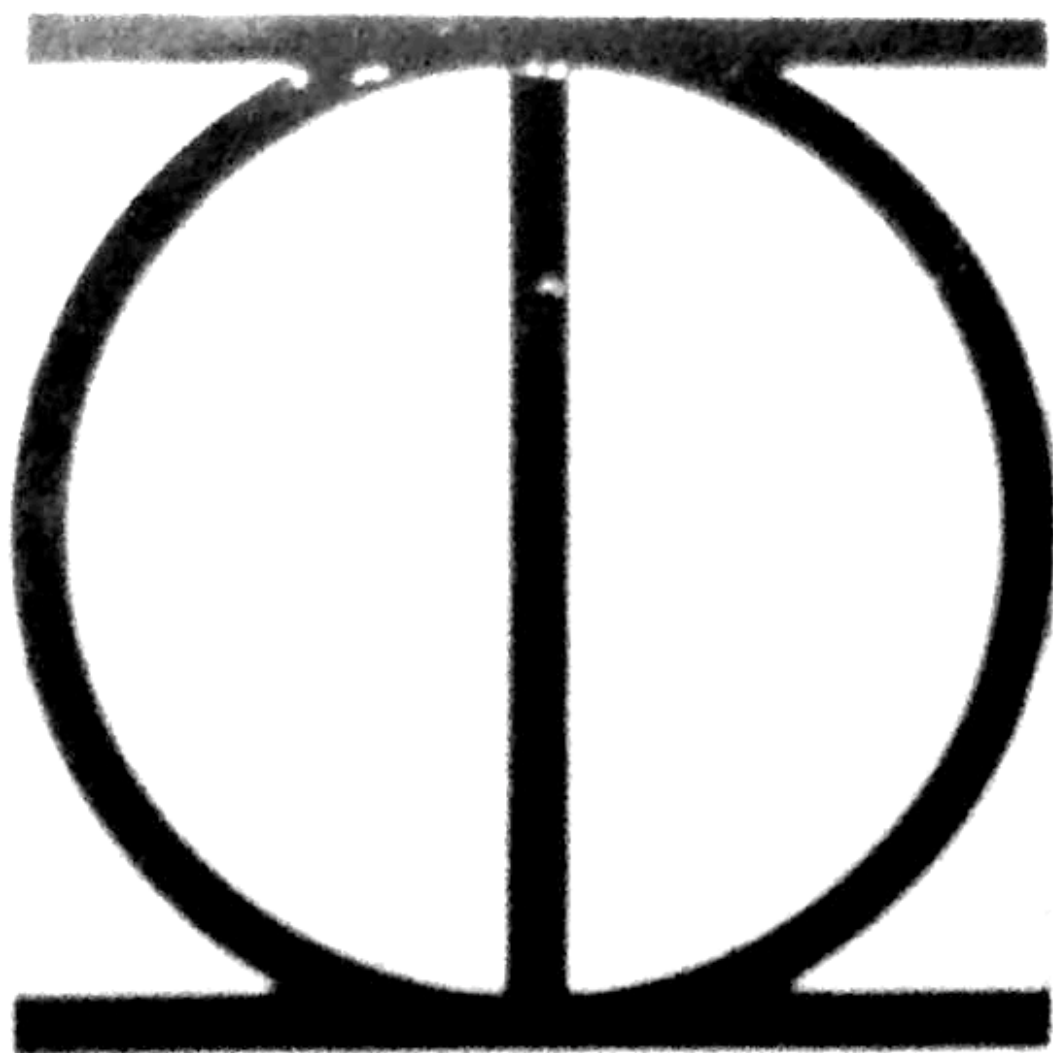




IO

Everything Beautiful Is Far Away

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"I believe we are all astronauts. We are all alone, we are isolated from each other. And we are all trying by verbal and non-verbal communication to get in contact with each other. To not feel alone. Each individual is a space with its own rules, materials, history and relations to the space outside of itself."

--Mattias Schaller, *Disportraits*

EXT. SNOWY WASTELAND - DUSK

A high altitude landscape of rugged mountains covered in snow and ice. A giant man-made crater is carved into the rocky surface of the alpine valley. And nearby, a clump of sad, half-fallen wooden buildings.

In the window of one of the distant structures, a dim light glows yellow.

INT. WOODEN SHACK - CONTINUOUS

A small square room with a cot in one corner. The furniture is wood, weathered, handmade. A beat-up guitar leans against the wall. In the center of the room, an old man, 70s, sits huddled in front of a coal-burning stove. This is JEREMIAH. A younger man, 30s, paces, fuming mad. This is MICAH. Both men are haggard, bearded, starving, and draped in winter rags.

MICAH

God damn him!

JEREMIAH

(calmly nodding in
agreement)

There will be wailing and weeping
and gnashing of teeth for that man.
You can count on that, by God.

(beat)

And the way things are looking,
that likely goes for all of us.

Micah stops in his tracks and shoots Jeremiah a deeply pained look. Jeremiah immediately realizes his mistake.

JEREMIAH

I didn't mean...

Micah nods: Apology accepted.

JEREMIAH

If I had any medicine left, I'd
give you mine.

MICAH

(looking at his friend)
I know you would.

A beat.

JEREMIAH

You *know* what I think.

MICAH
(shaking him off)
I can't do that. There must be
another way... There's still time.

JEREMIAH
You need to quit that shit right
now, you hear me? You're a good
man, Micah. Nothing's gonna change
that. But you're out of options.

They stare at each other for a long beat.

JEREMIAH
Anyway, it's like you said. To hell
with that sonofabitch.

MICAH
Even still, the three of us will be
too heavy.

JEREMIAH
Look at me. I'm an old man. I'm not
going anywhere.

Micah catches Jeremiah's attention with a look that asks:
What are you saying?

Jeremiah breaks eye contact and reaches for something next to
his chair.

JEREMIAH
Besides, I've got everything I need
right here.

He produces two glasses with old cartoon characters on them,
and a small brown bottle. He pours two drinks and extends one
to Micah.

They share an extended moment in silence.

Finally, Micah takes the drink and sits.

MICAH
I thought this was for special
occasions only.

Jeremiah nods and downs his drink. Micah follows his lead.
Jeremiah reaches for the guitar and starts to pick out a
song. The lyrics are low and melancholy. It's an old
traditional folk song, "The Wayfaring Stranger."

JEREMIAH

(sings)

I'm just a poor wayfarin' stranger,
While travelin' through this world
of woe.
Yet there's no sickness, no toil,
nor danger,
In that bright land to which I go.
I'm coming home to see my brother.
I'm coming home no more to grieve.
I'm coming home just over Jordan.
I'm coming home to never leave.

As Jeremiah sings, Micah turns his attention out the window, his thoughts are far away.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW: Snow in every direction.

MICAH

(stands)

I need to get back.

Jeremiah nods, but continues to play and sing.

Micah sets down his glass and walks towards the door. Before he leaves, he turns to Jeremiah and smiles. A look of thanks and friendship.

EXT. ROW OF LEANING STRUCTURES - CONTINUOUS

Micah exits the shack and shields his face from the bitter cold. As he trudges through the deep snow, we can still hear the sound of Jeremiah singing.

Then the singing stops. Micah pauses for a moment, then continues on his way. He is a couple buildings beyond Jeremiah's shack, when --

BANG. A GUNSHOT. From Jeremiah's.

Micah jumps, startled. He whips back around. In an instant, he realizes what Jeremiah has done. Micah falls to his knees and clinches his eyes tight for a long beat. Then he opens them, his pain replaced with a sense of clarity and purpose.

EXT. SNOWY WASTELAND - ALPINE VALLEY - DAWN

Micah sits near the edge of the massive mine. He uses a small helium tank to inflate a black balloon. When the balloon is inflated, Micah ties it closed and stands. He scans the horizon of mountains and then releases it.

The balloon climbs high into the overcast sky. Micah doesn't take his eyes off it.

We follow the balloon for a long time as it sails toward a ridge of ice-covered mountains in the distance. Eventually, the black balloon becomes a tiny dark speck against the soft shapeless white of the sky and, finally, it disappears.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

THE RHYTHMIC PULSING SOUND OF BUZZING INSECTS.

We look straight down on a faded yellow road line. Clumps of tall green grass break through the ash-colored pavement. The long blades of grass are bent to the side, dancing fluidly back and forth.

A rippling crease of light glints over the image. This street is underwater. Through the relentless drone of insects, we can now pick out the trickling sound of a stream.

As we hold on this frame, a closer inspection reveals among the grass and rocks a rounded triangular glass lens embedded in an obscured BLACK RUBBER MASK.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A wide expanse of low growth sways in a gentle breeze. The lines on the pavement reveal that this was once a parking lot. On the far end of the lot is a car-shaped lump of bright green climbing vines.

We look closely at the broad leaves of the vine. A DARK PURPLE FLOWER is nested amongst the twisting green tendrils. It's peaceful here.

Suddenly, there is a violent shake. A large PURPLISH-BLACK INSECT has landed on one of the leaves. It is winged, shiny and grotesque. The insect produces a prolonged, grating shriek. Then, with another violent shake, it is gone.

EXT. ZOO - DAY

An empty low-walled enclosure. A faded picture of a flamingo accompanied by a paragraph of text.

