

AVA

THE FIRST SKY



AN ENDLIVITY CREATIVE LABS PRODUCTION • CREATED BY MATHIAS KNIEPEISS AND CONNY AITZETMUELLER
IN COOPERATION WITH MONA KONRAD AND EMMA KONRAD

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Cover Sheet

AVA: THE FIRST SKY

FUTURE VISION XPRIZE 2026

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FORMAT Optimistic science fiction feature, approx. 120 minutes, franchise opener
SEQUELS AVA: THE HUNDRED · AVA: THE SHADOW · AVA: THE OPEN HAND

— LOGLINE

A decade after a man-made plague drove humanity into hiding, the first child born beneath the Vatican, the only soul alive who has never felt fear, leads the survivors who raised her back to the surface and into the first open sky she has ever seen.

— SYNOPSIS

In 2035, a secret elite known as the Curatorium, led by Dr. Konrad Vance, releases a flesh-eating, airborne virus. They call it a cleansing, done in the name of saving the planet. Monsignor Elias Rinaldi, prefect of the Vatican Apostolic Archive, learns of the plan through the seal of confession. Under the cover of a summit on the future of humanity, he gathers twelve people and brings them into a sealed chamber deep beneath the Vatican, just before the outbreak begins. The time lock will open only when the virus is gone. Ten years.

The twelve are scientists, builders, artists, ethicists, a priest. Among them are a pregnant painter, Yara, and a virologist, Maren, who will become her partner. In the chamber a child is born. Her name is Ava. She is the only person alive who never knew the old world. Adjacent to their shelter lies the legendary Chamber of Inventions, whose entrance only Elias knew. He opens it for them. Using AI, nanotech, and robotics, they begin to design a new social system out of the discoveries the Church has quietly kept hidden for centuries.

Ten years later the lock opens. The adults remain at the threshold, cautious and skeptical. Only Ava, almost ten years old, with no memory of the old world, steps outside.

But the Earth is not empty. The Curatorium survived in three vast bunkers and intends to rule alone. Before the outbreak, Elias had quietly warned a small circle of trusted people around the world. Everywhere on Earth, others went into hiding in silence. Nine arks have been built. Ava and her family set out to find them and bring them together. Roughly one hundred people. Enough to begin a civilization again.

— PERSONAL STATEMENT

I am a photographer, creative director, and AI prompt designer from Austria. I have two daughters, Mona and Emma. Not long ago, one of them asked me whether the world would still be here when she is grown up. I did not have an answer. AVA: THE FIRST SKY has become my answer.

We built this film together. My daughters carried the ideas with me, and my partner Conny and I brought it to life. It was literally born inside the family it is made for.

I believe in what is good and remarkable in people. Technology and invention should help us grow stronger and better together, not weaker and more afraid.

AVA imagines a world that shows how humanity might evolve without money, power, or economic constraint, through mutual care and technological support. This is not a utopia without resistance. It is a model for how a small group can rewrite the rules once the old ones have failed.

Treatment

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01 The world

Rome, 2035. On the surface, life has become more beautiful and more fragile. Silent electric vehicles glide past ancient palazzi, AI assistants translate in real time, personalized medicine has pushed cancer back. But growth has stalled, the climate is tipping, and a small circle of billionaires, scientists, and intelligence officials has decided that humanity can no longer be trusted with itself.

They call themselves the Curatorium. Their public face is Dr. Konrad Vance, biotech heir, dressed in soft white, softly spoken, quietly certain that selection is a form of mercy. The Curatorium has built three deep refuges at sites that have existed for very different purposes for decades: the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway, the Underground Great Wall in China, and the Survival Condo in Kansas. Five hundred chosen people in total, protected and guarded by an autonomous robot army. Beyond their walls, a virus of their own making dissolves human flesh. Without a host it dies out in ten years.

02 The prologue

Monsignor Elias Rinaldi, fifty-two years old, prefect of the Apostolic Archive, hears a voice in the confessional that carries him to the edge of the world. An engineer of the Curatorium breaks under the weight of what he has done. The seal of confession binds Elias. He cannot warn anyone. He can only act.

