

BEYOND APOLLO

by

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Based on the novel
by
Barry N. Malzberg

FADE IN:

EXT. DEEP SPACE

The stars shine brightly across the great expanse.

EVANS (V.O.)
I loved the Captain in my own way.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

HARRY EVANS, an astronaut (mid 30s), with earnest, unassuming features is at the console. Beside him, manning the ship, is CAPTAIN JOSEPHSON, striking, intense and slightly older.

EVANS (V.O.)
Even though I knew that he was
crazy, the poor bastard.

CUT BACK TO:

THE DARK VOID

A small chip of technology slowly comes towards us. As it grows nearer, we see it is a SPACE CAPSULE.

EVANS (V.O.)
This was only partly his fault.

The capsule races past us...hurtling towards Earth.

EVANS (V.O.)
I mean, you've got to consider the
conditions. The conditions were
intolerable.

Once it enters the Earth's atmosphere, the capsule begins to heat up considerably.

EVANS (V.O.)
This will never work.

Finally, it breaks through past the lower atmosphere.

Moments later, we see the capsule descending through the blue cloudless sky with the aid of parachutes.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOMEWHERE IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN -- DAY

The capsule touches down in the ocean. A team of rescue workers go to meet it, arriving in a Coast Guard boat (along with several motorized rafts). A helicopter hovers above.

There is a great sense of urgency as the workers pry open the capsule door.

Inside, they find a LONE, semi-conscious ASTRONAUT. We see that it is EVANS. He is lifted onto the ship's deck where he is immediately strapped to a stretcher.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHORELINE

There is an ambulance waiting. Evans is loaded onto it. Then, with sirens blaring, the ambulance races off.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEDICAL FACILITY -- SHORTLY AFTER

Now on a gurney, a disoriented Evans is hustled through the doors of a MEDICAL facility. The scene is pure mayhem.

EVANS

...where's the Captain?

He looks up in a daze, but the harried hospital employees pay no attention and continue rushing him along.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY : FIVE WEEKS LATER

EVANS, in a rumpled blue standard issue jumpsuit, sits in a large white window-less room. His skin is pale, his eyes are sunken. It looks as if he hasn't slept in days.

Finally, after what seems like an eternity, the door opens.

Evans watches as DR. RICHTER, a stern woman (40s), enters, clutching a clipboard, with TWO MALE ATTENDANTS at her side.

She sits across from Evans and reviews her notes.

After a short while, she looks up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. RICHTER

This has been a very convenient escape for you, Evans, wouldn't you say?

Evans remains still, silent.

DR. RICHTER (CONT'D)

I mean, the only reason we've allowed it to go on this far is because we thought you needed some time to adjust.

(then, forcing a smile)

Well, adjustment time is over.

She folds her legs and sits upright.

DR. RICHTER (CONT'D)

So, if you're ready to move forward -- I'd like to know, in your own words, exactly what happened.

Evans stays close-lipped. Dr. Richter grows impatient.

DR. RICHTER (CONT'D)

We don't have all day.

Still not getting a response, she tries a different tack.

DR. RICHTER (CONT'D)

Think about the others. You wouldn't want to be responsible for the death of hundreds of other crew members just because you were too selfish to speak, now would you?

This finally gets his attention. He meets her gaze head-on.

EVANS

You wouldn't send them out until I'd spoken, now would you?

The two lock eyes -- neither willing to submit.

Evans is enlivened by the exchange. Finally, Dr. Richter, resigned, lowers her pen on her pad.

In the background, Evans catches a glimpse of the two attendants whispering conspiratorially.

Evans's eyes again turn downcast.

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans is ushered through the corridor by the two attendants.

EVANS (V.O.)
Several thousand men applied for
the Program...

INT. ASTRONAUT TRAINING FACILITY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Several dozen CANDIDATES for the PROGRAM, in matching uniforms, are in the midst of a grueling TRAINING EXERCISE, CLIMBING 20 FT. HIGH ROPES under the watchful eyes of clipboard-toting LAB TECHNICIANS.

INT. EVANS' HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans sits at a small desk in his gray box-like hospital room in front of an old computer. He cracks his knuckles, stretches his neck, then places his hands on the keyboard.

There are scattered pieces of paper with word games on them (anagrams, cryptograms etc.) at his side.

EVANS (V.O.)
And only a few hundred were
accepted.

INT. ASTRONAUT TRAINING FACILITY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The candidates, covered from head-to-toe in wires, run on TREADMILLS while nearby TECHNICIANS take notes.

EVANS (V.O.)
Of these hundreds, only twenty
survived screening for the Venus
flight...

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A training exercise in the brutally hot sun.

A GROUP of CANDIDATES, in full ASTRONAUT GEAR, pull SLEDS loaded with WEIGHTS on them, across the desert terrain.

One of the candidates loses consciousness and falls to the ground. He is quickly attended to and carried off by lab workers as the other candidates continue.

EVANS (V.O.)
...and of these twenty, two were
chosen.

INT. EVENING NEWS PROGRAM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A FEMALE NEWS ANCHOR speaks from behind a desk. The photos of EVANS and CAPTAIN JOSEPHSON appear on screen behind her.

NEWS ANCHOR

Astronauts Jack Josephson and Harry Evans have been selected to embark on a four month flight to Venus, the first ever of its kind. This will also be the first mission attempted since the tragic events surrounding the Mars mission, which happened a little more than three year ago.

INT. THE PLANET VENUS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Suspended against the stars. The camera tracks the topography of the planet. We soon realize that we're actually looking at a replica. And we are in a PLANETARIUM.

EVANS (V.O.)

For someone who always wanted to travel in space -- ever since he was a child...

We see Evans as a YOUNG BOY (7) holding the hand of his UNCLE GEORGE (50s), husky, with an ever-present cigarette, who acts as tour guide.

EVANS (V.O.)

...it was a dream come true.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE -- MONTHS BEFORE THE FLIGHT (FLASHBACK)

THE HEAD of the SPACE PROGRAM stands at a PODIUM and introduces the CAPTAIN and EVANS to a crowd of dignitaries, reporters and VIPs.

EVANS (V.O.)

According to the selection process, I am the second most qualified man in the country to set foot on Venus for the first time.

Evans and the Captain, beaming proudly, wave to the crowd as flashbulbs pop all around them.

MOMENTS LATER

The Q & A session has begun. A British Reporter stands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRITISH REPORTER

With 200 mile winds, hydrochloric acids, sulfuric acids...a surface so hot it almost never rains, Venus is one of the most extreme planets in the solar system --

CAPTAIN

Easy there, friend, you almost make it sound like we're going to Hell.

This evokes nervous chuckles from the crowd. Cutting through them, the Reporter turns to Evans first.

BRITISH REPORTER

Can you tell me, just what is your mission objective?

Not used to the spotlight, Evans is a bit reticent as he steps up to the mike.

EVANS

Our mission objective is to collect rocks, samples...and hopefully what we find can somehow help make us understand things a little better here on Earth.

This is followed by a small smattering of applause.

BRITISH REPORTER

And, Captain, how about you?

CAPTAIN

(supremely confident)

My mission objective is to get to Venus and back all in one piece.

(then)

Cause, well, there'll be plenty of time to *barbecue* when we get home.

He smiles widely, cueing echoes of laughter from the crowd.

INT. EVANS' HOSPITAL ROOM -- RESUMING (PRESENT)

Evans continues to peck away at the computer keyboard.

EVANS (V.O.)

It's an honor to be deemed so highly qualified

He leans back and reads to himself what he has just typed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS (V.O.)
even though, in the Captain's
 case, such a serious mistake was
 obviously made.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We are in the main cabin. An emotionally distraught CAPTAIN JOSEPHSON rocks in his seat and anxiously runs his hand through his hair.

Seated at the console, EVANS turns to the Captain.

EVANS
 Look, Captain. You're just having
 an anxiety attack. I'm telling
 you, take some clonazepam. It's in
 the medicine cabinet. You'll feel
 much better.

The Captain faces him with a mad look in his eyes.

CAPTAIN
 Do you have any idea what we've
 gotten ourselves into? Do you?

Evans, used to these episodes by now, is nevertheless exasperated. Instead of fighting Josephson, however, he decides to indulge him.

EVANS
 No. What have we gotten ourselves
 into?

CAPTAIN
 Well, the price we're going to pay
 for all of this, *it's not worth it*.
 You'll see. It's all lies....
 everything they've told us. And if
 we don't do something about it
 immediately, if we don't do _ --
 the lies are just going to keep on
 coming.

EVANS
 I hear you. And I'd like to know
 more about it. But maybe you can
 just wait...
 (re: to his clipboard)
 ...until after I've charted these
 course degrees?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Captain explodes.

CAPTAIN

Fuck the course degrees! You think we have any control of what goes on up here? Come on! The only reason they want us to think we do is so we don't go bat-shit crazy!

EVANS

(under his breath)
Well, that obviously isn't working.
(then, to the Captain)
Look, in twenty minutes we've got another T.V. broadcast.

CAPTAIN

You can fuck that, too! In fact, the minute those cameras come on, I'm going to whip my dick out and take a piss all over 'em.

EVANS

You really ought to consider taking some of those pills.

He notices tears are now rolling down the Captain's cheeks. Evans takes a deep breath.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Look, I know what you're going through is difficult but you are the commander of this ship and you have responsibilities.

The Captain continues to weep. Evans gets up from his seat and exits the cabin, momentarily.

He returns with FIVE TABLETS and a GLASS OF WATER.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Here. Trust me.

The Captain pauses briefly, then grabs the pills and downs them with the water.

They take effect almost immediately. The Captain nods.

CAPTAIN

You're right, Evans. I feel better already.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVANS

Well, I'm glad to hear it.
 (returns to his seat)
 Look, if there's anything else --

CAPTAIN

(looking up, smiling)
 No, I think I've got a handle on
 it. Just a passing spell. Yeah,
 I've got it all under control now.

Evans nods, gives the Captain a reassuring pat on the shoulder. Then returns to the coordinates on the screen in front of him, more concerned than he's willing to let on.

INSERT - HELEN, EVANS'S WIFE - DUSK (FLASHBACK)

She is naked, draped in both shadow and light. Standing by a window in their home, she is the picture of sensual beauty. Her long flowing hair covers her perfectly round breasts.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

HELEN (27), slim, shapely, with piercing brown eyes, sits across from EVANS. The enormous strain of the last several weeks shows on her face.

And Evans, unlike the clean-cut healthy looking astronaut before the flight, now is worn-looking with blood-shot eyes and a five o'clock shadow.

The two remain in silence for a few beats.

HELEN

So, are you going to tell them?

EVANS

Tell them...what?

HELEN

...what you know, Harry.

A long beat of silence.

EVANS

Is *that* why you're here?

HELEN

You know that's not why I'm here.
 (then)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN (CONT'D)

Look, all I'm saying is it would make life easier, that's all. You know they're going to find out one way or the other eventually.

EVANS

Oh, you think?

(then)

Who's side are you on anyway?

HELEN

Please, Harry. You're not being fair.

EVANS

Are you sleeping with one of them?

Is that it?

Realizing it's no use, she gathers her things and gets up. Before she leaves, she turns to him, her voice trembling with emotion.

HELEN

Your doctors are talking about shock therapy. And a lot of other things that sound much worse...

EVANS

Which one is it? The blonde, looks like he works out or the tall one...with the goatee?

Helen heads to the door, then stops again, composing herself.

HELEN

Fine, it's okay if you don't want to tell them. You have your reasons. But what about me? Can you at least tell your wife?

Evans stares at her for a beat, then looks down through troubled eyes.

EVANS

I'd like to do that. Believe me, I would. But you see, ever since the flight, I can't remember things like I used to. It's like I've got some sort of amnesia.

He starts to WEEP. She puts a comforting hand on his shoulder. He turns and stares at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVANS (CONT'D)
 (sincere)
 I can't even say for sure if I know
 who you are.

Seeing the pained expression on her face, he reaches out,
 touching her cheek, tenderly, somberly.

EVANS (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry...

He tries to find the right words, but can't.

EVANS (CONT'D)
 ...I really am.

Upset, Helen turns and goes to open the door. When it
 doesn't open immediately, Evan goes to assist her.

EVANS (CONT'D)
 Here, let me --

HELEN
 No, it's okay.

Finally getting the door open, she steps into the hallway.
 Outside the door, Evans sees a small group of INSTITUTIONAL
 STAFF MEMBERS clustered nearby. They look at him, warily.

EVANS
 (indignant)
 What is wrong with you people?

The staff members avert their eyes.

EVANS (CONT'D)
 You think I'm some kind of a rat in
 a cage?

Evans grabs one of the Staff Members by the front of his lab
 coat and pulls him close.

EVANS (CONT'D)
 I've been to Venus and back,
 remember?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Evans is at his desk. In a trance-like state.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS
(to himself)
I've been to Venus and back.

The desk lamp casts a white glow upon him.

Looking down, he sees pages and pages of ANAGRAMS in front of him. NEVU, VUSEN, SENVU, SUVEN, UVES, VESUN, SNEVU, NEVU, VUSEN, SENVU, SUVEN, UNES, VESUN, SNEVU...

He readies his pen - about to add another to the list.

CUT TO:

INT. CENTRIFUGE ROOM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

It's SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE the Venus flight.

The centrifuge room is housed in a cavernous warehouse-like structure. The structure is dark, except for the CENTRIFUGE, which is attached to a MASSIVE MECHANICAL ARM.

EVANS is seated in the CENTRIFUGE. TWO TECHS strap him in.

After the last adjustments are made, the techs exit.

The signal to begin is given.

The centrifuge begins to spin, 1 G, 2G's. Reaching 5 G's in no time. The expression on Evans' face remains unchanged.

Now, it really starts to whip around. Finally, up to 8 G's.

As we move in, we see Evans' face start to shake and warp. Now, the centrifuge is up to 10 G's.

It's really MOVING.

Evans finally begins to react to the intense pressure. His face twists in an almost comical manner. He cries out, helplessly.

Eventually, the force becomes so great that Evans starts to "gray out". 11, 12 g's. And finally, despite his best efforts to fight it, Evans loses consciousness completely.

A SHORT WHILE LATER

When Evans comes to, he sees THREE TECHS hovering over him along with CROCKETT, the HEAD ENGINEER, a grizzled, white haired man in his seventies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The techs unstrap Evans, who's in a confused state. Face flushed. Hair soaked with perspiration.

He turns to Crockett with fluttering eyes and slurred speech.

EVANS

Wh-where's the Captain?

CROCKETT

Huh?

EVANS

The Captain?

CROCKETT

He's not scheduled for another day or so.

Evans takes a woozy step forward and almost falls. He grabs hold of the older man for support.

EVANS

You'll do the same to him?

CROCKETT

We do this to everybody.