In the corner of the monkey house there are several small SKELETONS huddled together, like the ruins of Pompeii. We hold on the faded photograph of a white-headed Capuchin monkey, when--

A GLOVED HAND enters frame and brushes the dirt from the image.

EXT. LION ENCLOSURE - DAY

ANGLE ON: The image of a Lion, on a placard outside the enclosure.

Keys hang in the lock of an opened gate.

Inside, a FIGURE walks around, behind bars, inspecting the features of the enclosure.

A human-shaped figure. Small, skinny, feminine. She has a scuba air cylinder and a camelback water bladder on her back with a hose leading to a black, alien BREATHING MASK obscuring her face. She carries a satchel and wears a short-sleeved wetsuit top, mid-thigh spandex shorts and high-top hiking boots with thick scrunched socks. A flashlight hangs at her hip.

An alarm BEEPS.

She checks her watch.

And hurries out of the enclosure.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Plants envelop everything. A mass of twisted foliage subsumes the concrete and steel and glass of the man-made world. In the distance, the figure moves towards us.

She moves with purpose to a squat INDUSTRIAL BUILDING.

INT. DECAYING BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

It's quieter now. The buzz of insects is replaced with dripping water, echoing footsteps, patterned breathing and the creak and groan of the massive settling structure. The masked explorer turns on a headlamp light and proceeds into the shadows of the dank and decaying building.

On the cement floor, dark cockroach-like insects scatter.

She checks her watch.

The face of the DIGITAL WATCH displays a countdown timer--

00:44:36 ... 00:44:35 ... 00:44:34 ...

She is checking all of the pipes, following them to the ceiling and around the corner. Her headlamp follows the pipework to a PRESSURE VALVE.

She kneels down. Produces a PIPE WRENCH from her satchel and struggles with the valve until it comes loose. She removes the valve and takes it. That moment --

A deep GROANING SOUND behind her. She whips around, but her headlamp doesn't reach across the large room. It's probably just the sound of the settling building. She pulls a flashlight from her hip anyway and narrows the beam on a grey, METAL DOOR in the corner, partially open.

She slowly approaches the door, hesitantly opens it, and shines the flashlight beyond its threshold to reveal a STAIRCASE leading down into deeper darkness.

After a frozen moment, she takes a tentative step down the stairs. Another step --

CRASH! The stairs give out.

INT. DECAYING BUILDING - BASEMENT - LATER

A wet, echoing silence and a slow methodical DRIPPING are punctuated by subdued breathing. The light from the headlamp cuts a narrow path through the darkness. Her GLOVED HAND lays motionless in the puddle.

The figure slowly comes to and struggles to sit up. She finally gets to her feet and looks around.

The half-circle ceiling extends in both directions into the dark. On the ground there are train tracks -- it's a SUBWAY TUNNEL.

She produces a BIC LIGHTER from her satchel and -- after a few feeble attempts -- lights it. The flame is DARK PURPLE.

She removes her soggy glove and looks at her hand, which is severely WRINKLED.

She bends down to examine the water. It's stagnant and dark. A thick BLACK SLIME coats the edge of the puddle.

After a moment, she collects a small sample of water from the puddle and a glob of black slime. Then returns the sealed jar to her bag.

She pulls a Ziplock bag from her satchel. She removes a strip of paper from the bag and adds a drop of liquid from a small glass jar to the strip. The paper quickly turns dark purple.

It's a LITMUS STRIP. She then compares the purple-stained paper to a small chart, which displays a row of varying shades of purple. From light to dark, they are numbered 1 to 12. Her paper is an 8. She returns the strip to the Ziplock bag and the bag to her satchel.

She takes in the surroundings as she slowly makes her way down the narrow platform.

Something captures her attention. An old, faded and torn subway POSTER on the wall with the word "IO". She stops and raises a hand to brush the dust off. The words "JUPITER AND IO" next to a fragment of a PAINTING of a young woman, nude and embraced by a black cloud in the vague form of a man.

Another partial image of a nude young woman being seduced by a BEAUTIFUL SWAN: An advertisement for an art exhibit. There are pieces of smaller words as well: "wings beating still," "strange heart," "Agamemnon dead." At the bottom, an attribution: "--Yeats."

She stares at the poster, motionless, mesmerized. SUDDENLY -- an alarm BEEPS. She's startled -- looks at her watch.

The face of the watch flashes: 00:01:00. Then - 00:00:58 ... 00:00:57 ...

She checks the pressure gauge of her air cylinder. Virtually EMPTY! She bolts through our frame in a blur as we linger on the poster. In bold letters at the top, the poster says: MODERN MYTHS at the MUSEUM OF ART

Her running footsteps echo and eventually disappear.

INT./EXT. SUBWAY - DAY

She bursts through the TURNSTILE.

Takes the STAIRS two at a time.

Sprints down a tiled CORRIDOR.

Explodes into the blinding DAYLIGHT.

Races down the middle of the STREET.

The sound of the BEEPING ALARM. The face of the BOUNCING WATCH: Flashing 00:00:00

EXT. ABANDONED STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The figure arrives at a beat-up MOTORIZED BICYCLE. Chest heaving. The bike is towing a small cargo trailer. In a section labeled "EMERGENCY" there is one small oxygen tank.

She expertly switches the tank on her back for the small emergency tank and takes a deep breath. She sits on the curb and silences the beeping watch.

We see the face of the watch as she resets it to -- 01:00:00, 00:59:59, 00:59:58

She reaches into the satchel and produces SIX COLLECTION JARS. Five are empty. One has the water and black slime. She loads them next to several more empty jars in a section of the trailer labeled "SPECIMENS." Then, she removes the pressure valve from her satchel and drops it into another bin where it joins five other identical valves. She reaches for the flashlight at her hip. It's gone. She hangs her head.

After a moment, she mounts the bike. Starts the electric motor. Makes a wide U-turn and starts up the street of dilapidated houses. She rides toward a horizon of MOUNTAINS.

EXT. CRUMBLING HIGHWAY - DAY

OPENING CREDITS OVER:

The motorized bicycle as it climbs into the mountains.

TITLE CARD: IO

EXT. ROCKY PATH - LATER

She pushes the bike up a rocky path that is marked on either side with a pair of large CAIRNS, carefully stacked piles of rock. The bright green vines climb over the cairns and up the hill, but they are thinning out with the elevation gain.

EXT. FENCE - DAY

She rides up to a dilapidated fence, stops, and checks the watch's countdown timer: 00:16:13 ... 00:16:12 ...

She dismounts and approaches the closed gate. She reaches down the front of her shirt and pulls out a long necklace that carries TWO SMALL KEYS. She uses the keys to unlock two separate padlocks that secure the gate.

She goes through, closes the gate, locks both padlocks and double checks them. Clearly a well-learned protocol here.

She sparks the lighter again. Now it's almost normal, but there is a light purple hue to the edge of the flame.

EXT. PATH - DAY

Riding higher in elevation, she approaches the top of the mountain. We're above the treeline and the bright green vines are non-existent up here. The terrain is rugged and barren compared to the landscape below. The insect buzz is gone, leaving only the desolate, lonely sound of wind on rocks.

She reaches another pair of cairns, dismounts the bike, takes off the gloves and mask. She's a TEENAGE GIRL; pretty but not delicate. She is muscular and weathered for her age. Her hands are callused. She has the kind of suntan that comes from laboring outdoors -- This is SAM.

Sam pushes her bike further up the barren, rocky plateau summit towards an OBSERVATORY.

She passes SOLAR PANELS, a homemade WIND TURBINE and the remnants of an old CHICKEN COOP. In the distance are two GREENHOUSES, built as geodesic domes.

Sam arrives at a small SHED housing another similar motorized bike, a bulky ATV and an assortment of SCUBA TANKS and equipment. She unhitches the trailer and parks her bike.

Mounted on the wall is a small glass tube containing a pilot flame. Sam checks the flame -- It is burning YELLOW. Good.

Sam grabs the trailer by its yoke and walks to the GARAGE DOOR of a neighboring structure. She sets down the yoke, lifts the door by pulling a metal chain and enters.

INT. DECONTAMINATION ANTECHAMBER - DAY

There is a raised PLATFORM in the center of the small garage. On the platform is a CHEMICAL SHOWER. Below the platform is a water holding tank, labeled "ZONE-CONTAMINATED GREYWATER."

From her satchel, Sam removes a VHS tape with a Dewey Decimal library number on the spine and places it on a table. Sam enters the shower in full gear and pulls down the LEVER. Water cascades over her for 10 seconds.

As the water drains into the tank below, Sam takes off her pack and undresses.

INT. DECONTAMINATION ANTECHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Sam's clothes, gear and specimen jars are organized and hanging on drying racks next to the platform.

She sits on a bench next to a wash bucket and scrubs herself. She has an indiscernible TATTOO on her rib cage.

Sam dunks her head in the bucket, wetting her hair. She slowly lifts her head up. Her long hair obscures her face as we watch the water drip back into the bucket.

INT. OBSERVATORY - TELESCOPE CHAMBER - MINUTES LATER

A giant optical TELESCOPE stands in the middle of the great dome-ceilinged room. In addition to a wall of dated computer equipment, there's a worn-out couch, a small bed in the corner and books everywhere. There are framed Polaroid photos on the walls -- mostly of a younger Sam. Some with an older man, presumably Sam's father. A few with her mother. In one corner there is a closed GREY METAL DOOR.