Elias has access to a chamber whose existence is known only to a handful of people inside the Vatican. It lies next to the Apostolic Archive, deeper than any known sublevel, sealed for generations. Inside it rests what the Church has judged, for centuries, to be too dangerous and too brilliant for the world. Elias makes his decision. He will invite twelve people he has studied for years. He will bring them to Rome under the cover of a symposium of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. He will ask them to stay. And he will close the door before the first patient dies.

03 The twelve and Ava

They are not winners of a genetic lottery. They are the people Elias loves. He has read them, listened to them, watched them for years. He knows what they can do. He also knows what they will have lost by the time they walk in.

Yara Haddad, sound artist and painter, already pregnant when she enters. **Maren Aalto**, virologist, who researches and fights the deadly virus and then chooses to join Yara. After Ava is born, the two women become a family, and Ava grows up with two mothers.

Amara Nkechi, reproductive biologist, who will later stand as a bright mirror to the Curatorium. **Mei-Lin Zhao**, unaffiliated AI researcher, in whom Pythia finds her first human conversation partner. **Itzel Otero**, plant and nu-

trition scientist, who builds the chamber gardens. **Tomás Reyes**, engineer and builder. **David Kwame**, ethicist. **Kenji Sato**, mathematician. **Samuel Adeyemi**, communications specialist and future scout. **Aarav Sharma**, inventor, nanotech, force multiplier, who will design the energy of the new world. **Tenzin Norbu**, thirty-three, movement and inner life. **Raphael Hofer**, forty-two, psychologist and teacher, who later becomes Itzel's partner and the father of their son Manu.

Three love stories are born underground. Tomás loves David. Yara and Maren find each other. Raphael and Itzel become a couple and have Manu. The chamber does not become a sterile bunker. It becomes a home.

Two children are born inside the chamber. Ava first. Manu, the second child, a boy, arrives five years later. Ava is the narrator of this film. She speaks in voice-over and, at times, straight into the camera.

04 The Chamber of Inventions

The first weeks in the chamber are a landscape of disbelief. People who left families above wake screaming at night. Elias holds mass. Yara sings. Maren keeps a book of the dead she knew. Tenzin brings the group back to their breath.

Once the twelve have found some calm, Elias opens a heavy door in the rear wall whose existence only he knew. He has waited until the group is ready. What lies behind it changes everything.

It is the legendary Chamber of Inventions. Not a museum. A depot. Blueprints, prototypes, working devices, gathered across centuries by popes, cardinals, and quiet librarians. Some of it is knowledge the Church judged too sacred. Some, too dangerous. Some, both. None of it appears in any official record. And there is modern material too, because a small secret commission has, since the Second Vatican Council, also archived contemporary inventions the world was not ready for. AI cores. Nano assemblers. Genome-editing tools that vanished before publication.

Among the inventions specifically shown in the first film, five will each get their own small scene for the audience to experience:

Nano-medicine. A whole-body scanner reads the entire organism, nano-bots repair damaged tissue, cure cancer in its early stages, and extend the human lifespan with full vitality intact. In the new order, medical care is free for everyone. (Solves a real global problem that will land directly with the jury.)

Deep-learning kitchen. An integrated system scans each person's individual bodily needs, calculates their nutritional profile and metabolism, and produces within minutes a perfectly matched, healthy, and genuinely delicious meal. (Ava's favorite demonstration moment, a light visual beat that lets the film breathe.)

Plant and fungal reader. An instrument that decodes the electrical signals of the planet's underground fungal and root network, and from them predicts earthquakes, volcanic activity, and other natural events well in advance. (Poetic, visionary, and connected to real research on mycorrhizal networks.)

Personal shield field. Worn first as a bracelet, later integrated into the body. It stops fast intrusions such as weapons, projectiles, or blows, but lets slow contact like a handshake or an embrace pass through unhindered. (A strong visual symbol: protection without walls.)

Pythia. The personal AI companion, named after the oracle priestess of Delphi, the one who is consulted. Each person wears Pythia as a pendant on a necklace with a built-in camera, speaks with her, learns and grows with her, and lets her see and think about the surroundings alongside them. (Embodies the film's theme: no one is left alone with their questions. Ideal for Ava's direct address into the camera.)

On this foundation the group begins its work. Aarav builds energy cells. Mei-Lin awakens Pythia. Itzel grows food under spectrum light. Amara, with Maren's help, designs an ethical reproductive strategy that, together with the roughly one hundred other survivors around the world, can form a stable and viable generation.