Evans catches sight of the Techs standing off to the side, whispering to one another, smirking and gesturing to him.

Evans smells something foul. Passing by a mirror, he sees that he's THROWN UP all over the front of his suit.

The Techs try to hold themselves back from laughing. Evans looks over at them and bristles.

EVANS

You think this is a joke?!

The Techs immediately clam up.

EVANS (CONT'D)

We'll see how funny it is when I write this all up and file a report.

The Techs' smiles quickly vanish. Trying to ease the tension, CROCKETT places his hand on Evans' shoulder.

CROCKETT

Relax, it's all part of the preparation. The important thing is you went to 12 G's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Evans is mildly assuaged.

EVANS

And that's...good?

CROCKETT

Are you kidding? It's better than good. Even Neil Armstrong bowed out before he got to ten.

Evans glances one last time at the Techs, then turns and hobbles off. As he does, he hears muffled snorting and snickering behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS'S HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

The room is dark. The sheets on his bed are tangled up, but Evans is not there.

A few feet away, we SEE that EVANS sits at his computer. He looks at the words on the screen.

They read: **I DID IT.**

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS (FLASHBACK)

Evans is alone in the main cabin. The machines whir and hum around him.

We see everything from his POV.

He looks down at his HANDS, then slowly gets up from his seat and goes to the rear of the ship.

He approaches the SLEEPING QUARTERS. Stepping inside, he sees the CAPTAIN is asleep.

Evans moves forward and places his hands around the Captain's neck, then squeezes tight.

The Captain's eyes snap open. He tries to resist, but it's no use. Evans overpowers him and continues to squeeze, choking the life right out of him.

OUTSIDE THE SLEEPING QUARTERS

Evans rolls the Captain's limp form into the refuse compartment, then shuts the door and ejects him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From space, we watch as the body of the Captain floats away.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. EVANS' HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

EVANS signs HIS CONFESSION, then folds the paper into quarters and slips it underneath the door.

He pulls up a chair nearby and waits.

SEVERAL MINUTES PASS

Evans falls asleep.

HOURS PASS

Evans is jolted awake by a hand on his shoulder. He looks up, still groggy. It's THE CAPTAIN, in his hospital room, and he's got a smile a mile wide.

CAPTAIN

Thanks for covering for me, buddy.
But you don't have to do it
anymore. I'm going to tell them
the truth.

The Captain kneels down and snatches the Confession Letter from the crack beneath the door.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

(re: letter)

You won't be needing this.

Evans watches as The Captain goes over to the DISPOSAL UNIT and drops the letter inside.

The PAPER explodes into hundreds of tiny pieces, which flutter into the dark void.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- MORNING (PRESENT)

Evans is awakened from his DREAM by the SOUND of A FLOOR WAXER outside his door. He's in the same chair.

Remembering the CONFESSION he left under the door, he crouches down and searches for it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's exactly where he left it. Fishing it out with a pencil, he re-reads it -- then rips it up into several pieces and throws it in the waste paper basket.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRIFUGE ROOM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE the flight.

It's the same set-up as before inside the warehouse-like room. CROCKETT, the elderly engineer, is there along with the THREE TECHS.

Instead, this time, the CAPTAIN is now in the Centrifuge Seat.

Unbeknownst to everyone, EVANS stands in the shadows a few yards away, watching.

EVANS' P.O.V.

He sees the Captain on the overhead monitor.

G's, then 8 G's, 9, 10, 11, 12...and even more.

No matter how much they throw at him, the Captain's expression remains unchanged. If anything, he appears to be enjoying himself.

It's truly an impressive display. No passing out, no throwing up. Barely a sound.

Evans can hear the cheers of the Techs in the background as they too watch on with amazement.

Fighting back feelings of envy and shame, Evans retreats back into the darkness.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans writes in a pad on his bed. He hears footsteps outside. The doorknob turns. He quickly hides the pad under his mattress.

TWO ORDERLIES (30s) enter the room. They are followed by TWO OLDER MEN in FULL DRESS UNIFORMS adorned with MEDALS.

ORDERLY #1

Let's go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Evans is taken aback.

EVANS
Go where?

ORDERLY #2
You'll see when we get there.

EVANS
No, I want to know now.

One of the UNIFORMED MEN intervenes.

UNIFORMED MAN #1
We're going to try out a brand new
treatment. The early trials of
which have proven very effective.

Evans grips the Uniformed Man's arm.

EVANS
(real panic in his voice)
Is it shock? Is that what you're
going to do to me?

The Uniformed Man can't help but smile.

UNIFORMED MAN #1
Hardly...the machine we're using is
state of the art. It's designed to
help jog your memory. So you can
finally get to the bottom of what
went on on that flight of yours...

EVANS
(studying his face)
What are the side effects?

UNIFORMED MAN #1
(smiles assuredly)
There aren't any.

EVANS
No side effects?

UNIFORMED MAN #1
That's the beauty of it. It's
completely, one hundred percent
risk-free. And we've got the
research to prove it.

The Uniformed Man drops a THICK DOSSIER onto Evans' lap.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Evans looks down at it, then stares into the Uniformed Man's persuasive eyes.

Eventually, he loosens his hold on the man's arm.

EVANS

O-okay...but only because I'm as anxious to get this over with as you are.

UNIFORMED MAN #1

As we all are.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MACHINE ROOM -- A SHORT WHILE LATER (PRESENT)

EVANS sits in a chair, not unlike one you'd see in a dentist's office. He wears a LARGE HELMET, which dwarfs his head. A mass of wires sprout forth from it.

In a room directly above, he's being observed by a TEAM of DOCTORS and MEDICAL PERSONNEL, behind a two way mirror.

The lights in the machine room are dim. THE VOICE OF THE MACHINE questions Evans in an authoritative fashion.

THE MACHINE

Where is the Captain?

EVANS

I don't know.

THE MACHINE

Why did you kill him?

Evans pauses a long beat, unsure how to answer.

THE MACHINE (CONT'D)

Why did you kill him?

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

EVAN looks down at his hands.

They are clasped around the neck of the CAPTAIN, who is sprawled, lifelessly on the floor before him.

Oddly enough, when Evans turns around, he sees THE CAPTAIN, looking very much alive, quietly eating his dinner at the console behind him, completely oblivious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then looking back at his hands, Evans is shocked to see that the Captain is no longer there.

EVANS (O.S.)
 (to the Machine)
 I'm not sure if I did. Or I
 didn't. I don't know.

INT. THE MACHINE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

Evans is visibly shaken. The REALISM of the IMAGES presented to him by the MACHINE is incredibly vivid.

THE MACHINE
 How did the ship turn around?

EVANS
 I can't...I wish I had an answer
 for you.

THE MACHINE
 How did you get home in a two-man
 capsule?

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

EVANS is now at the CONTROLS of the SHIP. The lone seat next to him is empty. He guides the ship back to Earth.

Then, in an instant, the CAPTAIN miraculously appears out of nowhere and is seated beside him.

EVANS (O.S.)
 (to the Machine)
 I'm sorry, I'm not being much help.

INT. THE MACHINE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS (PRESENT)

We are back in the Machine Room.

When Evans tries to bring his hand up to his head, his arm is snapped back down by restraints. He calls out --

EVANS
 Are these *really* necessary?

THE MACHINE
 Answer the question.

EVANS
 I'm *trying to*. But it's just...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He tries to lift his arm again, but it's brought down again with a SNAP.

EVANS (CONT'D)
I can't...this isn't working. I
can't do this. I can't do this
anymore.

In the room above, the DOCTORS and other MEDICAL personnel watch on. A palpable sense of disappointment fills the air.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- SHORTLY AFTER (PRESENT)

A mentally exhausted EVANS, flanked by orderlies and medical personnel, is escorted back down the corridor.

EVANS
(apologetic)
I'm trying to remember. I really
am.

The orderlies silently deposit him inside his room and depart. Evans looks dejected and withdrawn as he sits down on the edge of his bed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EVANS' HOME/BEDROOM -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A FEW WEEKS before the VENUS FLIGHT.

EVANS and HELEN lie in bed, naked, facing each other.

HELEN
I want you to leave the program.
I've given this a lot of thought.
And I'm convinced it's for the
best.
(exhales, then)
If you don't, I will.

EVANS
(flippant)
Great. Do you want to tell public
relations about this or should I?

Evans turns onto his back, stares at the ceiling.

HELEN
This isn't about public relations.
This is about you and me.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELEN (CONT'D)

Harry, there's a very real chance
that you won't come back again.
And I can't go on knowing that.

For a long time, there is silence between them.

EVANS

We're extremely well-prepared.
They've taken every precaution
imaginable.

HELEN

That's what they said about Mars.

EVANS

Mars was a freak occurrence. You
know they wouldn't let that happen
again.

HELEN

Why wouldn't they? If they could
get away with it.

EVANS

(turns back to her)
You know how much this means to me.
I've dedicated my whole *life* to
this.

(then)

And besides, we're not going to
Mars, we're going to Venus.

HELEN

It makes no difference. It's all
the same to me.

Her voice is rife with vulnerability. Softening, Evans
reaches out, feels her trembling. He pulls her close.

HELEN (CONT'D)

If you don't get out now, I will.

He slowly gets on top of her. Spreading her legs, he slips
inside her.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Do you hear me?

EVANS

Yes...I hear you.

They make love. From the start, he's clearly more engrossed
in it than she is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Eventually, he comes. After which he collapses on top of her. Detached, she stares at the ceiling.

HELEN

Now, Harry. I mean it.

He rolls off of her, onto his back, Feeling a sense of powerlessness, unable to connect, he chooses to let her be.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The Captain restlessly fidgets with his food. The boredom and confinement of the flight are simply too much to bear. He turns to Evans, who is writing in the ship's log.

CAPTAIN

Let's play a game.

EVANS

Huh?

CAPTAIN

What else are we supposed to do? Everything's automated. We don't even have control of the ship for chrissakes.

(off Evans' look)

Look, if I don't do something soon, I'm going to lose my fucking mind.

EVANS

You do know everything we say is being taped for playback later.

CAPTAIN

You think anybody really gives a shit what I have to say? Seriously. Think about it. Just as long as we don't go around bugging each other, we can do or say anything the fuck we please.

Unfazed by the Captain's words, Evans nods, playing along, too tired to put up a fight.

EVANS

So what's the game?

CAPTAIN

Pull up a chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Evans begrudgingly does so.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Okay, so here's what I propose.

(then)

We'll both ask a question which the other man has to answer truthfully. No free passes. Now, the game continues until each of us answers the questions in a satisfactory manner or refuses to answer, in which case the person who asked the question will be the winner. Did I leave anything out? Oh yeah, and the answer has to be in fifty words or less. No ifs, ands or buts.

EVANS

Sounds like you've given this some thought.

CAPTAIN

I can only stare at these god-damn instruments so long.

(then)

So, what do you say? Do you want to play or not?

Evans pauses. How long can he humor him for?

EVANS

I don't know.

CAPTAIN

Son of a bitch! Okay, let me put it to you this way then, if you don't play, I can and will make your life a living hell. Don't make me pull rank on you.

Evans looks out at the porthole at the vastness of space, where they are seemingly floating endlessly.

EVANS

Aren't you concerned at all about the mission?

CAPTAIN

What mission? I mean, how can you be sure we're really on one? Who's to say it's not another one of their simulations?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Evans turns to the Captain, finally starting to get fed up.

EVANS

You can think what you want, but the fact of the matter is, we don't have a choice. We believe it to be a mission, so it is one.

CAPTAIN

Relax, Evans. I'm just yanking your chain.

(then)

Then again I'd be lying if I said the thought hadn't crossed my mind.

He winks.

EVANS

You really don't seem to care that they're listening to every single word you say?

CAPTAIN

When are you going to get over that? They don't give a steaming pile of shit what we say.

(under his breath)

My God, this is the exact sort of thing I warned them about.

EVANS

What's that supposed to mean?

CAPTAIN

You really want to know? I'll tell you. What's the point in holding it back now. See, when I first met you, I did everything humanly possible to have you replaced. Truth be told, I never did like you. And now, here we are. I'm stuck with you. Go figure, right?

Evans's snaps back, if only to get him to shut up.

EVANS

All right, I'll play your stupid fucking game.

CAPTAIN

I knew you'd come around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVANS

Ask me the question.

CAPTAIN

Huh?

EVANS

I said, "Ask me the god damn question".

CAPTAIN

Okay.

EVANS

Today.

CAPTAIN

Why do you think we're on our way to Venus?

EVANS

Huh?

CAPTAIN

You heard me.

(then)

Why do you think we're on our way to Venus?

Evans takes a beat or two to gather his thoughts.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

It ain't exactly brain surgery.

EVANS

Give me a second.

Another beat.

CAPTAIN

Tick tock, tick tock.

Evans chooses his words carefully.

EVANS

The reason we're going to Venus is because of global warming. Venus is roughly the same size and mass as Earth. But its atmosphere is almost all carbon dioxide. If we can find out how it got so hot, we're hoping it can help us predict our own future.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CAPTAIN

You almost went over fifty words.

EVANS

Yeah, but I didn't.

CAPTAIN

Well, it doesn't really matter, because you're wrong anyway. You didn't tell the truth, Evans. You know what the penalty is for not telling the truth?

EVANS

(deflated)

What?

CAPTAIN

You have to keep on answering until you get it right...or until I decide that you've had enough.

EVANS

You decide?

CAPTAIN

I'm the Captain of this ship.

EVANS

Yeah, but you didn't tell me I was going to have to keep on answering.

CAPTAIN

I don't have to tell you *anything*. My ship. My rules. You think I'm the crazy one? Well, I got news for you. Looks to me like you're the one who's starting to show some cracks. Now, let's go, try again.

All of a sudden, the ship is hit with an INTENSE BLAST from outside. The craft is rocked VIOLENTLY. Both men are KNOCKED off their feet. Transmission equipment goes flying. Pots and pans are flung about. The noise is deafening.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

What the hell is going on?!

Evans and the Captain grip onto whatever they can to secure themselves. After several more moments of bedlam, the shaking finally ceases.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

As Evans picks himself up, he starts to hear strange WHISPERING VOICES in his HEAD. He looks around to try to find out where the voices are coming from, but sees nothing.

The voices slowly become clearer and more pronounced, though still unintelligible.

EVANS

Do you hear....voices?

CAPTAIN

I wonder where they're coming from.

The VOICES in Evans' head grow louder. Finally, one voice cuts through the others:

VOICE (O.S.)

STAY AWAY.

The two men turn to each other, having both heard it. Realizing that they're not alone, an incredibly unsettling feeling sets in.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' FIRST CAR -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

It's SIX YEARS EARLIER.

Evans sits with Helen in the backseat of the automobile on a bluff overlooking the lights below. It's the town's unofficial "Make-Out Point".

Helen turns away from him. Evans places a comforting hand on her shoulder.