Sam puts on a t-shirt. Her hair is still damp.

SAM
(calling out)
Dad?

Sam's voice reverberates through the space. She crosses the room to a desk with a dirty computer keyboard and cube-shaped monochrome monitor (think Apple IIe).

On the walls, there are vintage newspaper clippings. We catch glimpses of the headlines: "CATAclysm," "...the Exodus Project...", "...space colony orbiting the Moon of Io..." There are newspaper photos of massive crowds desperate to board large rocket ships. We briefly catch a glimpse of an image that shows a human corpse lying in the street.

There's a mechanical ORRERY model of Jupiter and its moons.

Sam turns on the computer, and the monitor glows green. The block-y pixels come to life and the CPU whirs.

As the computer slowly boots up, Sam crosses to a shelf supporting TWO SHORTWAVE RADIO TRANSCEIVERS. Each connected to its own AUDIO CASSETTE DECK. The wheels on both cassette tapes are turning. The first deck is RECORDING. The second deck is PLAYING. Sam checks a switch labeled TRANSMIT on the second radio to make sure the LED light is on. She turns up the volume of the transmission, and we hear--

MAN'S VOICE
 (crackling through the
 speaker)
 ...our planet, Earth, is a miracle
 in the Universe. We believe that it
 is our duty...

Next to a large map of the world that is almost entirely grayed-out, there is a dot matrix printout tacked up to the wall. It says: DAD'S PROTOCOL: RADIO TRANSMISSIONS. Under that, there are others: DAD'S PROTOCOL: THE ZONE, DAD'S PROTOCOL: POWER USAGE, and finally -- DAD'S PROTOCOL: CONTAMINATION STORMS. We linger on the last one for a beat.

Sam turns down the transmission volume and the voice disappears. She returns to the desk and sits at the computer.

On the computer screen, the display shows: 1 NEW MESSAGE(S). It's from "EXODUS CONTROL." Disappointed, Sam opens the message anyway.

A couple lines of text followed by map coordinates. We catch a glimpse of some text: "AUTOMATED MESSAGE... NO CHANGE IN LAUNCH STATUS..." Sam closes the message. On the Electronic Message Center's main page, interspersed with daily messages from EXODUS CONTROL, is a dialogue chain alternating "TO" and "FROM" someone named "ELON." Sam navigates down the page and selects one of the messages from Elon and opens it.

Filling the screen is an ASCII image. Viewed up-close, it's just a random series of letters, numbers, symbols and spaces. But, from a distance, we can clearly see the image of a teenage boy. This is ELON. Sam tabs through a series of messages to and from Elon.

On the screen, a message begins: "Dear Sammy,"

SAM
 Dear Sammy...

ELON (V.O.)
 Dear Sammy...

EXT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

Sam walks outside. She takes one of the valves she recovered from the Zone and drops it into a metal pot. She pours water into it from a dirty, heavy plastic jug with a screw-top.

ELON (V.O.)
 Some of us went to a party tonight!

Carrying the pot, Sam passes through a breezeway filled with storage boxes of fresh vegetables, ristras of dried peppers, as well as rows and rows of jars of preserved tomatoes, fruit, and pickled vegetables.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Adjacent to the breezeway is a wooden table, covered overhead by a colorful waterproof tarp. In this way, the breezeway makes a small, semi-outdoor kitchen.

ELON (V.O.)
I wish you could have been there
with me. I *really* want to introduce
you to my friends! They're...
different than you.

Sam puts the pot on an electric griddle.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The water is boiling. Sam turns off the burner and takes the valve out of the pot using tongs.

ELON (V.O.)
What else? School is kind of lame.
You're so lucky you don't have to
go to school!

Sam picks up a toolbox and heads out into the grassy plateau surrounding the observatory.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam kneels in front of a large water tank. She removes a corroded, rusted valve from her water tank with a pipe wrench and replaces it with the new one.

SAM (V.O.)
What was the party like?! I've
never been to a *real* party.

Once the valve is tightly threaded, Sam loosens a hand-turn lever. She opens the spigot on the end and water flows into a small bucket. Sam raises the bucket to her mouth and drinks.

ELON (V.O.)
My friends can't believe I know
someone who still lives on Earth. I
wish they would schedule the final
Exodus shuttle already.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - A LITTLE LATER

Sam exits the greenhouse and heads back toward the Observatory, her basket overflowing with produce.

SAM (V.O.)
Elon, I wish you could someday see
Earth the way I do.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

Sam stands next to a row of SOLAR PANELS. She looks out at the vast expanse of sky and admires the view over a valley of clouds in the afternoon sun.

SAM (V.O.)
If you could see it with your own
eyes just once, I know you would
understand.

Sam bends down to examine the smooth surfaces of the panels. With the exception of a small crack in one of the panels, they are perfect.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

A large CITY MAP hangs on a wall in the observatory. The map is spotted with yellow highlighted areas. Most of the markings are accompanied by a red "X."

ELON (V.O.)
Some of my friends are applying for
the mission. Crazy, right? But
awesome at the same time. I can't
explain it, but I have this intense
feeling we're going to find an
amazing planet at Alpha Centauri.

Sam sits in front of the map flipping through the yellow pages of an old PHONE BOOK. In the N's, Sam locates a section called "NURSERIES & GARDEN CENTERS." She's been here before. Most of them are marked with little red x's. Sam finds an unmarked entry: "EDEN NURSERY." Sam scrolls over to the address.

On the map, Sam finds the matching address on the edge of town and highlights the area yellow.

ELON (V.O.)
I can't wait to meet you for real
for the first time. Then, we can
enter cryosleep together.
(MORE)

ELON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And by the time we wake up at our
new home, I will have dreamed about
your face for nearly a century!

Sam is about to flip the phone book closed, when a chunk of
pages turns, landing on the section "MUSEUMS." With the turn
of a page, she finds it... "THE MUSEUM OF ART."

SAM (V.O.)

But Elon, after we wake up from
being frozen for all those years,
what if we've forgotten each
other... forgotten our love?

Sam locates the building on the map. It's downtown, a good
distance away from any of her highlighted marks. It even has
its own small icon on the map. After a moment, Sam highlights
the building yellow.

INT. LAB - LATE AFTERNOON

We are now inside the larger geodesic greenhouse. Staggered
layers of hanging plastic curtains block the entrance.

SAM (V.O.)

My father is on the brink of
something huge! Soon, all of the Io
colonists can come back home.

There is a desk space, microscope, a centrifuge. An extremely
worn chair, oxygen tanks. Long, clear plastic tubes from the
tanks are routed overhead and hang down. There are incubators
in the room housing test tubes.

On the wall, an array of Polaroids. Close-up snapshots of
areas of a human body.

But the most interesting items in the Lab are several make-
shift TERRARIUMS. Bell jars, small geodesic spheres and domes
are used to create several miniature greenhouses.

Some contain purple zone flowers and insects. But isolated
from them, there is a terrarium with traditional HONEY BEES.
Their backs are spotted with colored dots.

SAM (V.O.)

Soon we can be together *here*
instead of floating in Space...

INT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam crosses to the large ORRERY of Jupiter and its moons.

SAM (V.O.)
 Tell me the story again of what it
 will be like...

She winds the spring-loaded mechanical model.

ELON (V.O.)
 When I see your face for the first
 time... without a word...

With brass gears turning, the orrery comes to life.

SAM (V.O.)
 (continuing his thought)
 ... I will know. The energy between
 us...

ELON (V.O.)
 ... will be like electricity in the
 air. And in that moment...

Jupiter rotates, and the four Galilean Moons begin their
 orbits.

SAM (V.O.)
 ... it will be as if we were never
 separated by the vastness...

ELON (V.O.)
 ... of space and time at all.

IO, saturated in brilliant yellows, blues and oranges, is
 riddled with massive dark volcanoes.

Sam examines a nearby model that is labeled "IO COLONY." Her
 head is the size of a small moon behind the model.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Back at the desk again, reading a textbook on Theoretical
 Physics. On the page of the book is a complex equation.

On the wall by the desk, a small amusement park map for a
 place called FUN ZONE is tacked up. Hanging from one of the
 tacks is a SLIDE-VIEWER key chain, the kind with a frame of
 slide film inside.

SAM (V.O.)
 I miss you, Elon. Even though we've
 never been together in person... I
 miss you. Is that weird?

Sam reaches above the computer and removes the SLIDE-VIEWER from the tack on the wall. She holds it up to the light.

Sam's POV: It's an action shot of Sam's parents on a roller coaster. They look truly happy.

After a moment, Sam hangs the viewer back on the tack.

SAM (V.O.)
Yours forever, With all my love
from Earth, Until the end of the
Universe... I am Here. Sam.

Sam closes the message. Back on the main page of the message center, the screen begins to flicker on and off. Then it stops, seems fine now. With a look of concern, Sam shuts down the computer.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sam opens the library VHS tape case we saw earlier and pops the tape into an old VCR. The dramatic orchestral MUSIC comes before the TV's image has reached full brightness.

On screen, we start to make out an image, the familiar circle of blue and green with swirls of white -- Earth.

Sam settles into the worn couch. She opens a notebook and prepares to take notes.