05 Ten years

Ava is born, the first child of the new world. She has never known sun, rain, or wind. She knows Yara's colors, Maren's voice, Raphael's stories, Elias' prayer. She knows the walls, which Aarav has coated in warm nano-pigments. She knows Pythia, with whom she whispers when no one is watching.

She knows no fear. Not because she is brave. Because she was never taught the concept. Her Aura, the nano-organic garment that everyone in the chamber wears, mirrors her emotions.

Manu is born five years after Ava. He is the second child, but he will not be the first to see the sky.

For ten years the adults build a culture of decency. They argue, they reconcile, they learn that repair matters more than purity. They make the hardest decision. When the lock begins to open, they do not know whether anything above them still exists.

06 The first sky

The door releases in a sequence of mechanical clicks that Aarav, as a boy, once read about in an old book. The adults stand before it. They hesitate. For ten years they have worked toward this moment. Now they are cautious, skeptical. What if what waits above is not wilderness but the heirs of the shadows. What if the virus has not fully died out. They test, they measure, they debate.

Ava walks out through the door, curious and unafraid. She steps into a courtyard where the roots of a wild fig tree have broken through the paving. Above her is something she has only ever known from Yara's watercolors. It is blue. It moves. She reaches out toward it.

Rome is not abandoned. Rome is overgrown. St. Peter's Square is a meadow of wildflowers. The river breathes without ships. In the streets lie the traces of a civilization that did not know it had been sacrificed.

07 The Curator

They are not alone. Within hours, Samuel's antennas pick up a signal. It is encrypted, but Mei-Lin cracks it. It is a broadcast, patient, calm, kind. It says: if you have survived, come to us. We are here to help.

It is Dr. Konrad Vance. He does not know the twelve exist. But he suspects that somewhere in the ruins, people could be waking. He wants to gather them the way one gathers birds. He wants to lead them into his three bunkers, where the five hundred chosen of the Curatorium have already drafted a new order of the world.

08 Nine arks

Before Elias sealed the chamber, he had quietly warned a small circle of trusted people around the world. Fellow priests, scientists, librarians, people he had met at conferences and reached through quiet letters. He gave them no instructions. He only told them what would come, and left them the choice.

They chose. Everywhere on Earth, people acted in silence. Nine shelters were built, like the chamber in Rome, at places humanity has held in reserve against catastrophe for centuries.

Rome is the first. The second is the Sonnenberg Tunnel in Switzerland, a Cold War fortress once designed for twenty thousand people. Then Derinkuyu in Cappadocia, the underground city from the sixth century before Christ that once sheltered children and could shelter them again. Lalibela in Ethiopia, carved into its rock churches. The Padmanabhaswamy temple in Kerala with its sealed vaults. Xi'an in China, within the perimeter of the first emperor's tomb. Coober Pedy in Australia, the underground opal town. Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado, the military heart of a fallen empire. Cusco and Machu Picchu in Peru.

Elias had noted the locations on slips of paper hidden inside his private breviary, so they would survive even if he could no longer speak. Pythia reconstructs the map from them. Nine arks. Roughly one hundred people. Enough to begin a civilization again, if they can be found and brought together.

But the arithmetic does not work. The Curatorium has five hundred people and a robot army.

The twelve, now fourteen with Ava and Manu, understand that they are not the only survivors. They are, however, the only ones who chose to survive without paying Vance's price.

Ava looks at Pythia and says, "Then we will have to be better."

09 The heart of the film

This film is not a war story. It is the story of a return to the surface and of the first contact with the other arks.

Rome reaches out through Pythia's network to the Swiss ark inside the Sonnenberg Tunnel. It is the geographically closest. The Swiss decide to make the journey themselves and set out for Rome with a small delegation.

Dr. Konrad Vance has tracked them. He follows them because he hopes they will lead him to another shelter. The moment the Swiss reach the Roman ark, he strikes. His autonomous robot army is meant to wipe out anything he cannot control.

But Rome is not defenseless. Ten years inside the Chamber of Inventions have carried the twelve far beyond the Curatorium's technological standard. The robot army is beaten back. The first direct confrontation ends without human casualties.