EVANS

I'm sure we can work it out. The program's phasing down as it is.

HELEN

You're really dedicated to *the program*, aren't you?

His hand reaches down and slides over her breast. She doesn't resist.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I mean, it's a big part of who you are.

EVANS

It's my work. It's not my life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He begins to fondle her over her sweater.

EVANS (CONT'D)
My life's about a lot of things.
(then)
I'd like it to be about you.

HELEN
I don't know. I don't think I
could handle this type of
lifestyle.

EVANS
Why not?

HELEN
There's so much uncertainty...I'm
not really cut out for that sort of
thing.
(then)
You wouldn't think of leaving it
behind, would you?

Knowing that this is not even a remote possibility, Evans
chooses to let the question go unanswered.

HELEN (CONT'D)
I'm not saying I will or won't
marry you if you don't get out.
I'm just saying I know I wouldn't
be happy.

EVANS
I could get out...eventually.

HELEN
I wouldn't force you to leave, but
I know I'd probably end up making
your life miserable; I just know
that's the way it would turn out.

He reaches her hands underneath her sweater. She gasps.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Don't go too far, Harry. I don't
want to get too excited.

EVANS
(kissing her neck)
I won't excite you.
(then)
Promise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He slowly slips his hand down the front of her skirt, working his hand into her underwear.

He slides his finger inside her. She tenses, closes her eyes and moans lightly. He, too, becomes increasingly aroused.

HELEN

If we do get married, there'll only be problems.

Her breathing becomes quicker and more intense.

HELEN (CONT'D)

But if you want to, I'll do it.
I'll do it, Harry.

So excited by the whole situation, Evans has an orgasm right then and there. And buries his face into her shoulder.

A lone SPOTLIGHT from the nearby ASTRONAUT TRAINING FACILITY sweeps past them and cuts through the grass -- showing off the hard shadows of the town that lies below.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A FEW DAYS after the DISTURBANCE.

Evans gazes out at a bed of stars, deep in thought.

The ship's still in a state of disarray. Turning away from the porthole, he faces the Captain.

EVANS

Because man must explore. Venus is our California, our Spain, our moon. If we don't expand, the human race as we know it will cease to exist.

The Captain looks at him with a slight grin. He imitates the sound of a GAME SHOW BUZZER.

CAPTAIN

Wrong again. But keep trying. We have a week before the Venus orbit; hopefully you'll get it by then.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans sits across from DR. CLAUDE FORREST (50s), head doctor of medicine and clinical neurology at the Medical Center. A gruff, bear of a man, he anxiously taps the eraser end of a pencil on the desk.

DR. FORREST

Everybody around here is being put under quite a bit of strain because of you.

EVANS

(lowering his eyes)

I know.

DR. FORREST

If I didn't understand this syndrome so well, I'd say you were faking it.

EVANS

But I'm not.

DR. FORREST

Hundreds of people, this entire facility, has been mobilized...not to mention all the money that's being spent --

Evans looks back up, snapping back.

EVANS

Look, I'm trying my best. I want this to be over as soon as you do.

DR. FORREST

Then why don't we start again. At the beginning. Tell me, what happened?

EVANS

On the ship?

DR. FORREST

Yes!

(then)

You know, Evans, there's going to come to a point where we're going to have to take action, drastic action.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

I don't appreciate being threatened.

DR. FORREST

It's not a threat. I just want you to know there are other options --

EVANS

Okay, okay...

DR. FORREST

I'm ready when you are.

Evans takes a deep breath and exhales.

EVANS

I seem to recall the Captain and I having an argument just as we were settling into orbit.

Dr. Forrest eyes Evans skeptically, then grabs his clipboard and begins to write.

DR. FORREST

Go on.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Evans is at the console, trying to map coordinates. The Captain paces nearby in a manic state.

CAPTAIN

Fuck the control base. They're just a bunch of pimps. For the politicians, those whores.

Evans looks up from his work.

EVANS

Do you realize this happens every time we're about to have one of these broadcasts?

CAPTAIN

So, what are you saying, I'm wrong?

EVANS

No, I'm just saying: I get your point. *I get it.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

(sarcastic)

Oh, I'm sorry you're tired of hearing the truth.

(then)

You know what I'm tired of hearing? *I'm tired of hearing about the god-damn broadcasts.* I mean, do you honestly think anyone down there gives a flying fuck about us?

EVANS

Yes. I do. I think there are plenty of people down there who "give a flying fuck" about us.

CAPTAIN

Boy, you sure did drink the Kool-Aid. Slurped it down like a good little boy, didn't you?

Evans shakes his head and turns back to the console.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Don't you ever turn away from me when I'm talking to you.

EVANS

Captain, I'm just trying to get some work done. Maybe you ought to take another one of your pills.

CAPTAIN

And don't condescend to me either! You officious little prick. I've had just about all I can take of you.

EVANS

(slowly turning his head)

You've had all you can take of me?

CAPTAIN

You heard what I said!

EVANS

I don't even know how to respond to that.

CAPTAIN

God, I hate you. Deep, intense hatred. From the first day I met you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Evans again turns away from the Captain. He sighs --

EVANS

I'm sorry you feel that way. But there's not much we can do about it now.

CAPTAIN

(seethes, to himself)
Yeah, we'll see about that.

EVANS

I really wish you'd take those pills. And you can get me one, too, while you're at it.

The Captain fumes and pauses several beats. Finally he turns around in a huff and storms off.

SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Evans continues working on his chart. He hears the Captain walk in behind him.

EVANS

Feeling better?

CAPTAIN

Evans....

EVANS

Just a sec --

CAPTAIN

I'm sick of talking to the back of your head. Why don't you turn the fuck around?

Evans rolls his eyes. Prepared for more of the same, he lowers his pen and pivots in his seat.

The Captain, looking more crazed than ever, clutches a VIAL OF CLEAR LIQUID in his hand.

EVANS

What is that?

CAPTAIN

Acid. I snuck it on board. You know, just in case.

EVANS

Just in case?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

What, are you going to repeat everything I say?

EVANS

What are you planning to do with it?

CAPTAIN

Oh, I don't know, maybe throw it in your fucking face. How's that for starters?

Evans surreptitiously reaches into the DRAWER next to him. And fishes for a WRENCH, sliding it into his sleeve.

EVANS

You didn't take the pills, did you?

CAPTAIN

(mocking him)

"You didn't take the pills, did you?"

Evans rises to his feet.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Where do you think you're going?

EVANS

I'm going to get them for you.

Evans starts to head to the rear. The Captain stops him, shoving him with his hand. The WRENCH slips out of Evans' sleeve and falls to the floor.

CAPTAIN

(re: the wrench)

Is that yours?

EVANS

(goes to retrieve it)

Look, Captain --

CAPTAIN

You were going to hit me with it when I wasn't looking, weren't you?

Evans ignores him.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

There you go, the old silent treatment again.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

(then)

Well, fuck it. That's the last time.

The Captain rears back about to throw the ACID on Evans.

Scooping up the wrench, Evans swings at the Captain, connecting with the side of his head.

Hit hard, the Captain tosses the vial wildly in the air. It lands on the floor and shatters. Grabbing his temple, which has been CAVED IN, the Captain drops to his knees, then collapses face first.

Evans stands over the Captain's lifeless body. The ship is deathly silent except for the whirring of the machines.

As the reality of the situation sets in, his anxiety grows.

EVANS

Oh God...Oh God...Oh God.

Unsure what to do, Evans' mind races. Finally, taking the Captain by the feet, he drags him to rear of the ship.

Evans places the Captain's body in the garbage disposal unit, closes the door and presses "Eject".

EVANS (V.O.)

And I ejected his body. Directly into the sun.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. FORREST'S OFFICE -- RESUMING (PRESENT)

EVANS is emotionally spent -- having just finished telling all this to the Doctor.

EVANS

I wouldn't have done it if I didn't feel like my life was in immediate danger.

Dr. Forrest carefully places down his pencil, breathes in deeply and gazes off into the distance. After a few beats, he turns back to Evans, who anxiously awaits his validation.

DR. FORREST

It feels like we're going around in circles. I mean, I understand the situation from a professional point of view, but...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

(disappointed, but
determined)

Okay, okay. So that wasn't exactly
the way it happened. What was I
thinking, right? I mean, you've
seen the tapes. There were cameras
all over the place.

DR. FORREST

The cameras don't tell us
everything.

EVANS

I understand.

DR. FORREST

Tell us what happened -- in your
own words.

EVANS

Yes, yes, of course.

DR. FORREST

Well?

Evans tries to gather his thoughts. Finally, he looks at
Forrest and nods, ready to go on.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS/SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Evans is abruptly awakened from a deep sleep. Sitting
upright, he is surprised to see the Captain on the other side
of the room, watching him, smiling calmly.

EVANS

What -- what are you doing?

CAPTAIN

Just sitting here.

EVANS

How long have you been *just*
sitting... there?

CAPTAIN

Oh, I don't know. A little more
than an hour. Maybe more.
Difficult to say.

Evans is confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

Is there something you need me for?

CAPTAIN

Not that I can think of...no.

EVANS

What about the ship?

CAPTAIN

What about the ship?

EVANS

Well, I just think...it's a little odd, that's all.

The Captain considers this, then shrugs it off.

CAPTAIN

Look, Evans, we're thirty million miles from Earth, I can pretty much tell you anything I want, right?

EVANS

I suppose. Why? Something on your mind?

CAPTAIN

Yeah, you can say that.

EVANS

What is it?

CAPTAIN

Promise you won't...get upset?

Evans thinks to himself "what is it now?", but doesn't say it, just shakes his head. The Captain gets to his feet.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I want you to know I've never told this to another living soul. Not to a shrink. Not to my wife. Not even to my closest friend.

Evans braces himself.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I hope you'll bear with me, because...this isn't easy.

EVANS

I'm listening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN

See, ever since I was a young man,
I've had these *feelings*.

EVANS

Uh-huh.

CAPTAIN

Feelings towards... other men.

Evans nods, trying to come off neutral.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

They've always been in the back of
my head. Tucked away. Way back
there. I've never acted upon
them....ever.

He turns to Evans with a quivering voice.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I don't know if it's the radiation
or the pressure I'm under from this
flight...I don't know what it
is...all I know is these feelings
are stronger than ever.

The Captain sidles up next to Evans on the bed. Evans tenses up. Placing a hand on Evans' leg, the Captain slowly moves it up and down. Evans doesn't know quite how to react.

At that moment, the SHIP is HIT with a POWERFULLY INTENSE BLAST of some kind.

The Captain is tossed off the bed and out of the ROOM. Evans is propelled onto the floor with a CRUNCH. Alarms sound. Lights flash.

The ship ROCKS BACK AND FORTH WILDLY. Struggling to get a foothold, Evans, fighting back spasms of pain, manages to lift himself up and stumble out into the hall.

EVANS

Captain!

But there's no sign of him. The ship continues to LURCH ABOUT VIOLENTLY.

Knocked off balance, Evans grabs holds of some piping and looks to the other end where he finally sees the CAPTAIN, who has been thrust into the EVACUATION CAPSULE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Evans' eyes widen. The CAPSULE fills with human waste and is about to be discharged.

The door housing the capsule slowly eases shut. Evans lunges for it. But when he gets there, it's too late.

The door closes. And despite Evans' best, frantic efforts to open it manually, the capsule ejects with the Captain inside.

Now, all Evans can do is watch, listlessly, as the Captain and the capsule are hurled into space...and out of reach.

EVANS (V.O.)

I was shocked to say the least.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. FORREST'S OFFICE -- RESUMING (PRESENT)

Evans studies Dr. Forrest's face for any sign of recognition.

EVANS

You can understand why I'd keep this from you...and your staff. I mean, it's all pretty embarrassing stuff.

(then)

But you see...

Evans looks over both his shoulders suspiciously, then leans in and lowers his voice.

EVANS (CONT'D)

...I wasn't any different from the Captain. I also had...you know, *impulses*.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We're BACK on the SHIP. In the SLEEPING QUARTERS.

Now, it's the Captain who is asleep in his pod. And it's EVANS who stands over him, gazing admiringly.

He slowly touches his hand down on the Captain's chest, careful not to wake him. Then ever so slightly works his way down towards the Captain's mid-section.

The Captain lets out a COUGH and JOSTLES in his sleep. Alarmed, Evans freezes...stops moving his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

However, once the Captain settles, Evans continues his path downward.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. FORREST'S OFFICE -- RESUMING (PRESENT)

Without saying a word, Forrest abruptly caps his pen and shoves his clipboard onto the table.

DR. FORREST

This is all becoming a big waste of time.

EVANS

(cowering)

I'm sorry.

(then)

Look, maybe this has something to do with the "syndrome" you were talking about.

DR. FORREST

No, this has nothing to do with any syndrome.

Going to where Evans sits, he slaps an arm around him, tugs him in close and whispers through clenched-teeth in his ear.

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

Listen to me and listen to me good. If you don't cooperate, we're going to take measures that will turn your brain into Jello. I'm sorry it's come to this.

(then)

So ask yourself, do you want to spend the rest of your life living in a tube? Sucking food through a straw?

Evans, unnerved, shakes his head and swallows his words.

EVANS

...no.

DR. FORREST

What was that?

EVANS

NO.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Forrest finally lets go. Evans struggles to keep it all together. He looks up at Forrest who stands over him.

EVANS (CONT'D)

The real reason I haven't told you the truth is because I was...I was *afraid*...

DR. FORREST

You were "afraid". Afraid of what?

Evans's voice is reduced to a whisper.

EVANS

Afraid you wouldn't *believe* me.

Forrest rifles through his breast pocket, searching for his cigarette pack. With his hand shaking, he slips one in his mouth and, striking a match, lights it.

DR. FORREST

Well, it's time to come clean.

Evans lowers his head, trying to compose himself.

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

I'm all ears.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Evans and the Captain sit at their respective consoles. The GAME is in progress.

EVANS

We went to Venus because the Venusians were controlling our minds and they lured us here so that they could kill us. See, we thought it was the program that was controlling us, but it turns out it was something else entirely...a higher power.

The Captain listens, then clasps his hands together loudly.

CAPTAIN

No. Uh-uh.

(then)

Although I gotta say, I admire your persistence, Evans. I really do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

(sarcastic)

That's just great. Thanks.

(then)

When do I get to ask the questions?

CAPTAIN

Well, when you answer your question truthfully.

EVANS

So what you're saying is, this bullshit game of yours can go on forever.

CAPTAIN

Those are the rules.

EVANS

Yeah, well, I'm getting sick and tired of *the rules*.

(then, to Captain)

You want to know why we're going to Venus? I'll tell you why --

The ship is ROCKED violently once again. Evans and the Captain CRASH to the FLOOR.

Gripping onto whatever they can, they hang on for dear life.

