

1 MINUTE TO MIDNIGHT

2 SELECT SCENES: INTRODUCTION TO SOFI WARD & MORGAN INCH

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1 Minute to Midnight Series

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SELECT SCENE #1: INTRODUCTION TO SOFI WARD

EXT. PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA. BAR - NIGHT

SOFI WARD (19), multiracial, athletic -- the impulsive air of someone who has just been released from the oppressive grip of childhood -- thumps down a set of metal steps leading to a nondescript bar.

She has a full backpack hanging loosely around her shoulders; her jeans and shirt are dirty, her boots caked in dust.

Her heterochromatic eyes -- one blue, one brown -- are visible in the light of the generic, florescent BAR SIGN hanging above the door.

Sofi is a GENETICALLY MODIFIED HUMAN (GEN-M), distinguished by their heterochromia. Created one of two ways: either through private family funding, or a defunct government sponsored program designed to curb the cost of healthcare.

INT. PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Sofi stands in the entranceway; deer in headlights. Around her faces are dimly lit in the semi-packed bar.

ROWAN (teens), short cut hair, tattoos, androgynous look, also shares Sofi's heterochromia. They sit at the end of the bar nursing a beer.

They look up at Sofi.

Sofi notices the BARTENDER serving a CUSTOMER a drink; she moves through the bar, looking at the faces of the other patrons.

Everyone has heterochromatic eyes.

BARTENDER

What do you want to drink?

The bartender is short with a cut off t-shirt, severe cheek bones, early 40s; she's seen it all and lived to tell the tale.

The bartender is the only person in the bar without heterochromia.

SOFI

Sorry. I don't know what to say.

BARTENDER

You tell me what you want and I'll
see if I can help, how 'bout that?

Sofi looks around. Rowan watches her as she speaks with the bartender.

SOFI

PBR.

The bartender goes to a fridge beneath the bar.

SOFI (CONT'D)

Why a Gen-M bar?

The bartender sets the beer down.

BARTENDER

I was with a Gen-M for a while --
10 years younger than me, but had
the mind of someone older.

The Bartender softens as she remembers her former lover.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

She taught me some things about
life... your world. So, we bought
this shitty little dive together.
Now it's still a shitty little
dive, but it has purpose. This your
first time?

The bartender puts her hand on top of Sofi's, breaking her tough demeanor, a friendly squeeze, before letting go.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

(knowing)

You need something else.

SOFI

(whispers)

I need a way out.

BARTENDER

We're not pushing off until I close
up the bar at 4.

Sofi looks at a clock on the wall; it reads 3am.

SOFI

We?

The bartender nods to Rowan down the bar.

BARTENDER

Rowan.

SOFI

I heard everyone traveled alone?

BARTENDER

I don't question the way the system works. I watch the news every night looking for a Gen-M death and so far I haven't had to beat myself up about something going wrong.

SOFI

Why are you helping us?

BARTENDER

My partner would have wanted that. Besides, we're all humans. Plain and simple.

Sofi looks over once more at Rowan.

SOFI

You have a bathroom?

The bartender nods towards the back.

INT. PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA. BAR. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sofi shuts the bathroom door behind her, closing out the noise of chatter and the low hum of alt music playing over the speaker system.

Slapped on the mirror are stickers of "GEN-M" bands and anti-government slogans: "F*CK THE REPUBLIC", "DESIGNER DIGNITY" etc.

Sofi touches a sticker that says "CRISPR KIDS". Her face softens; taking in the words that define her.

She turns on the tap and throws water on her face, wiping away sweat and dirt with a paper towel.

She removes her shirt and replaces it with a clean one from her backpack.

INT. PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Sofi takes a seat at the bar, dropping her backpack by her feet.

Sofi sits with her drink watching the clock. A voice from down the bar cuts through the music.

ROWAN
You sleep last night? I couldn't
sleep last night.

Sofi turns to find Rowan leaning in her direction. She's unsure whether she should engage or not.

Everything in her body tells her it isn't safe to share anything with anyone.

ROWAN (CONT'D)
There's fear, sure, but more the
stories, like freedom is close, you
know?

SOFI
I haven't had a second to think
about it, yet.

ROWAN
I have. Every moment.

Sofi shares a brief feeling of excitement with Rowan.

