

THE ARK & THE CRUCIBLE

An original teleplay pilot for a series

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FADE IN:

EXT. A LOGGING ROAD - AFTERNOON

A two-track slices through a thick, old-growth forest. Sunlight barely filters through. Nothing stirs – it's at once bucolic and menacing.

Suddenly, a battered SUV flies up the two-track. Scars and dents on its sides indicate glancing contact with the forest.

VALERIE (O.S.)
(panicked)
Xavier, where the hell are we?

The SUV skids to a stop at a fork in the two-track.

INT. THE SUV - CONTINUOUS

A wealthy family. Couture outfits. Gold jewelry.

XAVIER (40s, a swarthy, athletic man) stares at the road. Bespoke shirt, torn. A tan line where a watch once kept time.

VALERIE (40s, a pampered soccer mom) gapes at the forest.

VALERIE
You idiot, why didn't you get a map?

XAVIER
Like you would have done better!? It was total chaos... I gave them my Rolex for this shit pile.

POPPY (19, a Barbie doll of a daughter) chews her manicured nails. She keeps checking for cell service.

POPPY
Doesn't *anyone* live out here?

VALERIE
Anchorage must be okay, right? They wouldn't have gotten Anchorage...

XAVIER
-- Shut up and let me think! Where's the sun? Is that west?

Xavier takes the left fork.

LOGGING ROAD - LATER

The SUV bumps along the two-track. The engine suddenly coughs. The vehicle shudders and dies completely.

IN THE SUV - CONTINUOUS

They sit in stunned silence.

VALERIE

You didn't fill the gas tank?

XAVIER

Looters were getting shot at the gas station. I... we'll have to walk --

POPPY

-- WALK!? Walk where?

XAVIER

That harpy at the rental said if we got to the main road, we'd be safe.

Xavier shoves his door open.

LOGGING ROAD - LATER

The family pulls Gucci luggage along the two-track. The women totter on high-heels.

XAVIER

Hurry! It'll be dark soon!

POPPY

I should have conned that jock I screwed into being my sherpa.

VALERIE

When you're CEO of our company, everyone will be your sherpa...

A shot rings out. Valerie's head explodes as a bullet tears through it. She drops where she stood.

Blood and viscera spatter Poppy. She screams.

XAVIER

VAL... MY GOD...!?

Xavier crouches beside Valerie's body as Poppy whimpers. His eyes dart around in panic.

ANNA SKYBEAR (50s, a stout First Nation woman) steps from the forest. Long, graying hair. A suit of denim, leather and fur. Fierce, piercing eyes. She exudes power.

Strong, well-armed Scamakounst women and unarmed men carrying heavy packs – not much more than mules – join her.

Xavier moves to protect Poppy.

XAVIER
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT..?

ANNA SKYBEAR
(pointing at Poppy)
Is she yours?

XAVIER
Of course – STAY AWAY FROM US!

Anna's warriors advance on Xavier and Poppy. Both surrender in horror.

XAVIER
We need to get to the road – to Anchorage. War has --

ANNA SKYBEAR
-- Bind and bare him. He bred once, he'll do it again.

The Scamakounst separate Xavier and Poppy. Xavier struggles desperately as one ties his hands behind his back.

Poppy cries out as they tear off Xavier's clothing. A warrior forces Poppy to her knees – and slits her throat.

Xavier howls in anguish. The warriors strip him like a kill. One loops a leather choker around his neck.

Anna squeezes Xavier's muscles. Assesses his genitalia.

ANNA SKYBEAR
Yes, he'll do. Take him. Search the bags. Leave the rest for the bears.

INT. VACATION CONDO KITCHEN, ORLANDO - MORNING

SUPER: TWO DAYS EARLIER

A soulless vacation rental. Cheap cabinetry. Cheesy artwork.

A MAN (40s) in a FedEx uniform scoops yogurt into a bowl. He adds honey as he watches a news bulletin on TV.

COMMENTATOR

-- Rising tension across the globe
could boil over at any time...

A world map shows hot spots: Iran, Ukraine, the South China Sea. Footage of tanks and missile tests rolls on screen.

