

E N V O Y

by

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EXT. SPACE

CLOSE on a rocket panel - a NASA emblem emblazoned across it. The panel shakes violently - silent in space.

TITLE: AUGUST 20th, 1977.

Fire erupts from the propulsion module. A short, fierce burst before the engine cuts out.

The rocket separates and falls away, to reveal -

THE VOYAGER MISSION MODULE

A huge parabolic dish, antennas and scientific instruments stick out from its base.

CLOSE on the collar of the dish - the dish spins, displays an array of spectrometers, detectors and a GOLD DISC -

The Voyager Module shoots past us, disappears into darkness at eleven miles per second. Its journey just beginning.

A moment in the void, before Earth orbits into view. Heading towards us, on a collision course. Rotating, the sun shines on the USA, dusk in the Atlantic. We close in fast as...

Earth fills the frame, night falls over the Middle East and we DIVE INTO THE NIGHT ON IMPACT.

EXT. PALMYRA, SYRIA - HILLSIDE - NIGHT

A sky full of stars. Peaceful.

TITLE: PRESENT DAY.

NICK TAYLOR, 35, kneels between bushes. Dressed in US army camouflage, he's barely visible. Nick looks out, observes -

A desert landscape below. A town in ruins, a village in the foreground. A few farms still trying to make it.

Suddenly - BOMBS strafe low in the dark like comets. EXPLOSIONS and GUNFIRE in the town.

FINCH (O.S.)
Let's move.

The foliage around Nick comes alive as FIVE HEAVILY ARMED SOLDIERS emerge from cover. Nick moves off with them.

TITLE: PALMYRA, SYRIA. ISIS HELD TERRITORY.

EXT. PALMYRA, SYRIA - VILLAGE - SOON AFTER

The team (FINCH, VINSON, DALE, HARRIS and PUCKETT) move with stealth through an empty village. On high alert, guns up. The houses pockmarked with bullet holes.

Finch up front, Nick close behind. As they travel -

FINCH
Specialist Taylor, how many more
times we comin' out here?

NICK
For as long as he stays valuable.

FINCH
Yeah, but roughly?

HARRIS
Hey Nick, think you can get his
wife to give us dinner this time?

PUCKETT
Man, I don't know what the hell it
is she makes, but that stuff smells
delicious.

VINSON
It still ain't mac 'n' cheese.

FINCH
Hold.

The team freeze. Finch aims his rifle at a house up ahead - a ground floor window. Bullet holes around the frame.

A ragged curtain behind the window twitches.

Finch's finger slides down to the trigger.

The curtain sweeps aside - reveals a LITTLE GIRL peeking out, curious. Despite the conflict, people still live here.

Finch lowers his weapon.

FINCH (CONT'D)
Clear.

The team hustle to the end of a row of houses. Hold.

FIFTY YARDS AWAY - a farm house. A small patch of land surrounds it, troughs and flimsy wooden fences.. No animals.

The team move across open ground to the farm house.

FINCH (CONT'D)
(to Nick)
You got ten minutes, tops.

NICK
Copy that, Finch.

Finch, Vinson and Puckett take up defensive positions behind low stone walls, eyes on the village.

Nick, Harris and Dale enter the house.

INT. FARM HOUSE

Nick moves slowly through the darkness. Harris and Dale flank him, guns raised. Nick turns into the -

INT. FARM HOUSE - KITCHEN

Nick stops. Waits. A candle flickers to life. Illuminates a nervous face - SAYID, 40.

NICK
Salam Alaikum.

SAYID
Wa-Alaikum-as-Salaam.

Sayid puts the candle down on the table and takes a seat.

The flame strengthens, reveals a basic, well-used kitchen. An old fridge sits in the corner, pots and pans out on the side. Kitchen utensils hang from the wall.

Harris and Dale on guard. Nick sits opposite Sayid.. A pot of tea on the table between them. Sayid pours Nick a cup.

NICK
Where are your animals?

SAYID
They came for them. Took them.
Everything is getting worse. Not
better. Worse.

Sayid wrings his hands in agitation.

NICK
I am truly sorry. But, the more
information you can give me, the
better it will get.

Nick takes a sip of tea. Nods to Sayid - *it's good*.

SAYID

You have come to visit many times,
perhaps I have no more to say.

NICK

We are looking for a man named
Miran Kokash. He's a bomb maker. We
think a local family could be
sheltering him.

SAYID

If they are sheltering him, it is
against their will. This is what
they do, hold the people hostage in
their own homes.

NICK

We know that. When we find Kokash,
no harm will come to the family.
They won't be held responsible.

SAYID

You take one bomb maker, they make
another one.

NICK

Do you know where he is?

Suddenly - a CRUMPLING sound. Nick turns, sees Harris
unwrapping an energy bar. Nick's eyes widen, realizing -

NICK (CONT'D)

Sayid, where is your wife?

Sayid doesn't respond. He holds Nick's stare - a resigned
sadness in his eyes. Nick senses danger, grabs his radio.

NICK (INTO RADIO) (CONT'D)

Finch, we're blown. Repeat, we are
compromised.

Harris and Dale raise their guns at Sayid simultaneously.

FINCH (OVER RADIO)

Are we taking him with us?

NICK (INTO RADIO)

Affirmative.

Nick gets to his feet. Sayid stays seated, terrified.

SAYID

Please, I am no use to you. I
cannot help you anymore--

GUNSHOTS outside. Harris moves to the doorway, covers it.

FINCH (OVER RADIO)

No time for exfil. Dig in, we don't
know how many are coming. Pluto
this is Alpha Green One reporting
enemy contact, repeat--

FINCH (OVER RADIO) (CONT'D)
Alpha Green One reporting
enemy contact.

SAYID
They didn't just take my
animals.

Nick switches the channel on his radio.

NICK (INTO RADIO)

Pluto this is Alpha Green One
commencing informant relay, copy?

PLUTO (OVER RADIO)

Copy that, proceed.

Nick slams the radio down on the table between him and Sayid,
broadcasts their conversation back to base.

NICK

Sayid, you need to tell me
everything you know, right now.

SAYID

(crumbles)

They'll kill her, she's all I have
left. They killed our son, right in
front of us...

The sound of a FIRE FIGHT erupts outside. Intense.

FINCH (OVER RADIO)

Pluto this is Alpha Green One
requesting immediate QRF!

NICK

(focused)

Sayid look at me. I'm sorry about
your son. But your wife is already
dead. This is what they do. You
know this. You can't save her.

Sayid starts to cry.

NICK (CONT'D)

The fighters that have come for us,
they're here for you too. We're all
going to die tonight.

In the doorway - Harris is shot in the head, goes down. Dale hurries to replace him, aims his gun out the door.

Nick holds Sayid's eye, lays it out for him.

NICK (CONT'D)

But you can still make this right.
Save your village. Redeem yourself
with God. Tell me where Kokash is.

Dale FIRES through the doorway, the enemy closing in.

Sayid nods. He leans down to the radio, speaks fast -

SAYID

The Homs family have two fighters,
Nasser, Ismat, Fakrhi are all
shelter--

Suddenly - a grenade CLATTERS across the floor. Sayid whips around off the sound as Dale lunges for it.

DALE

Take cover!

NICK

SAYID!

Sayid's close to losing it, but keeps going -

SAYID

Kokesh is at Youssef's market--

Dale hurls the grenade back towards the window - too late.

The grenade EXPLODES.

Nick and Sayid are thrown back. A violent blast of debris and dust as a wall comes down. Nick hits the ground hard.

Dale's body lies mangled, closest to the explosion.

Nick comes around. He looks over to Sayid on the floor. Sayid's eyes are glazed. He's dead. Then he looks to...

NICK

Dale?! DALE!

But Dale's gone. Nick looks defeated, until he hears -

PLUTO (OVER RADIO)
QRF inbound, hold position, copy.

Nick sees his radio lies a few yards away. He tries to move, CRIES OUT in pain. He stretches his arm out, his fingers just brush the radio. Can't reach it as...

Another grenade is hurled through the window. It rolls across the floor, comes to rest by Dale's body.

Nick stares at the grenade defiantly. Beat... it EXPLODES.

EXT. FORT BRAGG - DAY

The largest army base in the USA..

MAJOR BROWN (O.S.)
We got six inbound from Kobani --
only one survivor.

INT. FORT BRAGG - CORRIDOR - SAME

MAJOR BROWN, 41, briefs his superior, GENERAL ANDERSON, 62, as they move swiftly down the corridor.

GENERAL ANDERSON
Critical?

MAJOR BROWN
He'll survive. It's one of my
military intelligence officers..
Specialist Nick Taylor.

Anderson turns to Brown, shocked.

GENERAL ANDERSON
Taylor? God dammit.

They keep walking.

INT. MILITARY CARGO PLANE - SAME

Nick is strapped to a gurney. Seriously injured, in a back brace, his face busted up. A NURSE sits by Nick, checks the intravenous drip into his arm. The plane RUMBLES, taxiing.

MAJOR BROWN (V.O.)
His whole team were killed. But the
intelligence he was able to gather
during the fire fight was
instrumental to reclaiming Palmyra.

Nick turns his head, looks across the cargo bay to see -

Five flag-draped coffins. The bodies of his team returning home with him.

GENERAL ANDERSON (V.O.)

That doesn't surprise me, he was
always one of your best. How
serious is it?

MAJOR BROWN (V.O.)

Fractured vertebrae, ruptured
spleen, head injury - the list goes
on. He'll never return to active
duty.

The plane's rear cargo hatch WHIRS open, lets in bright
sunlight. The Nurse unlocks the wheels on Nick's gurney.

INT. FORT BRAGG - CORRIDOR

Brown and Anderson push through double doors, out onto a -

EXT. FORT BRAGG - LANDING STRIP

FIVE FAMILIES watch the cargo plane, waiting. Brown and
Anderson stand apart. Shout over the noise of the plane -

GENERAL ANDERSON

I'm sorry, Major. What a God damn
shame. When Nick recovers, get him
teaching, training our specialist
recruits.

MAJOR BROWN

Yes sir.

They watch as Nick is pushed on the gurney down the cargo
plane ramp, out onto the landing strip.

Travelling - Nick looks over at the families. His face
screws up, blinded by the sun. Suddenly, a WOMAN WAILS.

The coffins of their loved ones are being unloaded.

Nick watches a YOUNG BOY. The Boy holds his MOM'S hand,
looks up at her. His world falling apart.

The Nurse wheels Nick away from the families, towards a
building. No one there for Nick.

The plane RUMBLES louder over the Woman's CRIES, CRESCENDOES.

INT. FORT BRAGG - WOMACK ARMY MEDICAL CENTER - ROOM - DAY

CLOSE on a TV SCREEN: *News coverage of the war in Syria. A REPORTER stands on the Turkish border.*

REPORTER

Literally thousands of refugees are pouring through the Syrian border into Turkey on a daily basis. It's clear that while battles for Syrian towns and territories are being won, the war as a whole rages on.

Watching the TV, we find Nick sitting on the edge of a bed. Recovered and fully dressed, a packed duffel bag at his feet.

TITLE: FOUR MONTHS LATER

A DOCTOR enters, scans his clipboard. Nick turns off the TV.

DOCTOR

Specialist Taylor, you're finally leaving us.

NICK

Yes I am.

The Doctor holds out pills to Nick. He takes them.

DOCTOR

Painkillers. Let me know when you run out, you will need more. If anything changes, if you have any concerns about your recovery, come see me. And take it easy for a few months, don't stretch yourself-

Nick LAUGHS a little, grabs up his duffel bag.

NICK

...there's no chance of that.

INT. FORT BRAGG - NICK'S ACCOMMODATION - MINUTES LATER

The door opens, shifts a mound of letters that have built up behind it. Nick enters, shuts the door.

Nick's place is functional and sparsely decorated. Picture frames with photos of Nick with a WOMAN are covered in dust.

INT. FORT BRAGG - NICK'S ACCOMMODATION - BATHROOM - LATER

Nick stands in the shower, naked. He leans forward, lets the water pummel him. No motivation to do anything else.

MOMENTS LATER

Nick wipes the steam from the mirror and stares at his body. SCARS from the grenade explosion cover his lean torso.

Determined, Nick lifts his arm slowly. He reaches shoulder height, then starts to shake. Pain etched over his face.

INT. FORT BRAGG - NICK'S ACCOMMODATION - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Nick sits on the couch, goes through a ton of mail. He rips open an envelope, scans the letter inside - stops him cold.

MOMENTS LATER

Nick's on the phone. Holds the letter out in front of him.

THE LETTER: the top line reads: **your credit card payments are overdue**. A red **final warning** stamp across the page.

NICK (INTO PHONE)

It's a joint card with my ex-wife!
She told me she'd sent you the
paperwork to cancel the card.

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (FROM PHONE)

Um, I've got no record of that
here. All I can see is that the
account's overdue.

NICK (INTO PHONE)

(rubs temples)
How quickly can you shut the
account?

CUSTOMER SERVICE GUY (FROM PHONE)

Once we receive the paperwork it'll
take ten working days. We'll also
need you to settle the balance to
close the account, so remember to
enclose a check.

MOMENTS LATER

Nick yanks a photo of him with his ex-wife from a frame. He pins the photo to the dartboard that hangs on the back of the door. Snatches a dart from a jar full of darts and pens.

He takes aim with the dart, throws it -- and hits the image of himself in the head. He grabs another dart.

Nick throws the dart hard -- it misses the photo, embeds in the door and Nick YELLS in pain. Reaches down to his back.

Nick pulls the painkillers from his pocket, quickly tips out two and swallows them.

INT. FORT BRAGG - CLASSROOM - DAY

Nick sits on a small table, completely at ease. He faces a class of FORTY YOUNG RECRUITS.

COLONEL DURAN, 48, studies Nick from the back of the class. A fair-minded authority - but one you wouldn't want to cross.

NICK

Today we're gonna start with an easy one. What do you have in common with a terrorist? Hands up.

Confused glances between Recruits. BLOND RECRUIT slowly raises his hand. Nick points at him.

BLOND RECRUIT

Is it a trick question, sir? We're nothing like terrorists.

NICK

You sure about that? If you've got nothing in common, what are you gonna talk about with him? And in most cases, it will be a him.

Nick gets off the table. He could teach this in his sleep.

NICK (CONT'D)

It is vital that you find a connection between you and your enemy in order to build a rapport. Raise your hand if you drink tea.

Amused expressions from the Recruits. All hands stay down.

NICK (CONT'D)

No, why would you? I hate tea. But that's what the Pashtun leaders in Afghanistan drink, so you'd better learn not only to like it, but to tell the difference between a bad cup and a good cup.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
Unless coffee's more your thing, in
which case get yourself assigned to
Istanbul.

A smattering of LAUGHS from the Recruits. Duran too.

JIM, 52, pushes through the door. Dressed in civilian
clothes, he looks like a cowboy. Jim tips his hat to Nick.
He nods back and motions the Recruits toward Jim.

NICK (CONT'D)
Now he may not look like it, but
Jim over here is an informant. Or
at least, he'll be playing one
today in this next exercise.

Jim takes a seat by the small table.

NICK (CONT'D)
I need a volunteer.

Every hand goes up, eager. Nick points at a LANKY RECRUIT.

NICK (CONT'D)
You. Come up front.