BRITISH MAN'S VOICE
There are some four million
different kinds of animals and
plants in the world. Four million
different solutions to the problems
of staying alive. This is the story
of how a few of them came to be as
they are...

On screen, a school of flying fish emerge from the water, gliding through the air in slow-motion with wing-like fins.

INT. OBSERVATORY - MORNING

Sam turns on the computer. The screen flashes to life. She navigates to the message center.

The display says: 1 NEW MESSAGE(S). Again, it's just EXODUS CONTROL.

Disappointed, Sam opens the message anyway. She's about to immediately close it when -- SOMETHING catches her attention.

On the screen: *LAUNCH ALERT*

She can't believe what she's reading.

Fragments of text on screen - "...toxicity level has exceeded extreme risk threshold... automatic launch sequence of Exodus 18 has begun..."

SAM

(reading)

Automated launch will occur in
exactly 30 days from this
transmission.

(beat)

Launch countdown transmitting on
band 31 meters, 9400 kilohertz.

Sam stares at the monitor in shock. She gets up and tunes the shortwave radio receiver to the proper wavelength. Turns up the volume.

VOICE

At the tone, launch in 29 days 17
hours and 54 minutes.

BEEEEEP.

She tunes the receiver back to its original band. WHITE NOISE. She turns the volume down and goes to the computer.

Sam uses the keyboard to DELETE the message. On the screen:
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO PERMANENTLY DELETE THIS MESSAGE?

Sam hits ENTER. The message is gone.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

It's getting hot out. Sam is up on the roof, adjusting the angle of a WIND TURBINE to account for the current wind direction. She climbs down and watches the narrow blades of the turbine slowly turn.

Sam looks out and scans the horizon. An empty sky stretching endlessly over a blanket of clouds. As usual, there is nothing. But Then --

There is a brief GLINT OF LIGHT, like a reflection from a mirror.

She strains to look closely. Difficult to make out, there is a tiny speck, a little grey dot against the sky!

Sam rushes into the Observatory.

INT. OBSERVATORY - SECONDS LATER

BINOCULARS. Sam's hand grabs them quickly.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam scans the horizon with her binoculars. The tiny grey speck is gone. Could she have imagined it?

INT. LAB - DAY

Sam enters through the plastic curtains carrying a crate. She hooks one of the plastic tubes behind her ears, fits the oxygen delivery mechanism into her nostrils, and opens the valve on the corresponding tank.

She goes back to the crate and starts removing the collection vials. All empty except one. Sam looks at her empty vials with a sense of failure. She places the single sample in an incubator.

Next, Sam crosses to the BEE-FILLED TERRARIUM. The terrarium is labeled ADAPTATION SUBJECTS G-42 - G-46. She picks up a bee collection tube and carefully captures a single bee with a green marking on its back.

She carries the bee to another terrarium. This miniature ecosystem is filled with Zone vines and flowers. There is also a purple litmus strip inside. The terrarium is labeled TOXICITY LEVEL 6 (MODERATE).

Sam carefully releases the bee into the terrarium. She grabs a data notebook and opens it. The top of the sheet says DR. HENRY WALDEN.

The bee flies around inside the terrarium. On the other side of the glass, Sam's face looms over the miniature world. The bee lands, and starts moving frantically, then twitching unnaturally. The surface of it's body begins to blacken - turning a deep, bruised, purple color.

ANGLE ON THE DATA NOTEBOOK: Next to the bee's I.D. number G-43 Sam writes: FAIL.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Kill all of your mother's bees yet?

Sam doesn't look up from her data notebook.

SAM

Dad. What are you doing in here?

Now we see him. A bearded man steps out of the shadows. He moves closer. In the light, we can see he is in his 60s, weathered, resilient, a little gruff. But with piercing blue eyes, and the look of a poet and outdoorsman.

This is HENRY WALDEN.

WALDEN
My lab, isn't it?

SAM
(looks at him)
You shouldn't be here.

A beat.

SAM
Not without your oxygen tube.

She moves to grab his oxygen tube from the ceiling. She does this like a nurse used to taking care of people every day.

WALDEN
Samantha, it's fine. You don't have to take care of me anymore. I'm fine.

This stops her.

SAM
(snapping at him)
You're not fine.
(beat)
Where have you been?

WALDEN
(after a long pause)
Walking.

Walden looks at the terrariums, the empty vials.

WALDEN
It's not worth it--

Sam looks disheartened.

WALDEN
--continuing my experiments.
(beat)
How many test samples did you get yesterday?

Sam doesn't respond.

WALDEN

One. One jar of slime. And you risked your life for that?

SAM

And *you* just go wandering off for days at a time and don't come back with any samples at all!

WALDEN

Samantha -- listen to me -- if there was a discovery, a miracle discovery, I would have found it.

SAM

And what about Lucy?

WALDEN

Don't.

Sam looks away.

WALDEN

(changing the subject)
How are things with Elon?

Sam rolls her eyes.

SAM

(under her breath)
Jesus. I am not talking to you about this.

WALDEN

Fine. But never underestimate the power, as astronomically unlikely as it may seem, of a little human connection. That's all there is. There is no bigger meaning. Just human connection.

SAM

You used to say that special people owed humanity greatness.

WALDEN

I was wrong. I taught you all the wrong things.

A long silence.

SAM

You are the most important scientist of our time.

WALDEN

Was I?

A closer look at Walden reveals FADED DEEP PURPLE RECTANGULAR MARKINGS almost everywhere there is visible skin.

Sam takes a test tube of purple liquid from the incubator and uses a dropper to retrieve some of the liquid. She puts one drop on a small cotton square and lifts her shirt revealing her rib cage. Walden looks pained.

ANGLE ON SAM'S RIB CAGE: What looked like a tattoo at first is actually a grid of allergic reactions. Small purple squares that look like deep purple bruises in various stages. Her rib cage looks like a diagram.

WALDEN

You're hurting yourself, Samantha.

Sam grabs her Polaroid camera and takes a "before" picture of her ribs.

SAM

You used to call it science.

With a piece of medical tape, Sam tapes the cotton square onto the corresponding patch of her rib cage.

As the Polaroid develops, she tacks it up on the wall at the end of the array of other similar photos. Walden frowns.

WALDEN

You should leave this place. Go be with Elon. Leave me behind. Sooner or later you'll have to.

(beat)

You are all alone here, Samantha.

SAM

I'm not alone.

WALDEN

I don't count.

SAM

Why not?

He gives her a severe look.

WALDEN

I'm dead.

A beat.

SAM

Then leave. I have work to do.

Sam turns back to her work. She attaches a nose-and-mouth surgical breathing mask to a large tube coming out of one of the toxic terrariums. We hear Walden go through the plastic flaps, and then he is gone.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

Sam walks a little path along the fence that marks the boundary of the Observatory.

She comes to an opening in the fence and goes through. In the middle of the small, barren plateau is some sort of SCULPTURE. It's a large stone cairn, but less like a trail marker and more like a work of art made from the materials of the Earth. She begins to stack more rocks. Carefully adding to this artwork of the landscape.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

Sam puts on large white gloves and a white hood -- making her look like a benevolent space traveler, rather than the ominous black, oxygen-masked figure from the Zone.

Sam approaches a weathered white box and opens the lid of the box revealing HUNDREDS OF HONEY BEES. It's an apiary.

Sam uses a contraption that smokes the bees. She takes off her hood and looks closely at the mass of bees, crawling over each other as they go about their business.

Then, her smile turns. She holds up a collection tube and slowly lowers it on several of the bees.

SAM

I'm sorry.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Sam is seated at her computer. The screen is blipping on and off. Sam checks the cables and finds one that is frayed.

She takes some electrical tape off the desk and wraps it around the cable. The monochrome screen comes back on and stays on. Sam sits down at the computer again. She navigates on screen using the keyboard.

On screen: 0 NEW MESSAGE(S)

Sam crosses to the radio setup and stops and ejects the tape that has been playing. She pulls out another cassette tape labeled, "SIGN-OFF" and pops it into the tape deck.

HENRY (V.O.)
 (crackling through the
 speakers)
 This is Dr. Henry Walden,
 transmitting on frequency 9043
 kilohertz daily. Listening on
 frequency 9560 Kilohertz daily.
 That's 31 meter band frequency 9560
 kilohertz. -- Over and out.

Sam ejects the SIGN-OFF tape and puts the other tape back in. She is about to press PLAY. A close shot of the tape's handwritten label reads: DR. HENRY WALDEN - LECTURE 08.

After a moment, Sam ejects the tape and places it in its sleeve alongside a dozen others on a rack.

From a tupperware box, Sam removes a different type of tape. This one is in a colorful cardboard sleeve, like a store-bought music cassette.

Sam pops the white plastic cassette into the deck and hits PLAY. It's a POP SONG. The speakers are blown out and the music sounds like it is beaming in from another solar system.

CLOSE ON: The cassette tape turns and the red transmit light is on.

INT. OBSERVATORY - TELESCOPE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Sam winds her way up a spiral staircase to the base of the telescope. The pop song continues to play.

Sam turns a large brass wheel and the telescope doors above slowly, mechanically, churn open.

Sam looks into the telescope and we see her point-of-view:
 THE GALAXY.

