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ONE MORE SEASON

Monologues / Sci-Fi / 3-4 min
Cast 1 Male x1

After forty-one years of listening to an empty sky, Abel's mountaintop station is being shut down. A young auditor has come with the form. Abel wants one more season, and he has never told anyone why.

CHARACTERS

ABEL - 70s, the last resident technician at a deep-space listening station, dry, careful, and carrying something

SETTING

The control room of a mountaintop radio listening station after midnight, near future.

A control room at a mountaintop listening station, near future, past midnight. Banks of old equipment, one modern terminal, a coffee maker. Through the window, the dish, enormous and still.

ABEL, 70s, the station's last resident technician, stands at the terminal with a mug. He speaks to a young auditor from the agency who has come to sign off on the shutdown.

ABEL

Sit down. You're making the equipment nervous.

I've read the report. I know what it says. Forty-one years, eleven hundred terabytes of sky, and not one line of it that couldn't be explained by a pulsar or a microwave oven. I know what it costs to keep the dish warm. I know what it costs to keep me warm, which is less, but not nothing.

(beat)

You got a form and I got a coffee pot. Let's be civilized about it.

He pours. He does not offer the auditor a cup.

I'm gonna ask you for one season. March to October. You can strip the crew quarters. You can sell the vehicles. I don't need a vehicle, I haven't been down that road in three years. Just the dish, the terminal, and the diesel. One season. Then you can sign whatever you like and I'll drive the van down myself and hand you the keys.

(off the auditor's response)

Why. Yes. That's the right question. You're better than the last one. The last one didn't ask.

He sets the mug down. This is hard.

Year nineteen. October. I was alone that night. The other two were down in town for somebody's wedding. Two twelve in the morning, the terminal started printing. Not noise. Not a pulsar. A structure. Eleven blocks, repeating, each one a little different from the last, the way a hand is different from a hand.

It ran for four minutes and eleven seconds. And then it stopped.

(beat)

And I sat there. And I thought about what happens to a man who calls the agency at two in the morning to say the sky has spoken to him. I thought about the funding review that was due in March. I thought about my wife, who was sick, and about how little I wanted to be famous, or wrong, or both.

And I erased it.

Pause.

I've never said that out loud. Forty-one years of sky, and the only thing worth hearing, I threw in the trash because I was scared.

(steadier now)

But I kept the timestamp. In my head. Not on the log. In my head. And I kept listening, because that's the job. And the thing about the sky is that it's patient. Things come around.

Twenty-one years. That's the cycle. I figured it out from the position. Year nineteen, plus twenty-one.

He nods at the calendar on the wall.

It's year forty. October is seven months away.

So. One season. And this time I'll make the call. And you can be in the room when I do, if you'd like to be the one who was right.

He slides the mug across the desk to the auditor.

That one's yours. I made two.

END OF SCRIPT