The Lanky Recruit gets up, shimmies out of his row. Nervous,
his hands ball up at his sides. He goes to sit opposite Jim -

NICK (CONT'D)
And now we're all dead.

LANKY RECRUIT
But I didn't say anything--

NICK
You didn't have to. Your body
language was unsure, hostile. You
trust this guy, that he's a genuine
informant? He could be a terrorist,
playing you. Conversing with the
enemy isn't all about what you say.
Thank you for playing.

Nick gestures to him - *back to your seat.*

The Lanky Recruit goes back, disappointed. Others SNICKER.

NICK (CONT'D)
Someone else.

Major Brown appears in the doorway. Nick spots Brown -
confused at his presence. He follows Brown's eye line to
Colonel Duran at the back of the room.

Duran's looking at Nick. He holds Nick's eye for a moment, then breaks out a smile. Duran nods to Brown.

MAJOR BROWN
(to the class)
OK you're dismissed! Time for PT!

Duran stays at the back while the Recruits file out. Brown glances at Nick - hard to read - then leaves them alone.

NICK
What can I do for you? Colonel...?

Duran rises, steps towards Nick.

COLONEL DURAN
Duran. Thanks for the class. When Major Brown told me that his best elite intelligence officer was out of the field, teaching on base, I just had to come and check you out.

NICK
Did you enjoy the show?

COLONEL DURAN
This must feel like a step down for you. I mean, compared to what you used to do. Still feel like you're making a difference?

NICK
(smarts)
Teaching other people how to do my job is not doing my job.

COLONEL DURAN
Maybe you're a little bored too? A man with your skills, you're not gonna find any challenges on base.

NICK
What's the job?

Duran grins - Nick is as sharp as he'd expected.

COLONEL DURAN
It comes with criteria. The job is only available to candidates with the highest security clearance. We're looking for someone with the best relationship-building and influencing skills.
(MORE)

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
The job involves significant travel, so if you're thinking of settling down, having a family one day, then it's not for you. If selected, you'd have to start in two weeks.

NICK
What's the objective?

COLONEL DURAN
Same as always. Protecting people, safeguarding lives. Gotta warn you though, the selection process will be tough, there's no guaran--

NICK
--I'm in.

EXT. SKY - EVENING

In an orange sky - a Black Hawk WHOMPS up into cloud.

INT. BLACK HAWK HELICOPTER - MOVING - SAME

Nick and Duran wear aviation headsets, sit opposite each other. Nick gazes -

THROUGH THE WINDOW - the cloud breaks, revealing a red sun setting on the horizon.

Duran studies Nick. Nick's eyes are sharp - revitalized.

COLONEL DURAN
Don't you wanna ask me any questions? About the job?

NICK
Why? You're gonna tell me anyway.

A smile curls on Duran's lips.

EXT. LITTLE ROCK AIRFORCE BASE, JACKSONVILLE - NIGHT

The helicopter lands at a small base.

Nick and Duran climb out, move towards a building. Eerie, no one around.

NICK
This place been mothballed?

COLONEL DURAN
Nope. It's been cleared for us,
just for today.

NICK
Just us? How romantic...

INT. LITTLE ROCK AIRFORCE BASE - BRIEFING ROOM - SAME

A large, windowless room. EIGHT CANDIDATES sit waiting. TWO GOVERNMENT MEN and FOUR SOLDIERS hover at the periphery.

The Candidates turn as Duran enters, followed by Nick.

Duran strides to the front.

Nick sits, glances around. The other Candidates are men and women, some casually dressed, some professional. A real mix.

Duran stands in front of a screen, addresses the room.

COLONEL DURAN
For those of you who don't know me,
I am Colonel Duran. You're here
because you've been selected as the
very best candidates for a job. A
mission. But if, after this
briefing, you don't want to take
part in the selection process,
you're free to leave. Everyone in
this room has the highest security
level clearance, so it goes without
saying that everything said in this
room stays in this room. And quite
frankly, if you ever repeat
anything I'm about to tell you, no
one will believe you anyway.

Nick watches the other Candidates exchange curious looks.

Duran flips on the screen, briefs them over video footage.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
Forty years ago, we sent a message
into space aboard the Voyager
probe.. A golden record containing
information about our planet and a
welcome to alien life.

ON SCREEN: Grainy film footage shows *SCIENTISTS* prepare the golden record - a gold disc with phonographic markings on, about the size of a vinyl album. The Voyager II spacecraft launches at Cape Canaveral in 1977, carrying the record.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
Two years ago, we got a response.
First contact has happened.

The news ignites reactions and WHISPERS around the room.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
We received a capsule containing an
extra-terrestrial version of our
golden record.

ON SCREEN: *past news coverage of an explosion at the Cape.*

The Candidates gape at Duran. MIGUEL, 34, suit and tie,
shakes his head.

MIGUEL
Wait, I saw that on the news. It
was a rocket malfunction.

COLONEL DURAN
No. It was an impact. They sent
their record in direct reply to
ours.

REESE, 28, a no-nonsense woman with cropped hair, follows up.

REESE
How is that even possible? The
technology to send a craft all the
way to our planet would be
advanced, yeah, but with that sort
of accuracy? No way. How?

COLONEL DURAN
Our science team at the selection
facility will be better placed to
answer that question. This is
classified military footage of the
recovery.

ON SCREEN: *Floodlights illuminate a TEAM in hazmat suits,
some carrying guns, as they recover a grey capsule the size
of a bicycle from a crater at Cape Canaveral.*

Nick leans forward, soaking in the footage.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
A team recovered a capsule,
containing their message to Earth.
The alien's record is made of a
unique material we've never seen
before that, according to our top
scientists, we don't have on Earth.

ON SCREEN: *Classified lab footage of the capsule being opened
- a metallic-looking oblong retrieved from inside.*

An ASIAN WOMAN scoffs.

ASIAN WOMAN

Aliens? Are you kidding us, sir?

COLONEL DURAN

Get used to that word - alien -
it's not science fiction anymore.

NICK

What does their record say,
Colonel? What's the message?

COLONEL DURAN

Over the last two years, the US
government has been learning from
their record and preparing to take
them up on their offer.

(beat, to everyone)

They want to send a representative,
an envoy, to Earth. In exchange,
they would like us to send an envoy
of our own, to represent the human
species on their planet. This is
the job on offer. We only have two
weeks to select our envoy. It will
be one of you.

Heavy silence fills the room. Nick's eyes widen.

NICK

(on breath)
...holy shit.

TOBY, 29, full of nervous energy, speaks up.

TOBY

Uh, assuming this is all real, why
have you left it so late to
recruit? I mean, two weeks notice--

COLONEL DURAN

--If we'd done this a year ago
that's a long time for someone to
keep this secret, to over think it
and change their minds. Plus, it
gave us more time to make sure we
had the right people in the room.

He glances to the two Government Men at the side of the room,
clear they were part of the selection process.

BALD MAN

So if we get the job, we go to an alien planet, and never come back?

COLONEL DURAN

Correct.

BALD MAN

But what about our families, wives--

COLONEL DURAN

Every Candidate has no family, little family or estranged family.

The Bald Man shifts in his seat, uncomfortable.

JEN, 30, vest top and jeans, leans forward in her seat. Confident, in control. Beauty beneath a steely gaze.

JEN

What's the job's objective?

Nick looks over at Jen - she's thinking the same way he thinks. She looks back, they hold each other's eye a moment.

COLONEL DURAN

Your first objective is to convince me that I can trust you with the lives of eight billion people. Because in the extra-terrestrials eyes, that's what you'll stand for.

A PRIVATE appears in the doorway. Duran spots him.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

Each one of you needs to decide, right now, if you want to be considered for this mission. If you're in, follow the private to the transport. You'll be briefed fully at the selection facility. If you're out, then this briefing never happened. I think you can all guess the consequences of talking about this to anyone else.

Duran moves to the two Government Men, hushed conversation.

The Candidates stay seated, exchange looks of disbelief when -

A SCREECH from a chair turns heads. Duran and the others see Nick already standing. Duran flashes a smile as Nick moves to the door with purpose. Nick's surprised to find -

Jen walking closely behind. She smiles as she passes him -

JEN
Let's see where this rabbit hole
goes.

EXT. LITTLE ROCK AIRFORCE BASE, JACKSONVILLE - NIGHT

Duran, Nick, Jen, Reese, Miguel and Toby hurry across the asphalt, climb into a chinook. Rotors already spinning.

INT. CHINOOK - MOVING

Nick, Jen and Duran sit on a bench seat facing the other three Candidates. They all wear aviation headsets. Quiet as the mission sinks in. Faces of excitement, terror and angst.

Toby TAPS away on his electronic tablet. Miguel eyes him.

MIGUEL
You taking notes?

TOBY
(self-conscious)
There's a lot to take in. Helps me
remember things.

Miguel CHUCKLES.

TOBY (CONT'D)
How about we get to know each
other? If we're gonna be together
for the next two weeks...

Jen raises an eyebrow. Not here to make friends.

TOBY (CONT'D)
I'm Toby Quinn. I work for DARPA.

MIGUEL
I'm Miguel Hodges. US Ambassador.

JEN
Jen Hurrie. CIA.

REESE
Reese Porter, NASA. Astronaut.

Toby looks impressed. He looks to Nick, expectant.

NICK
Nick Taylor. Army.

TOBY
Army? That's it, just 'army'?

Nick grins, not giving anything else away.

COLONEL DURAN
Nick's a military intelligence officer.

NICK
You wanna give all my cards away for me, Colonel?

COLONEL DURAN
This isn't poker.

NICK
Yeah. I can tell you've never played before.

Duran smirks.

MIGUEL
Colonel, how do we know that this really is first contact--

TOBY
Do any other countries know about this?

COLONEL DURAN
No, just the US.

REESE
I'd like to know how, exactly, we're gonna get to their planet--

COLONEL DURAN
We'll tell you everything we know. But I wanna be clear - at this moment, we don't have all the answers.

JEN
How about proof?

Duran eyes her. The question hangs in the air as -

EXT. SKY - CHINOOK - NIGHT

The chinook swoops through a valley. Snowy wilderness.

EXT. SELECTION CENTER - NIGHT

A mothballed military training base surrounded by forest.
The chinook comes in to land.

Nick steps out onto the pad. Scans his surroundings - spots
the twelve foot high perimeter fence topped with razor wire.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Duran leads the Candidates swiftly through the center. Busy
throughout with STAFF. SOLDIERS on security at every door.

COLONEL DURAN

This place used to be an army
training base in the eighties, been
brought back up to spec
specifically for this mission.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL

The group walk through a huge, dated canteen. Eight long
tables with benches, half-filled with STAFF on downtime.

COLONEL DURAN

This will be your home for the next
two weeks.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - LIVING QUARTERS

Empty and sparsely furnished, a long way from home comfort.

COLONEL DURAN (O.S.)

Barracks.

Duran leads the group in, heads straight through another
door. Miguel and Toby rubberneck, hurry to keep up.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - CORRIDOR

A YOUNG SOLDIER sees Duran coming, swipes an access card
through an entry panel and holds the door open. The group
walk through, into -

INT. SELECTION CENTER - SCIENCE WING

A high-tech space. Futuristic compared to the tired 80s look
of the rest of the center. SCIENTISTS & TECHS hard at work.

RICK MALONE, 42, and MIKE HERNANDEZ, 46, move to meet them.

COLONEL DURAN
(to the Candidates)
This is Rick Malone, JSOC...

Malone barely nods in greeting, stone faced.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
...and Mike Hernandez, SETI--

MIKE
The Search for Extra-Terrestrial
Intelligence. Not that we're
searching any more. So happy to
meet you all. But only one of you
is gonna make history.
(excited)
I guess you wanna see it, right?

Beat - what does he mean, 'it'?! Nick and Jen trade looks.

MOMENTS LATER

THROUGH A GLASS WALL - SCIENTISTS work in a sealed lab full
of diagnostic equipment. On a central bench, the metallic
oblong from the briefing video - the ALIEN'S GOLDEN RECORD.

Nick and the group peer in through the glass. Up close, the
alien's record is covered in etchings and surface marks.

MIKE (CONT'D)
The record is packed with
scientific information, all
pertaining to their planet. There's
also math, a puzzle that my team
are currently deciphering. We've
put everything from the alien's
record onto data sticks so you can
get familiar with it.

A nervous coder, GARY, 22, hands out data sticks.

NICK
I'd like a copy of the record we
sent too, for comparison.

MIKE
My team already did a comparison,
but if you think that'd be useful--

JEN
Me too.

Nick catches Jen's eye - *he's got competition.*

MIGUEL

Even if we learn everything they've sent, how are we going to communicate with them? We can't learn a new language in two weeks.

MIKE

(grins)

You won't have to.

Miguel's eyes narrow, confused.

MALONE (O.S.)

They sent their record in English.

The Candidates turn to Malone - *he must be joking.* Only Reese nods, as if a light bulb's just switched on.

REESE

That makes perfect sense. We sent instructions for how to learn basic English on our golden record, and every TV and radio transmission since World War Two has been broadcast out into space too.

GARY

The first season of Game of Thrones has just left our solar system.

NICK

Let's hope they're not watching that.

REESE

It figures that a race advanced enough to send a message directly to our planet would be advanced enough to learn our language.

NICK

America is the world's greatest military power, it makes sense they'd want to talk to us first.

Malone glances at Duran - *this guy's impressive.* But Mike's brow furrows - *Nick's on the wrong track.*

MIKE

We don't know that they're aware of that. And even if they were, we don't believe that's the case.

NICK

Why? If this race are advanced enough to do all of this, why do they want to talk to us? How do we know they're friendly?

COLONEL DURAN

The record isn't all they sent.

CUT TO:

A SEALED GLASS CYLINDER

sits in the middle of the room.

Inside the cylinder - a BLACK ORB the size of a soccer ball. Smooth. Threaded with silver veins, like a chunk of rock.

MIKE (O.S.)

(proud)

This is their gift to us.

The group gather around the cylinder, examine the orb inside.

NICK

What is it?

MIKE

It took us a little while to find that out. What you're looking at is a device that converts one kind of chemical - and not just elements, compounds too - into another. Six months ago we figured out how to use it, so far we've successfully converted methane into oxygen.

REESE

By-product?

MIKE

Nothing. It's a totally clean conversion.

JEN

You're saying this orb could clean the air?

MIKE

Combat climate change, even reverse it! And that's just the beginning--

MIGUEL

It could save our planet.

Nick paces, mind racing. He brings the group back to Earth.

NICK

How could they have known we needed this device? Just from watching all the TV we send into space? If they are receiving those broadcasts, then they must know a lot about us.

MIKE

What are you getting at?

NICK

What we have from them is comparatively little compared to what they have on us. It just seems like we're on the back foot here.

Duran nods, steps closer to Nick.

COLONEL DURAN

I understand what you're saying. And you're right, so our approach will be cautious. But these beings are clearly more advanced than us. If they were going to attack us, why bother sending a message, a gift, why not just do it already?

Nick doesn't have an answer. Duran addresses the Candidates.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

The greatest threat to the envoy mission is us, if we fuck it up. The selection process starts now.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - GYM - DAY

TITLE: DAYS TO MISSION - THIRTEEN.