Sam navigates to particular coordinates. We see JUPITER. It appears as a striped dot. Off to the side of Jupiter is the brightest glimmer of light in the sky. This is the Colony.

Sam looks up from the telescope ocular.

SAM
 Elon.

EXT. THE NIGHT SKY

Floating above the landscape against a sea of stars. Sam's song continues to play, crackling with static as it transmits beyond the observatory into the vast expanse of nothing.

INT. OBSERVATORY - MORNING

She is lying asleep on the couch.

On the screen, translucent jelly-fish-like creatures pulsate across the black. They could be alien ships in outer space.

A DING from the computer echoes through the room.

Sam wakes up with a start. She looks across the room at the glowing computer, but doesn't get up. She's frozen, alarmed.

Sam tentatively crosses the room to the computer and sits down.

On the screen: 1 NEW MESSAGE(S)

It's from Elon. Sam takes a deep breath and opens it.

ELON (V.O.)

I just heard the news about Exodus!
Less than 30 days until lift-off.
Finally we can be together. I know
what you are going to say --

As she reads, Sam is becoming visibly upset. We haven't seen this side of her before.

ELON (V.O.)

-- but it's over, Earth is lost.
Your father is a brilliant man, but
he can't force you to stay. It's
not fair.

The monitor begins to flicker on and off again. Sam stares at the frayed cable with the look of an enraged teenager.

ELON (V.O.)

You have to be on that shuttle.
It's our last and only chance to be
together... See you soon.

(beat)

I can see the Jupiter-Io Flux Tube
from my window... It's *beautiful*.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

We follow Sam as she barrels across the hilltop toward the GARAGE DOOR of the Decontamination Building.

ELON (V.O.)
Yours Forever, With all my Love
from Io, Until the end of the
Universe... I am here.

Sam jerks down on the chain violently, and the metal garage door loudly flies open.

INT. DECONTAMINATION ANTECHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

In a frenzy, Sam changes into the WETSUIT SHIRT, SPANDEX SHORTS and HIKING BOOTS we saw earlier.

She angrily snatches her SCUBA MASK, CAMELBACK and SATCHEL from the drying rack and stomps out the door.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - SHED - MOMENTS LATER

At the motorized bicycle, Sam drops her gear into the TRAILER without bothering to organize the items into their sections. She throws THREE OXYGEN TANKS into the trailer.

EXT. DIRT PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Sam is on her bicycle racing towards the fence. She has an air tank on her back and her mask slung over her shoulder. When she passes the cairns, she puts on her mask.

EXT. FENCE - MOMENTS LATER

On the other side of the gate, Sam looks up at the sky.

SAM
I'm here.

From the fence, we see Sam disappearing down the path.

ANGLE ON THE GATE: One of the padlocks hangs open.

EXT. CRUMBLING HIGHWAY - LATER THAT DAY

Sam's bike glides down the vacated highway, the sound of her electric motor lost in the drone of buzzing insects. She passes an old, dilapidated billboard.

The image is peeling off, but we can make out a bright, graphic sun, and a blow-dried WEATHERMAN. The caption reads:

FROM ALL OF US TO ALL OF YOU, SEE YOU TOMORROW!

EXT. THE ZONE - LIBRARY - A LITTLE LATER

Sam pulls up and stops in front of a large stone building. Her actions are calmer now.

She bypasses the front door without even trying the lock, lifts open a nearby window and easily slides inside.

INT. LIBRARY - STACKS - DAY

The floor is covered with books and fallen ceiling tiles. Evidence of severe water damage is everywhere.

Sam finds the right section, pulls a book out of her bag, and returns it to the shelf.

INT. LIBRARY - STACKS - A LITTLE LATER

Sam wanders aimlessly in and out of the rows of half-full book shelves.

She moves slowly down one of the rows, running her hand along the books -- relics of a bygone era that hold all the secret wonder of a time she never knew.

Sam sees a large book that says MYTHOLOGY down the spine. She pulls the book off the shelf, looks at the cover and puts it into her satchel. Then, she has a thought--

Back in the main aisle, Sam reads the subject signs on the end of the rows, finds "Poetry" and turns.

Sam scans the spines of the books. She comes to a tattered, paperback copy of Yeats' *Collected Works*.

INT. LIBRARY - COMPUTER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sam comes to a room filled with computers and pauses outside. Some of the computers sit on desks, but many lie on the floor in various stages of disrepair.

She stares into the strange white room -- all the computers there for girls and boys to send messages to each other.

Sam looks down at a computer on the floor. A CABLE sticks out from the back of the monitor.

Sam snaps back into protocol. She grabs the cable, unplugs it from the monitor and CPU, and continues to move through the room, methodically harvesting every cable she can find, when--

She suddenly stops in her tracks. She looks at the half-dozen identical cables in her hand. What is she doing? What's the point of this? She doesn't need ten more cables or even two.

Sam holds the cables up, dangling in front of her. For a moment, she looks like she might break down and cry. But then, she takes a deep breath, composes herself. A look of determination sets on her face.

Sam drops all of the cables onto the floor except for one, which she stuffs into her bag.

INT. LIBRARY - ENTRANCE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

With a renewed sense of urgency, Sam hustles towards the exit. She stops at a giant table in the middle of the lobby.

Large swatches of dust have been brushed off the glass-topped display case. Inside, we can see pieces of a 3D scale model of the city.

Sam fixes on a specific building -- it's a large dome-topped greenhouse in a park labeled: BOTANICAL GARDENS.

We hear the faint roll of distant THUNDER outside.

EXT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

Sam emerges from the same window she used to enter. Dark clouds are forming overhead. Concerned but calm, Sam sparks her lighter. Dark Purple.

She takes the litmus strip test kit we saw earlier out of her bag. She removes a piece of litmus paper and adds the chemical solution from the eye dropper. The paper quickly turns Dark Purple. She compares the paper against the toxicity chart. 11 out of 12!

But Sam doesn't save the strip of paper for her records this time. Instead she drops it, and the purple-stained litmus strip flutters to the ground. As we linger on the piece of paper, Sam mounts her bike and rides off.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY

Sam climbs the wrought iron gate of the Botanical Gardens.

She jumps down the other side, dusts herself off, and then we see it -- THE HUGE DOME-TOPPED GREENHOUSE.

INT. ABANDONED GREENHOUSE - BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY

The greenhouse is a mess of overgrowth. There are Zone vines mixed with recognizable plant species.

Sam moves through the rows that separate the planter boxes and sets to work collecting specimens of all kinds.

INT. ABANDONED GREENHOUSE - BOTANICAL GARDENS - LATER

Sam is working in an overgrown corner of the greenhouse, when she spots something in a tree. Hanging from a large branch are several rounded parallel white disks, each about the size of a dinner plate.

A closer look reveals that the disks are made of masses of small hexagonal white wax cells. It's an abandoned BEEHIVE.

After a moment, Sam's stare becomes a smile.

EXT. CRUMBLING HIGHWAY - LATER - DAY

Sam's bike flies toward the horizon of mountains. Her trailer is almost overflowing with plant specimens.

Overhead the storm looks more and more impending. Sam's look is resolved, determined, and focused on the road in front of her.

BOOM! Thunder crashes.

EXT. ROCKY PATH - LATER - DAY

Higher in elevation, Sam is now inside the cloud. It's dark. A gusty wind blows thick patches of fog up the mountain.

EXT. FENCE - A BIT LATER - DAY

Sam pulls up to the fence and stops. She still hasn't climbed out of the storm!

She quickly hops off the bike, takes out her keys and approaches the closed gate. She goes to unlock the first padlock, when she notices that it is hanging open. How could she have been so careless?

She unlocks the second padlock, swings the gate open and races back to her bike. A huge gust of wind blows thick fog in her face. She can barely see her own hands as she mounts the bike.

BOOM! The thunder is practically on top of her.

Sam races through the gate, leaving it hanging wide open as she continues up the steep path.

EXT. PATH - MOMENTS LATER - DAY

Clouds of dust whip past her as she rides.

Sam arrives at the shed and quickly dismounts. She turns her attention to the PILOT FLAME. It's YELLOW. She stares at the little flame intensely.

SAM
Come on... come on... you're
okay... everything's okay...

We slowly PUSH IN on the yellow flame as it gradually, almost imperceptibly, morphs to a very deep shade of DARK PURPLE.

SAM
Fuck.

INT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam slips inside and quickly surveys the large room.

SAM
(calling out)
DAD?!

There's no one here. She turns and heads back for the door.

INT. LAB - MOMENTS LATER

Sam appears through the plastic curtains. Not here either.

Sam closes her eyes and concentrates hard. After a few seconds, she opens her eyes again. She's still alone.

EXT. OBSERVATORY MEADOW - SECONDS LATER

Sam heads across to the Observatory and enters. A moment later, she comes back out with an ORANGE PISTOL. She points the gun straight up and FIRES.

A streak of light catapults into the sky. It's a FLARE GUN.

Sam scans the horizon for a long time. No one is coming.

INT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam finishes sealing the front door frame with tape and clear plastic sheeting.

Next to the front door is a LARGE AIR CYLINDER on wheels. Sam connects her mask to the new tank, and takes off her pack.

On the wall beneath the printout DAD'S PROTOCOL: CONTAMINATION STORMS is a row of eight litmus paper strips. They are all varying degrees of Purple.