The on-board lights flicker. The ship makes a horrible grinding sound. Finally, everything goes to black. The shaking slows to a low rumble.

And the Captain and Evans soon find themselves ENGULFED in a BLINDING BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT. Staring right into it, they hear a MASS OF WHISPERS.

Once again, there is one voice which STANDS OUT from the others. This is the voice of the VENUS REPRESENTATIVE.

VENUSIAN

Turn back...abort the mission.

The Captain and Evans both hear this and trade looks. Finally, the Captain addresses the voice.

CAPTAIN

We...can't. The mission is on complete automatic.

VENUSIAN

You're lying, we know you're lying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN

We're just passengers. Along for the ride. It's all happening back at the base, millions of miles from here.

VENUSIAN

Do not interfere with Venus. Go back.

CAPTAIN

(to Evans)

You talk to them...tell them we'd be perfectly willing to abort if we could.

(to Venusian)

Evans here is my second in command.

EVANS

The Captain's telling the truth. It's out of our control.

VENUSIAN

Enough. Unless you cooperate, we will have to take drastic action.

CAPTAIN

No. You have to believe us. Everything we've told you is true.

VENUSIAN

This is not a hallucination. This is real. We are speaking to you from a distance of thirty million miles.

CAPTAIN

I believe you.

(gestures to the console)

But you see, it's all out of our control. There's nothing we can do.

VENUSIAN

Enough...enough.

INT. DR. FORREST'S OFFICE -- RESUMING (PRESENT)

Evans is in mid-story. Dr. Forrest waves over the ATTENDANTS standing by his door. They stop on either side of Evans.

EVANS

Well, the Captain, he's a very stubborn man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS (CONT'D)

He's not about to let anyone, or anything, tell him what to do.

When Forrest gestures to the attendants, they lift Evans to his feet.

EVANS (CONT'D)

He told them we had nuclear devices on board... that could wipe out their whole planet.

This stops Forrest in his tracks. He raises his hand.

DR. FORREST

(to the attendants)

Hold on.

EVANS

Then they did something to his pineal gland, I think that's what made him go crazy. Because just like that -- he walked into the evacuation capsule and ejected himself.

Forrest pauses, raising an eyebrow.

DR. FORREST

You know, the ship did have nuclear devices on it.

EVANS

I know.

DR. FORREST

Of course this is knowledge only given to *the commander*. There's no reason at all the second-in-command or anyone else should be privy to this.

Evans realizes that he's just betrayed the Captain. Woefully embarrassed, he tries to backtrack.

EVANS

I lied. The Captain never said anything about the devices.

Finally, having heard enough, an exasperated Forrest motions to the attendants.

DR. FORREST

That's all. Take him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They yank Evans to his feet and drag him to the door.

EVANS

He didn't. I swear. I lied about
the whole thing...

Evans watches as the door to Dr. Forrest's office slowly closes. As he helplessly watches on, we remain on his face.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' HOUSE/BEDROOM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A FEW MONTHS PRIOR to the Venus launch.

Evans and Helen are in bed. The mood is tense.

HELEN

The base is full of psychiatrists.
Why don't you ask one of them?

EVANS

About *what*?

HELEN

Your "problem".

EVANS

It's not a *problem*.

HELEN

Maybe one of them can give you a
prescription or something.

EVANS

I really wish you'd stop talking
like that.

HELEN

Harry, it's been going on for
weeks. Ever since you found out
you were going to Venus.

EVANS

It's got nothing to do with Venus.

HELEN

Oh please...

EVANS

I've been preoccupied, that's all.
I've got a lot of things on my
mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks down underneath the covers at the "problem" in question, then back up at her.

EVANS (CONT'D)
There. See. No problem.

She reaches to shut off her lamp.

HELEN
Good night.

He sits up to stop her.

EVANS
That's it?

HELEN
(stopping)
What do you want?

EVANS
(vulnerable)
I don't know. I thought maybe at least we could...talk.

Helen pauses, impatiently.

HELEN
I got a call from one of your administrators today. He said he thinks it would be a really good idea if I cooperated with the press. "It would pave the way to Venus" is how he put it.

EVANS
So what'd you tell him?

HELEN
I didn't tell him anything. I hung up.

EVANS
You hung up.

HELEN
I'm not cooperating with anyone from the program.

EVANS
Fine. You don't have to.
(then)
All I ask is you don't shut *me* out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELEN

Look, Harry, I'm tired and I really have nothing more to say.

EVANS

Well, maybe there are things I'd like to say. Did you ever think about that?

She stares off into the darkness.

HELEN

The call I got today. I might as well have been talking to a recording. Please tell me you're not going to end up sounding that way?

EVANS

I wouldn't worry about it.

HELEN

But I do. I do worry.

EVANS

(raising his voice)

Well, I'm telling you not to.

Upset by his tone, she turns the light switch off.

HELEN

Good night, Harry.

Evans watches as she lies with her back to him on the far end of the bed. The gap between them grows larger and larger.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans presses his ear against the locked door. He hears what he thinks is the shuffling of HIS WIFE'S feet, her breathing.

EVANS

Helen, I know it's you.

(then)

Go home. You're not going to get anything out of me. Go on. Leave the program. You're free.

He tries to turn the doorknob, but it won't budge. Resigned, he rests his back against the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS (CONT'D)

All I wanted to do was change lives. Alter circumstances. Make people see that what they were living was only one small fragment, an alternative, to many, many other lives. I tried to get it through to the Captain. The Captain was the key, but now he's gone.

He waits for his wife's response...but hears nothing.

EVANS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. There's nothing more I can tell you. That's all.

He hears footsteps walk away. He turns back, faces the door.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Helen? That is you, isn't it?

The footsteps grow more distant. Until they disappear altogether.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Helen?

He is left alone with his own thoughts, his own voice which he cannot bear to hear anymore.

He sees and hears in rapid succession: the clicking of his jaw as he speaks, the cryptograms he's always formulating, the ever-present rumbling of the institution machinery.

He clutches his hands around his head and tries in vain to block these things out, but it's no use.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The Captain is deeply immersed in a game of COMPUTER POKER. Evans is opening his DINNER packet when it finally comes to him and he looks up.

EVANS

The reason we're going to Venus is because the administration knows it's inhabited and they want to start a war so that they can bring all the nations of Earth closer together. You know, against a common enemy.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS (CONT'D)

They figure it's our only means of survival. The psychologists figured it out a long time ago and the administrators are finally picking up on it now.

The Captain continues at the computer.

CAPTAIN

So what you're saying is the point of this whole mission is to *save mankind*.

EVANS

(hopeful)

Yeah. Exactly. That's it.

CAPTAIN

Somebody's been watching way too many science fiction pictures. Personally I never went in for that "War of the Worlds" crap.

EVANS

(deflated)

Yeah. Me neither.

The Captain sits up.

CAPTAIN

Truth is the administrators don't even know Venus is inhabited. Trust me. I'm the commander. They tell me everything.

(then)

So I guess that brings us back to square one.

Evans pushes aside his dinner, frustrated.

EVANS

Don't you think we should be concentrating on something else? I mean, let's face it, there's a very real possibility we're going to be attacked again. Shouldn't we spend our time figuring out how we can turn this ship around? Or at the very least figuring out a way to reason with these -- *beings*? Cause I'll tell you, anything's going to be more productive than playing these pointless games.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN

(stretches and yawns)

It's not going to make a difference one way or the other. Whatever we do, the same things are going to happen. It's out of our control, remember?

(then)

Besides, do you really want to stop now? I mean, you've come this far. Don't you have a question you wanted to ask me?

EVANS

Uh-huh. Yes, as a matter of fact, I do.

CAPTAIN

Well...?

EVANS

(on the spot)

I wasn't exactly prepared...

CAPTAIN

C'mon, don't be shy.

Evans takes a deep breath and musters up his courage.

EVANS

I'd like to know about your sex life.

CAPTAIN

(amused)

My *sex* life?

(then)

Now this is interesting.

EVANS

If you were ever impotent or somehow felt that being an astronaut fucked you up inside so you weren't, you know, normal...in bed.

CAPTAIN

(off guard)

A tad *personal*, wouldn't you say?

Evans now raises his eyes to meet the Captain's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVANS

Yes.

CAPTAIN

Well, you answer your part correctly and I'll be perfectly willing to tell you anything you want to know.

Evans nods sheepishly, and turns back to his dinner. The Captain grins to himself and turns back to his game.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' HOME/BEDROOM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A FEW WEEKS before the Venus flight.

Evans and Helen have sex in the darkness.

As he mechanically writhes on top of her, Evans talks --

EVANS

Despite everything they do...
working us over...locking us up,

running endless tests...I've retained my individuality...my pride...my self-sufficiency. I'm still a person...even if I'm...going to Venus...I'm still what I always was....

Helen looks at him, clearly receiving no pleasure from this.

EVANS (CONT'D)

...because there's a basic core...in man that can't be destroyed...no matter what they do. I have this core...They haven't taken that away from me.

She clutches the back of his head and pull him close, whispering pointedly in his ear.

HELEN

Harry, I'm sure everything you're saying is true, but couldn't you just come already?

Angered by this, Evans pulls his head out of her grasp.

EVANS

Fine. You want me to come, then I'll come, you bitch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He quickens his pace...straining harder and harder.

But it's not use. He can't seem to finish.

OUT OF THE CORNER OF HIS EYE, EVANS CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF SOMETHING...

And he turns his head.

EVANS' P.O.V.

At the other end of the bed, in darkness, ANOTHER COUPLE IS ENGAGED IN INTERCOURSE.

It's the CAPTAIN and the CAPTAIN'S WIFE, beautiful, blonde, and curvaceous.

Unlike Evans and Helen's, their sex is intense, passionate, all consuming.

Evans continues watching, completely absorbed.

After several moments, the Captain turns his head in Evans' direction and locks eyes with him.

He grins -- before he turns his attention back to his wife.

WE MOVE IN ON EVANS' FACE

He looks back at Helen and resumes thrusting, but this time with renewed VIGOR.

Finally, he manages to reach ORGASM.

Panting heavily, sweat dripping down his face.

EVANS

(to Helen)

See? It's the same, it's always the same. They haven't *changed* me.

But when he looks below him, he sees that HELEN is not there.

In fact, he's not even in his house. He's in the bed in his HOSPITAL ROOM. And he's alone.

Looking between his legs...he sees that all along he's been having SEX with a PILLOW.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Oh God, what am I doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The industrial hum of the institution fills him with dread. He looks at the bare walls around him.

EVANS (CONT'D)
(to himself)
What's happened to me?

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

The MORNING after HIS DREAM.

Evans sits at the edge of his bed. Looking gaunt, almost skeletal. Staring blankly through severely bloodshot eyes.

A beat passes. Footsteps approach.

We see the CAPTAIN, in full uniform, enter frame and go to where the detached Evans is sitting.

CAPTAIN
How you doing, buddy?

EVANS
Fine.

CAPTAIN
You don't look fine.

EVANS
No. Everything's good. They're treating me well, although they're starting to make some threats.

The Captain puts a hand on Evans' shoulder.

CAPTAIN
Well, if they start giving you a hard time, you tell them to come see me. I'll straighten them out.

EVANS
No...I can do it.

CAPTAIN
You sure? Because...I don't know -- you seem a little...*out of sorts*.

EVANS
I'll be fine. You'll see. Come back later. I'll tell you how I've won out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Captain nods, not completely convinced, then turns and walks away.

Evans remains, seated on the edge of his bed. He rubs his eyes, as if trying to wake himself from a bad dream.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLDING FACILITY/HOSPITAL -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans sits across from Dr. Forrest with a defiant look. Forrest gets out of his seat, lights up a CIGARETTE.

DR. FORREST

The new *treatments* I told you about are scheduled to begin shortly.

EVANS

What do you people want from me? I've given you everything I have.

DR. FORREST

I'm trying, too. I've tried everything a fair man could. They wanted me to start these treatments earlier, but I fought them off. I'm doing everything I can for you.

EVANS

(resigned)
Fine, go ahead. You're going to do it anyway, no matter what I say.
(points to the cigarette)
Got another one of those?

Forrest reaches into the cigarette pack, then stops.

DR. FORREST

You can have it...when you cooperate.

EVANS

(under his breath)
Asshole.

Forrest shrugs, puts the cigarettes away.

DR. FORREST

I know the price of pain. I know it well. Nevertheless... you've left us with no other choice --

INT. LOWER DEPTHS OF HOSPITAL -- LATER

Evans is rolled down a DIMLY LIT HALLWAY on a GURNEY in restraints. A team of stone-faced DOCTORS, headed by DR. FORREST, accompany him.

EVANS

Can you guys really sleep at night?
I know I can. But can you?

Evan struggles in the restraints, but it's no use.

The hallway gets darker and darker. Until it's pitch black.

DISSOLVE TO:

AN EMPTY CORRIDOR

In another part of the hospital. It's quiet. A few beats pass. Soon, the silence is broken.

We hear Evans cry out. Loud, piercing screams.

EVANS

No...please...NO!

His screams echo throughout the corridor.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMISSARY/TRAINING CENTER -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

SEVEN WEEKS before the VENUS FLIGHT.

The Captain and Evans eat at a table inside the training center commissary. The cafeteria is empty except for them.

Nevertheless, the Captain speaks in a secretive tone.

CAPTAIN

This will never work. I'm sure of
it.

He scoops fruit cocktail into his mouth. Liquid drips down the corners of his mouth. Evans looks at him, oddly.

EVANS

Why do you say that?

CAPTAIN

Because...I've gone over the
figures.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I have some background in theoretical mathematics, you know -- more than they give me credit for. Anyway, it can't possibly work. The way the charts are constructed, the ship will definitely miss the Venus orbit and fall straightway into the Sun. I'm certain of it. Of course you want to keep this all highly confidential.

The Captain attacks his meat with his knife and fork. Evans can't believe what he's hearing.

EVANS

If that's really so, we've got to tell them. *Right now.*

CAPTAIN

I wouldn't do that. The best mathematicians and physicists in the world have worked for the last three years on these charts. You really think they'd listen to me? No, it's not going to amount to anything. All they'd do is bump me right out of the voyage and into an examination center, and they'd do it to you, too and start all over going with the next on the list.

EVANS

But that's *impossible.*

(then)

You can't just sit there and say something like that and do nothing.

CAPTAIN

I didn't say I'd do nothing. I said that I wouldn't discuss it with them. The ship will definitely fail in orbit and fall into the sun. They haven't taken into account the facts that Venus is far closer to the sun than any other body we've attempted and that the sun's gravity at certain points will exceed that of Venus.

The Captain's face becomes flushed. His voice becomes higher in pitch. Evans looks at him, wondering if he's demented...if the stress of the training has gotten to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

There are waves of dislocation moving out from the sun and there is no way, as we settle in and move toward orbit, that we can avoid an interception. Sunspots, you know. The gravitational dislocations move out from the sunspots.