A lab crossed with a gym - seven treadmills, each surrounded by monitoring kit. The Candidates wear exercise gear, stand with a MEDICAL TRAINER.

Reese makes an aside to the others -

REESE

I've done this before at NASA. How long can you run for?

The Medical Trainer scans his clipboard.

MEDICAL TRAINER

Oh no, you won't be running. Just walking.

(to the group)

In an environment with twice the gravity of our planet, breathing half the oxygen we have in our atmosphere..

Reese's face falls.

LATER

Soaked in sweat, Jen walks on her treadmill. Earphones in, listening to MUSIC. A respirator covers her nose and mouth.

Nick grimaces, tough going on his treadmill. He winces, pulls the respirator up onto his head and takes a painkiller.

Jen eyes Nick, sees him take the pills. In the bg - Miguel stumbles off his treadmill and throws up.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - DAY

The Candidates push their trays along the counter, get lunch. Jen watches Nick go sit down to eat. She leans in to Toby.

JEN

Hey, do you know what Nick's deal is? What's with the pills?

Toby glances back, sees Nick's out of earshot.

TOBY

It's Vicodin. His team got attacked out in Syria, Nick broke his back in a grenade explosion. Only survivor.

JEN

No way.

TOBY

Yeah. He spent a month in a back brace, couple more learning to walk again. Just five months ago.

JEN

You're kidding me?! How do you know all this, did he tell you?

Toby smirks.

TOBY

I work for DARPA, I'm a tech specialist. Didn't take much to break into his file online.

(off look)

Hey, it's a competition right?

He looks down at the chicken salad on Jen's tray.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Maybe have some beans too, keep on top of that anaemia.

He walks off with his tray, leaves Jen speechless.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

Nick sits on a medical bed. A band tight around his arm just above the elbow, his blood being taken by a YOUNG NURSE. DR. LEE, 37, reads over Nick's medical file.

The Young Nurse pulls the needle from Nick's arm - blood flows out of the vein - she hurries for cotton wool - not fast enough. Drops of Nick's blood spot the floor.

Dr. Lee looks up and TUTS.

DR. LEE

You've done this before right?

The Young Nurse looks horrified.

YOUNG NURSE

Yes. I-I'm sorry, doctor.

Her hands shake as she sticks a band aid on Nick's arm.

NICK

(jokes with her)

It's OK, you're not the first woman to be distracted by my good looks.

She glances up from cleaning the floor, they share a smile.

DR. LEE

Not good enough. You're dismissed.

The Young Nurse finishes cleaning up and scoots. Dr.. Lee reads off Nick's file -

DR. LEE (CONT'D)

So you're on two Vicodin every six hours, no other medication?

NICK

Correct.

DR. LEE

Hand them in, you can't have those.

NICK

(taken aback)

Doc, I'm a few months out from a major field injury--

DR. LEE

(holds his hand out)

They won't have painkillers in space.

Reluctantly, Nick digs into his pocket and hands the painkillers over.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - DAY

Nick works on a laptop. He jolts suddenly - pain spasms through his back. Staff at other tables shoot him looks.

Nick rubs his face, tries to focus on his work.

ON LAPTOP SCREEN: Nick clicks through folders; **chemistry, geology, atmosphere** - the science of the alien's planet.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - ROLE PLAY ROOM - DAY

CELIA JONES, 50, stern, sits facing the Candidates. An empty seat in front of her. Duran and Malone hang back.

CELIA

My name is Celia Jones. Spent twenty years running black ops interrogation for the CIA, JSOC - parts of the US government you've never even heard of. In this room we're gonna role play conversations - what you plan to say to this new species. The Colonel says you're the best influencing specialists the USA has to offer... but I doubt you'll impress me as easily.

Nick looks to Duran - Duran returns a sly smile.

Celia beckons Jen, indicates the empty seat. Jen sits.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Go ahead.

JEN

How long would you like the exchange to be?

CELIA

We can't be sure they know the difference between length as a distance and length as a period of time.

Jen takes this in. Tries again.

JEN

What would your envoy like to do on Earth?

CELIA

Not specific enough.

Jen EXHALES, frustrated.

MINUTES LATER

Nick now sits where Jen was, opposite Celia.

NICK

What is your name?

CELIA

Good.

Nick waits. Doesn't say anything. After a moment -

CELIA (CONT'D)

Continue.

NICK

A conversation is a two way thing, I'm waiting for your question.

CELIA

That's not how this is going to work.

NICK

How do you know?

Celia holds his eye. Nick relents.

NICK (CONT'D)

Tell me about your planet.

CELIA
We already have that information.

NICK
No you don't. You don't know how
they live, how their society works.
All you have is the science.

CELIA
Ask a question.

NICK
If you've got so much experience
why aren't you going for the job?

CELIA
(doesn't miss a beat)
My kids would miss me.

NICK
You sure about that?

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - NIGHT

The song MELANCHOLY BLUES by Louis Armstrong & his Hot Seven
plays from laptop speakers.

Just a few lights on. The mess is empty apart from Nick, who
sits in front of a laptop. Head in his hands, troubled.

Jen wanders in. A towel around her shoulders, fresh from the
gym. Nick glances up.

NICK
Hey.

JEN
Hi. This off our golden record?

NICK
Yep. Wonder how they reacted when
they heard it for the first time.

Jen pours herself a glass of water.

JEN
Maybe they'll tell us.
(senses Nick's unease)
What's up?

Nick leans back on the bench.

NICK

All the music, art, pictures of
life, animals, buildings... the
lion's roar, the sound of thunder -
we sent so much and they sent back
so little.

Jen sits next to Nick.

JEN

(teases)

So because they don't have a
Picasso, you're gonna hold that
against them?

Nick grins at her, devilish.

NICK

I guess not.

JEN

Nick, can I ask you a question?

She looks at Nick, sincere. He nods - *yeah of course.*

JEN (CONT'D)

Why do you want this so bad?

NICK

You kidding me? The chance to--

JEN

No, Nick. I mean really..

Nick considers Jen. Decides to level with her.

NICK

The feeling. Having a high stakes
conversation, it almost feels like
chess. The most dangerous, verbal
game of chess you can play. And I'm
good at it. When I finally get that
one piece of information that I
know is the prize-

JEN

It's the thrill.

NICK

Nothing like it. And if I do my job
right, I achieve something
important. I save lives.

JEN
How many lives?

Nick's brow furrows, surprised at the question.

NICK
What, how many lives have I saved?

JEN
Yeah.

NICK
Been working in elite army
intelligence for over ten years.
Preventing suicide bombings
alone... hundreds, probably more.

JEN
Really?

NICK
Yeah. But then I got injured, got
stuck teaching recruits. This
mission, being the envoy, it's my
only way back in to doing my job.

JEN
I'm sorry. Man, that's tough.
Especially, you know, cos I'm gonna
get the job...

NICK
(grins)
So how about you, why do you want
it? I'm gonna say that it's
personal for you. You feel driven
by something more than ambition.

JEN
Damn, you are good at this.

She sips from her glass of water, holds eye contact.

JEN (CONT'D)
I don't want it to save lives. I
want it for the people I've lost.

She puts her glass down and lifts her top a little to show
her hip - reveals a tattoo of three black stars.

JEN (CONT'D)
One for each of my friends, my
colleagues.
(MORE)

JEN (CONT'D)

My only family, really, all total
badasses killed in the field..
Stars on my body to match their
stars on the wall at Langley.

NICK

I'm sorry.

Nick looks up at Jen - their faces close.

JEN

Don't be. Their lives meant
something and still do. Reminds me
of what's at stake.

They hold here for a moment. Close enough to feel each
other's breath, close enough to....

Nick turns away. He shuts his laptop, and with it, the music
ends. He moves to leave.

NICK

Better get some sleep.

JEN

...right.

Jen grabs her glass of water and gets up to go.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - SCIENCE WING - DAY

Mike stands in front of a white board, briefs the Candidates.
Gary assists. Duran and Malone hang at the back and watch.

MIKE

When you're on the alien's planet
you'll need to keep both written
and audio diaries. We don't know
how you will report this
information back to us yet but the
aliens clearly have advanced tech -
influence them to let you use it.

JEN

How will we survive there?

COLONEL DURAN (O.S.)

That's second phase information,
for whoever's chosen as the envoy.

Nick glances back at Duran, then catches Jen's eye -
information is being withheld.

NICK

What could the aliens be like, what will we be looking at?

GARY

It's likely that they'll be post-biological, evolved to machine-like beings as they became more advanced and began to engineer their own evolution.

MIGUEL

Like a robot?

GARY

No, like artificial intelligence.

MIKE

And as well as being a kind of AI, they could have no form, no body at all. Some research suggests that advanced alien civilizations could be pure energy beings.

TOBY

So it'll be like trying to have a conversation with a light bulb.

A smattering of CHUCKLES and smiles.

NICK

Do you have any ideas of how that kind of life form would communicate?

GARY

Energy beings? Just theories, guesses, uh, we're in the dark on that one.

LATER

Gary sits at his computer, the brief finished. Nick walks up behind him, glances at Gary's screen.

ON SCREEN: A basic game, crude spaceships zoom across the screen. A red and a blue player compete to blow them up.

NICK

Hey. Gary, right?

Gary spins around, skittish.

GARY
Yeah, yeah I'm Gary.

NICK
(off computer screen)
What are you working on?

GARY
This? Oh it's nothing.

Nick winces, sits down.

NICK
Looks interesting.

Gary's eyes widen, flattered.

GARY
Thanks. It's just a game I made. I
code - create artificial
intelligence algorithms. I'm
playing against my latest one.
(embarrassed)
The, um, algorithm is winning.

NICK
That's pretty cool. Can I play?

GARY
Yeah, yeah of course. You're red.

Gary moves over, Nick sits in his place. Nick focuses on the screen, taps keys.

ON SCREEN: Nick's red player destroys spaceships - but not as fast as the blue player - the algorithm - does.

NICK
How does it know how to play?

GARY
It doesn't. I set it an objective,
to win the game, then just let it
play. It learns by trial and error,
figures it out for itself.

Nick studies the screen, fascinated.

ON SCREEN: The blue player moves lightning fast, zaps the remaining spaceships. **Game Over** flashes up - Nick's lost.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - NIGHT

Nick, Toby, Miguel and Reese eat dinner together. Techs, Scientists and a contingent of Soldiers sit at other tables. A handful of GOVERNMENT MEN - new faces eye the Candidates.

REESE

(to Miguel)

All I'm saying is you've gotta be
fit enough to go to this planet--

MIGUEL

So you're better than me at
fitness. Maybe I'm better than you
at other things, huh?

Jen puts her plate of pasta on the table, sits next to Nick.

JEN

Whoever's right for the job is
gonna get the job, so let's stop
busting each other's balls, huh?

Reese glares. Rises and takes her plate with her.

REESE

I'm done.

She dumps her plate in the serving area and walks out.

JEN

Something I said?

Nick and Jen share a smile.

Miguel looks after Reese. He rubs his ring finger,
absentminded. Nick notices, gestures to him.

NICK

What's up?

Miguel looks to Nick, realizes what he was doing.

MIGUEL

They took my wedding ring.

NICK

(frowns)

You're married?

MIGUEL

Uh, widowed. You?

NICK
Divorced.

JEN
Me too.
(off Nick's surprise)
When you get divorced, your ex-wife
does too.

NICK
Yeah I know, you just seem a little
young.

JEN
No one's too young for Vegas. Let
me guess, high school sweetheart?

NICK
Bar. Happy hour.

A flirtatious smile between them. Nick nods to Miguel -

NICK (CONT'D)
So why'd they take your ring?

MIGUEL
Said if I was chosen as the envoy I
can't take it with me.

JEN
They said the same thing about my
music, took that off me second day
here.

TOBY
Made me hand in all my electronics.

JEN
Bet they took something from Reese
too, probably why she's cranky.

Nick chews, thinks on it.

NICK
Seems like there's a lot of stuff
you can't have in space.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - GYM - DAY

TITLE: DAYS TO MISSION - NINE.

Nick's drenched in sweat. He wears his respirator, trudges on the treadmill. He grips the treadmill bar, his knuckles white. Suffering without his painkillers.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

Dr. Lee takes Nick's blood pressure.

DR. LEE
How do you feel physically?

NICK
In agonizing pain.
(off look)
Nothing new. How do you feel?

Dr. Lee scowls at the question.

DR. LEE
That's irrelevant.

NICK
To the mission, yeah. To you, no.
When I see someone snap, overreact
like you did with that nurse,
there's usually something else
going on beneath the surface.

Dr. Lee glowers at Nick, rips the blood pressure cuff off his arm and turns away.

NICK (CONT'D)
Listen, if you wanna keep your head
down and just get through the job,
that's fine. But if you want to
talk, you can talk to me. This
whole mission is top secret.
Nothing'll ever leave this room.

With his back to Nick, Dr.. Lee looks tempted.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - ROLE PLAY ROOM - DAY

Nick sits opposite Celia, rattles through his questions. The other Candidates watch on.

NICK
What is your energy source?

CELIA
Good.

NICK
How does it work?

CELIA
Good.

NICK
Can we use it?

CELIA
Good.

Celia almost cracks a smile. Nick eyeballs her.

NICK
No. None of those questions are
good.

Nick gets up and walks out, limps slightly.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

A conference table surrounded by executive chairs, a flat screen at the head of the room. Mike and Duran stand alone.

They speak low, Duran's heated.

COLONEL DURAN
So how close are you? Give me a
number - hours, days?

Mike holds his hands up, submissive. Under pressure.

MIKE
We're getting there.. My
mathematicians and cryptanalysts
are working hard on it, we've got
the best people-

COLONEL DURAN
Mike, I've got Malone up my ass
every day about this. That math
problem is the last piece of
information we don't have..

MIKE
I know.

COLONEL DURAN
Assign more staff to it. This
mission will go ahead whether you
solve the puzzle or not, it's
imperative we know what it says.

A KNOCK at the door. Duran EXHALES.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

Come in!

(off Nick in the doorway)

Nick. What can we do for you?

Mike seizes his chance to escape, hurries past Nick as Nick moves into the room. Nick moves slow, hides his limp.

NICK

I'd like a clearer objective. If I know the end game, what we want to achieve specifically, I can do better.

COLONEL DURAN

Your primary objective is to establish a relationship.

NICK

Why?

Duran almost laughs, surprised by the question..

COLONEL DURAN

Why?!

NICK

Nobody makes friends for the sake of making friends. There's nothing on their record about family, culture, things you'd use to establish a rapport. If I had a clearer motivator, a purpose, I might be able to work around that.

COLONEL DURAN

You've been given an objective. There is no more information to give. If you can't find a way in, maybe you're just not right for the job.

Duran stalks off.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - SCIENCE WING - NIGHT

Gary sits alone at his computer. Just a few lights on. He wears headphones, completely absorbed in his work.

A HAND touches his shoulder - Gary jumps in shock.

GARY

Jesus!

NICK

Sorry man. You good?

Gary pulls off his headphones, calms down.

GARY

Yeah. Yeah how are you?

NICK

Wondered if I could play your game again. Kick the algorithm's ass this time.

GARY

Yeah, sure. Algorithm's got pretty good though, don't think you've got any chance of winning.

Gary moves and Nick sits in his place, starts to play.