INT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

At the computer, Sam replaces the frayed monitor cable with the one scavenged from the Zone and turns on the power. Sam sits down at the computer and types furiously.

After a moment, she finishes and sits back to look at what she wrote. She begins to read out loud.

SAM

Dear Elon...

She's already dissatisfied.

ON THE SCREEN: She erases that and types "Elon, my love, my life..."

Sam stares at the screen, giving her words serious consideration. She begins to read aloud again.

SAM (CONT'D)

Elon, my Love, my Life, my Fire, my Everything... You are killing me.

(beat)

I'm scared, Elon. I think I might die tonight. I'm terrified at the thought of never making love to you!

(beat)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

I don't know what I'm doing here anymore. Should I really give up everything and go to Exodus? My father, my work, my home, my entire life? Please, Elon... Don't make me choose! I'm begging you.

ON THE SCREEN: "...Don't make me choose..."

Then -- She erases the entire message.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER THAT EVENING

Sam lies on the bed wearing her mask. The large oxygen tank is next to her. But she's too agitated to sleep, so she stares at the ceiling. Then she remembers something --

Sam goes to her satchel and takes out the MYTHOLOGY BOOK and the copy of YEATS' *COLLECTED WORKS*.

She lies back down on the bed, looks at the cover of the mythology book and puts it down on the bed beside her. She opens *Collected Works* and slowly, pensively leafs through the pages looking for any reference to a swan.

Finally, she finds "Leda and the Swan." Sam reads silently.

SAM (V.O.)

"A sudden blow: the great wings
beating still..."

Sam absentmindedly runs the palm of her hand across her chest as she reads.

SAM (V.O.)

"Above the staggering girl, her
thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught
in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon
his breast."

Finished reading, Sam looks up at the ceiling. Then, she puts the book down, picks up the MYTHOLOGY book and begins flipping through the pages.

INSERT: A barrage of subtly erotic images. Jupiter shirtless. Io naked. Aphrodite. Gods. Goddesses.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"How can those terrified vague
fingers push

(MORE)

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The feathered glory from her
loosening thighs?"

Sam lingers on the final picture. Leda, pregnant.

Outside the sound of wind whips through. Thunder and the dry electrical storm.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
"And how can body, laid in that
white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating
where it lies?"

The SHORTWAVE RADIO buzzes with intermittent static. The transmit light flickers on and off.

SAM
(whispers)
If I die...

That moment -- there is a metallic sound outside. Through the window, we see Sam's WIND TURBINE tumble over in the wind and collapse on the ground with a SMASH.

EXT. THE SKY - DAY

Aerial photography at high altitude. We sail through the clouds, like a dream of death.

SAM (V.O.)
If I die... will I see you sooner?

INT. OBSERVATORY - THE NEXT MORNING

Sam is still in bed with the covers over her head. All is silent save the consistent gentle buzz of white noise coming from the shortwave radio.

Sunlight pours in from outside. Then, we hear Sam take a long easy breath.

Under the bed sheets it's bright and sweaty. The inside of Sam's mask is beginning to fog. Her hair is matted to her forehead. Beads of sweat on her upper lip.

She's asleep and not moving. One of her hands is down the front of her shorts. The other hand is slipped up under her shirt resting on her chest.

Then, she stirs. She removes her hand from her shorts and pulls the covers down, exposing her face and torso to the open air of the room.

Groggy, she reaches a hand up to rub her face, but she's blocked by the scuba mask. Using both hands, she absentmindedly peels off her breathing mask and takes a breath... then another. Her eyes are still closed, but she seems fine.

Sam stretches and squirms into a comfortable sprawled position. Her eyes begin to squint and finally peek open. She notices the Mythology book lying open beside her. Wertmuller's LEDA AND THE SWAN stares back at her. Leda, rosy-cheeked, fair-skinned, lies naked on her back, her lips parted in pleasure as she gently pulls the swan to her, his torso between her thighs, wings arched back and his bill biting her breast.

As Sam studies the painting, she slips her hand back under her shirt and touches her breast. With her other hand, she grabs her pillow, clutches it to her and closes her eyes.

After a moment, Sam slowly pushes the pillow down under the covers and between her legs. She turns over onto her stomach, both of her hands hidden under her body below the covers.

Sam turns over again. She pulls the pillow back up to her chest and clutches it with one hand, her other hand between her legs. Sam's eyes and lips are closed tightly.

Her rhythmic tensing and relaxing becomes faster until it gives way to subtle jerking convulsions.

Her lips part slightly and she takes attenuated gasps of air. Then, her eyes open and she takes a deep breath... then another. Her breathing begins to slow.

Fully awake now, she notices the oxygen tank beside the bed.

She reaches for the mask at her face, but it's not there. She starts to remember the details of last night. When something occurs to her --

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - MOMENTS LATER

Sam charges across the meadow. She sees the mangled WIND TURBINE on the ground.

She passes the GREENHOUSES. There's a mess of clear plastic sheeting, and some of the glass panes are broken.

On the other side of the greenhouses, she sees the apiary. The wooden hives are knocked over on their sides. The usually neatly stacked layers are separated from one another.

This stops Sam in her tracks.

SAM
(softly)
No.

She slowly approaches the wrecked apiary. She carefully separates the layers of the first hive. No bees under the lid. None on the frames in the honey chamber. None in the lower brood chamber.

She moves to the next hive and the next. They are all the same. Not a single living or dead bee. Just gone.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - A LITTLE LATER - DAY

The pilot light burns YELLOW. Sam walks among the wreckage from the storm.

EXT. OBSERVATORY FENCE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sam closes the gate that she left open the day before. She locks both padlocks and double-checks them.

INT. LAB - CONTINUOUS

Sam reluctantly surveys the damage to the lab.

SAM
Dad?

The lab is wrecked. She looks defeated.

Sam navigates around the broken glass and scattered specimens. She places an oxygen tube into her nostrils and loops the clear hose behind her ears.

A large swath of translucent plastic has peeled away from the top of the greenhouse dome, revealing a patch of blue sky.

Sam runs her finger along a crack in one of the bigger terrariums. When --

A LARGE SHADOW wipes across the inside of the Lab, darkening everything for a brief moment. Then it is gone.

Sam looks up. But sees only blue sky -- What the hell was that? Not a cloud. The shadow was too quick, too defined.

EXT. OBSERVATORY MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

Sam bursts out of the Lab looking up. Nothing. She runs out into the open meadow. She spins around. The sky is cloudless and empty.

Sam stands in the middle of the meadow. All is silent. Is she going crazy? That moment --

A GIANT SILVER HOT AIR BALLOON with a suspended CAPSULE rises up over the hillside. It is huge in the sky, like a heavenly body... or a metallic moon.

Frozen in shock, she can't take her eyes off the great orb. The balloon seems to descend towards her slowly, gracefully.

As the balloon gets closer to the ground, its speed becomes more apparent. It is CAREENING towards the mountain!

She is completely exposed in the open meadow, but makes no attempt to run for cover.

The capsule smashes to the ground, and bounces its way across the meadow, finally coming to a rest, leaving a trail of gashes in the land.

All is still and quiet again. Sam doesn't know what to do. She waits for something to happen, but nothing does. Sam calmly approaches the cockpit of the balloon.

That moment -- The cockpit door opens, and a bearded, rugged but gaunt, WANDERER emerges. He is wearing a low-tech mask that covers his nose and mouth. He carries a short-handled sledge hammer.

Sam freezes, no more than 25 yards away.

The man sparks a lighter. The flame is YELLOW. Then, he quickly circles the capsule hammering stakes into the ground. When -- he notices Sam.

A flash of fear crosses Sam's face, suddenly aware of her vulnerability here. But there's nowhere to hide. He's walking straight towards her, hammer in hand.

He stops ten feet in front of Sam and stares at her, expressionless. Then, he removes his mask. We can now recognize him as Micah.

Micah breathes in deeply through his nose. He raises his free hand in front of his face and studies it as he breathes, looking for some kind of reaction. But nothing happens.

They stare at each other without speaking for a long time. Sam does not approach him, leaving a safe, if awkward, distance between them.

MICAH
(broken)
The air is good here.

Sam doesn't respond.

MICAH
I'm here to see Henry Walden.

Micah returns to his balloon and checks the tethers. Hammers in a few more, places the hammer inside the capsule, and grabs a worn shoulder bag from inside.

He closes a small PADLOCK around the latch to the capsule's hatch door and places the small key in his pocket.

Sam watches with curiosity, too frozen to either help or send him on his way.

But his focus is now on the Observatory behind her. Just before he walks past her --

SAM
You can't be here.

Micah stops and looks at the girl who can speak after all.

MICAH
Right. Of course.
(beat)
But, what about his radio
transmission?... There was music.

Sam is caught off guard by this. He heard *her* transmission, *her* song... She's unsure about what to do. What's the protocol here?

MICAH
Could I have a drink of water?

Sam snaps back into the moment. She glares at him.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam marches towards the observatory with Micah in tow, ten paces behind. Micah scans the facilities, taking it all in.

Sam gets to the door and stops.

SAM

Wait here.

She goes into the Observatory.

Micah waits, uncomfortably, constantly eyeing for other signs of people, when he sees the damaged wind turbine.