ROWAN (CONT'D)
We're on our way.

Sofi looks away from Rowan and back to the clock.

BARTENDER (O.S.)
Shit.

Faint traces of flashlights strike the bar's frosted glass windows.

Suddenly the front door opens and two PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICERS enter the bar.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
(whispers to Sofi)
Black car behind the back of the
bar.

PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
Everyone take your license out!

BARTENDER
You got a reason for being in here--

PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
 We're here to address the
 disorderly gathering of GEN-M's in
 direct opposition to state laws
 barring more than five GEN-M's from
 congregating at a single time.

BARTENDER
 We're drinking, that's it--

The SECOND PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER flashes his
 flashlight in a PATRON'S eyes. The PATRON squints as the
 light touches his heterochromatic eyes.

The FIRST PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER grabs a WOMAN'S face
 and pushes it so that her neck is bent right back; her face
 beneath the ceiling light.

Sofi tightens her grip on her beer bottle.

The WOMAN closes her eyes, which the FIRST PENNSYLVANIA
 PATRIOT OFFICER pries open with a gloved hand.

PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
 Are you from Pennsylvania?

The WOMAN nods her head.

PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER (CONT'D)
 You're aware of the laws?

Terrified, the WOMAN forces a nod.

PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Then you understand you're in
 violation of these laws?

BARTENDER
 Listen, I'll send everyone out--

FIRST PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
 (to the SECOND
 PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT
 OFFICER)
 How many in the bar?

SECOND PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
 I'm counting nine.

FIRST PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
 Shame.

The FIRST PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER releases the Woman's
 head roughly before turning his attention to Rowan.

FIRST PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER
(CONT'D)

You. Come here.

(beat)

Now!

Rowan walks over to the FIRST PENNSYLVANIA PATRIOT OFFICER.

He grabs Rowan, twists their arm behind their back, and zip ties their hands. Dragging them forward by their wrists.

Quickly, Sofi jumps forward and with all her might swings her beer bottle around, smashing it against the side of the First Officer's face.

The bottle shatters into the First Officer's eyes. He grabs his face and lets out a scream, dropping Rowan to the ground.

The bartender moves from behind the bar and rushes the SECOND OFFICER knocking him back onto the ground, while the rest of the GEN-MS bolt for the exit.

The FIRST OFFICER writhes on the floor in pain.

Sofi pulls at the zip tie around Rowan's wrists.

SOFI

Pull!

With both of their might the zip tie snaps.

They get up off the ground.

A GUNSHOT goes off behind them.

As Rowan and Sofi run for the back exit of the bar, a knife slices its way through the side of Sofi's thigh, causing her to fall to the ground.

She looks back to see the First Officer blindly lunge on top of her.

The First Officer flips Sofi over and puts his hands around her neck trying to strangle her.

She grabs at his face with her nails, struggling through his grip.

SOFI (CONT'D)

(breathlessly)

I don't want to kill you.

The First Officer continues to squeeze.

Sofi digs her fingers into his face, and manages to slip one leg up and push him off of her with an enormous amount of force.

The First Officer flies back against a chair.

Sofi gasps for air as she picks up her bag, gets to her feet and runs out the back door.

SELECT SCENE #2: INTRODUCTION TO MORGAN INCH

EXT. VIRGINIA. MOTEL - EARLY MORNING

QUINN (30) GEN-M, gutsy and loyal with a strong sense of morality, hands two sets of keys to MORGAN INCH (40s).

A medium-built, Black man, he's commanding when needed, or, in an instant, anonymous.

Morgan, locks the door to a cheap one level motel room -- the type of dive you'd see late at night as a last resort for tired eyes.

There's an awkwardness between Morgan and Quinn that fades in the evening, only to return by morning.

They walk along the concrete path leading to the Main Office.

INT. MOTEL. MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sludgy coffee pours into two take-away cups. Quinn tops them off with half and half from a box placed in a plastic container with melting ice.

Behind her, Morgan squares away with the FRONT DESK ATTENDANT.

MORGAN

Can I have a receipt for the two rooms?

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT

I don't mean to pry, but... you guys here -- is that for long?

MORGAN

Routine.

The Front Desk Attendant holds out the receipt for Morgan.

FRONT DESK ATTENDANT
Nothing I should worry 'bout?