NICK

I'll give it a shot. How come you're the only one working late?

GARY

Ah... I don't know. Don't really speak to the others, just Mike.

NICK

So you work alone, you're the only one doing algorithms? What do the rest of them do then?

GARY

Uh, mainly scientific disciplines, chemistry, botany, math-

NICK

There's a botanist? Like plants?

Nick's eyes narrow, calculating the implications of this.

GARY

Yeah, bacteria, fungus, that sort of stuff.

NICK

Ah, shoot.

ON SCREEN: **Game Over** flashes up. Nick's lost again.

HOURS LATER

Gary has fallen asleep in his chair, chin on his chest.

Nick still plays the game. He glances back, sees Gary asleep. Looks to the door -

THROUGH DOOR PANE - a SOLDIER's back. He stands guard, facing out to the corridor.

Nick sees his chance. Quietly, he rises.

CLOSE on Gary's belt - Nick detaches Gary's access card.

Lights switch on with Nick's movement through the lab. Motion sensor controlled, like a spotlight on him. Exposed.

RAPID CUTS

Nick scans shelves - opens drawers - rifles through paperwork - searching for something. He swipes Gary's access card through a door panel, enters a -

INT. SELECTION CENTER - SCIENCE WING - STORE ROOM

Twenty grey peli-cases are piled neatly, hazmat suits hang on a rail. Each case has a sticker - green, red, blue - coded.

Nick drops to his knees by the cases, winces with back pain.

He opens a case with a blue sticker. Inside are hundreds of silver pouches. Nick examines one -

POUCH LABEL: **Mac 'n' Cheese.**

Food rations for the envoy. Nick ignores the blue cases, goes for a red labeled one. Opens it up, to reveal -

Inside - syringes, gauze, a defibrillator. Medical supplies for the envoy.

Nick puts the case back, opens up a green labeled one.

Inside - science equipment. An anemometer, sediment sieves, sample bags, and a laptop-sized machine. A plastic sleeve with a folded piece of paper is stuck to the machine.

Nick pulls the paper from the sleeve and scans it.

His face falls, realizing.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - MORNING

The Candidates eat breakfast with Duran and Malone. Mike sits at his team's table, Soldiers at another. Busy as ever.

Toby questions Malone through a mouthful of cereal.

TOBY

So when their envoy gets here,
you're gonna keep an alien living
on Earth secret?

MALONE

Yes. That a problem?

TOBY

Nope.

Mike sees Nick enter, the machine from the science wing in his hand. Mike pales.

Nick sets the machine down by Duran.

NICK

You wanna shed some light on this,
Colonel?

Duran looks at the machine - fury flits across his face.

JEN

What is that?

NICK

Read the instructions.

He tosses the piece of paper from the machine's plastic sleeve over to Jen. Duran rises.

COLONEL DURAN

Nick, you are not authorized to
know this information, certainly
not to share it--

TOBY

But if he knows something we don't,
he's got an unfair advantage right?

Duran boils silently, then -

COLONEL DURAN

Everyone out. Now!

The Soldiers obey quickly, Mike hurries his team up and out. Nick holds Duran's eye, grim-faced.

Malone eats toast, calm. Watches this play out. Jen scans the piece of paper fast, summarizes -

JEN

It's a synthetic cell making machine--

NICK

--designed to create new organic cells, to create life. I found it in the cases to take to the alien's planet. Made me wonder why we'd need it - and then I realized something. I thought the only thing missing on the alien's record was cultural information, family, art, but I was wrong. In comparison there's science on ours that's missing on theirs.

REESE

What's missing?

COLONEL DURAN

Nick--

NICK

We told them the four essential elements of life on Earth, hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, nitrogen. That reciprocal information is missing on the data stick given to us. The only reason to take this kit is if we know more about what their planet is like - what *they* are like. So what's the mission, Colonel?

COLONEL DURAN

(fumes)

That information is classified for the envoy.

Jen examines the machine.

JEN

Kinda feels like he just declassified it for you Colonel.

Duran glares at her, his hand being forced.

COLONEL DURAN

Hydrogen, silicon, oxygen.

The weight of this revelation settles on the Candidates.

TOBY

Oh my God...

REESE

Their planet has water.. If they're a silicon based life form, not carbon like us, then their planet's not *identical* to Earth, but it could be just right--

COLONEL DURAN

It's potentially a Goldilocks planet. The envoy will find out if their planet's suitable for human colonization.

JEN

And what if it is?

COLONEL DURAN

Then the mission will be to influence them to let us establish a human colony there.

Miguel gapes at Duran, speechless. Nick simmers.

NICK

So we're not only protecting the human race, we're safeguarding the future of the entire human species. If the stakes of the job are this high, you need to be more open.

Duran steps closer to Nick.

COLONEL DURAN

And you need to be more careful. Snooping around the lab, taking risks, makes me feel like you're not a safe pair of hands.

NICK

This won't work if our own side withhold information and the more lead time I get, the better. Building trust to persuade them to let us colonize their planet will take time, it's not something we can ask for outright.

They stare down. Duran grabs the machine.

COLONEL DURAN
(to the Candidates)
If this is the kick you all need to
raise your game, so be it. We are
running out of time and so far none
of you are impressing me!

Duran stalks off. Malone finishes his toast and gets up -

MALONE
What he said.

He leaves too. Toby tries to defuse the tension.

TOBY
(to Nick)
Well, if you win why don't you try
it. Ask them if we can have a
colony, see what they say.

NICK
If anyone says yes straight away to
something like that, then it's not
real. They're just telling you what
you wanna hear.

Nick walks away.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MEDICAL ROOM - DAY

TITLE: DAYS TO MISSION - THREE.

Nick has his blood taken by Dr. Lee. Lee focusses on the
blood filling the syringe, avoids eye contact.

DR. LEE
I think it'd be unwise to act on
it. There's so many negatives.

NICK
The biggest negative is that you're
unhappy. If this is right for you,
just think about you. Not about
what anyone else thinks. Screw 'em.

He smiles warmly at Dr. Lee. Lee looks unsure. He pulls the
needle from Nick's arm and turns away.

NICK (CONT'D)
Hey, at least you can deal with
whatever the fallout is together,
you won't be on your own anymore.

Dr. Lee scribbles something on Nick's medical notes.

DR. LEE
We're all done.

Nick gets up and moves to the door.

DR. LEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Nick.

Nick turns. Dr. Lee tosses Nick's painkillers over, Nick catches the packet.

DR. LEE (CONT'D)
Keep them hidden. Just for while
you're here on Earth.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - ROLE PLAY ROOM - DAY

Toby eyeballs Celia, losing patience.

CELIA
That's a misleading question.

TOBY
What do you do for fun?

CELIA
They could misconstrue that word--

TOBY
(raised voice)
Then why don't you just tell me
what to ask, huh?

Celia keeps her cool.

CELIA
Because we can't all go to the
alien planet.

Toby bristles, then gets up. Pushes past Nick on his way out. Nick approaches Celia.

NICK
We need to take them a gift.
(off look)
In exchange for the gift they sent
us, we need to give them something
in return.

CELIA
What did you have in mind?

NICK

The one thing we hope their planet has. Water. The purest water from Earth.

Celia on the verge of a smile.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - NIGHT

The Candidates eat dessert. The other tables finally empty.

REESE

First time I saw Earth from space, that blew my mind. Can't wait to see that again.

TOBY

If they pick you.

REESE

'Course they'll pick me.

NICK

But you always got to come back to Earth. This time I'll be leaving for good.

Reese scowls at Nick's tease.

JEN

Imagine being the only one of your species on an entire planet. Never having any kind of relationship with another human being again.

TOBY

Not that any of us have managed one of those successfully--

MIGUEL

Hey, that's not true. I wish my wife was alive to leave behind.

TOBY

(pales, remembering)
I'm sorry, I didn't mean--

MIGUEL

She'd be pissed though.

Miguel smiles at Toby - *forgiven*.

NICK

If you were still with her you wouldn't qualify to be a candidate. And they're right to do that - the one unifying thing that brings down informants is personal relationships. Their wives or kids get taken and that's it, they're in the enemy's pocket, can't trust 'em anymore. Love, relationships, that's a weakness. You show that to the enemy and you're done.

JEN

See the same thing in the CIA, turning agents out in the field.

Nick and Jen trade a look - *yet another connection.*

MIGUEL

With respect, I believe the opposite is true. Loving Grace made me stronger. I was the best man I could be when she was alive.

Nick avoids eye contact, clear he's not convinced. They finish their dessert in silence.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - GYM - DAY

The Candidates slog on their treadmills.

Miguel and Toby pull off their respirators and quit, exhausted. Reese in real pain. Jen looks determined.

But Nick moves faster, harder than the others. His painkillers taking effect.

Duran watches through a glass pane in the door.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

TITLE: DAYS TO MISSION - ONE.

The Candidates sit around the conference table. Duran stands up front. Malone, Mike and the two Government Men watch on from the back of the room. Nervous tension in the air.

On the table in front of Duran - a tray containing the Candidates confiscated personal items.

Nick glances at the tray. Keeps his game face on.

COLONEL DURAN

I wanna thank each of you on behalf of the US government for taking part in this selection process, I know it hasn't been easy, and for most of you it's gonna end in disappointment.

He reaches into the tray, picks out Miguel's wedding ring.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

Miguel.

Duran tosses the ring to Miguel, who puts it on immediately.

Duran lifts a crucifix necklace from the tray, throws it to Reese. She catches it, shocked at what this could mean.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

Toby.

Duran slings back Toby's electronic tablet - Toby fumbles it.

Next, he throws an iPod and earphones to Jen. She looks to Nick, but he avoids her gaze.

Duran holds up the tray, shows everyone it's empty. He places it down on the table and stares at Nick.

The other Candidates look to Nick too - the odd one out.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

I have nothing to return to you. We knew the role playing exercises were a shot in the dark. So we set a secret test. Nick was the only one out of all of you to identify a way to get back what he needed - his painkillers - forge a relationship and influence that relationship to get it.

Nick pulls his painkillers out and puts them on the table - proof. He hides his pride, he can see where this is going.

And so can the others.. Reese glares at Nick. Jen looks incredulous. Duran breaks out a broad smile.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

Congratulations.

Relief washes over Nick like a tonic.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
Jen, Nick, you'll both ship out at
oh four hundred to the land site.

JEN
(pissed)
Why am I coming?

COLONEL DURAN
As number two in the selection
process, you'll be part of the
alien envoy's meet and greet team
as well as a back up, in case
something happens to Nick. The rest
of you will leave for home in a
couple of days. Dismissed.

Miguel rises, goes to shake Nick's hand. Toby just stares at
his tablet in shock.

Nick watches as Jen walks out. Reese follows behind her.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - NICK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nick lies in bed and stares at the ceiling. Wide awake.
Glances at the clock on his bedside table: **1AM**. He gets up.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Nick pads in. Dark and quiet, no one around this late.

He pours a glass of water. Downs it. Takes a moment - the
gravity of his new job sinking in.

He spots something on the other side of the serving counter.
Leans over for a better look. His eyes widen in horror off -

REESE'S DEAD BODY

Half hidden under the serving counter, a static blood pool
around her head.

Nick hurries around, drops to his knees by her side. He
checks for a pulse. Nothing. Reese's eyes glazed.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - DURAN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

RAPID KNOCKS at the door. Duran wakes up off the sound. He
plods to the door, twists the lock and opens it.

Nick's in the doorway.

NICK
Reese is dead. Murdered. Her body's
in the mess hall.

Duran's mouth drops open. He rushes to grab his gun, turns back - but Nick's already gone.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - MESS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Nick darts to the serving area. Quickly selects a knife from the cutlery tray - barely a weapon but better than nothing.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Nick stalks down the corridor. Bright and exposed. Suddenly he stops, sensing danger. Nick whirls around, to see -

Jen six feet behind. Still in her pajamas. He softens.

JEN
Couldn't sleep. You see Reese?

NICK
Yeah. Let's move.

They turn a corner - to see the body of the Young Soldier slumped by the door to the science wing. His throat slit.

The door stands ajar. Suddenly - an EMERGENCY ALARM sounds out - Nick and Jen exchange a look and hurry through.

INT. SELECTION CENTER - SCIENCE WING

Jen sprints to the glass wall - peers in at the lab.

THROUGH THE GLASS WALL - the central bench is empty. The alien's golden record is gone.

In the middle of the room, Nick examines the cylinder that holds the black orb. The glass is covered in chips and force marks - but still sealed. The orb safe inside.

Jen races up, shouts over the ALARM -

JEN
The record's gone.

NICK
Can't have got far.

They rush out.

EXT. SELECTION CENTER - NIGHT

Almost pitch black in the wilderness. A strong wind sweeps the snow from the trees.

Light and the ALARM floods out of the center as a door opens.

Nick pushes the door back until it clicks, stays open. Framed by light, Nick and Jen squint into the darkness.

The fence forty yards in the distance, the forest beyond it.

Nick's eyes scour the terrain. Suddenly, he spots -

SIXTY YARDS AWAY - a cell phone screen light flashes on.

NICK

There.

Nick rushes towards the light.

CELL PHONE SCREEN: a **call failed** alert pops up. A thumb quickly hits the **redial** button.

MALE VOICE

Come on come on come on...

Nick closes in.

NICK'S POV - the phone light weakly illuminates a figure. Moving, heading for the trees.

Nick reaches the perimeter fence - partly pulled back. He slips through, Jen close behind.

Nick's bare feet crunch through snow. His focus fixed on the figure ahead. He slips - comes to a sudden stop.

Shock as he sees who the figure is.

NICK

TOBY!

Toby whirls around - the tree cover just yards away. A bag over his shoulder, the shape of the alien's record inside.

Toby hits redial on his cell phone. Jumpy as hell but tries to joke through it.

TOBY

Duran was right. The signal's terrible out here.

JEN

Toby, what are you doing?!

Toby backs away towards the trees, shivers in the cold.

TOBY

Isn't it obvious?

NICK

Stop moving.

Toby hesitates. Spots the knife in Nick's hand.

TOBY

What, are you gonna stab me? Cos I think mine's bigger.

He pulls out a blood stained kitchen knife.

Jen moves to shield Nick.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Oh that's sweet.

JEN

(low, to Nick)

You're the envoy, you can't take this risk. Go back inside.

Nick ignores her. Drops the knife and steps towards Toby, keeps pace so the distance between them stays the same.

NICK

Toby look at your situation.
Whoever you're working for, it's not worth it.

Toby backs away, keeps glancing at his phone as he goes.

TOBY

Pretty sure it's too late for that Nick.

NICK

You know there's only one way you come out of this--

Suddenly - Toby's cell phone RINGS - he's got signal.

Toby lights up. Quickly hits green to answer the call and brings the phone up to his ear, goes to speak -

BANG!

Blood trickles from a bullet hole in Toby's forehead. Toby's face falls. He collapses into the snow. Nick spins, to see -

Duran, twenty yards behind with his gun up. Just shot Toby..

FIVE SOLDIERS back Duran, they move to recover the alien's record from near Toby's body.

Nick and Jen stare at Duran in shock.

COLONEL DURAN
We're moving out now.

INT. CHINOOK - MOVING - NIGHT

Nick and Jen sit next to each other. Duran, Malone, Celia, Mike, Soldiers, Scientists and Techs fill the rest of the seats. Kit bags and cases cover the floor. The mood somber.