The Captain's hand trembles. Evans steadies it with his own.

EVANS

Well, what can we do then? We've got to do something.

CAPTAIN

We will.

He looks Evans in the eye and speaks in a feverish tone.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

We'll make the adjustments ourselves en route. It's very simple; it's a question of picking up the rhythm of emanations as we approach Venus and then feeding it to the computer. We can do it easily once we apprehend the forces. We'll make the readjustments and bypass the computer completely. No one will ever know and we'll orbit safely.

EVANS

But can we do that?

CAPTAIN

Of course we can do that. I told you, I'm a fully trained mathematician; at least trained enough to have detected an error like this in the first place. Trust me. Everything's going to be all right. I'm just telling you this now so that you'll be fully briefed...fully prepared.

EVANS

Why couldn't we just tell them?

Evans looks up uneasily at the ceiling, wondering to himself if the commissary is being monitored.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVANS (CONT'D)

That way they could make the corrections themselves. They'd be glad to know --

CAPTAIN

No, no, they wouldn't be glad to know. I told you, they'd postpone the voyage and find another crew. They'd think I was crazy. Do you think I'm crazy, Evans?

EVANS

(unsure)
Well, no --

CAPTAIN

I'm not crazy. If anything, I'm supremely qualified. It's the god-damn program that's a mess. First the Mars disaster, then this Venus expedition which, mind you, was put together slap-dash and for all the wrong reasons. It's more than just a political smoke screen. They're afraid if they don't do *something* this whole operation's going to go down the tubes.

EVANS

Which, as far as I see it, is why there's no way they could afford another disaster.

CAPTAIN

Are you kidding me? They're a bunch of bureaucrats running scared. They got the answers they wanted and now they're ready to move forward. The wheels are already in motion. Which is why we've got no choice but to do this ourselves. That's the best way.

EVANS

I still don't like it. I really think we should bring it to the attention of the agencies.

CAPTAIN

The agencies?! You want to put it in the hands of these bureaucratic little pencil-pushers?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

They're corrupt ...mindless...
gutless. This whole program began
with men like us, Evans ...
courageous, idiosyncratic
individuals. We can solve this and
we will. And then it'll just be
the two of us in the capsule
hurtling toward Venus. Forget the
agencies. We'll figure it out on
our own.

The Captain gets to his feet, winks at Evans.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Now, I've told you this in complete
confidence. It's not to go beyond
this table. Because if it did...

He wipes his mouth with his napkin. Evans notices his hand
is still trembling.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

...there is no question in my mind,
it would result in the cancellation
of the flight, which I don't think
is what you want. I mean, you do
want to land on Venus, don't you?
Don't you want to be a *hero*?

Evans is nonplussed. After a beat, the Captain turns and
strides out of the commissary, confidently. We remain on
Evans alone, pondering what he has just heard.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' UNCLE'S INDOOR PATIO -- DAY

The patio is decorated in jungle-type patterns with rattan
furniture. It overlooks a golf course. The sun shines
brightly through the slats of the horizontal blinds.

Evans's LATE UNCLE GEORGE, the same man who took him to the
planetarium when he was a child, only older and wasting away,
sits in a Barcalounger chair. A cigarette in one hand and a
Scotch tumbler in the other.

Evans sits nearby, in his astronaut uniform with his helmet
at his side. He picks up a framed photo on a table. It
shows a young Evans with his Uncle from years ago.

UNCLE

Venus is a marvelous goal. Man must
conquer. Man must move onward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Evans looks up.

EVANS

So even though it ended up the way that it did, you still think it was justified?

UNCLE

Anything is justified if it's going to lead man outward. Man's the only one of God's creatures that can conceive of a goal in abstract terms, that can sacrifice his life toward attaining that goal. Venus. Fantastic! The moon. Amazing! You know, when I died, they were just starting to talk about Venus and immediately you heard people scoff. But I had faith even then. Ask your aunt, she'll tell you.

EVANS

And Mars? What about Mars?

UNCLE

Mars was unfortunate, but this is the price you have to pay. Only the game fish can swim upstream.

His LATE UNCLE begins to cough uncontrollably.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Fucking cigarettes, they were what did this to me.

EVANS

Uncle George, can I ask you something.

UNCLE

Yes, my boy.

Evans leans in closer, lowers his voice.

EVANS

This isn't really happening, is it? You and me talking like this. I mean, this is just the effects from the trip, right?

His uncle looks at him, confused, then changes the subject.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

UNCLE

What I want to know is what was
Venus like? Was it beautiful?

Realizing he's not going to get an answer, Evans shifts
uncomfortably in his seat.

EVANS

I wish I could tell you, but
unfortunately I can't. We never
got there. Maybe we'll never know.

UNCLE

Why not? So you failed, what does
that mean? There'll be a second
and a third and a fifth. You'll
conquer Venus eventually. It's in
the cards. We got Mexico, didn't
we? California? The South Pole?
Once we set our mind to something,
we do it. That's mankind. That's
all of us.

He creakily gets to his feet.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Well, this has been a most
interesting visit, but
unfortunately I have to go.

EVANS

You're leaving?

UNCLE

Got things to do, appointments to
keep. You take care of yourself,
kiddo, all right?

EVANS

But you haven't even let me finish.
I wanted to ask you for advice. I
wanted to --

UNCLE

Yes?

Evans' eyes well up with tears.

EVANS

You were the only one I could ever
talk to.

Evans' pleading becomes more desperate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVANS (CONT'D)

What do I do? What do we do next?
What's going to happen to us?

UNCLE

The same thing that's always going
to happen. We'll voyage on... and
on.

EVANS

But what about me?

UNCLE

You're just going to have to work
that out for yourself. I can't
really get involved in specifics. I
was always a "big picture" guy,
remember? That was my specialty.
Well, like I said, this has been
most interesting. And I'm very
happy to know that you've done so
well for yourself. Keep it up,
Harry, and everything will be
resolved in the long run.

(then)

Oh wait. I almost forgot.

(reaching into his pocket)

You need any money? You'd always
hint around for money after one of
our little talks.

EVANS

No, everything's taken care of for
me here.

UNCLE

I understand.

(then)

Well, the important thing is we had
a good talk, didn't we?

EVANS

But you haven't answered any of my
questions.

UNCLE

Harry, Harry, Harry, always with
the questions. You know, when you
were younger, after a while, I'd
lose patience. I'd make up answers
just so you'd stop asking them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

EVANS

I just want to know what to do.
That's all.

Uncle George exits. Evans buries his head in his hands. A moment later, Evans looks towards the window. The sun has disappeared, having been replaced by a nighttime sky.

Evans gets to his feet, goes to the window and peers out. He sees that the house is now floating in space.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Pulling back, we see Evans is now staring out the porthole of the ship. The Captain pedals on a STATIONARY BIKE nearby.

EVANS

We're going to Venus because we know there's life there. Hidden in the hold are the documents of a peace treaty. You've been keeping this from me until the landing. In due course, you and you alone are authorized to make a deal.

CAPTAIN

(dismissive)
Really, Evans, is that the best you've got?

He slows his pedalling to a stop.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I don't even think you're trying now. This trip isn't going to last forever, you know.

Evans simmers, balls his hands into fists. The Captain sits upright.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Okay, I'll give you a hint. It's got to do with our personal lives. There's a direct personal reason why the two of us are on this ship.

Evans just stares at him, unwavering.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Dig a little deeper, Evans. I know you've got it in there somewhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Captain resumes pedalling. Turning away, Evans begins to work out his next answer.

CUT TO:

INT. VISITATION ROOM -- DAY (PRESENT)

Evans watches as HELEN is led into the VISITATION ROOM by TWO GUARDS, one slightly older than the other.

The room is small and cramped. Evans and Helen are separated by a slender table.

The OLDER GUARD is especially cordial with Helen, pulling out her chair, helping her get into it. Evans can't help but notice the extra attention he is giving her.

The older guard eventually takes his post with his counterpart on either side of the door.

Evans is happy to see Helen and grins wearily as she sits across from him. Helen, however, is in an altogether different state.

HELEN

This is the last time. I'm not coming back here again.

She is unable to meet Evans's gaze.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I just wanted to tell you that.

Evans immediately loses his grin and lower his eyes.

HELEN (CONT'D)

I'm going away for good. The papers will go through automatically. Do you hear me, Harry?

EVANS

I hear you.

HELEN

I came here to tell you exactly that. And that's all.

Evans looks up -- growing resentful.

EVANS

This isn't one of their tricks to get me to talk, is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Helen sits up straight.

HELEN

You know, I felt very guilty for a long time, but I don't now. It's not my fault. I'm through feeling involved.

EVANS

Well, then you don't have to. Whatever's happening to me has to do with my own personal problems. Or maybe it's something that happened to me during the flight. Whatever the case, you're not to blame. I'm the one.

HELEN

No, that's the point. This isn't about you. I wish you'd listen.

EVANS

I am listening. I'm listening to everything you say.

He turns to the OLDER HOSPITAL GUARD standing by the door.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Aren't I listening?

The older guard is caught by surprise.

GUARD

(feeling compelled)
Sure...I guess.

The younger guard abruptly admonishes his cohort for responding. Evans is vexed by this.

EVANS

He can talk to me if he wants to. He has rights. I mean, how else is he going to get on my good side?

(gestures to Helen)

When all he really wants to do is fuck my wife.

Helen bristles.

HELEN

That's it. This is over.

Helen gets to her feet. Evans rises along with her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVANS

You saw the way he was looking at you when you came in here. Besides, everybody wants to fuck an astronaut's wife; it's a little piece of America right there. I mean, it would be crazy of him not to want to fuck you.

(re: his wife)

And who knows, maybe now that you're leaving me, he'll finally get his shot.

Helen SLAPS Evans across the face. She goes to hit him again, but he catches her arm with his hand.

The TWO GUARDS rush at her.

YOUNG GUARD

What are you doing?! No one's supposed to touch him.

EVANS

(to Helen, sincere)

You're right. That was a stupid thing for me to say.

The guards grab Helen. Evans grows incensed.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Hey. What are you...what are you doing --

HELEN

(fighting back)

Get off of me!

(then, to Harry)

It had to end this way. It just had to.

One of the guards steps in Evans' way to stop him from advancing. The other continues to grapple with Helen.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Oh please! I'm not going to do anything. I just want to leave him.

YOUNG GUARD

Then let us escort you, ma'am.

Evans watches his wife as she struggles. Her nostrils flare. Her hair is a tangled mess. Mascara runs down her cheeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Unable to help feelings of dismay and that he's to blame, Evans takes another step forward.

EVANS

Look, guys, take it easy, will you?
She hasn't done anything wrong.
She's harmless.

YOUNG GUARD

Get back on your side.

EVANS

(re: his wife)

I'm sorry, I never meant for any of
this to happen.

YOUNG GUARD

Get back on your side or I'll make
you.

EVANS

Please forgive me...uh...um...

For a moment, Evans' mind goes blank as he can't remember who he's talking to.

Helen stops struggling. She looks at him, incredulous.

HELEN

You don't remember my name?

EVANS

(covering)

Of course, I do.

Evans, still drawing a blank, is overcome with great shame.

EVANS (CONT'D)

It's...uh...um --

She allows the guards to escort her out of the room. The door clicks shut. Evans finally remembers.

EVANS (CONT'D)

...Helen!

He bolts to his feet and goes to the locked door.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Helen! Don't go.

He hears her footsteps growing more distant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

EVANS (CONT'D)
Don't leave me here!

Her footsteps all but disappear.

EVANS (CONT'D)
You're the only one I have.

Evans closes his eyes tight.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEEP VOID IN SPACE -- NIGHT

Evans opens his eyes. He soon realizes he's in his astronaut suit, floating alone in space. Far from his space craft. Or anything else for that matter.

EVANS
Where the hell am I?

He panics. And just as he does, the WHISPERED VOICES OF THE VENUSIANS enter his head.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)
Be calm. Don't fight us. You're still in your craft.

FLASH CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS/SLEEPING QUARTERS -- MEANWHILE

We see EVANS rocking back and forth in his pod, in the midst of a particularly RESTLESS sleep.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DEEP VOID -- DAY

Evans floats in space.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)
This is purely a suggestive process. We're not yet sufficiently developed to transport you physically.

Evans is strangely calm as he makes his way through the ether. And gradually begins to drift toward the huge orange orb which he recognizes as Venus.

Before he knows it, Evans is gliding through layers upon layers of gasses and vapors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then on through billowy cloud cover.

His descent continues.

Once he breaks through the clouds, he's able to see miles of lush green rolling fields. Seemingly endless. An extraordinarily majestic sight.

VENUSIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
These farms feed the cities.

Dozens of animals like cows and goats dot the landscape.

VENUSIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
We are a sedentary, peace-loving race. Dedicated to the preservation of our own. All that we desire is to live out our cycle, in peace. And harmony.

The colors are all incredibly vibrant, like an idealized, Technicolor version of the Earth.

VENUSIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Those gases you see are merely protective cover; we hoped that you would decide the planet was uninhabitable.

There is a brief jolt -- like an ELECTRICAL CHARGE -- and Evans is back in his ship.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- CONTINUOUS

Still in his helmet and uniform, Evans now stands in the ship's corridor.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)
However, we failed to take into account your persistence. So we settled on these defensive devices that would enable us to contact and dispose of your craft if we must.

Evans peers into the cabin.

EVANS' P.O.V.

He sees HIMSELF during LIFT-OFF. His face is sweating, demented, on the edge of unconsciousness. He seems to collapse into sleep.

Next, EVANS walks towards his SLEEPING QUARTERS.

ANOTHER P.O.V.

When he looks inside, EVANS SEES himself lying in his pod, MASTURBATING, fist pumping between his legs, unaware that he's being watched.

Evans recoils at the sight of this.

EVANS
(to the Venusians)
Stop, stop! Enough!

The IMAGE quickly shifts.

Evans now watches himself in the MIDDLE OF HAVING AN AWFUL NIGHTMARE. He gnashes his teeth, kicks his legs. Looking as if he's having convulsions.

EVANS (CONT'D)
No more! Please! Stop it!

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS/SLEEPING QUARTERS -- CONTINUOUS

Another electrical-type jolt and Evans now finds himself lying in his sleeping pod, staring at the top of the bunk.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)
We have our planet, our lives to protect. So we must ask you to turn around instantly or be destroyed.

EVANS
(to himself)
This is a hallucination. It's got to be. There's no intelligent life on Venus. This is all inside my head. It's the strain of space. It's too much. The same thing must have happened on Mars. I'm imagining all of this.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)
Really, we're quite sympathetic to your point of view, but you are imagining nothing. That is exactly the way it is.

