

= Live and Learn ( Falling Skies ) =

" Live and Learn " is the first episode of the first season and the series premiere of the TNT science fiction drama Falling Skies . The episode was written by series creator and executive producer Robert Rodat and directed by Carl Franklin . The episode first aired in the United States on June 19 , 2011 , alongside the second episode .

Six months after an extraterrestrial invasion , history professor Tom Mason is made second @-@ in @-@ command of the 2nd Mass , a group of soldiers and civilians . Weaver , 2nd Mass ' commanding officer , sends Tom , Hal and a small group of soldiers on a mission for supplies for the rest of the troop . While on the mission , Hal catches a glimpse of his missing brother Ben , who has been enslaved by the aliens .

In the United States , the two @-@ hour series premiere achieved a viewership of 5 @.@ 91 million , making it the most @-@ watched series premiere of 2011 . The episode garnered a Nielsen rating of 2 @.@ 0 in the 18 ? 49 demographic , translating to 2 @.@ 6 million viewers .

= = Plot = =

In the opening scene , young children tell their versions of the invasion . They draw pictures of their families , kids with harnesses and the alien airships . Tom Mason 's ( Noah Wyle ) son , Matt , tells Anne Glass ( Moon Bloodgood ) that his mother died during the attacks and his older brother , Ben , was kidnapped . He then shows her a picture of his father and oldest brother , Hal ( Drew Roy ) . Matt informs Anne that they are fighting . In a dark street , Tom and Hal look for food . They grab a food kart , but are ambushed by robotic aliens , known as " Mechs " , which destroy the food . As Tom and Hal run away , soldiers fire guns at the aliens behind barricades . The aliens destroy the barricade and kill the soldiers . Tom and Hal hide in an empty store . They exit , finding Captain Weaver ( Will Patton ) and other soldiers armed with guns . An airship flies overhead and fires , causing a bright light to consume the atmosphere around them . The group runs away back to their base .

Upon arrival , Tom sees his son Matt asleep and picks him up . He talks to his friend , Anne who tells him about his son 's drawings . Tom is then called by Col. Porter ( Dale Dye ) for a meeting . There , Porter discusses his plan to leave the city and break off into groups . The alien air ships can detect groups of humans over 600 persons so he splits his brigade into smaller groups consisting of 100 fighters and 200 civilians . He puts Weaver in charge of the 2nd Mass and Tom as his second @-@ in @-@ command .

The following day , the fighters and civilians begin to move . They search for food in stores but find none . Weaver tells Tom that they can 't go back looking for more food as the numbers are too large . Tom volunteers to go back . Weaver gives him six fighters and a pickup truck . Hal , Karen , Dai , Anthony , Click and Jimmy join Tom in the hunt for food . Hal and Karen leave the group to search for aliens . Hal sees Mechs and harnessed kids with them . It is there that he sees his brother , Ben . He immediately returns to tell his father . They are both overjoyed , yet Tom insists that they stick with the mission at hand . Hal disagrees and tries to go and find his brother . Tom wrestles him to the ground and convinces him to do the job the " right way " .

The group finds a supply store with food and scout the area for aliens . Finding none , they load the food into the truck . Hal is attacked by a Skitter . Tom fires at it and his son runs away . A Mech is alerted and comes after Tom . Hal stops it by firing at it . It then runs after Hal . Tom puts C @-@ 4 in a shopping cart and wheels it next to the Mech , killing it . The Skitter comes after Tom , but Dai shoots it . The alien dies slowly after its gun wound and the group observes it before it dies .