Suddenly - Mike types furiously on his laptop, energized.

MIKE
(to Duran)
We got it! We cracked the math!

Nick watches Duran and Mike.

COLONEL DURAN
What does it say?

MIKE
Nothing. I mean, nothing new. It's just our own information repeated back to us in a mathematic jumble.

Duran shakes his head, annoyed.

COLONEL DURAN
Well it took you long enough to find that out. There must be something else in there.

MIKE
I guarantee you there isn't, if there was we would've found it.

Nick shuts his eyes.. Mentally prepares himself.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE CAPE CANAVERAL - NIGHT

The chinook banks left, on the approach to land. Cape Canaveral Air Force Station lit up brightly below.

TITLE: CAPE CANAVERAL AIR FORCE STATION, FLORIDA

Red lights blink on an empty launch tower. Three launch pads also vacant. A jigsaw of buildings and tarmac, bordered by a beach and the Atlantic Ocean. Marshlands in the distance.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - NIGHT

The chinook lands on the strip. Soldiers unload the gear with military speed and precision. Everyone bails out.

Mike shouts to Nick and Jen over the rotor noise -

MIKE

You two, come with me.

Nick, Jen and Celia follow Mike and his team. Nick looks around - a huge field tent set up on the strip, MILITARY MEN rush in and out. SNIPERS on the rooftops.

Duran, Malone, Gary and three soldiers head off in a different direction across the launch complex.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB - NIGHT

NASA PHYSICISTS and ASTROBIOLOGISTS busy about the well-used lab space. A reinforced viewing window embedded in the wall.

THROUGH THE WINDOW - an airlocked isolation cell, ten feet square and empty. Ready to receive the alien envoy.

Mike and Celia enter, make quick intros. Mike's team hurry to set up, unpack the cylinder containing the alien's orb.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL BUILDING - CORRIDOR

Duran strides down the corridor. Malone on his cell. Gary rubbernecks - through every doorway, EXPERTS hard at work..

BLAKE, 55, hurries down the corridor to greet them.

BLAKE

I'm Jon Blake, Launch Controller,
gonna make sure everything runs
smoothly for you tonight.

COLONEL DURAN

Any activity so far?

BLAKE

No, nothing yet.

They push through double doors, into -

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

TEN NASA TECHS buzz around a bank of computers and equipment, all facing a blank wall screen. Blake leads Duran over.

Malone heads up stairs to an OBSERVATION ROOM - glass reveals SIX HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS looking out over the center.

Duran looks up to the Obs Room, sees -

THROUGH THE GLASS - Malone shakes hands with the Officials. A screen with a live feed to a command center on one wall.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - VARIOUS - NIGHT

MILITARY COMMS SPECIALISTS set up video and audio recording equipment on the strip and close to the three launch pads.

ARMED SOLDIERS set up tactical positions around the Cape.

ON THE STRIP

MILITARY COMMS #1 sets up a tripod.

MILITARY COMMS #1
What direction are we shooting in,
how do we know where to look?

MILITARY COMMS #2
I don't know man. Just keep it wide
down the strip.

COMMANDER PEREZ, 40s, wears a headset, sets up a EIGHT MAN TEAM close to the chinook on the strip.

COMMANDER PEREZ (INTO HEADSET)
Colonel Duran, we are ready, steady
and standing by, copy?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran wears a headset. Six flatscreens sit under the wall screen, displaying video feeds from the military comms teams.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Copy that.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - SUIT ROOM - NIGHT

A sterile room buzzes with TECHNICIANS in blue uniforms.

RAPID CUTS

The Techs attach biomedical sensors to Nick and Jen - their chests, arms and legs. Help them both into bulky spacesuits. Check cameras inside their helmets, fit headset mics.

Nick and Jen steal glances at each other throughout.

A Tech seals Nick's helmet.

INSIDE NICK'S HELMET - his breathing suddenly loud.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECES)
Nick, Jen, you hear me?

NICK & JEN
Copy / Yes sir.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECES)
Copy that.

The Techs finish up and leave. Jen holds her helmet, not going anywhere.

Nick gets up slowly, acclimatizes to moving in the suit. A quiet moment between them.

NICK
For what it's worth, I'm sorry. I know how much you wanted this.

JEN
That's OK. Not your fault they chose the wrong person..

They share a soft smile. Jen stands.

JEN (CONT'D)
Good luck.

NICK
Do you think they understand luck?
(beat)
I don't need it. Cos I know if I fail, you can always take over.

Jen steps close. Peers in through the glass of Nick's helmet visor. Meaningfully -

JEN
You got this.

A professional respect teamed with something more.

A PALE TECH races into the doorway. They turn off the sound -

PALE TECH
They're here.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2 - NIGHT

The air ripples like water in sunlight as a cloaking device lifts, to reveal -

AN ALIEN SHIP

A colossal structure - a hundred yards wide, fifty high. A rough starfish shape, five 'arms' protrude from a central disc. Metallic-looking - the same material as their record.

The Military Comms Team (SOUND GUY and CAMERA GUY) on Pad 2 gape at it, camera rolling.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

Soldiers scramble to relocate. On the move -

COMMANDER PEREZ (INTO HEADSET)
Reposition for Pad Two, repeat,
reposition for Pad Two.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

ON WALL SCREEN: *video feed of the alien ship.*

The entire room stares at the screen in awe.

BLAKE
Jesus Christ...

PAD CONTROLLER
I don't understand... how...
(turns to his staff)
How did we miss this?

COLONEL DURAN
You can work that out later --
they're here now.

THROUGH THE GLASS - the six Officials sit at a table, in animated discussion. Malone stands, looks out at the center.

Duran watches the wall screen, serious.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET) (CONT'D)
Light up the path.

NASA TECH #1
Yes sir.

NASA TECH #1 turns to his station, flips some switches.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL

A ground strip of lights power up, illuminates a fifty yard path leading to the operations building.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen enters, dumps her helmet on a table and strides to Mike.

Everyone busy around him, Mike looks through the window into the isolation cell. Still empty, but not for long.

A flatscreen sits on a bench near the window. Jen spots it and her mouth drops open.

ON FLATSCREEN: *the same video feed of the alien ship.*

JEN
Is that...?

MIKE
Yep.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - CORRIDOR

Nick follows an ANTSY TECH. His suit cumbersome.

The Antsy Tech pushes through a heavy external door and holds it open. Nick steps out.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

Nick stops on the strip. His eyes widen as he sees -

IN THE DISTANCE - THE ALIEN SHIP

Huge, intimidating... and waiting for him.

A grim-faced NAVY SEAL, COBB, 28, approaches Nick.

COBB

Sir.

Nick shakes from his thoughts.

COBB (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

The Antsy Tech nods to Cobb and retreats back into the building, handover complete.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)

Nick?

Nick holds his hand up to Cobb - *hold on*.

NICK

I hear you, Colonel.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran stares at the alien ship on the wall screen. Takes a deep breath.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)

Nick, you've got the ball..

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

Nick nods his head a little - confident in his abilities but facing the unknown. It's all on him now.

COBB

Are you good to go?

NICK

Would you blame me if I said no?

COBB

(smiles)

Hell no.

Nick grins, game face on.

NICK

Let's go.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

NASA Techs in full flight at their stations.

NASA TECH #2

Radiation sensors showing nothing--

NASA TECH #3

It's not emitting heat either.
Geothermal image shows the ship
blending in with its surroundings,
like it's not even there.

Duran listens to the chatter, eyes on the screen. Gary watches, a spare part. Blake leans in to Duran.

BLAKE

Sir, what happens now?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen stares through the viewing window, wondering the same thing. She hears Duran's answer through her earpiece.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)

...we wait.

THROUGH THE WINDOW - the cell. PUSH IN on a sealed hatch that leads to outside. Only a matter of time till it opens.

INT. OPEN AIR CARGO TRUCK - MOVING

Nick sits in the back of a truck, travels with FIVE NAVY SEALS. On the floor - all the peli-cases Nick has to take.

Nick looks back, watches the launch center recede into the distance. His first step to leaving humanity behind.

YOUNG NAVY SEAL

Don't worry sir, we've got your
back. Whatever happens.

The other Seals MURMUR in agreement, serious. Nick nods.

NICK

Appreciate that fellas.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

A BIOMED TECH scans readouts from Nick's sensors.

BIOMED TECH
All vital signs normal... not even
an elevated heart rate.

COLONEL DURAN
Nick's a pro, he knows how to keep
his cool.

Gary nods in agreement. Nick's got this.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen watches the flatscreen, bites her lip as -

ON FLATSCREEN: *the truck drives into frame, closing in on the ship. Nick stands out in his bulky white spacesuit.*

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

The Camera Guy and Sound Guy watch the truck drive past.

IN THE TRUCK - Nick tilts his head back, takes in the height of the alien's ship. It towers fifty feet above.

The truck stops forty yards away, Nick and the Seals get out.

The alien ship dwarfs Nick - in his spacesuit he's just a little white dot at its base.

NICK (INTO HEADSET)
Colonel, am I cleared to approach
the ship?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran and Malone trade a look through the Obs Room glass.
Duran turns back to the wall screen. Thinks.

ON WALL SCREEN: *Nick with his back to camera. The alien ship colossal beyond him.*

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Negative. That is a negative.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

NICK (INTO HEADSET)
You wanna wait it out?

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Just a little. We're in no rush.

NICK
(under breath)
Easy for you to say.

The Seals stand guard by Nick, ready for anything.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

A hubbub of activity. Celia briefs Mike and Jen.

CELIA
Jen, sit tight, I'm gonna lead the conversation. Mike, relay updates from your team directly to me but don't interrupt. And prepare yourselves - we don't know what's going to come through that hatch.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

The room is still. Everyone waits, watches the wall screen.

Duran's eyes scan the six flatscreens that sit beneath it -

ON THE FLATSCREENS:

Four screens stream video from the military comms teams. No activity from the other launch pads, all is quiet.

Two screens stream video from the operations building - the empty isolation cell and the lab.

Duran narrows his eyes, calculating.

COLONEL DURAN
Flash the path lights.

NASA TECH #1
Yes sir.

Nasa Tech #1 flips switches at his station -

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING

The fifty yard strip of ground lights leading to the operations building flash on and off, on and off. Stay on.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

CLOSE on Nick, fixated on the ship. His eyes flit over the craft, examine its surface, its shape.

Suddenly - his eyes stop moving.

NICK (INTO HEADSET)
I see something.

REVERSE to see -

The tip of one of the ship's five 'arms' has blackened - like a hole has opened up into an abyss.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran squints, tries to work out what he's seeing.

ON WALL SCREEN: *the black tip on the alien's ship grows, ten yards in diameter.*

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Nick, what am I looking at?

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

Nick takes a step forward, studies the hole in the ship.

The black tip grows to twenty yards in diameter, then stops.

NICK
Looks like an opening, a tunnel
maybe--

Nick freezes mid-sentence. His mouth drops open a little.

The Seals around Nick suddenly tense. Weapons stay down.

REVERSE to see -

THE ALIEN ENVOY EMERGES FROM THE TUNNEL.

A six foot tall humanoid. The color of sand from head to toe. Bald. Basic facial features. Eyes mostly black, as if fully dilated. It steps out onto the asphalt and stops.

NICK (CONT'D)
Colonel are you seeing this?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

The entire room gawks at the wall screen.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)

Yes we are.

(aside, to Nasa Tech #1)

Flash the lights again, show it
where to go.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

The Alien Envoy turns its head - looks at Nick.

Nick stares back at his exchange counterpart. Almost like an
unspoken understanding communicated between them...

Suddenly - in the distance beyond Nick - the path lights
flash on and off again.

The Alien Envoy snaps its attention to the lights. It moves
towards the path - precise, even steps. Machine-like.

Nick and the Seals watch the Alien Envoy pass between them
and the Military Comms Team.

Camera Guy pans the camera, records the Alien Envoy walk by.

The Seals eyeball the Alien Envoy - grips on guns tighten.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

We follow the Alien Envoy as it reaches the path - the lights
begin to flicker. Soldiers watch it travel, on high alert..

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Mike works his team in the lab.

MIKE

Talk to me guys, what have we got?

PHYSICIST #1

Ah, looks like it's generating an
electromagnetic field, interfering
with the lights.

MIKE

How big?

PHYSICIST #1
Small - it's not harmful.

MIKE
OK what else?

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

Cobb hands Nick a glass canister full of water - his gift.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Nick, you are clear to approach the
ship.

NICK
OK. I'm walking now.

Nick moves towards the craft - the start of an epic journey.

EXT/INT.. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING

The Alien Envoy closes in on the building, the strip lights
flickering madly. It looks around, takes everything in.

Ten yards from the building - a motion sensor controlled
hatch WHOOSHES open - leads into the isolation cell.

The Alien Envoy stops. Stares -

THROUGH THE HATCH

Into the cell. Jen and Celia stare back through the viewing
window at the Alien Envoy on the path outside.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2 - ALIEN SHIP

Nick approaches the tunnel opening. He reaches out and
touches the ship with his glove - trails his hand across it
and into the empty space of the tunnel. Full of wonder.

He stands on the threshold of the twenty-yard-wide hole.
Peers inside, to see -

Blackness. A pin-prick of light at the end of the tunnel.

Nick flicks on a flashlight attached to his suit, aims it
down the tunnel - illuminates brushed metallic walls.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

THROUGH THE OBS ROOM GLASS - the Officials sit at the table, stare out at the wall screen. Riveted.

ON WALL SCREEN: *video feed from Nick's helmet shows the tunnel into the alien's ship.*

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
You are clear to board. Repeat,
Nick you are good to go.

NICK (BROADCAST OVER SPEAKERS)
OK. Let's see where this rabbit
hole goes.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen hears Nick say this through her earpiece and smiles.

THROUGH THE VIEWING WINDOW - the Alien Envoy starts to move, walks through the hatch into the isolation cell, just as -

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2 - ALIEN SHIP

Nick steps over the threshold and enters the alien ship.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - ISOLATION CELL

As soon as the Alien Envoy steps inside, the hatch behind it WHOOSHES shut - seals the Envoy in.

INT. ALIEN SHIP

Nick takes a step further into the ship, looks down at the ground. Something sticky under his boots.

NICK
The floor's--

A sudden CRACKLING sound - the hole to the outside world closes in an instant, like an iris shutting.

Nick GASPS and whirls around - drops the flashlight.

NICK (CONT'D)
Colonel can you hear me?

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Yes Nick, we still got you.

NICK
I'm inside the ship, the opening
just shut. Think I'm sealed in.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

CLOSE on Duran, tense.

ON WALL SCREEN: *the video feed from Nick's helmet shows the
pitch black tunnel - a tiny light up ahead.*

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
OK Nick, understood. Keep going.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - TUNNEL

NICK
(under breath)
If you say so.

Nick grabs the flashlight dangling from his suit and examines
the goop on his boot. Translucent, like a gel.

The pin prick of light from up ahead refracts through the
water in the canister, creates a tiny rainbow inside.

Nick pans his flashlight, moves deeper inside the alien ship.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - ISOLATION CELL

The Alien Envoy examines the hatch. It turns, studies the
human faces peering in through the viewing window.