Sam emerges with a glass. She goes to the water tank, fills the glass with the cloudy water and hands it to Micah. He looks into the water but he does not drink it.

MICAH

I'm here to see Henry Walden.

SAM

(indicating his glass)
It's only cloudy like that because of the charcoal. Our drinking water is filtered through sand and charcoal. It doesn't need any more than that.

A pause. Then Micah drinks the entire glass of water in one breath. Sam smiles faintly -- he trusts her.

MICAH

(indicating the
Observatory)
Is he in there?

Micah absentmindedly clutches his leather bag even though it's securely hanging from his shoulder.

SAM

(very professional)
I'm Dr. Walden's top research assistant. I'm sure I can answer your questions.
(beat)
So... What do you want?

MICAH

How old are you?

SAM
(indignant)
What difference does that make?

MICAH
I'm here to see Henry Walden. Not
you. Not anyone else.

It's a standoff.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Sam motions for Micah to sit down at the table under the tarp
along the breezeway.

SAM
We haven't had anyone making the
pilgrimage to see Dr. Walden in a
long time.

MICAH
Pilgrimage?

SAM
Of course. That's why you're here,
isn't it? To meet Dr. Walden?

Micah is intrigued by this idea. But he neither confirms nor
denies the suggestion.

MICAH
Where did you say he is?

SAM
He's off the mountain right now on
a scientific mission, gathering
specimens for our work.

Micah is fidgety, restless.

MICAH
Look. I need to see him, okay?...
Right now. I need you to take me to
him.

Micah stands. This rattles Sam.

SAM
I can't... I don't know his exact
whereabouts.

MICAH
And where's everyone else?

SAM

There *is* no one else. It's just the
two of us.

Sam realizes she's given too much away.

SAM (CONT'D)

But he could be back any minute...
Like I said, you can't stay.

Micah sits back down and retreats inside his head.

MICAH

(to himself)
Scientific mission...

Sam watches Micah closely. Something is off.

SAM

You know about Dr. Walden,
right?... You've heard of him, his
work...

Micah shakes his head "no".

SAM

(incredulous)
Are you serious? Where have you
been the last twenty years?!

Micah gives her a severe look. We get the sense that the last
20 years for him have been very bad.

MICAH

I'll wait.

Sam is intrigued by this strange traveler, and she is letting
her curiosity get the best of her.

SAM

So you've really never heard of
Henry Walden?

MICAH

I heard the radio transmission.
That's all.

A beat. Sam is trying to wrap her head around this --

SAM

I get it... Of course! You're on
your way to Exodus!

MICAH

What?

SAM

The balloon. You have to be going to the final Exodus launch! You're going to Io, right?

MICAH

(after a beat)

Yeah... That's right.

SAM

We're not going with you, you know... Besides, it's very dangerous. I don't understand why anyone would want to go there.

MICAH

You think it's safer here?

SAM

Have you heard of the Utopian communes?

A sombre expression comes across Micah's face.

MICAH

Yes.

(beat)

But they don't exist.

Sam looks at Micah. Puzzled. She gets up and crosses to the pantry.

SAM

It sure took you long enough... to decide to leave Earth.

Micah looks out across the meadow toward his balloon. Deep in thought. Sam takes a bunch of vegetables off the shelves.

SAM

Should I fix you some food?

MICAH

(without looking at her)

No. I'm not going to take your food.

SAM

We have plenty.

Micah turns back around. Sees Sam with the fresh produce.

MICAH
(surprised)
You have fresh vegetables?

SAM
Of course. I have an entire
greenhouse.
(beat)
Did you start for Exodus without
enough food stores for the journey?
Not good planning if you ask me.

Micah is in awe of the food. It's clear he hasn't seen fresh
produce like this in years.

MICAH
All this? Just for two of you?

SAM
Yep.

Sam chops vegetables for a salad. Micah can't seem to come to
terms with how this is possible.

MICAH
You grew this?

SAM
Yeah, like I said... In the
greenhouse.

She takes a jar of honey off the shelf and is about to use it
on the salad, but thinks better of it.

Sam sets the plate of vegetables and a glass of water in
front of Micah. Micah stares at the plate.

MICAH
It isn't fair...

SAM
What do you mean?

Micah doesn't answer. Then --

SAM (CONT'D)
Look, I appreciate your optimism.
But who knows if the Exodus shuttle
can actually make it. It's over two
decades old.

But Micah doesn't hear her. He picks up a ripe cherry tomato
and studies it. His eyes begin to well up with tears.

He plops the tomato into his mouth. In a second, he's eating ravenously without looking up. Sam watches him.

SAM

Do you know... is there any animal
life left in the sea?

(beat)

I've always wanted to see the
ocean.

Micah shakes his head. As he continues to eat, he opens up a little to her.

MICAH

No. Nothing. There's nothing
anywhere.

SAM

Even the birds all died. I would
think they could live, high up,
like us.

MICAH

Even birds have to land some time.

SAM

Have you ever seen a swan?

MICAH

Sure. When I was a kid.

SAM

(as though she is
informing him)

Cause you're from BEFORE.

Micah nods his head "yes".

SAM

(matter of fact)

You're old enough that you would
have to be.

Micah is amused at her bluntness, her lack of social skills.

SAM

We had chickens when I was a kid.
But they're gone now.

(beat)

What other animals have you seen?

MICAH

Lots, I guess. I had a dog.

SAM
(excited)
What was his name?

MICAH
Maggie. She was a black lab.

SAM
Labrador Retriever.

MICAH
But she died... Like everyone else.

A long beat.

SAM
When I was little, I kept asking my
dad for a kitten. I didn't
understand why he wouldn't let me
have one. Then one day he explained
it to me. I remember his exact
words -- "Cats don't EXIST
anymore."
(beat)
I had just seen pictures of them in
books.

Micah looks at Sam and smiles faintly.

SAM
You've seen other cities?

MICAH
Just from the sky.

SAM
(hopeful)
And? Is it the same? Everywhere?

MICAH
Yes.

They stare at each other for a moment. Micah picks up his
glass and takes a slow drink of water.

SAM
I don't believe you. You haven't
seen everywhere.

MICAH
(growing impatient with
the conversation)
When is Dr. Walden getting back?

SAM

I'm not sure. Sometimes he's gone
for days.

MICAH

Are you fucking kidding me?!

Micah smashes his glass down on the table with such force
that it breaks. A small trickle of blood runs from his palm.

Sam is taken aback by this outburst. There is a long and
uncomfortable silence as Sam studies Micah's distressed face.

SAM

Are you okay?

MICAH

I'm sorry. It's just... it's been a
long journey.

He stands up and starts to clean up the broken glass.

SAM

Your hand --

MICAH

I don't know what came over me.

He looks down and turns away from her.

SAM

It's okay.

MICAH

(under his breath)
I guess I'm staying then.

Sam looks out across the meadow at Micah's balloon.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Micah shuffles quietly around the main room. Still wearing
his shoulder bag, he looks uncomfortable, like a house guest
who hasn't been told where to sit.

Sam sits, focussed on her computer, oblivious to her social
responsibility and the awkward silence.

On the screen: 0 NEW MESSAGE(S).

Micah notices the metal door on the far side of the room.

MICAH

You have a lot of electronic equipment in here.

SAM

Well, we do run a scientific lab. Of course, most of it came with the place. Put in by the University before. But it's become essential for the work we're doing here now.

MICAH

What are you doing?

SAM

It's complicated. But, essentially, we're seeking a symbiosis between our species and Earth.

MICAH

No. I mean right now. What are you doing?

SAM

I'm writing to someone.

ANGLE: THE SCREEN: "...strange man arrived today...", "...Dad isn't here. What should I do?..."

MICAH

What are you talking about? To who?

SAM

(correcting him)

To *whom*. And it's none of your business. Someone on the colony if you must know.

ON THE SCREEN, Sam types: "I don't trust him."

MICAH

(shocked)

You can communicate with Io?

SAM

Yeah. Where have you been living?

Micah doesn't know how to respond.

Sam finishes typing her letter. Then, gets up and crosses the room to the closet.

SAM (O.S.)

You have to sleep in here with me.

She emerges with a sleeping bag and pillow. She spreads them on the floor for Micah.

SAM

Dr. Walden's work is very important. I can't have you interfering. We've already lost half a day because of you.

MICAH

(motioning toward the metal door across the room)

Is that his room, there?

SAM

Yes. His office and living quarters. It's strictly off limits, of course.

She crosses to the radio setup. She puts a cassette in the deck, presses PLAY, and turns up the volume.

HENRY (V.O.)

This is Dr. Henry Walden, transmitting on frequency 9043 kilohertz daily. Listening on frequency 9560 Kilohertz daily. That's 31 meter band frequency 9560 kilohertz. -- Over and out.

Micah watches Sam's actions, processing this. Sam is oblivious. She ejects the tape and swaps it with another, labeled "Dr. Henry Walden: Lecture 12." She turns the volume all the way down and presses PLAY.

MICAH

Is that what I heard the other night? A tape recording?

SAM

It's protocol. When he's not here, I play the tape.

MICAH

So, you're telling me he's been gone over two days?

SAM

Yeah, I guess that's right... I expect him back tomorrow.

Micah is not comforted by this. Sam changes the subject --

SAM

Why are you so sure? About Exodus.
You know... considering what
happened with the last one.