The six fighters return and Tom informs Weaver of their success . He then tells Weaver that he and Hal must go looking for Ben . Weaver declines and says they must raid the armory for weapons . Tom tells him after that , they will go and find him . Before the 2nd Mass leave the city , Hal gives his brother his birthday gift . The children of the 2nd Mass play with it as the adults watch . Weaver tells Tom it is time to leave and they all move out on foot .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

Development officially began in 2009 , when TNT announced that it had ordered to pilot an untitled alien invasion project . Falling Skies was created by Robert Rodat , who is best known for writing the Oscar @-@ winning film Saving Private Ryan , which was directed by Steven Spielberg . Rodat wrote the pilot episode from an idea which was co @-@ conceived by Spielberg . Originally , Falling Skies was called Concord , referencing the Battles of Lexington and Concord and Tom Mason 's profession as a former History Professor . Spielberg then came up with the title Falling Skies . " I felt that this was a very interesting postapocalyptic story with a 21st century [ spin on the ] spirit of ' 76 . I came up ? out of the blue one day ? with the name Falling Skies , which is basically what happens to the planet after this invasion . What is unique about this particular series is that the story starts after a successful conquest of the world , " he stated . Spielberg was attracted to the project due to its themes of survival . " I 've always been interested in how we survive and how resourceful we are as Americans . How would the survivors feed the children ? How do they resupply themselves militarily in order to defend and even take back what they have lost ? " he added . Like much of Spielberg 's work , such as The Pacific and E.T. the Extra @-@ Terrestrial , Falling Skies ' running theme is family and brotherhood . He explained , " It 's a theme I harken back to a lot because it 's something I believe in . It 's something I have the closest experience with . [ Laughs ] They say write what you know , and with seven children and three sisters ... I tend to always come back to the family as a touchstone for audiences to get into these rather bizarre stories . "

While writing the pilot , Rodat dedicated a five @-@ page montage to the alien invasion , but decided not to go through with it as it had been done before in films such as War of the Worlds . " I wrote a few drafts of it and I looked at and say , ' Ay @-@ yay @-@ yay , I ? ve seen this before . There ? s no emotion to this . It feels like one of those montages , ' " he said . Rodat came up with the idea of having the children in the series " harnessed by aliens " . " When we were working out the initial stuff , the thing that excited [ Spielberg ] was the idea that adults are killed if they ? re a threat , and kids are captured for whatever reason and changed or altered . The harness was a logical outgrowth of that . Then what we ? ll explore is what the harnessing does to the kid over the course of the show but that also is something that ? s going to have to unveil itself gradually , " he stated . Spielberg previously explored the idea of enslaved children in the 1984 film Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom .

Series lead Noah Wyle emphasized Spielberg 's presence on set by stating " Anytime he gives an anointment to a project , it steps up the pedigree . " Colin Cunningham , who plays outlaw John Pope , exclaimed " You ? d show up and think , ? This is not a TV show ; this is something else that we ? re doing , ? " he said , noting that Spielberg was very hands @-@ on for the pilot . " Its scope is massive . Anytime you hear the word Spielberg , you know it ? s not going to be crap ; you know it ? ll be quality and there will be some money behind it . " Mark Verheiden , who was the showrunner for the first season , stated " It ? s great to know you have a world @-@ class filmmaker backing up what you ? re trying to do who is supportive and helping design the great stuff . "

= = = Casting and filming = = =

Casting announcements began in June 2009 when Noah Wyle was announced as the lead . Wyle , who worked with TNT on the The Librarian films , was sent scripts for various shows on their network . He said part of the reason he chose the part was to gain credibility from his children . " With the birth of my kids , I started to really look at my career through their eyes more than my own , so that does dictate choice , steering me toward certain things and away from other things , " he said . He also decided to do it as he could relate with his character , stating " I identified with Tom 's devotion to his sons , and admired his sense of social duty . " Spielberg wanted Wyle for the role because he knew him from his previous series ER , which Spielberg 's company produced . He had