FedEx Man relishes his yogurt until his cell phone buzzes. He considers it with apprehension.

FEDEX MAN

Yes?

(he listens)

So soon? ... NO, please - I'll make
the delivery today.

The call ends.

FEDEX MAN

Thank you.

Shaken, he sets the bowl of yogurt in the sink.

EXT. HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS, VANCOUVER - THAT MORNING

Fresh-faced LENOX ARMSTRONG (30s, a sturdy and intense black man) sits outside the hotel's porte cochere.

He wears the white uniform of a ship's officer. Dark epaulets with two gold bars. A gold name badge. His hat sits on the bench beside him.

Three suitcases rest to one side.

Lenox studies frayed newspaper clippings. The headlines:
"ROBOTICS EXPERT MISSING." "WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN POOLE
HARBOUR." "FOUL PLAY RULED OUT."

LENOX

(Cockney accent)

Foul play ruled out. Bloody hell...

A cab pulls up. Lenox wipes his eyes. Pockets the clippings. Dons his hat. The CABBIE collects his bags.

CABBIE

You okay, buddy?

LENOX

I'll live, mate. Take me to the Canada Place cruise terminal.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CANADIAN FJORD - THAT MORNING

The warm light of the summer solstice.

Granite cliffs rise from the fjord's deep water. Conifers cover its ledges and inlets. An eagle soars overhead.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - MORNING

SUPER: THE VILLAGE OF SPATSIZI

Spatsizi, an once-thriving logging town, wedges between the fjord and the Tongass temperate rain forest. It crumbles from years of decline.

Main Street leads from the docks through a tired commercial district. One coffee shop. A vehicle dealer. An addiction center. Gift shops mix with empty storefronts.

Still, the village bustles. A robust woman paints the fence. A female shopkeeper plants flowers. Other women shop. Drive. Get coffee.

The MAYOR (60s, an ebullient gentleman) watches two old men hang a banner at city hall. It reads: "WELCOME, PACIFIC SWAN."

They are the only men we've seen in town.

MAYOR

First cruise ship in a decade, boys.
Let's make it count!

He smells the fresh corsage pinned to his blazer and saunters into town, a cane aiding him.

Main Street ends at a two-track - the only road out of town. It joins a labyrinth of lumber roads in the forest.

Between the commercial district and the forest sits:

EXT. STORMY'S TAVERN & GUESTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A rambling two-story structure with a broad front porch. Tavern on the ground floor. Rooms to let above. Bright paint and trim set it apart.

MILLIE McADAMS (60, weathered, confident) sweeps the porch, her gray ponytail swinging. She takes in a farm stand beside the tavern, then the stunning view. Pensive.

A MAN (40s, well-dressed) bursts from the tavern. Loses his footing. Tumbles down the stairs.

GRACE McADAMS (mid 30s, a beauty battered by life) follows him. A fireball of a woman, fit and outdoorsy – she is not to be trifled with.

GRACE

-- I don't care how big that penis extender of a boat is!

MILLIE

GRACE! What the..?

MAN

I never called that bourbon --

GRACE

-- You said, and I quote, "best whiskey in the tavern" which means Pappy Van Winkle at \$100 an ounce.

MAN

You tricked me, you bitch.

Grace advances down the stairs to stand over him.

GRACE

This bitch isn't tricked by rich hedonists looking for a score. Mother – get his wallet.

The man scrambles to his feet. Grace cuts off his escape.

GRACE

Grab him!

Millie lunges, and the man throws her to the ground. And then – the man is suddenly prone on the sidewalk.

An athletic woman pins his arm between his shoulder blades.
This is NATALIE ABITIBI (17).

NATALIE

I play hockey with the boys, sir –
200 career penalty minutes – so just
lie there. What's he owe?

GRACE

\$425.75.

Natalie yanks out his wallet. Tosses it to Millie.

MILLIE

He just has hundreds.

GRACE

Then I'm getting a nice tip.

Millie counts out the money. Natalie lets the man go and he
rolls over to face them.

MAN

Damn thieves. I'm calling the police
– ow... fuck!