Quinn brings over the two coffees.

QUINN
(to Morgan)
You ready?

Morgan takes the receipt.

MORGAN
(to the attendant)
No. Have a nice day.

Morgan turns. REVEALED on the back of Morgan and Quinn's jackets is a Centers for Disease Control logo.

INT. MORGAN'S CAR - DAY

Morgan and Quinn sip their coffees. The semi-autonomous car moves them towards their destination.

QUINN
Sometimes I find it weird that I've spent my whole life in one country and haven't seen the vast majority of it.

MORGAN
I can tell you there's really not much to see.

They drive past an empty wasteland of burned grass and a dried riverbed.

Heatwaves have destroyed what was once green in West Virginia, leaving dying crops and families on the brink of starvation.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
Small tight-knit communities, terrified of how far behind they've been left.

QUINN
Easier for a sudden outbreak.

MORGAN
It doesn't surprise me that it happened.

Quinn is all too familiar with Morgan's sardonic tone.

QUINN

Was it near here you grew up?

MORGAN

Bit further West, but I left when I was 10.

QUINN

How was that? A "small tight-knit community terrified of being left behind"?

Morgan accepts her mockery, by putting his hand on Quinn's, and squeezing it for a moment.

MORGAN

It was a close community, for sure. We were one of those towns you hear about where some big industry swoops in buying up cheap land.

QUINN

I'm surprised you volunteered us to come down. The way you describe this place sounds like hell on earth.

MORGAN

Maybe. We get territorial down here, I figured it would help to have someone from the area. That's all.

Their car begins to slow automatically.

INT. MORGAN'S CAR/EXT. STATE BORDER CHECKPOINT - CONTINUOUS

Ahead of them is the WEST VIRGINIA LIBERATION FRONT STATE BORDER CHECKPOINT. A BORDER PATROL OFFICER comes out from a booth.

His waist is saddled with weapons: a handgun, knife, extra clips. In his hand is a scanner with display screen on the back.

Across from him is another BORDER PATROL AGENT. He's armed to the teeth -- an AR-15 across his chest, his finger laying menacingly on the trigger.

The Border Patrol Agent signals for Morgan to open his window.

BORDER PATROL AGENT

License.

Morgan hands over his license. The Border Patrol Agent scans it. A disturbing amount of information comes up on the screen.

Date of Birth: 10/12/2000. Place of Birth: Beckley, West Virginia. Parents: Deceased. Current Residence: Washington D.C. Genetically Modified Human: No.

The Border Patrol Agent hands the license back to Morgan. He looks in and sees Quinn.

BORDER PATROL AGENT (CONT'D)

Reason for visit?

MORGAN

We're --

BORDER PATROL AGENT

(to Quinn)

You.

QUINN

We're with the Centers for Disease Control -- Epidemic Intelligence Service.

BORDER PATROL AGENT

License.

Quinn hands it over and the Agent scans it.

BORDER PATROL AGENT (CONT'D)

This is the Republic of West Virginia. You have passes to be here?

QUINN

We're a Federal Agency.

The screen on the back of the Agent's scanner reveals Quinn's personal information.

Date of Birth: 7/24/2013. Place of Birth: Boston, Mass. Parents: Alive. Place of Residence: Washington, D.C. Genetically Modified Human: Yes.

BORDER PATROL AGENT

Get out of the car.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

BORDER PATROL AGENT
Hands above your heads. Face the
car.

The Border Patrol Agent moves around the car to Quinn. He shoves her face into the car.

BORDER PATROL AGENT (CONT'D)
You have no jurisdiction here.

QUINN
Actually, we do. Member States are
required to fund Federal Agencies
from a portion of their gross state
budget, of which the CDC is one.
This enables us to cross borders,
territories and wherever else we
please in order to keep this
country safe.

From across the car--

MORGAN
It is still a country, after all,
no matter what some people think...

The Border Patrol Agent pushes Quinn's face harder into the car before releasing.

BORDER PATROL AGENT
How long are you here?

MORGAN
Not a second longer than's
necessary.

The Border Patrol Agency waves them back to the car, moves towards the gate.

INT. MORGAN'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Rattled, Morgan and Quinn settle themselves in the car.

The gate goes up and their car moves through, leaving the Patrol Station behind.

QUINN
Fuckers.