wanted Wyle to appear in his 1998 film *Saving Private Ryan* but due to scheduling conflicts , he was unable to star . Spielberg stated that he was determined to work with him again . In July 2009 , Moon Bloodgood , Jessie Schram , Seychelle Gabriel and Maxim Knight were cast as Anne Glass , Karen Nadler , Lourdes and Matt Mason , respectively . Bloodgood , the female lead , did not have to audition for the role . She received the script and was offered the role . Bloodgood was drawn to the role because of Spielberg and Rodat 's involvement . She stated : " Well certainly when you get handed a script and they tell you it ? s Bob Rodat and Steven Spielberg , you ? re immediately drawn to it . It ? s got your attention . I was a little cautious about wanting to do science fiction again . But it was more of a drama story , more of a family story . I liked that and I wanted to work with Spielberg . " Bloodgood added that portraying a doctor excited her . " I liked the idea of playing a doctor and deviating from something I had done already , " she said . In August 2009 , Drew Roy and Peter Shinkoda were cast as Hal Mason and Dai , respectively . Drew Roy 's agent received the script and the pair joked that Roy might get the role . " This one came to me through my agent , just like everything else . We even joked about the fact that it was a Steven Spielberg project . We were like , " Oh yeah , I might have a chance . " We were just joking . " He auditioned four times for the part . " The whole process went on for quite some time , and then towards the end , it was down to me and one other guy , and we were literally waiting for the word from Steven Spielberg ? cause he had to watch the two audition tapes and give the okay . That , in and of itself , had me like , " Okay , even if I don ? t get it , that ? s just cool . " Fortunately , it went my way . " The pilot was filmed in 2009 in Oshawa , Ontario , and the rest of the season was shot from July to November of the following year in Hamilton and Toronto .

= = = Promotion = = =

The show 's official website offered an online web @-@ comic prior to the show 's launch . The comic , released every two weeks , follows the characters of the series just weeks after the alien invasion . It is published by Dark Horse Comics and a 104 @-@ page comic was released on Jul 5 , 2011 . Character videos are also became available online . The videos explore the main characters of *Falling Skies* . As part of the promotional campaign , a vehicle , with the TNT logo and called *Falling Skies Technical* was released as a free gift in the social networking game *Mafia Wars* on June 14 , 2011 .

= = Reception = =

The two @-@ hour premiere of *Falling Skies* was watched by 5 @.@ 9 million viewers , making it cable television 's biggest series launch of the year , with more than 2 @.@ 6 million adults 18 ? 49 and 3 @.@ 2 million adults 25 ? 54 .

The pilot episode saw a mostly positive reception . Tim Goodman of the *Hollywood Reporter* wrote " ... the entertainment value and suspense of *Falling Skies* is paced just right . You get the sense that we 'll get those answers eventually . And yet , you want to devour the next episode immediately . " Thomas Conner of the *Chicago Sun @-@ Times* called it " ... a trustworthy family drama but with aliens . " He continued , " It 's ' Jericho ' meets ' V ' , with the good from both and the bad discarded . It 'll raise the summer @-@ TV bar significantly . " Ken Tucker from *Entertainment Weekly* gave the series a B + and wrote , " A similar , gradually developed , but decisive conviction makes *Falling Skies* an engaging , if derivative , chunk of dystopian sci @-@ fi . " He continued , " ... *Falling Skies* rises above any one performance ; it 's the spectacle of humans versus aliens that draws you in . " In the *Boston Herald* , Mark A. Perigard gave the series a B grade , writing " Don 't look now , but *Falling Skies* could be a summer obsession . "

However , not all reviews were favorable . Brian Lowry from *Variety* gave the series a mixed review , stating that he enjoyed the action sequences but that " the soapier elements mostly fall flat " , and called the series " painfully old @-@ fashioned " . Mike Hale , from *The New York Times* , called the series " average " and " good on the action , a little muddled on the ideas " . He added that " the tone is placid and slightly monotonous , as if we were watching the Walton family at the end of the

world " . The Washington Post reviewer Hank Steuver criticized the actor portrayals , writing that " the show is slowed by so many wooden performances , Wyle 's included " . He also states he found himself " root [ ing ] for the aliens , which cannot have been the writers ' intent " . In The Miami Herald , Glenn Garvin also criticized the poor acting , stating , " the ' Falling Skies ' cast appears unconvinced and unconvincing . " Garvin singled out the performance of Sarah Carter as the only exception , and added that Spielberg has " bottomed out " with this family drama series .