CELIA (OVER SPEAKERS)
(serious)
Welcome to Earth.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

ON WALL SCREEN: *a shaky feed from Nick's helmet as he walks
down the tunnel. Closing in on the light.*

NICK (OVER SPEAKERS)
The floor's covered in some sort--

INT. ALIEN SHIP - TUNNEL

NICK
--of substance. Soft underfoot.

Nick moves cautiously, one step at a time.

UP AHEAD - the light is the size of a football now.

Nick looks at a panel display on the arm of his suit.

NICK (CONT'D)
The atmosphere reading is the same
in here as it is outside.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Keep your helmet on.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - ISOLATION CELL

The Alien Envoy faces the viewing window. Motionless.

CELIA (OVER SPEAKERS)
Hello. Can you hear me?

The Alien Envoy doesn't respond.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - TUNNEL

Nick reaches the circle of light - the size of a car tire at head height, suspended in the air. Nick examines it.

NICK
(on breath)
What the hell is this?

He takes a moment, decides something. Reaches out to touch it - the light grows, BLINDING.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

ON WALL SCREEN: *Nick's video feed flashes bright white.*

Concern sweeps across Duran's face.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Nick? Nick?

THROUGH THE OBS ROOM GLASS - the Officials talk, worried. Malone rubs his face, unsettled. He moves to the stairs.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - TUNNEL

Nick stands in the same spot in the tunnel. The circle of light has grown to a doorway size - it ebbs with warmth.

Nick squints into the light.

NICK
I think it's a doorway, I can see
something on the other side.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Malone walks up to Duran.

MALONE
I don't like it.
(points to Obs Room)
They don't like it either.

GARY
It's just different. Doesn't mean
we have to be afraid of it.

NICK (OVER SPEAKERS)
Colonel, what do you want me to do?

COLONEL DURAN
(to Malone)
Listen, we chose Nick for this.
We've gotta trust his judgement.

Malone concedes, hurries back to the Obs Room.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET) (CONT'D)
Nick, you're on the ground in
there, assess it. It's your call.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - TUNNEL

Nick considers his situation, the buck being passed to him.

NICK
Right. I'm stepping through.

Nick takes a last glance around the tunnel. He steps towards
the light, walks into it and through -

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

- to a wave-shaped room. Brushed metallic walls emit a glow
that lights the space. Ripples in the walls like veins.

Nick stands inside the doorway of light and takes it all in.

Two pedestals sit in the middle of the room.

Separating them is a transparent partition on a grey plinth.

A CHILD-SIZED HUMANOID sits on a pedestal. Sand colored, bald and with basic facial features, just like the Alien Envoy. Its black eyes stare ahead, frozen. Sinister.

NICK
(low, disbelief)
You seeing this?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

The room bustles with activity, reacting to Nick's footage.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Affirmative, we're getting
everything. We're with you, Nick.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

CELIA
(to team)
Are you sure the microphone's
working?

YOUNG TECH
Yes. Tested it myself.

JEN (O.S.)
Oh my God....

Jen looks at the flatscreen, wide-eyed.

ON FLATSCREEN: *footage from Nick's helmet - the Humanoid.*

Celia glances away from the viewing window to the screen.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick moves towards the Humanoid. He sees that it's attached to the pedestal, wired into the ship.

NICK
Looks like a machine. Maybe machine
artificial intelligence - Gary's
theory could be right.

Suddenly - the Humanoid moves. Tilts its head.

Nick steps back.

The Humanoid uses words spoken by humans broadcast into space, the same words from different people layered together to create a computer processed vocal harmony -

HUMANOID
Hello. Please sit.

As the Humanoid speaks, BROADCAST IMAGES to accompany its spoken words flash across the clear partition.

Nick freezes. This is like nothing he's ever seen before.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Nick?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen watches the flatscreen, wills Nick to move.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Everyone holds their breath. Waiting for Nick to act.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

JEN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Nick, you're about to play your
finest game of conversational
chess. This is your moment.

Nick shuts his eyes a second, refocuses. He moves to the pedestal opposite and sits, the water canister on his lap.

NICK
Hello. My name is Nick. What is
your name?

HUMANOID
I have no name in any of your
languages.

NICK
OK. Can I call you 'friend'?

The Humanoid takes a moment, as if thinking this through.

HUMANOID
Yes.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

At every computer station - hurried activity bordering on chaos, Techs trying to analyze everything as it comes in.

COLONEL DURAN
(to the room)
I want every one of those images
identified. What date, what
channel, we're gonna work out what
they've been receiving!

Blake works the room, gets his staff on task.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)
Gary - you're the AI expert in this
room, analyze what's happening.

Gary practically gulps. Rushes off to set up his laptop.

ON WALL SCREEN: Nick's helmet POV - the Humanoid seen through
the clear partition.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Mike's attention on the flatscreen - Nick's footage.

MIKE
(in wonder)
They're using our own words--

CELIA
(fast and low)
Pull together an audio library of
broadcast words, we're gonna
communicate the same way as them. I
want everything I'm saying
translated into vocab they could've
heard in space.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

NICK
I would like to welcome you to our
planet, on behalf of Earth. We also
thank you for your gift, the orb
you sent us, and we'd like to
present a gift of our own.

Nick rises, holds out the canister of water to the Humanoid.

The Humanoid stares at the canister for a moment - then reaches out quickly and snatches it from Nick. Examines it.

NICK (CONT'D)
The canister is full of the purest water on Earth, from the fresh waters of Puerto Williams in southern Chile.

The Humanoid holds the canister close to its face... then drops it. Nick doesn't move a muscle.

A panel in the floor opens up just before the canister smashes - it disappears through and the panel shuts.

The Humanoid tilts its head up to Nick.

HUMANOID
Thank you.

Relief reflected in Nick's tone -

NICK
You're welcome.

Nick returns to his pedestal.

NICK (CONT'D)
How was your journey?

ON PARTITION SCREEN: a futuristic graphic of the alien's journey zooms past at lightning speed.

HUMANOID
Sixty three billion miles, seventeen days. How was yours?

NICK
...Fine.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

The room works at a hectic pace. Blake looms over NASA TECH #4 - the Tech's fingers dance across the keyboard.

BLAKE
Push the radius out to sixty five billion miles.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN: a graphic of our solar system - it zooms all the way out to encompass billions of miles of galaxy.

Nasa Tech #4 swings around to another monitor -

ON MONITOR: *Nick's recorded footage. It rewinds, zooms in and plays back the futuristic graphic in slow motion.*

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB/CELL

Mike bashes keys on his laptop, looks to Celia -

MIKE

OK you're good to go.

Celia pushes a button at the viewing window's base, speaks into the microphone -

CELIA

Hello--

IN THE CELL - Celia's words translated into broadcast voices.

BROADCAST VOICES (OVER SPEAKERS)

--welcome to Earth.

But the Alien Envoy doesn't reply.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick gestures smoothly to support his speech.

NICK

I am honored to have been chosen as Earth's representative to travel to your planet. I look forward to your hospitality, to meeting your people.

The Humanoid cocks its head. Doesn't respond.

NICK (CONT'D)

What is the name of your planet?

HUMANOID

Our planet does not have a name in any of your languages.

NICK

Can you tell me its name in your language?

HUMANOID

I am unable to communicate with you in the language of our species.

NICK

Can you tell me about your planet?

HUMANOID

The information was sent.

NICK

Yes. We thank you for the information you sent to us, in reply to our golden record. Can you tell me more about the envoy exchange?

HUMANOID

The information was sent.

The transparent partition stays blank.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran looks worried. Turns to Gary at his laptop -

COLONEL DURAN

What should he do? What should he be asking?

GARY

I don't know--

(off look)

If it's a machine it might only be programmed to answer certain questions, or only if he asks them in a specific way. He's gotta figure it out, trial and error.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB/CELL

Jen and Celia watch the Alien Envoy through the glass.. It sways gently, as if moved by an undetectable wind.

Deep in the lab, Mike problem-solves with his team.

PHYSICIST #1

Its electromagnetic field has dipped, negligible now. Techs in the control center say they're getting no reading from whatever Nick's speaking to either.

PHYSICIST #2 hangs up the phone, turns to Mike.

PHYSICIST #2
The other being is using words
broadcast between 1953 and 1970.

MIKE
Update our library to just that
time period.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick leans forward on his pedestal. Searching for answers.

NICK
Why do you look like us?

HUMANOID
My maker made me in your image.

ON THE PARTITION: *broadcast images of the human race, every
ethnicity, children, women and men.*

NICK
Who is your maker?

HUMANOID
My maker does not have a name in
any of your languages.

NICK
Is your maker your master?

ON THE PARTITION: *broadcast images of slaves, masters showing
cruelty to servants.*

HUMANOID
I am not a slave. I am driven by
their needs.

NICK
What about your needs?

HUMANOID
My needs are their needs.

NICK
Did your maker send you?

HUMANOID
Yes.

NICK
So you are here on their behalf, to
represent them?

HUMANOID

Yes.

NICK

Why not come themselves?

HUMANOID

I am artificial. They are not.

ON THE PARTITION: *broadcast images of human-made artificial items whizz past, clothing, food, machinery.*

Nick's brow furrows, working this out.

NICK

Friend - are they afraid of us?

HUMANOID

We have seen humans fight other worlds.

NICK

What other worlds?

ON THE PARTITION: *flashes of clips from sci-fi shows broadcast over decades - humans defeating aliens.*

Nick watches the images, fascinated.

HUMANOID

You have Earth. Which other worlds do you command?

TIGHT on Nick, seized with realization.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

THROUGH THE GLASS - an alarmed reaction from the Officials.

Duran and Gary stare at the wall screen in shock.

GARY

Christ.... they think that's real.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)

Nick, tell them it's not--

GARY

Wait! That could be risky--

COLONEL DURAN

Why?

GARY

They might not know the difference between fiction and a lie and we need them to trust us. Seventy year's worth of TV, mixing up factual programs with entertainment would be more than enough to confuse them.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick stays focused on the conversation, tries to lead it.

NICK

You and your maker have nothing to fear from us. Tell me about your maker - what are their needs?

HUMANOID

We have more gifts to share with Earth. Your allies. Who are they?

The partition screen stays blank.

NICK

You have my word that no harm will come to you.

HUMANOID

We have seen humans make alliances with powerful planets. Want to know more. That is my maker's need.

ON PARTITION SCREEN: *broadcast images of science fiction shows - war, death and reconciliation.*

Nick takes a moment, watches the images and recalibrates.

NICK

I will answer your question - but I need to ask you a few questions first. That is *my* species need.

The Humanoid cocks its head. Nick waits. Satisfied it understands -

NICK (CONT'D)

Do you know what a lie is?

HUMANOID

Primitive... Something not true.

NICK
Do your masters know how to lie?

HUMANOID
Yes. Just like humans.

NICK
Do you know how to lie?

HUMANOID
Yes. Just like humans.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

COLONEL DURAN
I don't like where this is heading.

GARY
Just because they know *how* to lie
doesn't mean they are lying -
there's no greater risk here than
Nick talking to another human.

COLONEL DURAN
That's what worries me.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - CELL

BROADCAST VOICES (OVER SPEAKERS)
Hello, my name is Celia. What is
your name?

The Alien Envoy doesn't move. It just stares back at Celia
and Jen's concerned faces on the other side of the glass.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick sits forward, elbows on knees. Relaxed posture.

NICK
If you know how to lie, how do I
know you're not lying now?

HUMANOID
I am not. Are you lying?

NICK
No. I'm telling the truth.

The Humanoid just stares at Nick.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Nick, I am ordering you to explain
right now. You're putting this
whole mission in jeopardy.

NICK
But how do I know that you're
telling the truth? Can you give me
your word?

HUMANOID
I can give many words.

Nick chooses his words carefully.

NICK
Do you know what fiction is?

HUMANOID
Something that is not true.

NICK
Do you know what the purpose of
fiction is?

HUMANOID
What is the purpose of a lie?

Nick tilts his head, calls the Humanoid's bluff.

NICK
You know what a lie is, so I think
you know the answer to that. What
would you or your maker lie about?

The Humanoid's black eyes bore into Nick.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
God dammit Nick, explain right now!

CLOSE on Nick - risk-assessing his next move. A big
decision. He makes it.

NICK
I am not lying, and I want to prove
it to you. I'm looking forward to
travelling to your planet and
meeting with your species. But that
is not my primary objective.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran stares at the wall screen, agape.

COLONEL DURAN
(on breath)
What the hell is he doing...?

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

TIGHT on Nick as he takes the plunge. Asks the question he warned Toby against just nights ago.

NICK
We would like to establish a human colony on your planet. Would your maker allow us to do that?

The Humanoid stares at Nick.

Nick holds the Humanoid's eye. Dread hidden behind Nick's expression, hoping it won't be the answer he wants to hear.

The wait feels like forever. The Humanoid cocks its head.

HUMANOID
Yes.

Nick pales. The Humanoid is lying.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

An eruption of excitement - everyone talks at once. The Biomed Tech scans a readout on screen, shouts to Duran -

BIOMED TECH
Nick's heart rate just shot through the roof!

COLONEL DURAN
(cracks a smile)
He just achieved his mission.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen pushes her earpiece further into her ear, hangs on every word. Troubled. She leans in to Celia -

JEN
They just agreed to a colony on their planet.

CELIA
(snaps around to Jen)
What?

Suddenly - THROUGH THE WINDOW - the Alien Envoy walks right up to the glass, stares at the humans on the other side.

Celia moves forward. A yard between them, separated by glass.

The Alien Envoy speaks. Just like the Humanoid, it uses broadcast human voices, layered together and processed.

ALIEN ENVOY (THROUGH SPEAKER)
We have seen you fight many worlds.
Want to know more.

Celia smiles, relieved to finally get a response.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

NASA TECH #1
(shouts)
Their envoy just started talking!

Nasa Tech #1 brings up the volume on the lab video feeds.

Duran quickly shifts his focus down to a flatscreen -

ON FLATSCREEN: *The team crowds around the viewing window, the Alien Envoy just inches away on the other side.*

ALIEN ENVOY (OVER SPEAKERS)
Please tell us about your
interstellar allies.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Jen, we need to clarify this for
their envoy as a priority.

JEN (OVER COMMS)
Yes sir.

CELIA (OVER SPEAKERS)
Hello. My name is Celia.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

CLOSE on Nick's fingers - he TAPS out a sharp rhythm on his leg. Morse code. Trying to get a message out. His hand hidden from the Humanoid, shielded by the partition plinth.

He speaks with more urgency now.

NICK
What is your job?

HUMANOID
To know you and your allies. You
said you would tell me about them.

NICK

How about I tell you about the human species first. We like puzzles. We enjoyed decoding the math you sent us, but we were disappointed.. We could only find our own information in the puzzle, information we'd sent to you. Nothing new. What was the purpose of the math?

The Humanoid doesn't answer.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

An Audio Tech, GIBBS, sits at his station wearing headphones. Tilts his head as he strains to hear - FAINT TAPPING.

ON WALL SCREEN: *Nick's helmet POV - the Humanoid seen through the transparent partition.*

COLONEL DURAN

Where's he going with this?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

THROUGH THE WINDOW - the Alien Envoy stares down at Celia, nearly two feet taller than her.