EVANS
Neurasthenia, neurasthenic hallucinations and withdrawal.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS (CONT'D)

We were warned about this. It's self-created, I know it is. None of this is happening.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

It is happening, Evans. We're going to destroy your ship if you don't turn around. Either that or we'll destroy one of you and send the other back to pass the word that we must not be bothered again.

Nearby, Evans catches sight of the Captain, in his own pod, thrashing about wildly as if he, too, is seeing visions.

VENUSIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We haven't quite settled on which one it will be. Probably we'll just wipe you out.

EVANS

No. None of this is true. I've got to get a hold of myself. I've got to block this all out.

The sound of the voice subsides. Evans sits up slowly.

His head still foggy, he gets to his feet, feeling somewhat triumphant that he was able to ward the thoughts off.

This feeling is quickly deflected by the GRUNTS and SHRIEKS coming from the Captain.

Still in his pod, asleep, the Captain begins to GROAN louder and louder. And his BREATHING is heavy.

From his moaning and his undulating body, Evans can tell that he's having an ORGASM.

Settling back into his pod, Evans watches, disturbed, yet fascinated at the same time.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Evans is at the computer, punching away at the keyboard with newfound determination.

EVANS (V.O.)

Gentleman, the true story of the Venus expedition may now be told...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He continues typing into the night.

INT. THE HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

The sound of the computer keys clicking echo down the halls.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. FORREST'S OFFICE -- THE NEXT DAY (PRESENT)

It's the morning of the next day. A hopeful Evans sits across from Dr. Forrest, who holds Evans' LATEST CONFSSIONAL LETTER in his hand.

DR. FORREST
I received this today. And I've
read it over.

Evans nods, pleased with himself.

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)
So you were intercepted by
Venusians, eh?

EVANS
Yes.

DR. FORREST
They showed you pictures of their
planet and warned you if you didn't
immediately turn around, they'd
kill one of you aboard the ship.

EVANS
That's right. They didn't believe
that we weren't able to turn the
ship around ourselves.

DR. FORREST
And then they...killed the Captain.

EVANS
Yes. To set an example.

DR. FORREST
Which led to...

EVANS
My going into shock...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. FORREST

(reads from the letter)

A cataleptic state of neurasthenic overtones intimating complete breakdown...

(takes off his glasses)

Which rendered you incapable of communicating exactly what happened.

EVANS

Well, until now. Thanks to the efforts of you and your staff...the pieces finally came together.

DR. FORREST

(re: letter)

And you stand by this? This is what you really want us to believe?

EVANS

Yes, this is what I've always wanted.

DR. FORREST

Another one of your bizarre confessions.

Evans' eyes, which were previously hopeful, now darken.

EVANS

...but it's what happened.

Forrest's voice trembles. His frustration rises to the surface unlike any time before.

DR. FORREST

There isn't any intelligent life on Venus! It's impossible. The planet is not inhabitable!

(then)

I don't think we're making any progress at all. In fact, if you want to know the truth, I think we're going backwards.

EVANS

(sheepish)

Why don't you just release me then?

DR. FORREST

(disregarding him)

You know what I think?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

I think you're doing this deliberately, that you're getting some kind of perverse thrill out of all of this.

EVANS

Just tell me what you want...

DR. FORREST

And you actually expect us to believe this statement?

EVANS

Why not? It's as good as anything else, isn't it? Just tell me what you want to hear and I'll write it down for you.

DR. FORREST

I never thought it would deteriorate into something like this. I thought that reasonable means would extract reasonable ends, but I couldn't have been more wrong.

EVANS

Can I have my letter back? Maybe if I rework it --

Evans whisks it out of Dr. Forrest's hands, placing it beneath his underarm all in one motion.

Forrest is aghast.

DR. FORREST

Give me that!

Forrest snatches the letter from Evans.

The letter TEARS in half and floats down to the floor.

EVANS' P.O.V.

The floating letter in SLOW MOTION.

He sees Dr. Forrest looking more helpless than ever as he, too, watches the paper drift down between them.

Then suddenly everything FREEZES in TIME.

Except for Evans who slowly looks up and examines Dr. Forrest's face...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's as if Forrest's whole career, everything he's worked on up to this point hinges on that piece of paper...just inches beyond his grasp-- yet seemingly unattainable.

Evans gets an impulse to REACH out and COMFORT the DOCTOR, to tell him everything's going to be all right.

But before he can, everything REWINDS.

The LETTER returns to Dr. Forrest's hands, still in one piece. Forrest takes a steps back.

Just then, TWO SETS OF HANDS grab Evans from either side. The hands belong to the HOSPITAL GUARDS who, once again, drag Evans from the office.

CUT TO:

INT. KENNEDY II (THE MARS SHIP) -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We are now on the SHIP TO MARS -- five years in the past.

Three ASTRONAUTS walk through a corridor together, in the midst of a heated debate -- although we can't make out exactly what they are saying.

The astronauts are CAPTAIN OLIVER (late 40s), Second-In-Charge HALVERSON (mid 30s) and CZERNIAK (early 30s).

Unbeknownst to them, EVANS stands hidden away in the shadows, watching their every move.

MINUTES LATER

The astronauts continue their discussion in the main cabin. Evans eavesdrops from behind some bulkhead and machinery.

Captain Oliver is at the console. Nearby is Halverson.

HALVERSON

What, and you know of a better way to revive the program?

OLIVER

Look, all I'm saying is I'm not sure this is going to work out the way they hoped it would.

Halverson sits up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HALVERSON

And all I'm saying is -- you couldn't be more off-the-freaking mark.

(then)

The only way to salvage this program is by doing what we're doing right now.

OLIVER

(growing angrier)

This is not the *only* way.

HALVERSON

(raising his voice)

What's better? Going back to the Moon? You want to go back to the sixties? Peace, love and all that other bullshit? Please. I thought the whole idea is we're supposed to be moving forward, not backward.

Oliver seethes at Halverson's insubordinate tone, but chooses not to respond. Halverson, realizing he might have crossed a line, goes for another tack.

HALVERSON (CONT'D)

Anyway, who knows? We might get lucky on Mars. Maybe find gold there...or oil or something.

Oliver turns his back to him.

HALVERSON (CONT'D)

I mean, when you get down to it, we're basically just mechanics. Right, Czneriak?

(after a beat of silence)

Czneriak?

CZERNIAK

Oh snap. It's not even close to being red.

Czneriak stares through the PORTHOLE at MARS with a look of child-like wonder.

HALVERSON

"Oh snap"? What are you, twelve years old?

Czneriak disregards him and gets up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CZERNIAK

I'm going to take some pictures.

HALVERSON

For what?

(then)

I mean, according to the Captain,
we're just spinning our wheels
here.

Czerniak offers him a curious look.

HALVERSON (CONT'D)

(sotto)

He thinks this whole mission's one
big "whoop-de-fucking-do".

CZERNIAK

He said that?

HALVERSON

Well, not in so many words, but
yeah, pretty close.

(gets to his feet)

Look, I'm going to hit the head and
then maybe catch some z's. You can
get into it with him if you want,
but I'm warning you, he'll only end
up killing your buzz.

Halverson exits. Czerniak turns to Captain Oliver, who sits
quietly with his back to him, extremely still.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SHIP TO MARS/SLEEPING QUARTERS -- NIGHT

Later in the evening, HALVERSON and CAPTAIN OLIVER mutter to
themselves, asleep in their pods.

HALVERSON

The calculations are wrong! No
percentage. No percentage!

OLVIER

It's a joke...a horrible joke.
Save the situation.

HALVERSON

...no percentage.

INT. THE SHIP TO MARS/MAIN CABIN -- LATER

A sleep-deprived CZERNIAK is at a work desk, repairing a CONTROL PANEL. TOOLS are spread out around him. His eyelids growing heavy, he starts to nod off.

It's quiet all around him except for the occasional noise from the main computer and the ever-present hum of machinery.

Watching from behind a wall is EVANS, who, deciding it's time to reveal himself, slowly steps out.

As Czerniak becomes more drowsy, he begins to see a large shape approaching.

Alarmed by this, his eyes snap open and he grabs a nearby WRENCH for protection.

Evans stops a few feet away.

CZERNIAK

Who are you?

EVANS

Listen to me. The other two are already cracking under pressure. You're the only one I can talk to.

CZERNIAK

How did you get on the ship?

EVANS

This flight is going to fail. You're never going to make it to Mars.

CZERNIAK

Who are you?

EVANS

You're going to swing out from your orbit and lurch right into an asteroid belt. For reasons that have never been fully explained, you're going to collide with Ceres and disintegrate on impact.

Czerniak thinks to himself, then cracks a smile.

CZERNIAK

That's weird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

What is?

CZERNIAK

I've actually had thoughts of that happening myself.

(then, catching himself)

But there's nothing that can be done about it. We're going to make it through.

EVANS

No. No, you won't. This all happened five years ago.

(off Czerniak's look)

I know, I sound like a crazy person, but the truth of the matter is you have less than forty-eight hours to live. All of you.

Czerniak takes a deep breath.

CZERNIAK

This is all a dream, isn't it?

(then)

I mean, I'm a reasonable person. And this is...unreasonable. In fact, it's unthinkable...

EVANS

You're right, there's no logical explanation of what I'm doing here on this ship. At least none that I can think of. But the fact is -- I am here. And as long as I'm here, I need to find out why....

CZERNIAK

Why?

EVANS

Why did this happen?

CZERNIAK

Why did "what" happen? Nothing happened. And nothing will happen. This flight's going to be a success. We'll land on Mars, make our observations, then return five weeks from today. They've already started planning receptions for us back home. It's on all the morning shows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVANS

I wish that was the case. I really do. But that's just not how it happened.

A voice calls out. It's HALVERSON, yelling out in his sleep.

HALVERSON

No percentage!

Evans looks towards the noise. Czerniak's eyes, however, remain on him.

CZERNIAK

Look, I don't know what you're doing here...but only authorized personnel are supposed to be on this ship.

EVANS

I am authorized. In five years, I'm going to be the co-pilot on the first expedition to Venus.

Captain Oliver and Halverson's SLEEP TALKING grows louder in the background.

CZERNIAK

I really think you should leave.

EVANS

I *can't* leave.

(then)

Trust me. I've passed all the tests. I'm already in the program.

Czerniak gets up from his seat with wrench in hand.

CZERNIAK

This is the last time I'm going to tell you.

He advances towards Evans.

EVANS

I'm just trying to help. You're going to miss the orbit of Mars.

CZERNIAK

Do you hear what I said?

Evans retreats a few steps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVANS

You'll splinter into Ceres and be totally demolished. The instruments, the monitors, they're going to reveal nothing.

CZERNIAK

Get out of here....now!

EVANS

They'll never be able to explain why it happened. Computer error. That'll be the official explanation, even though everyone at the upper echelons will know that's a lie.

CZERNIAK

(raising the wrench)
That's enough!

EVANS

The program will be abandoned. The space station shut down. There's going to be a national day of mourning.

CZERNIAK

Shut up! Shut. Up.

EVANS

There'll be ceremonies of remembrance in all the major cities. The program will be gutted. The Venus flight'll be prepared under a shroud of secrecy.

Czerniak, nostrils flaring, white-knuckles his grip around the wrench. He is a foot away from Evans.

CZERNIAK

Why won't you listen to me?!

EVANS

The program'll move forward, even though they know it'll never be able to touch Venus and the whole flight will be a disaster. Nevertheless, nevertheless...

CZERNIAK

I said that's ENOUGH!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Czerniak swings the wrench.

And connects with Evans, delivering a CRUSHING BLOW to his scalp. Evans's feet go out from under him.

The sleep-talking from the other room reaches a fever pitch.

Evans crashes to the floor. His head lies on its side.

EVANS' P.O.V.

An enraged Czerniak lets out a GUTTURAL YELL at the top of his lungs. And continues to swing the WRENCH, wildly and randomly, throughout the CABIN.

He leaves the main cabin and heads to the SLEEPING QUARTERS.

We only see an empty DOORWAY, but we can HEAR the sounds of BONES SHATTERING in the near distance.

Soon BLOOD starts to seep into Evans' eyes.

As his vision gets more murky, the sounds of whimpers and moans grow in the background. Finally, Evans blacks out.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We return to Evans and the Captain on the Venus Flight.

Evans, looking disheveled, the strain of the trip weighing on him heavily, sits at his WORK STATION, pondering what he hopes will be the final answer to the Captain's question.

EVANS

Because of a blind series of events.

He, turns and faces the Captain, with mounting confidence.

EVANS (CONT'D)

All of it's coincidence, blind alleys. We'd reached a point in our technological spectrum where a flight to Venus was inevitable and so we made it. And so it falls upon us to invent, after the fact, an explanation which'll seem credible; we'll tie the meaning to the event, rather than the event to the meaning because that's the kind of people we are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Captain, also worn down, listens to this, and nods his head solemnly.

CAPTAIN

I'm sorry. But I can't allow that.

EVANS

(devastated)

Why not?

CAPTAIN

You went over fifty words.

EVANS

(ashamed)

Oh. Shit. Maybe I did. Dammit.
It's just...it isn't easy --

CAPTAIN

You have to do it in less than
fifty words. Those are the rules.

Evans nods, gravely disappointed.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

But I'll tell you one thing.

You're getting closer. Maybe there is hope for you after all.

Laughing to himself, the Captain grows more and more excited. And Evans' eyes slowly begin to brighten.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Evans awakens from a deep sleep to the disconcerting sight of DR. FORREST seated in a chair at the foot of his bed.

Evans' worries are slightly eased when he sees that Dr. Forrest is looking weaker and more vulnerable than ever. Rubbing his eyes wearily, Forrest's mutters...

DR. FORREST

I don't know. I don't know.

Feeling oddly sympathetic towards the Doctor, Evans slowly gets out of bed and approaches him.

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

I mean, we've tried everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everything. And nothing works.

Evans pulls up a chair and takes a seat next to him.

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

I'm highly qualified. I know more about the psychology of space than any man who's ever lived. I devised the training program, the control systems, the checks, the balances.

Evans even feels compelled to offer words of consolation.

EVANS

You'll figure it out. We'll find a way.

DR. FORREST

I thought I understood it all. There was no possibility of error. It wasn't too big, too frightening, it was completely routine. I showed them that. I built this program. Almost by myself I built it.

EVANS

You did the best that you could.

DR. FORREST

The factors were all calculated. Men would perform in space as they performed in any stressful situation. There was no difference in the calculations, the preparations. I staked my life, my reputation on it.

EVANS

I know you did.

DR. FORREST

I was responsible for Mars as well. Mars was the first mission I worked closely on. I had everything charted out and then look what happened.

EVANS

You couldn't have known.

DR. FORREST

But I said, the hell with Mars; it was a bad situation.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

Computer error; a failure of orbits. It was the mathematics of the situation which broke down, not the psychology. I was not a humble man! When the time came for Venus, I was positive that it would work. Hadn't it always worked? It was fine in the simulator.