A stylish boot crushes the man's fingers into the sidewalk.

SASHA ABITIBI (late 40s - a saucy doyenne of Russian descent)
glares down at the man. She radiates power and a Romanov
flair even in her off-the-rack suit.

SASHA

By the time the RCMP get here, you'll
have enjoyed a week in jail with the
less savory bits of Spatsizi society.

MAN

Who the hell..?

SASHA

Deputy mayor Sasha Abitibi. Tasked
with peace keeping, liaising with
the RCMP, maintaining the jail...

She takes the man's remaining cash and drops his wallet on
his stomach.

SASHA

... And seeding the police retirement
fund. Thank you for your donation.

The man flees with his wallet. Minnie opts out of the situation and continues sweeping.

NATALIE

You need a better class of class in your pub, Gracie.

GRACE

We get diamonds and dung here, Nat. It's the dung that usually lingers.

Natalie returns to the farm stand, where a grizzled man shelves spruce root baskets and jars of jam.

SASHA

Civic protection is a beautiful thing.

Grace grudgingly hands half of her money to Sasha.

SASHA

I can only surmise that your house-of-ill-repute will be active.

GRACE

Why? You need a room?

SASHA

The McAdam's clan has always had thumbs in a great many pies.

GRACE

Much like you Abitibis. Natalie seems to have a more legit entrepreneurial spirit.

Sasha smiles a reptilian smile.

SASHA

My daughter won't always be around to save you --

GRACE

-- I don't need saving, Sasha, this town does -- or is that beneath the deputy mayor?

SASHA

-- Natalie! You're behind on the accounts at the dealership.

Sasha and Natalie argue. Grace takes in Millie's disapproving glance, then strides into the tavern.

EXT. URITSKY'S GARAGE - THAT MORNING

A shabby garage with two gas pumps. An attached apartment molders behind it - and zero cars sit in front.

INSIDE

Parts and tools. A lift. Vintage car ads share wall space with travel posters and Playboy centerfolds.

Greasy legs in overalls poke from beneath an old Chevy. A stern LOCAL WOMAN judges a booby poster girl.

LOCAL WOMAN

You shouldn't have these in a place of business, gimp.

Strapping ELIJAH "The Gimp" URITSKY (early 30s, scruffy with a blond goatee) slides from beneath the car.

ELIJAH

Only rivals, misfits and malcontents call me "Gimp". Which are you?

Elijah slowly stands - six-feet of Viking muscle in overalls and a painted-on t-shirt. He wipes his hands on a rag.

LOCAL WOMAN

A woman tires of objectification.

ELIJAH

The place has one mechanic, decorator and bottle washer and you're looking at him. Consider your complaint filed.

He loudly opens a trash can and tosses the rag.

ELIJAH

Repairs are two grand plus lunch.

WOMAN

You moonlight at the tavern and need my business. \$500 and a muffin.

ELIJAH

The next garage is right at the corner, 200 kilometers up the two-track and another seventy to Prince George. Or, you could give the Scamakounst a try...

The woman blanches at his suggestion.

ELIJAH

Two grand plus lunch, and I'll take
that muffin. Cranberry orange,
pastrami on rye, and an old pickle.

She leaves in a huff. Elijah eyes, with contempt, a woman
primping her store. He waves to her grimly.

EXT - RENTAL AGENCY - THAT MORNING

A nondescript warehouse, now a multipurpose vehicle dealership
and rental. Outside: rows of shiny SUVs and Kubota tractors.

INSIDE

Natalie sits at a computer.

NATALIE

QuickBooks needs an update sometime
this decade.

Sasha consults a rental list - full from top to bottom.

SASHA

We'll soon leave this forsaken town.

NATALIE

I'll take a beach - anywhere.

SASHA

Mark my words, Natalie: tomorrow
will be a day to remember.

Sasha's cell rings. She listens then hangs up without a word.

SASHA

The *Pacific Swan* is on schedule. It
leaves Vancouver at five.

NATALIE

You're telling me you have a source
on *Pacific Swan*?

Sasha ignores her. She types a text and sends it.