



SCENE INSERT: “Echoes Before the Flash”

(Location: Rebel-occupied utility roof, Calgary Suburb urban area — 43 mins before the blast)

Characters:

- **Joshawa Le’Clair** (on roof, demo switch in hand)
 - **Maya** (on headset, coordinating evac and PR response)
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[INT. REBEL COMMS – MAYA’S POV]

Maya watches the crowd density model update on her pad. Numbers are climbing. She’s frowning, worried as she sits in the tattered aisles of a torn apart corner store.

MAYA (into headset)

Josh? I’m hearing movement. Crowd metrics just spiked in Quadrant C. Have you got a line of sight?

[EXT. ROOFTOP - SAME BUILDING – JOSHAWA’S POV]

Josh stands overlooking a city block. The street below looks eerily calm—too calm. Sunlight glints off bus shelter glass and shopfronts.

JOSHAWA (chuckling, voice raised from habit)

Look mes ami, the glass isn’t even shattered here! We will be *perfectly* fine.

He wipes sweat from his brow. The remote trigger dangles from his vest like an ornament. He’s comfortable. Too comfortable.

[INT. MAYA – INTERCUT]

Maya freezes. That’s not what she expected to hear.

MAYA

Wait. What?

Josh, can you even *hear* the riots where you are?

[JOSHAWA – RADIO FLARE-UP]

He cups a hand around the mic, glancing up at the sky. There's a stillness.

JOSHAWA

Nah, sweets. Not even a chirp.

[BEAT]

Maya doesn't answer immediately. Her tablet lights up red with a late crowd telemetry ping. The route just flooded. The feed lags. Too late.

[SPLIT AUDIO]

We stay with Josh—his boot knocks loose a bit of gravel. Wind shifts. Something distant... a pop? Maybe thunder. Maybe tear gas. He doesn't react.

MAYA (O.S.)

Josh... confirm timestamp on your Aegis query.

JOSHAWA

Timestamp? I—I pulled it two clicks ago, didn't need to live it. It's a scare job, not a f—
(cut off)

MAYA (urgent, rising panic)

Josh. Re-query the crowding. Right now.

Josh presses the pad. It buffers... lags... then loads a newer crowd model. The color changes. Entire zones have shifted. People moved in.

His face drains.

JOSHAWA (barely audible)

...merde.

The shot hangs. Cold wind. A faint, delayed rumble echoes up through the streets. Somewhere below, in the zone he was told would be clear, a chant grows faintly audible through glass.

Cut to black.