CELIA

Fiction is entertainment. It is a diversion from normal life, from reality. It is different from a lie by its intention. The purpose of a lie is to deceive. We would never deceive you.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick's fingers TAP furiously on his leg.

NICK

Can you tell me more about the orb, the gift you sent us? What do you use it for on your planet?

The Humanoid sits motionless. Eyes fixed open.

The Alien Envoy taken over questioning now.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

The black orb sits inside the damaged glass cylinder.

In the bg - everyone faces the opposite direction, focused on the viewing window. Oblivious to the potential threat.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran watches the wall screen, anxious.

ON WALL SCREEN: *the Humanoid sits still, as if frozen.*

COLONEL DURAN

(mutters)

Why isn't it talking anymore...

CELIA (OVER SPEAKERS)

With fiction, no one is deceived--

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)

Jen, any response from their Envoy,
anything at all?

JEN (THROUGH EARPIECE)

That's a negative, Colonel.

Duran tries to read the situation. Something's not right.

Gibbs listens intently through his headphones, writes what he hears on a pad of paper.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick leans forward. Firmer now.

NICK

What is your mission? You said you
wanted to learn about humans - I
will answer any question about my
species.

The Humanoid doesn't respond.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Gibbs rips off his headphones, tears the piece of paper from the pad. Hurries over to Duran.

GIBBS

Sir, I think I picked up a message
from inside the room on the alien
ship. Must be coming from Nick.

COLONEL DURAN

From Nick? How?

GIBBS

Tapping, Morse code. It's just two
words repeated over and over again.

Duran straightens, serious.

COLONEL DURAN

What does it say?

Gibbs hands over the piece of paper, pale.

Duran's face falls as he reads the message..

ON THE PAPER: Morse code translated into words: **double cross**.

COLONEL DURAN (CONT'D)

Double cross. They're not a friend.
They're an enemy.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

THROUGH THE WINDOW - the Alien Envoy peers down at Celia. It
feels threatening now, no longer curious.

CELIA

What you saw and heard of us
fighting other worlds, that was
just fiction - not a lie - fiction.
Do you understand?

Jen watches Celia, hears Duran over comms -

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)

They're an enemy.

Jen's eyes widen. She rushes forward -

JEN

Stop!

CELIA

We have no allegiances with
other worlds. Our first
contact with extra-
terrestrials is you.

- too late. Jen freezes in horror.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

NICK

What is your purpose--

Suddenly - Nick grimaces - a HIGH-PITCHED WHINE through his earpiece. It cuts out to silence.

The Humanoid's expression fixed in a blank stare.

NICK (CONT'D)

Colonel can you hear me? Colonel?!

He listens for a moment. Nothing. His comms are down.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

ON WALL SCREEN: Nick's video feed cuts to black.

CHAOS as Techs scramble to work out what just happened.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)

Nick?!

(to the room)

Get his feed back up NOW!

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

CLOSE on the black orb inside its damaged case.

Suddenly - gas starts to vent from the orb's silver veins - creates what looks like a heat haze inside the cylinder.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick rises fast. Confronts the Humanoid.

NICK

Did you do that? Did you cut communications?

The Humanoid still as a statue.

Nick strides around the partition. Leans close to the Humanoid, gets in its face. A desperate, last ditch tactic.

NICK (CONT'D)

Talk to me! Why are you here? What do you want?!

Nick's helmet visor just inches from the Humanoid's face.
Suddenly - the Humanoid's jaw moves. Chilling.

HUMANOID

Earth.

Nick reels. Fear in his eyes for the first time.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

JEN (INTO HEADSET)

Nick?! Nick can you hear me?

CELIA

What's happening?

Suddenly - a commotion behind them in the lab.

Jen and Celia whip around, to see -

The cylinder that holds the orb is filled with thick gas.
The black orb inside barely visible through the mist.

Mike and his team frantic around it.

VARIOUS

How did it activate?! / Have we got
a read on the gas inside? /
Diagnostics running.

Suddenly - the cylinder CRACKS. Pressurized vapor streams
out through the fracture.

Mike pales.

MIKE

Everybody out! Now!

The room moves to leave, just as -

THE CYLINDER SHATTERS - VAPOR ROLLS OUT IN ALL DIRECTIONS
LIKE A SHIMMERING WAVE.

Triggered by the fumes - an ALARM BLARES and LIGHTS FLASH.
Jen looks across the lab to her suit helmet - too far away to
reach in time. Celia dashes past Jen.

Mike and his team race to the exit. Too slow.

The gas reaches Physicist #1 at the back of the group - his
eyes widen and he starts to choke. Falls to his knees.

Jen backs up against the viewing window, watches in horror as the wave hits Mike's team. One by one, they hit the ground.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - CORRIDOR

Celia and two scientists burst out of the lab into the corridor outside - but they don't get far.

The air blurs and they collapse mid-run, sprawl on floor.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB/CELL

The vapor just meters from Jen. She looks desperately around the lab - out of options. Makes a decision.

She turns - yanks open the hatch to the isolation cell - rushes inside and hauls it shut. Just in time.

The heat shimmer crashes against the window in the lab.

Inside the cell, Jen watches as -

THROUGH THE VIEWING WINDOW - blurred through the vapor - everyone is down - their movements slow as they die.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Experts from the other rooms hurry inside.

RAPID CUTS

Thick containment doors shut - levers are locked - buttons pushed - a GREEN LIGHT - the center is sealed.

THROUGH THE OBS ROOM GLASS - Malone and the Officials are in crisis management mode, their attention on the screen feed.

The control center is a melee of panicked noise. Duran stares in horror at the feed from the lab.

ON FLATSCREEN: *Through a blurry haze, bodies are strewn across the floor.*

COLONEL DURAN

How are we doing with Nick's comms?

BLAKE

Whatever the problem is, it's not at our end.

GARY

Look what just happened in the lab,
you think Nick's still alive?!

BLAKE

We need to take a breath to work
out what's going on here. Maybe
what happened in the lab was an
accident, the ship could just be
causing interference with comms--

In the bg - Malone rushes over.

COLONEL DURAN

What about Nick's message? You
think it's a coincidence that this
all happened right after we told
their envoy we have no allies, that
there's no one out there to protect
us?

Blake has no response.

MALONE

You got a green light, Colonel.

COLONEL DURAN

Swap the wall feed to pad two.

ON WALL SCREEN: Nick's blacked out comms are replaced with
footage from launch pad 2. The alien ship.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET) (CONT'D)

Commander Perez, Seal team one.

PEREZ & COBB (THROUGH EARPIECE)

Yes sir.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)

Visitors are hostile, treat
anything that comes out of that
ship as an enemy.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

Cobb hardens.

COBB (INTO MIC)

You got it. Rules of engagement?

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)

You must be engaged to engage.

COBB
(to Seals)
Combat positions! Attack only in
retaliation, let's move!

YOUNG NAVY SEAL
(on the move)
How's our guy inside?

COBB
Unknown.

The six Seals break out weapons from the truck, spread out across the pad. A SNIPER SEAL scans for a target.

Commander Perez and his eight man team hustle towards the truck, take up defensive positions.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick stands in front of the Humanoid, shaken to his core.

HUMANOID
Thank you for your answer.

NICK
I didn't give you an answer.

The Humanoid cocks its head at Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)
This whole mission, the envoy
exchange you asked for, it was all
a ruse. You just wanted to find out
if we had any interstellar allies
to protect us.

HUMANOID
Yes.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - VARIOUS - NIGHT

ON THE STRIP - Military Men rush out of the field tent and into jeeps, haul ass to provide back up to launch pad 2.

ON THE ROOFTOPS - Snipers scan the Cape, stay frosty.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - CELL/LAB

Jen faces the viewing window. The Alien Envoy stands a few yards behind her in the cell. The ALARM still going off.

Slowly, Jen turns. The Alien Envoy appraises her. A good foot taller, intimidating.

Jen finds her courage, steps forward.

JEN
What did we do wrong? How can we
stop this?

The Alien Envoy stares at Jen, then strides past towards the hatch to the lab.

JEN (CONT'D)
No!

It turns the metal lever - locked in place. It tries again, twists the lever clean off and pushes open the hatch.

The deadly vapor shimmers into the cell - Jen covers her mouth, holds her breath as the wave hits her.

THROUGH THE VIEWING WINDOW - flashing lights illuminate the Alien Envoy. It steps over bodies, moves through the lab.

Jen rushes out, sprints across the lab to her suit helmet.

She pulls the helmet over her head, hurries to clamp it to her suit. Vapor swills inside the helmet, stings her eyes.

THROUGH JEN'S VISOR - blurred, the Envoy exits the lab.

The last clamp CLACKS shut, seals the helmet to her suit.

Jen drops to her knees as she COUGHS through the small amount of toxic vapor inside her helmet.

INSIDE JEN'S HELMET - the blur disappears, her oxygen tank pumping clean air inside..

Jen falls forward onto her hands and breathes deep, recovers.

She touches a button on the arm panel of her suit.

JEN (INTO HEADSET) (CONT'D)
(yells over the alarm)
Colonel? Duran do you hear me?

ON ARM PANEL: a graphic analyzes the atmosphere.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Relief washes over Duran hearing Jen's voice.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
I hear you Jen. What happened?

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

JEN
The orb activated..

She looks down at the arm panel on her suit.

JEN (CONT'D)
My suit reads the atmosphere as
zero percent oxygen - the orb
must've converted it into something
else, unidentified. Whatever it is,
it's toxic. Deadly.

Around her, through the blur - Mike and his team. Dead.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Is it still active?

Jen gets to her feet, looks across the lab to -

THE ORB - fresh waves of thick vapor flow out from its veins.

JEN
Yes.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Destroy it. Where's the envoy?

Jen rushes to the orb, glances around for anything to destroy
it with as she goes. Nothing stands out.

JEN
It just left the lab. Taking care
of the orb now.

With trepidation, she reaches for the orb and picks it up.
Toxic fumes seep between the fingers of her suit.

Jen YELLS out, hurls the orb to the ground with force.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Blake hurries around the control center, works his staff.

Malone is on his cell. Stone faced, he listens intently.

ON WALL SCREEN: *more military have now joined Perez and the
Seals at launch pad 2 - a massive force, still as they wait.*

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Cobb, the Envoy has broken out of
isolation in the ops building. Take
your team, find and contain it.

INTERCUT COBB ON LAUNCH PAD 2 AND DURAN

COBB
Yes sir.

COLONEL DURAN
You got field protection masks?

COBB
M forties are in the trucks.

COLONEL DURAN
You'll need them.

COBB
Got it.

STAY WITH COBB

COBB (CONT'D)
(shouts to Seals)
New mission! Seek and capture that
ugly son of a bitch we saw earlier!

YOUNG NAVY SEAL
Hell yes.

Cobb and the Seals sprint off to find the Alien Envoy.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen hurls the orb at a concrete wall.

It hits the ground with a dull, heavy THUD.

Jen bends down and examines the orb, shakes her head in
disbelief. Not even a scratch.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick speaks fast, searches for a clue to solve the problem.

NICK
How do I know you're telling me the
truth now?

HUMANOID

We were given an answer. There is
no longer a need to lie.

NICK

Why do you want Earth?

HUMANOID

There are no words in any of your
languages to explain.

NICK

What about us? What about human
life?

HUMANOID

My maker has no interest in your
species.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

Cobb and his Seals run towards a truck in the distance. The
ops building twenty yards to their left.

Sniper Seal glances at the building, double takes -

A heat shimmer pours from the building's door and window
frames. It seeps across the strip, closing in.

SNIPER SEAL

COBB!

Cobb looks over, sees the fumes.

COBB

Get to the masks!

The Seals sprint - close in on the truck - thirty yards out.
But it's too far. The toxic wave overtakes them.

The Young Navy Seal clutches at his throat, falls face first
onto the strip. The others go down too.

COBB (INTO MIC) (CONT'D)

(struggles to speak)

Building breach... gas....

He chokes, drops forward onto the asphalt.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2/ACCESS ROAD/COMPLEX

Perez preps his rifle, tense. Glances back, spots -

The Seal team, all down on the strip. The air blurs around them, like heat rising from asphalt.

Perez's eyes widen.

COMMANDER PEREZ
(to everyone in earshot)
Chemical attack! Fall back!

The Soldiers see the danger and scramble to retreat.

Perez jumps into the truck, fires up the engine.

Soldiers pile in the back, toss out Nick's cases. Perez steps on it, drives down the access road by the pad.

Perez glances in the rearview mirror -

IN THE REARVIEW - Soldiers collapse, caught in the wave.

The truck speeds between buildings, SCREECHES around a corner. Soldiers cling on, aim guns back at the threat.

The haze closes in. Perez's expression distorts as it catches up and he breathes in the toxic fume.

FROM ABOVE - the truck turns a corner - but not hard enough. The truck CRASHES hard into a building.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick kneels in front of the Humanoid - face to face.

NICK
I would like to speak to your
maker.

HUMANOID
No. They sent us.

NICK
To find out about our allies.

HUMANOID
Yes.

NICK
Tell me about *their* allies. Tell me
about their families.

HUMANOID
(cocks its head)
They do not have families. They
stand alone.

NICK
They sent you with an objective, to
find out about our allies. Do they
always set objectives, is that how
their species works?

HUMANOID
In a complex form.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING

The Alien Envoy steps out of the building and into the night.

The air shimmers with toxic gas. The Envoy moves through the
fume, leaves a trail in the air like oil on water.

It stops, looks around at the bodies - no living thing in
sight. It turns and moves off towards the sea.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

Jen SMASHES a monitor over the orb - the monitor breaks.

Useless. Waves of gas still flow from the orb's veins.

Jen catches her breath. Realizes something.

She picks up the orb, rolls it like a bowling ball into the
isolation cell and locks the hatch. Air tight.

THROUGH THE VIEWING WINDOW - the air inside the cell
thickens, toxic fumes building up.

Jen races out of the lab after the Alien Envoy.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran's on the phone, his headset mic pushed up on his head.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO PHONE)
We don't know how fast the toxin
will spread or what else might be
coming. Issue an evac order to the
media for the entire Cape, let's go
with a gas leak story for now.
(MORE)

COLONEL DURAN (INTO PHONE) (CONT'D)
We need CAS, a medi-vac team and
boots on the ground prepped with
masks immediately.

Duran hangs up and pulls his headset mic back down.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET) (CONT'D)
Jen, what's happening with the orb?

JEN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
I shut it in the cell, air tight,
should slow down the spread.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

Jen runs as fast as she can in her space suit down the strip.
She reaches Cobb's body, picks up his rifle, checks the ammo.

JEN
Couldn't destroy it. In pursuit of
the Envoy now.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran's jaw clenches - not what he wanted to hear.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Report in when you find it.

Gary moves close to Duran, thoughtful.

GARY
Colonel, what if their planet isn't
like ours at all?
(off look)
All that information on our golden
record, in the broadcasts we sent
out, we left ourselves wide open.
They know everything.

COLONEL DURAN
What are you getting at?

GARY
The math puzzle was meaningless,
just to waste our time. What if
they said their planet was similar
to ours to distract us, make us
focus on the carrot at the end of a
stick, but only the stick is real.
(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

Listen, your objective was to set up a colony on their planet. So what if they're thinking the exact same thing. What if they're not just hostile, what if they're--

COLONEL DURAN

Here for Earth.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

Nick rubs his face, frustrated with an answer he's heard many times before.