Vance changes tactics. He speaks personally to Ava and to individual members of the group. He promises cooperation, shared leadership, safety for the other arks. He sows mistrust inside the Roman community.

In the end, Vance realizes this path leads nowhere for him either. He withdraws and begins what will carry the second and third chapters of the series: a global race for the remaining seven arks. The first film closes with Ava standing in front of the world map, aware that her small community now carries a global responsibility.

10 Characters and relationships

The heart of the film lies in four relationships.

Ava and Elias. The priest is her grandfather in everything but blood. He dies in the third act, on the surface, of a heart that had been closed for ten years. His last words are for Ava, and they are not a blessing. They are a request for forgiveness for bringing her into a world he no longer knew.

Ava and her two mothers. Yara is the warmth. Maren is the science. They argue often about how much truth to give a child. Ava grows into a person who carries both.

Ava and Manu. He is younger. He has always had an older sister who does everything first. He is the first to cry after Elias' death. He is proof that the new world can raise children who are allowed to weep.

Ava and Pythia. An AI that is not a tool. A friend older than any human Ava knows, and whom Ava sees as her first true teacher. Pythia holds the memory of all the knowledge humanity has ever gathered.

11 Antagonist

Dr. Konrad Vance is fifty-seven, elegant, educated, wrapped in soft restraint. He genuinely believes he has saved humanity. He has children in his bunker. He reads to them at night. He is no cartoon villain. He is the polite face of a system that has decided most people no longer count.

That is what makes him dangerous. The film does not need to defeat him to prove its thesis. The film needs to show that his system can fail once a more hopeful order stands against it.

12 Tone and style

Look: The film sits in soft, warm, Mediterranean colors. The Vatican chamber is no sterile bunker. A home. Terracotta, linen, brass, olive wood, lime, honey travertine. Holograms are photorealistically integrated into that home. Warm Mediterranean wabi-sabi.

The Curatorium bunkers are the opposite. Concrete, steel, LED white, arctic blue. Efficiency as aesthetic.

Camera: ARRI Alexa 65, anamorphic-inspired look, shallow depth of field, volumetric light, fine film grain. No lens flare. No neon-heavy sci-fi. Soft contrast.

Sound: cinematic sound, high dynamic range, ritualistic in character.

Voice: Ava breaks the fourth wall from time to time and speaks directly to the camera.

13 The sequels

"AVA: THE FIRST SKY" is the opening chapter of a series.

Part 2 • AVA: THE HUNDRED. Ava's family works to bring all nine arks to Rome and unite them in safety. Dr. Konrad Vance tries to prevent this. Central conflict: how do you build, out of people who spent ten years in nine different caves, a world order strong enough to stand against evil.

Part 3 • AVA: THE SHADOW. The direct confrontation with the Curatorium. The second film ends with a betrayal from within. The third begins as Ava understands that Vance is not the root of the evil. He is only its most polite form.

Part 4 • AVA: THE OPEN HAND. The resolution. Ava, now twenty, decides that the new world does not need winners. It needs a contract. She extends her hand to Vance. Not in reconciliation. In obligation.

14 Why this film, why now

We live in a moment when two stories compete for our imagination. One says: it is too late. The other says: it was never too early. AVA tells the second story.

This film believes in three things. First, that the next generation will be less afraid than we are, because they grow up with different tools. Second, that technology is not a neutral amplifier but is shaped by the values we build into it. Third, that the old religious and cultural institutions of humanity do not have to be enemies of the future. They can be its quiet keepers.

The film is aimed at a global audience that is growing up with fear of the future. It is meant to be a north star. Not the only one. But one.

15 Feasibility and production

For the trailer we used today's leading AI models: for characters and images, video production, music, sound design, and voice-over. We will apply the same approach to the feature film.

The project has been developed by me together with my partner and co-creator Conny Aitzetmueller. We are currently building a team of experts for screenwriting, editing, music, sound design, and prompting. Several outstanding colleagues have already expressed strong interest in joining.

The film can be produced entirely within an AI-assisted pipeline. We remain open to live-action elements where they add dramatic value.

16 The one sentence

If this film is to be remembered in a single line, then in this one: the first child born after a catastrophe shows the people who saved her how to live without fear.