EVANS

You couldn't help it if there turned out to be *visitors* and that the Captain behaved the way that he did --

DR. FORREST

But then everything seemed to break down...

Evans realizes that Dr. Forrest has started to weep. Now embarrassed for him, Evans embraces Forrest, allowing him to sob over his shoulder.

EVANS

The simulations were very fatiguing. They made us sick. Some of us became impotent. But that made us strong. For the flight. You did a fine job. You had our best interest at heart.

DR. FORREST

I want to believe that. To know that you understood: I never wanted to do anything *bad* to you; and now I have people saying that I didn't do my job and somehow it was my fault. It *wasn't* my fault; don't you see how hard I'm trying to cure you?

Forrest loses all control and falls onto Evans. Evans tries to support him, but Forrest is quite heavy and both men go down, collapsing onto the floor.

EVANS

Dr. Forrest?
(then)
Are you all right?

With Forrest on top of him, Evans tries slip out from under him -- but he can't. Forrest, still weeping, is just too big of a man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

In addition to Forrest's weeping, Evans can feel him moving up and down. The movements get more PRONOUNCED.

That's when Evans realizes: Forrest is grinding on top of him, trying to PENETRATE him.

EVANS (CONT'D)

What are you -- what are you doing?

Evans is incredulous. He can't believe this is happening.

Forrest continues PUMPING his body, moaning and grunting as Evans now attempts to squirm out from under him.

EVANS (CONT'D)

DR. FORREST!

But it's no use. Evans is pinned there. Forrest continues like a jack rabbit, faster and faster.

Then he screams as he DISCHARGES. Exhausted, Forrest lies against Evans, continuing to MOAN and MUTTER.

DR. FORREST

Catalepsy, cataleptic breakdown,
schizo-affective psychosis, ideas
of reference, hallucinatory impact.

Evan is overcome with revulsion and shock.

In addition, he can't help, but notice Forrest looking at him with one of his eyes...as if this has all been an EXERCISE. Another way to EXTRACT the TRUTH from him.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

EVANS mans the controls as the ship heads back towards Earth. The Captain is nowhere in sight. Instead, Evans' LATE UNCLE GEORGE is seated next to him.

UNCLE

Struggle. Achievement. Testing.
Where there's a will --

EVANS

It can't work. Sooner or later they
have to face that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UNCLE

Outward and inward. Ever voyaging.
A quitter never quits. A winner
never wins.

EVANS

They've gone at it the wrong way.
If they don't face it, we're going
to lose the solar system time and
time again.

UNCLE

Never sew a needle. A stitch in
darkness brings light. Only the
mightiest oak ever knew stone.

Uncle George starts to cough uncontrollably. When he finally stops, he turns to Evans with a deathly pallor. His condition is rapidly deteriorating.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

You'll have to excuse me. I seem
to be somewhat ill.

(unbuckling himself)

Maybe you'd just better eject me.
No reason for me to hold up your
progress.

EVANS

You know I'd never do that.

UNCLE

Why not?

EVANS

Because you're my uncle, you're my
flesh and blood.

UNCLE

All the more reason.
Sentimentality can't hold us back.

Uncle George coughs some more and feebly attempts to OPEN a nearby PORTHOLE in order to escape.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

I can't *do* this.

Evans turns and sees what his Uncle is trying to do.

EVANS

Would you stop?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Uncle George goes into another coughing jag, clearly in a great deal of pain. Evans is greatly disheartened by this.

He reaches out to touch the old man's shoulder and realizes he's just a skeleton with skin hanging on it. Evans chokes back emotion. Nevertheless, he realizes what must be done.

EVANS (CONT'D)

There's an exit hatchway you can use. Here. Follow me.

Evans leads his uncle by the arm to the rear of the ship. When he gets there, he opens the Exit Hatch Wall for him. His uncle gingerly steps inside.

UNCLE

Yes, much better this way. Onward towards the stars. Ever hopeful.

Evans closes the hatch with a cold, mechanical efficiency, pushing it all the way to the wall. He sets a series of buttons on automatic.

UNCLE (CONT'D)

Into the expansion. Struggle and sacrifice. Inward and outward.

There's a small hiss as Evans' uncle disappears into space.

Evans watches him go with a blank, shocked look, then turns and heads to his seat as the ship accelerates towards Earth.

As he continues on his path, he can hear the faint whisper of his uncle as if he's still with him.

DEAD UNCLE (O.S.)

...accomplishment...striving...
struggle...

Soon however the voice disappears, replaced by the humming of machinery as we watch Evans returns to pilot the ship.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Evans lies in his bed asleep. He hears a familiar voice...which sounds like Forrest's.

DR. FORREST (O.S.)

Ha. I think it's finally working.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Evans' eyes snap open. He's alone in his hospital bed. He sees that nothing has changed. And thinks to himself, in all actuality, nothing is working at all.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We return to the Venus ship several weeks in the past.

The Captain walks through the ship's spine trailed by Evans.

CAPTAIN

They make the case very clearly.
It's either both of us or you.

EVANS

Both of us or *me* what?

The Captain stops to address him.

CAPTAIN

That they're going to get rid of.
And if it turns out to be you, then
I'd be the one to return, tell the
tale, you know, so on and so forth.

EVANS

Oh. Well, isn't that convenient?

CAPTAIN

Look, if you think I'm being
selfish, well, you're wrong. This
isn't personal. It's just the
alternative they presented me with.
Either we're both killed or just
you.

The Captain walks away. Evans remains.

EVANS

That's kind of funny. Because the
way I heard things, it was both of
us or you.

The Captain slows to a stop.

EVANS (CONT'D)

They thought that it would make
more sense to finish off the senior
man. More frightening, you know,
more final.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

Well, one of us is lying then.

EVANS

Either that or maybe they just told us two different things.

CAPTAIN

No. No, I don't think so. It was very definite what I heard them say. This is clearly what they wanted.

Noticing a small FIRE EXTINGUISHER hanging on the wall, the Captain removes it and feels its weight in his hands.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

There's only one way to settle this, don't you think?

EVANS

(incredulous)

Oh, c'mon!

The Captain looks down at the OBJECT in his hands and shrugs.

EVANS (CONT'D)

So what, you're going to hit me with that?

CAPTAIN

It'll only take one tap. You'll barely feel it.

Evans can't believe what he's hearing, but soon realizes that the Captain is dead serious.

EVANS

No, this isn't what they wanted. They said they would take care of it. Now just, just back off.

CAPTAIN

I can't back off. I'm under very strict orders. The Venusians told me they want you dead and, well, I'm not about to argue with them.

The Captain takes a step forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Come here, Evans, it'll just be a simple tap, nothing painful at all, I promise, and then it'll all be over.

EVANS

So what, you're going to do this now?

CAPTAIN

Why prolong the inevitable?

The Captain advances. Evans steps backwards, feeling his way with his hands.

EVANS

You're a fucking lunatic.

CAPTAIN

Think of it this way, you'd be doing it for your country.

As Evans retreats, he comes across a discarded TUBING and grips it in his hands -- something he could use to STRANGLE the Captain if need be.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Just a tap, Evans. Just a tap.

The Captain continues forward. Evans backs up against the EXIT HATCH WALL. He blindly searches for the right combination of NUMBERS on the KEYPAD.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

You wanted to know about my sex life, right? Well, now's your opportunity. I'll tell you it all.

Evans continues to punch in numbers, but gets nowhere.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

I first fucked when I was fourteen, and if you want to know the truth, it was with a pig.

(then)

God, I loved that pig.

He looks off momentarily, replaying the memory in his head.

Seeing an opening, Evans rears back and kicks the Captain in his rib-cage. There's a loud CRACKING SOUND as the Captain drops to his KNEES, in intense pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The fire extinguisher drops from his hands and rolls to Evans' feet. Evans picks it up.

He lifts it over his head and brings it down with considerable force, shattering the Captain's SKULL.

The Captain is killed instantaneously. His body collapses in front of Evans.

Evans, adrenaline surging, stands over the Captain for several beats. Then he turns to the keypad, punches in the correct CODE, opens the door and deposits the Captain inside.

In a very workman-like fashion, he closes the door and ejects the body into the void.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- NIGHT (PRESENT)

Once again, Evans awakens in his dark, empty room.

Looking around, he sees his DOOR is WIDE OPEN. Curious, Evans puts on his slippers and goes to investigate.

When he steps out into the hall, he sees that all the lights are off. The only sound is the industrial hum coming from the boiler room below.

Evans saunters along. Sees an open room. Looks inside. TWO ATTENDANTS lie soundly asleep on their cots.

He continues on, going to the end of the corridor, and stops by an elevator. As if on cue, the elevator door slides open.

Stepping inside, he presses the button marked "L". The doors close and the elevator starts to descend. After a few seconds, the elevator comes to a jolting halt.

Dismayed, Evans tries another button, but the elevator won't budge.

Just then, he feels a rumbling sensation. Soon everything starts to SHAKE around him. Frightened, Evans slides down to a seated position on the floor.

The shaking eventually subsides.

Looking at his hand, he sees his skin has turned luminescent. And an INTENSE BRIGHT WHITE LIGHT is now shining down on him from the top of the elevator.

The familiar whispered voices he heard in space also return.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

Please, I was just trying to leave.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

I'm sorry, Evans.

EVANS

What, what did I do wrong?

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

Your efforts are not credible.

EVANS

But I've done every single thing possible.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

No. You've done exactly what you wanted to do and then rationalized it that way. We're not happy. The job is not being done.

EVANS

But I've tried. They don't believe me.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

They are thinking of going back. They are not through with Venus and they think you're merely being perverse. A theory has been circulating, which places the blame completely on your head. We cannot tolerate this.

EVANS

Then you've got to try another way. They're not listening to me.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

They have decided that you went mad, killed the Captain and then disposed of his body. Then somehow were able to take over the computers and come back. They blame you wholly for the problem. They admit no other involvement.

EVANS

I'm doing the best that I can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

We do not want you people coming toward our planet again. This is the last time we'll discuss it with you. If there is another instance, we will have to take drastic action.

(then)

We have already destroyed your planet once. We are prepared to do it again.

EVANS

But why me? I was just a passenger. Why am I in the middle of all of this?

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

That's not our problem.

EVANS

But I'm just an engineer, my background is technological. I don't know anything about all this...other stuff. None of us were trained that way.

VENUSIAN (O.S.)

You were the ones sent out. So you are the ones to pay the price. Our time is quite limited. Remember us, Evans. Remember us.

Evans feels a painful electrical-type jolt. Falling onto his side, he clutches his head in his hands.

The pain is almost too great to bear. Evans squeezes his eyes tight -- as if he's trying to shut it out.

When he re-opens them, he finds himself back in bed in his hospital room. The door is closed. His skin has returned to normal. The light and the pain are gone.

Evans' confusion turns to rage. He swipes at his night-stand, knocking a WATER PITCHER and a LAMP onto the floor.

EVANS

I can't take any more of this!
When is it going to end?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He waits for some kind of response, a reprisal. A few beats pass and he receives none.

CUT TO:

INT. EVANS' BEDROOM -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

It's a week before the Venus flight.

EVANS and HELEN are in bed.

He lies on his back with a thousand yard stare. She's on her side with her back to him.

HELEN

(mutters)

You never think of anyone else.
You'll always be the same...

Her words echo hollowly in his head.

HELEN (CONT'D)

You're a machine, you know that?
Just like the rest of them.

ANGLE ON EVANS

He's barely aware she's even there. Instead he's focused on the images, which invade his head.

First we see the ominous-looking CENTRIFUGE.

Next, we see THE CAPTAIN at the console of the SHIP, appearing strong, confident, virile.

Then we see a view of VENUS as the ship approaches it.

And finally, we see EVANS standing before us NAKED.

He looks down at his GROIN. Instead of his penis, there is a MASS OF WIRING torn from the BULKHEAD OF THE SHIP sprouting from his skin.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS/MAIN CABIN -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Several LOUD SIREN BLASTS one after another. EVANS sits with his feet up on the CONSOLE, fingers entwined behind his head, seemingly without a care in the world.

Awakened by the alarm, the Captain steps into the Main Cabin from his SLEEPING QUARTERS and angrily turns to Evans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Evans casually shuts off the alarm with a flick of a switch.

CAPTAIN
What the hell is going on?

EVANS
I've got it.

CAPTAIN
Got what?

EVANS
The answer to your question.

CAPTAIN
(sighing heavily)
That's why you woke me up?

After a beat, just wanting to get it over with, he gestures that he's ready to hear it.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
All right, let's have it.

EVANS
Events control our lives, even though we have no understanding of them and they don't have any motivations. Everything is blind chance, happenstance, occurrence; in an infinite universe anything can happen. After the fact, we find reasons. We're going to Venus because the dice came up.

The Captain's anger seems to subside as he considers this for a while. He nods his head and strokes his chin.

CAPTAIN
You're right, Evans.
Congratulations.

He claps his hands in a half-mocking gesture.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
You nailed it.

A tremendously relieved Evans smiles, but his revelry is short-lived.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
I think I'll shit now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Captain turns, starts to exit. Evans is crestfallen.

EVANS

Wait. That's it?

CAPTAIN

(caught off guard)

What do you want me to do, jump up and down?

EVANS

What about my turn?

The Captain eyes him, quizzically.

EVANS (CONT'D)

To ask you a question. It's my turn.

CAPTAIN

I suppose we can get around to that. Sooner or later.

EVANS

No, no, no...not *sooner or later*. I want to ask my question now!

CAPTAIN

For God's sake, Evans. I have to shit. And when I'm done shitting I'm going to get back to that dream I was having right before you woke me up...and then after that maybe, maybe we can get around to your question.

EVANS

Maybe we can get around to it?!

CAPTAIN

Uh, yes. I believe that's what I just said.

EVANS

(rises to his feet)

Look, you hypocritical son of a bitch. You said that you'd go first and then I'd go. Now, let me ask my god-damn question. Those are the rules.

CAPTAIN

Uh-uh, those were the rules.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

EVANS

Huh?

(stunned, realizing)

I can't believe this. You lead me on and on. And now I finally win and you decide to go and change things mid-stream?

CAPTAIN

I can do whatever the hell I want. I'm the Captain, *remember?*

EVANS

No, you're not. You're a piece of shit, that's what you are.

CAPTAIN

Watch your mouth, Evans.

EVANS

You're the best living example of what the program churns out. You've got nothing inside. Nothing. You might as well have come off a conveyer belt. And now you won't even play by the rules of your own stupid, fucking game! I could strangle you right now.

CAPTAIN

You do know what you're saying is mutiny. And you can bet your sorry ass, I will report it.

EVANS

(incensed)

You want to see "mutiny"? I'll show you "mutiny".