HUMANOID

There are no words in any of your languages to--

NICK

How can we save our species? What can we do to stop this?

The Humanoid looks into Nick's eyes.

HUMANOID

My objective has been met..

INT.. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Duran's eyes scour the screen feeds - no sign of the Envoy.

COLONEL DURAN

Blake, do you have any CCTV feeds we could patch in? We need to see more than this.

BLAKE

Not from here. All our CCTV is down in security, different system.

A Soldier looks through the reinforced portal in the door -

THROUGH THE GLASS - the air shimmers in the corridor. The deadly toxin just outside.

INT. ALIEN SHIP - ROOM

HUMANOID

...of your languages to explain.

NICK
Does your maker have morals,
principles? What are you ruled by?

Suddenly - the Humanoid freezes.

The room HUMS and the light dims, as if powering down.

NICK (CONT'D)
No!

Nick quickly examines the Humanoid's head and body - runs his hands down it to the pedestal, where it connects to the ship.

No panels or joins, no way in to power it back up.

NICK (CONT'D)
Damn it.

He rises fast.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

With Duran on the phone -

MALE VOICE (FROM PHONE)
CAS is inbound, ground support are
twenty minutes out. We're hearing
chatter that the ESA have spotted
an unidentified object near a
British satellite--

COLONEL DURAN
More are coming. What about our
officials--

MALE VOICE (FROM PHONE)
Congress, the President and his
staff are tucked up in bunkers.
They want to know what went wrong,
when this'll be over. What do I
tell them?

Duran glances around the room.

COLONEL DURAN
Tell them we're working on it.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - LAB

A large CRACK spreads across the viewing window.

THROUGH THE GLASS - the air is opaque inside the cell - the gas built up to high concentration and pressure.

Suddenly - the entire window SHATTERS WITH FORCE.

Glass EXPLODES out into the lab - followed by a shimmering wave that rolls out like a tsunami.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - NIGHT

Quiet. The blur in the air makes the building look fuzzy.

Suddenly - the windows and doors EXPLODE with the force of the pressurized gas - thick mist WHOOSHES out onto the strip.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - VARIOUS

The field tent on the strip ripples wildly as the gas hits.

The shimmering wave rolls out fast, towards the marshlands.

Birds drop from the air, dead, as the fumes hit them.

The haze sweeps over the lighthouse and out to sea.

INT/EXT. ALIEN SHIP - TUNNEL

Nick hurries down the tunnel, his flashlight pans wildly. He slips on the goop underfoot and falls hard.

Nick SCREAMS, writhes in pain as he holds his back.

INSIDE NICK'S HELMET - his breathing loud and staccato.

UP AHEAD - the tunnel entrance is wide open. The launch pad and jeeps beyond it visible, blurry.

Nick grits his teeth, forces himself to get up. He speed limps out of the opening - whips around as it shuts fast behind him. No longer welcome.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - ALIEN SHIP - LAUNCH PAD 2 - NIGHT

Nick winces in pain, looks around in shock -

THROUGH NICK'S VISOR - the dead bodies of Soldiers strewn across the ground. The air thick with toxic fume.

NICK

Jesus...

Nick's earpiece CRACKLES to life, gives him hope..

NICK (CONT'D)
Colonel!? Duran can you hear me?!

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

ON WALL SCREEN: *Nick stands by the alien ship.*

Duran lights up, hearing Nick's voice.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
God damn it Nick we thought you
were dead.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

Nick moves away from the ship.

NICK
Colonel, they want the planet.
They're gonna wipe us out.

INTERCUT NICK AND DURAN

Duran and Gary exchange a serious look - *suspicion confirmed.*

Nick squints into the distance - a black dot in sky.

NICK (CONT'D)
I need to speak to their Envoy.

COLONEL DURAN
The lab was compromised, but it
could still be in the ops building.
Jen's on the hunt too.

IN THE SKY - the faint outline of a helicopter closing in.

NICK
You order an Apache?

COLONEL DURAN
(grins wide)
Yes I did. We got ground support
inbound too.

NICK
Good. Heading to operations now.

Nick hurries towards the operations building.

EXT.. CAPE CANAVERAL - BEACH

The Alien Envoy stands on the sand. It stares at the lighthouse further down the shore, then looks out to sea.

Behind the Alien Envoy, Jen creeps up.

INT. APACHE HELICOPTER

A PILOT and GUNNER, both wearing respirators, look -

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - the alien ship two miles away. Through the gas shimmer it looks like a huge gray blotch.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Apache 1, you are clear to engage.

PILOT
Target locked, fire when ready..

GUNNER
Execute.

The Gunner hits a button -

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - a hellfire missile streaks towards the alien ship.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH PAD 2

All is still, quiet. Suddenly - an almighty WHOOSH -

The missile hits the alien ship and EXPLODES.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - BEACH

The Alien Envoy turns off the sound, sees the fireball on launch pad 2 and Jen -

Jen OPENS FIRE.

The Alien Envoy doesn't even flinch. Bullets PING and ricochet off its body. Jen keeps firing.

A bullet deflects, clips Jen's oxygen tank. A second bullet rebounds, hits her in the thigh.

Jen YELLS OUT, collapses by a dune.

CLOSE on Jen's oxygen tank - a clear stream of oxygen escapes into the toxic air.

Blood flows from her thigh. She GASPS, clutches the wound.

JEN
Colonel, I'm down.

A CRACKLE, the sound of electricity in the air.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
(cuts in and out)
Did you find their Envoy?

The Alien Envoy holds its hand out towards Jen - a HIGH-PITCHED WHINE through Jen's earpiece - her comms cutting out.

JEN
It's on the beach, can you hear me?

She puts pressure on her bullet wound, blood seeps between her suit fingers.

INT. APACHE HELICOPTER

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD - the last smoke clears, reveals the alien ship. A large dent in its hull - but not breached.

PILOT
Colonel, we have a negative impact.
The ship is still intact.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Hit 'em with everything you've got.

EXT. APACHE HELICOPTER - STRIP

Under the Apache - a front-mounted gun swivels and FIRES.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - OPERATIONS BUILDING - VARIOUS

Nick kneels by Celia's body - lifeless. He rises.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Nick, report in.

NICK
Checked most of the building, it's
not here. No survivors either.

Nick strides down a corridor, heads down stairs.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Jen's comms cut out, before they
went down it sounded like she was
outside.

NICK
Maybe she was close to the Envoy,
could've interfered with her comms
just like mine on the ship.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)
Listen Nick, the hellfire failed.
We're running out of time here.

Nick pushes through a door -

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - STRIP

He stops and scans around - *where to look next*. The weight
of the task heavy on his shoulders.

NICK
I know.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - ALIEN SHIP

The Apache FIRES, muzzle flashes strobe in the dark. More
dents in the ship's hull, but nothing gets through.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - BEACH

The Alien Envoy's foot sinks into the sand. A wave laps up,
touches its foot - ELECTRICITY SPARKS out.

Jen struggles for breath, watches a chain reaction of sparks
dance over the water and up into the toxic gas above.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Malone glances back to the Obs Room glass. Low to Duran -

MALONE
They're agreeing on offensive
options beyond the hellfire.
Whatever Nick's doing he'd better
do it fast, this'll be out of our
hands soon.

Duran nods, grim. Malone retreats back to the Obs Room.

COLONEL DURAN (INTO HEADSET)
Nick, what's your plan?

EXT.. CAPE CANAVERAL

Nick moves between buildings, searches for the Alien Envoy.

INTERCUT NICK AND DURAN

NICK
The Envoy is machine artificial intelligence. Its maker is its master - it's a hierarchy, just like how a terrorist cell operates. They're working to a set of instructions, and when we answered their question about allies they moved on to the next step - the takeover of Earth. Our only chance is to reverse that step, make them believe we have those allies. You got Gary with you?

Duran indicates to Gary, Gary puts on a headset.

GARY
I'm here.

NICK
Gary, what rules would you program when creating AI?

Nick moves towards launch pad 2 - the Apache still firing.

GARY
Uh, like machine AI, not just an algorithm? We'd want them to serve us, not hurt us--

NICK
Right, preservation. I think its overriding objective will be to protect its maker.

COLONEL DURAN
Why? We can't assume they'd do the same thing we would--

NICK
Every species wants to live.. I have to convince it that its objective hasn't been met, that Celia was wrong.
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
I need names of planets, ones we
know that could support life.

Duran looks to Gary, gobsmacked.

COLONEL DURAN
Nick, are you suggesting we bluff
our way out of this?

Nick stops, spotted something -

IN THE DISTANCE - the Alien Envoy stands on the beach.

NICK
Trust me.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - BEACH

Jen lies by a dune, her breaths shallow.

CLOSE on her oxygen tank, the last of her oxygen escaping.

FURTHER DOWN THE BEACH - Nick approaches the Alien Envoy -
Jen hidden from view behind the dune.

The Alien Envoy turns. Nick stops six yards away.

NICK
I am the representative for planet
Earth, for the human species. You
think your objective has been met -
that you've heard all you need to
hear, but that is not the case.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER

Gibbs hurries to write down names of planets.

GIBBS
...Kepler twenty two B and Kepler
one eight six F.

BLAKE
Add Gliese four one one B. Colonel
they probably have completely
different names for these planets--

COLONEL DURAN
Of course they will, but that's no
reason not to believe us.

Duran takes the list from Gibbs.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - BEACH

The Alien Envoy stands motionless, regards Nick. Static sparks dance in the air.

NICK

The woman who spoke to you did not speak for Earth. The broadcasts we sent out were for everyone on the planet to see, all eight billion of us - but not all of us are trusted with the truth. We have a hierarchy, just like you. Only the people at the top are trusted with the most secret knowledge, and that person is me - I am at the top of that hierarchy as Earth's chosen representative.

The Alien Envoy's black eyes bore into Nick.

ALIEN ENVOY

Humans are just one species.

NICK

On Earth, yes. But I was chosen to represent this planet not just by Earth, but by an interplanetary committee. Our allies.

COLONEL DURAN (THROUGH EARPIECE)

Kepler twenty two B, Gliese four one one B and five eight one D--

NICK

Representatives from the planets Kepler twenty two B, Gliese four one one B and many more all know about your offer of an envoy exchange. And if you double cross us, if you kill us and take our planet, they will come for you.

The gas shimmers over the sea. As it thickens, the line between water and air blurs, becomes one.

Nick steps towards the Alien Envoy, fire in his eyes.

NICK (CONT'D)

You have no idea how powerful our allies are. They will defend us. They will wipe out your race and destroy your makers.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
If you continue with this takeover,
you will be responsible for the
extinction of your master's race.

Suddenly - Nick spots movement by the sand dune - Jen's foot.
Nick's eyes widen and he rushes to her, drops by her side.

The Alien Envoy watches Nick, as if puzzled.

ALIEN ENVOY
Why do they protect you?

Jen's eyelids flutter, barely conscious. Nick sees the hole
in her oxygen tank, her leg bleeding out into the sand. She
doesn't have long.

And in this moment, he realizes the answer. He turns to the
Alien Envoy.

NICK
All our allies have evolved, like
you and your maker, to become
artificial intelligence, machines
and energy. We have a trait they
wish they'd never engineered out,
something you can never truly
understand. They protect us because
of our families, our relationships,
because of how we love each other
and how that makes us strong.

Nick detaches the oxygen hose from Jen's suit. He takes off
his pack and plugs the hose from his tank into her suit.

The Alien Envoy shifts its weight, falters. Doesn't
understand what Nick's doing.

NICK (CONT'D)
Because we'd die for each other.
Because I choose to die so she can
live.

Jen's eyelids open a little as she regains consciousness.

Nick breathes deep. The toxic air flows inside his suit,
fills his helmet. He starts to choke - defiant.

NICK (CONT'D)
Because we're human.

Nick falls back onto the dune. The Alien Envoy a blur,
standing over him as he passes out.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK - the sound of the SEA. Gentle, lapping waves.

FLASHES of light. A wave CRASHES.

Suddenly - A DEAFENING CRACK OF THUNDER!

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - BEACH - DAWN

Nick comes around with a jolt, whips towards the sound -

THE ALIEN SHIP RISES FROM LAUNCH PAD 2

Its five 'arms' begin to spin, propel the ship out over the Atlantic Ocean. They spin faster, the CRACKLE of THUNDER intensifies until -

THE SHIP WHOOSHES UP INTO THE ATMOSPHERE, OUT OF SIGHT.

A few stars shine clear in the early dawn light - the blur in the air is gone.

SHOUTS in the distance. Nick turns, to see -

A MEDICAL TEAM in biohazard suits racing down the beach.

NICK

Jen...

Nick scrambles to her, a few meters away. Relief washes over him as she smiles weakly. Water laps peacefully on the shore.

JEN

You just saved the human race.

NICK

If I hadn't met you, I wouldn't have known what to do. We'd all be dead by now.

The Medical Team reach Nick and Jen - a flurry of activity - TWO MEDICS start work on Jen's leg.

MEDIC #1

Sir, are you injured? Are you hurt?

JEN

You're saying I helped by getting shot. Technically, I shot myself.

NICK (CONT'D)

You did it so well.

(to Medics)

I'm fine, just help her!

They share a devilish smile before the Medics rush Jen away.

OVER BLACK - the sound of the sea... a wave CRASHES.

INT. NEW MEXICO BEACH HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAWN

In bed, Nick wakes with a jolt off the sound of the wave.

The window is open, the beach just outside.

He glances back at Jen lying asleep beside him and smiles, remembering where he is.

TITLE: SIX MONTHS LATER

INT. NEW MEXICO BEACH HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - MORNING

Homely and lived in, it's the polar opposite to Nick's accommodation at Fort Bragg.

Nick pads to the KITCHEN. Downs two painkillers with some orange juice as he walks.

NICK (V.O.)
Love. The emotions that tie us
together, whatever they may be. Our
greatest strength.

A DOG follows Nick as he bends to set down its bowl of food.

NICK (V.O.)
Took an alien race to make us
realize that. To make me realize.

He looks out the window to a glorious view of the ocean.

EXT. SEA - DAY

Nick swims in blazing sunlight. He stops, takes a moment to appreciate the world around him. Spots Jen on the beach.

NICK (V.O.)
To truly live. Not just survive.

EXT. NEW MEXICO BEACH HOUSE - VERANDA - NIGHT

Nick and Jen play chess together under the stars.

NICK (V.O.)
I used to work for the thrill, the
feeling.

Jen narrows her eyes, makes a move and takes Nick's rook.
She eyes Nick, teases - *what's your move?* Nick grins.

LATER

Nick and Jen drink on the veranda, look out to sea. The
stars reflect off its inky black surface.

NICK (V.O.)
Now I live for it.

We stay with them a moment, in complete peace.

JEN
Do you miss it?

Nick stares into the distance.

NICK
Do you?

JEN
(smiles)
No.

Nick wraps his arms around her. Kisses her hair.

JEN (CONT'D)
You know they're out there
somewhere. The door's open now.

NICK
And we'll be ready. Together.

Jen looks up at Nick. They smile, knowing.

Together, they look to the stars.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END