He lunges at the Captain, who tries to dodge him. But Evans manages to grab hold, tossing him onto a table.

EVANS (CONT'D)

I just want to ask you a question!

Evans pounces on top of the Captain, pinning him down. The Captain tries to struggle free. Able to get a foot in Evans' sternum, he kicks him backwards.

Evans slams hard against a CABINET, dislodging some TOOLS. Then falls to a seated position on the floor. The force of the blow knocks him senseless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

With Evans down and apparently out, the Captain gets up off the table, goes over and, as a parting gesture, SPITS at him.

Then, turning around, the Captain heads towards the back of the ship.

Thoroughly enraged by this, Evans grabs a large wrench from nearby and charges the Captain with a feral scream.

With one swipe, he delivers a FATAL BLOW to the Captain's temple. Blood sprays across Evans and the table as the Captain topples onto the floor.

INT. SHIP TO VENUS/DISPOSAL HATCH -- A SHORT WHILE LATER

An exhausted Evans drags the Captain's body through the corridor to the EVACUATION CUBICLE.

EVANS

It's only fair. You refused to play by your own rules.

He folds the Captain's lifeless form inside.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I'll spare you the embarrassment. Nobody'll know you were killed by a subordinate. I'll just blame it all on the Venusians.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. FORREST'S OFFICE -- DAY (PRESENT)

Having just been told of the Captain's death, Dr. Forrest looks at Evans, quizzically, from behind messy stacks of papers on his desk.

DR. FORREST

The Venusians did it? Is that right?

EVANS

Yes. That's right.

A beyond exasperated Forrest runs his hand through his hair.

DR. FORREST

And is that all you have?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

(insulted)

What else is there? I just told you everything.

DR. FORREST

Oh, I don't know. I just thought there would be more.

Dr. Forrest thinks for a beat, then goes back to making notes on other reports. Evans rises to his feet, indignant.

EVANS

I don't understand.

The TWO ATTENDANTS at the door begin to take notice.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Is it because I'm not giving you easy answers, is that it? Something you can wrap up with your fat fucking fingers in a tiny little bow?

Dr. Forrest looks up at Evans, unconcerned. Too tired to reprimand him, Forrest instead tidies the papers on his desk.

DR. FORREST

Look, Evans, as you can see I've got a lot of work --

This is the last straw.

Infuriated, Evans shoves the stacks of papers off Forrest's desk, sending them fluttering to the floor.

The attendants start to approach.

Forrest reacts calmly and in a controlled manner. Slowly getting out of his seat, he bends down on his knees and begins gathering the papers.

Evans watches this, boiling over. Forrest looks up, momentarily.

DR. FORREST (CONT'D)

Are you just going to stand there? Or are you going to help?

Having gone past his breaking point, Evans reaches down and grabs Forrest by the neck with both hands.

And starts to CHOKE HIM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The attendants now rush over and try to separate the two men.

EVANS

You send me on a suicide mission,
you put me through everything you
put me through and now you want
some kind of easy answer?

Dr. Forrest's face turns beet-red. He gurgles....tears stream down his cheeks.

DR. FORREST

I was just...following...orders.

Evans squeezes Forrest's neck so hard, he break it. Forrest's body goes limp. The guards finally get the two men apart -- but it's too late. Forrest is dead.

Evans looks down at the doctor's slumping body, stunned.

He continues standing there (being held by the guards), as if frozen in time, as the realization of what has just done taken place slowly starts to sink in.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An extremely overwhelmed EVANS watches through the PORTHOLE as the ship hits the orbit for VENUS for the first time.

Standing alone in the cabin, he remains frozen, paralyzed -- unable to even fathom the unbelievable spectacle which lies before him.

EVANS

(to himself)
...impossible...

The sheer size of the planet is huge, vast, unconscionable.

Evans is flooded with incredible feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, insignificance...

EVANS (CONT'D)

...too...much...

A crackling sound is heard coming out of a nearby monitor.

MONITOR (V.O.)

...this...is Mission Control. Do
you copy --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Without removing his eyes from the porthole, Evans reaches for the switch and turns the monitor off.

Now there is utter silence, except for burbling of the ship's machinery as it continues to make its descent.

Evans' eyes remain focused on the massive sight before him.

After a few moments, he realizes that CZERNIAK, the young astronaut from the Mars flight, is standing beside him -- watching along with him.

EVANS

Impossible, that's what I was thinking.

Evans shakes loose a pill from a bottle into his trembling palm. Sticks it between his teeth and chews it. Offers one to Czerniak.

EVANS (CONT'D)

...tranquilizer?

Czerniak takes one and pops it in his mouth.

CZERNIAK

(re: Venus)

This is nothing new.

EVANS

Huh?

CZERNIAK

I've seen it all before.

EVANS

(incredulous)

How can you say that? You went to Mars. This is Venus.

CZERNIAK

Mars, Venus. There's no difference. The quality of the experience is still the same. They felt the same way on the moon.

EVANS

I don't know what to do. Do you understand that? I have no idea.

Evans' knees wobble. Czerniak grasps him by the elbow, steadies him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CZERNIAK

It's too late to make simple judgements. Or to compare your past experiences against them. You've got to assume a larger perspective.

EVANS

But I don't understand.

CZERNIAK

These are all abstractions. You won't understand that for a long time, but that's all they are. It's not what you see; it's the distance you have to travel.

Evans turns to him. Czerniak smirks, conspiratorially.

CZERNIAK (CONT'D)

You'll come to understand that, just as I have.

Before Evans knows it, Czerniak is gone.

EVANS

No, you can't go!

He scans the ship for the young astronaut.

EVANS (CONT'D)

Don't leave me here all alone. I don't know what to do.

The ship swings into its third orbit. Evans turns back to the porthole as the ship LURCHES towards its destination.

Evans' eyes fill with profound dread.

EVANS (CONT'D)

I just wanted to change lives.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP TO VENUS/EVACUATION CAPSULE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A week before the previous scene.

Evans literally struggles with a near-hysterical CAPTAIN, who is trying to get into the EVACUATION CAPSULE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

I'm *scared*. I can't take it anymore. *Let me be*.

EVANS

I can't. I won't.

Evans thrusts the Captain against the wall, holds him there.

EVANS (CONT'D)

You can't be scared. Don't you understand that? I need you!

CAPTAIN

I can't be your crutch anymore.

EVANS

What about your responsibilities? What about the flight?

CAPTAIN

They're not my responsibilities, they're *yours*. I never took the tests, Evans. You passed them.

Evans is confused by this.

Taking the opportunity, the Captain breaks loose from Evans' grasp and smooths out his uniform with shaky hands.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

You're the qualified one. Not me. You figure it out.

The Captain starts to move past, but Evans grabs his wrist.

EVANS

No. It's not supposed to be that way. You're the Captain. I'm supposed to take orders from you.

The Captain tugs his arm free, continues towards the capsule.

CAPTAIN

(getting inside)

I'm sorry it turned out this way, but I guess I'm just not cut out for this. It's not your fault. It's mine. You'll figure a way out, I'm sure.

Evans watches on, helplessly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EVANS

Wait. What do I tell them?

CAPTAIN

Tell them I went crazy.

(then)

If they think I was sane, they'll hold you responsible.

He closes the lid.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

It's over, Evans. It's over.

Evans hears the whisper of the machinery as the Captain is evacuated. He doesn't move...his eyes stare out, startled at what has just taken place.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- EARLY MORNING (PRESENT)

Evans sits at his desk in front of the BLANK SCREEN on his computer, immobile. HIS MANUSCRIPT is stacked next to him.

There is the sound of a TOILET FLUSH in his adjoining bathroom. Followed by the sound of water from a faucet.

Curious, he slowly looks towards the bathroom and gets up.

The knob turns and the door opens, revealing the CAPTAIN. He steps into the room dressed in his pilot's uniform, smiling pleasantly, wiping his hands with a paper towel.

CAPTAIN

Miss me?

Evans is taken aback.

EVANS

What are you doing here?

CAPTAIN

Thought I'd drop by, take care of some *unfinished* business.

The Captain steps up to a clearly unnerved Evans.

EVANS

I wasn't expecting to see you.

The Captain places a hand on Evans' shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN

I'm sorry, but I didn't think it could wait any longer.

(then)

Don't you agree it's time we finally told them?

Evans eyes the Captain's hand, warily.

EVANS

Told them what?

CAPTAIN

About us.

Evans ponders this a beat.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

C'mon. What are you afraid of? A little closure never hurt anyone.

Evans looks up at the Captain, searching...

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- CONTINUOUS

Evans and the Captain step out into the hall.

CAPTAIN

They ought to know the real deal, don't you think? Once and for all.

He turns to Evans with a glint in his eye.

EVANS

(not fully convinced)

I-I suppose.

The Captain offers his hand to Evans to hold. Evans hesitantly takes it. They continue down the corridor, hand-in-hand.

CAPTAIN

Besides, it's not our fault. It's just a question of telling them exactly how things really are.

Stopping momentarily, Evans turns to the Captain.

EVANS

Can I ask you a question?

CAPTAIN

Go for it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

How was your sex life?

CAPTAIN

You mean, did I get mine?

(then)

Nah. It was lousy.

EVANS

Yeah, so was mine.

CAPTAIN

I think it had something to do with the program. They made a machine out of me.

EVANS

(agreeing)

Yeah, you and me both.

They approach the end of the hall. Arriving just outside DR. FORREST'S OFFICE, they both knock.

After a short wait, FORREST'S ASSISTANT opens the door.

EVANS (CONT'D)

We'd like to talk to Dr. Forrest.

The Assistant eyes Evans curiously, hesitates.

CAPTAIN

C'mon, chop chop. You want to get that second expedition off as soon as possible, don't you?

The somewhat shaken assistant takes a step back.

FORREST'S ASSISTANT

I-I'll be right back.

He closes the door and scurries off.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTSIDE FORREST'S OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

Forrest's Assistant returns.

FORREST'S ASSISTANT

Dr. Forrest said you should come in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS

Both of us?

FORREST'S ASSISTANT

(to Evans)

Uh...no. Just you.

A concerned Evans turns to the Captain, who shrugs, unfazed.

CAPTAIN

You heard what the man said.

Evans takes a deep breath, looks at the Assistant and nods.

The Assistant turns and Evans follows him inside.

They walk past a waiting area to a door with a nameplate which reads: DR. CLAUDE FORREST.

The assistant nudges open the door for Evans.

INT. FORREST'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Upon entering, Evans sees that Dr. Forrest's office chair is empty. A recently lit cigarette smolders in an ashtray on his desk.

Evans continues to move forward, heading over to a nearby couch. Before sitting down, he spots a FILE marked CLASSIFIED with his name on its label on the coffee table.

ANGLE ON FILE

It's overstuffed with documents and news clippings. At first, Evans thinks of leaving it be...but curiosity gets the better of him and he picks it up.

ANGLE ON EVANS

He opens the file and starts to thumb through its contents.

His eyes narrow. His pulse quickens.

It's as if his whole world has been turned on its head.

Flipping through document after document, clipping after clipping, Evans grows increasingly FRANTIC and INTENSE.

His hands begin to tremble.

Out of the corner of his eye, he NOTICES a TELEVISION MONITOR playing across from him. He slowly turns away from the file and faces it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

What he SEES SHOCKS him.

He stumbles back a step.

His hand holding the FILE drops to his side, sending the documents and clippings fluttering to the floor.

He covers his mouth with his shaking hand.

EVANS

No. This can't be.

Unable to BEAR IT ANYMORE, he retreats backwards, collapsing into a chair besides the couch.

His eyes filling with tears, he lowers his face into his hands and shakes his head, again and again.

ANGLE ON THE TV MONITOR

On screen, WE SEE EVANS from weeks ago, on his way to Venus, speaking into one of the SHIP'S ONBOARD CAMERAS.

EVANS

The price we're going to pay for all of *this, it's not worth it.* You'll see. It's all lies... everything they've told us. And if we don't do something about it immediately, if we don't do something -- the lies are just going to keep on coming.

These were the exact words of the Captain -- only they're now coming out of Evans' mouth.

Switching to a WIDER ANGLE taken from a different CAMERA, we see that EVANS is ALL ALONE in the CABIN...there is no one else there. Evans is the lone astronaut on the flight.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

Evans, this is Mission Control. Go to the medicine cabinet, take some clonazepam...you'll feel much better.

WE MOVE AWAY from the TV MONITOR in the doctor's office and drift down to one of the NEWS CLIPPINGS from the file, at Evans' feet.

The HEADLINE READS:

CAPT. HARRY EVANS READIES FOR 1ST SOLO FLIGHT TO VENUS

CUT TO:

EXT. UPSCALE MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY -- DAY

The upscale cottage is in a DESERT OASIS COMMUNITY. Lush tropical vegetation, rolling hills and Koi-stocked ponds.

INSERT - A LETTER IS BEING TYPED

The letter is being typed not here, but in an office building many miles away. It is addressed to **Harry Evans, c/o Sunderland Institute, Sedona, Arizona.**

We hear the voice of a SENIOR EDITOR of a PUBLISHING HOUSE dictating.

SENIOR EDITOR (V.O.)

Dear, Mr. Evans, I am pleased to inform you that all us of here at Random House are delighted with your manuscript, we would like to make a formal offer of publication.

INT. Evans' COTTAGE/INSTITUTE -- CONTINUOUS

We move past TWO LARGE SUITCASES and a DUFFEL BAG on a full-sized bed. To where HARRY EVANS sits.

SENIOR EDITOR (V.O.)

We think as the only living being to ever go to Venus and the way your "mission" looked to you at a time of some emotional maladjustment, you have a fascinating story to tell. One that could be enormously popular.

We hold on Harry, looking clean-cut and well-rested, at peace, reading from the letter in a wicker chair.

SENIOR EDITOR (V.O.)

I wish to thank you very much for sending your manuscript our way, and I offer my best regards to you and the woman, to whom the book is lovingly dedicated, your wife. Very truly yours, K. Martin Conrad, Senior Editor. cc: Dr. Claude Forrest

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PORTER (O.S.)
Is this everything, Captain?

EVANS
(caught off guard)
Huh?

Looking up, he sees that A PORTER from the Institute has entered the room. The Porter stands by the bed, ready to remove the SUITCASES.

EVANS (CONT'D)
(realizing)
Oh...yes, that should do it.

Grabbing the bags, the Porter heads to the door. Evans puts away the letter, picks up the duffel bag and follows him.

EXT. INSTITUTE COURTYARD -- CONTINUOUS

Evans heads through the courtyard, towards the lobby.

For a brief moment, Evans turns back towards the cottage.

EVANS' P.O.V.

...he sees the CAPTAIN watching him from the window for a brief FLASH...and then the Captain's gone.

Evans turns his head back around. Training his eyes forward, he continues on his path and doesn't look back again.

FADE OUT