Micah gives a questioning look.

SAM

You don't know? It blew up before
it even made it out of the
atmosphere!

Sam doesn't get the reaction she is expecting.

SAM

It exploded. No survivors... Don't
you think it might be more
dangerous than staying?

MICAH

(coldly)
No.

SAM

What's your name?

After a long beat.

MICAH

Micah.

SAM

I'm Sam.

Micah readies for bed. He takes his shirt off and lies down
on the sleeping bag. Sam looks him up and down, studying him
like an animal in a zoo.

SAM

Turn around. Close your eyes.

He does. She watches him while she changes into an over-sized
t-shirt. He doesn't budge. Then she gets into bed.

SAM

But you *did* think it was better to
stay here. For a long time... You
must have.

MICAH

For a long time... I was foolish.

SAM

I think you were very brave.

MICAH

Well you don't know me.

Sam rolls over in bed, turning away from him.

SAM

Even if the shuttle works. Getting
to Exodus is a danger all its own --

MICAH

I don't want to talk about it
anymore.

INT. OBSERVATORY - MORNING

Micah wakes up from deep sleep with a start. His eyes land on the grey metal door to Dr. Walden's room.

He sits up and looks towards Sam's bed. She isn't there.

Micah looks at the old newspaper clippings on the wall. We get a better look at the black and white photo of the corpse in the street. The woman's skin is pale, but her veins are dark and clearly defined. It looks like a system of black rivers and tributaries carved into the surface of her body.

He notices a self-shot Polaroid of Sam with Henry. Their faces are pressed together, overexposed by the flash and slightly out of focus. Another with a much younger Sam sitting in Henry's lap. Taken from further back, the photographer's shadow extends into the bottom of the frame. The pictures tell the story. Sam is Henry's daughter.

Micah looks pained by seeing this, but not shocked. Then, another photo catches his attention. There's a woman in the photo with them. It's a family portrait. Micah looks closely at the woman. She's pretty, happy. This makes him sad.

Then -- A girl's voice in the distance -- Sam's -- singing. It is difficult to make out the song.

Micah follows the voice to the window and looks out. Sam stands on an outdoor raised platform taking a shower, facing away from Micah. He watches her without being seen.

Then, Sam shifts slightly and Micah notices the strange tattoo on her rib cage. He studies the marking, trying to make it out. When --

Sam turns and locks eyes with Micah. She makes no attempt to cover her naked body. But Micah turns away, embarrassed that he saw her naked and she saw him seeing her.

He quickly sits down in the nearest chair and finds himself staring at the powered down computer monitor. He delicately runs his fingers over the old keyboard.

After a moment, he closes his eyes and begins to type, even though the computer is turned off.

INT. OBSERVATORY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Micah studies the giant map of the city. He sees the highlighted building in the city's center. He looks closely at the words, THE MUSEUM OF ART.

Sam enters, in a towel. Micah backs away from the map awkwardly. She smiles at him confidently.

SAM

I have a boyfriend, you know.

Micah turns away from her and busies himself looking at books on a bookshelf.

MICAH

You do?

SAM

On the Io Colony.

Micah removes an old science book from the shelf and pages through it. There is a section on the NASA space program of the 60s. It shows MONKEYS who were the first space travelers.

Sam takes some clothes and goes into the bathroom to change.

Micah pulls out another book -- this one by Henry Walden. The book is called EXODUS. It looks like an Arthur C. Clarke type speculative paperback with a 70s-style illustration of a space ship on the front. Very 2001.

Micah flips to the dedication page: THERE IS NO WAY BACK INTO THE PAST; THE CHOICE IS THE UNIVERSE OR NOTHING. The book is dedicated: TO JUNE.

Micah turns the book over. There is a photo of Henry Walden on the back cover.

MICAH

How does that work?

SAM (OS)

His name is Elon. We write each other letters.

Sam comes back into the room, dressed.

SAM (CONT'D)
Do you have a girlfriend?

MICAH
No.

SAM
A wife?

Micah shakes his head, No. He looks away from her.

Sam can see that she's struck a chord. She changes the subject.

SAM (CONT'D)
You probably think it's silly.

MICAH
(after a moment)
What?

SAM
Elon and me. I mean, we've never
even met in person. But, he makes
me feel *whole* somehow. I can't
explain it.
(beat)
It's crazy, I know.

She turns and starts to head back into the bathroom.

MICAH
No it's not.

This stops her. She turns back to him, taken off guard.

MICAH (CONT'D)
(quoting)
"So ancient is the desire of one
another which is implanted in us,
reuniting our original nature,
seeking to make one of two, and to
heal the state of man."

SAM
What is that?

MICAH
Plato. The Symposium. It's about...
love.

SAM

What does it mean?

Micah hesitates. He considers whether or not to continue.
Then--

MICAH

He says that humans originally had
two faces. Four arms and Four legs.
And they were happy like this.
Complete.

(beat)

But they defied the Gods, angered
them. So the Gods split us in two
as punishment. Tore us away from
our other halves. He says, "Each of
us when separated is always looking
for his other half." It's our
nature.

Sam is enraptured. She sits.

SAM

Is there more?

MICAH

"And when one of them meets with
his other half, the actual half of
himself... the pair are lost in an
amazement of love and friendship
and intimacy, and one will not be
out of the other's sight... even
for a moment: These are the people
who pass their whole lives
together, and yet they could not
explain what they desire of one
another."

Micah is no longer addressing Sam. He's lost in his own
world.

MICAH

"And the reason is that human
nature was originally one and we
were whole, and the desire and
pursuit of the whole is called
love."

Both are silent.

Sam stares at him in awe. Then she stands and reaches out to
him.

Micah snaps back into the moment and pulls away from her before she can touch him. Suddenly aware he is showing such emotion, Micah looks away from her and regains himself.

SAM

Wow. You know a lot about that stuff, don't you?

MICAH

I don't know.

(beat)

But I know that one.

Sam smiles at him. Then --

SAM

I have something to tell you. I wasn't going to, but... I trust you.

(beat)

Henry Walden is my father.

MICAH

(feigning ignorance)

Oh. Really?

She notices the book in his hand. Walks over to him and takes it enthusiastically.

SAM

This is one of his books. You know, they named the program after it. But back then his work was in geophysics. He's the one who figured out how the Jupiter-Io Flux Tube could be used as a power source for the Colony. Walden's Equation. The Exodus Project would have been impossible without it.

(beat)

But that was a long time ago. He wasn't part of the implementation.

She hands the book back to him and then remembers something.

SAM (CONT'D)

(excited)

I have something you have to see.

(indicating the couch)

Sit down.

Micah isn't used to being ordered around, but he obliges.

Sam grabs a VHS tape from a short stack next to the TV and pops it in. She turns on the TV, presses PLAY and jumps on the couch next to Micah. She doesn't seem to notice that her leg is pressed against his. He does.

On the screen, a hand-held, home-video style recording of a pig. The footage is distressed and disintegrating from countless repeated plays of the tape. The pig walks along the street, a loose leash around its neck. The camera tilts up to reveal Henry holding the leash. He is wearing an oxygen tank and mask. They are in the Zone, and the pig is breathing the air normally.

Micah is speechless.

SAM (CONT'D)

That's Lucy.

MICAH

(finally able to make words)

How?

SAM

Well, that's just it. It's complicated.

The video zooms in on Henry's face. He holds a lighter up and strikes it. The flame is purple.

SAM (CONT'D)

Dad was always misunderstood. People thought he made this radical 180 degree change in his beliefs... It's a good story, I guess, but it's not true. He never wanted humanity to abandon Earth. If you actually read EXODUS, then you would see that. For him, Io was always a last resort... A life-boat.

MICAH

What happened to Lucy?

SAM

She died... Eventually.

(beat)

When I was young, Dad and some of his assistants went Below to gather research specimens. But something went wrong. A young man was exposed. They brought his body back.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

His skin was purple -- almost black. It was horrible. And Dad used him, his body, for research. That's when I first understood the massive importance of the science. Of his work.

(beat)

The work always comes first.

The video cuts out. Static overtakes the frame and Sam gets up to stop the tape. But before she can, we hear Henry's voice and another image appears through the static. It's the set of a professional news program. This is what the pig footage was recorded over.

Sam isn't interested in this and is about to eject the tape.

MICAH

Wait. I want to see this.

Micah is hooked. We get the sense that this news program is familiar to him.

But it doesn't have the same effect for Sam. She busies herself rolling up Micah's sleeping bag and putting it away.

On the screen, a younger version of Henry is being interviewed. Under Walden, in the lower third, it says: "DR. HENRY WALDEN, GEOPHYSICIST"

WALDEN

...Seventy-one thousand years ago there was a volcanic eruption of such magnitude that the Earth's population was reduced to only ten thousand people.

(beat)

Now, in the aftermath of another catastrophe of this scale, we at least have the technology, and had the foresight, for a safety net. Alone in the Universe, there is no one to come to our aid. But we can rescue ourselves.

(beat)

As the resources of the planet deplete and survivors become further isolated from each other, we will maintain a schedule of eighteen Exodus shuttles destined for the Moon of Io orbiting Jupiter. The first several will, of course, contain world leaders and scientists.

(MORE)

WALDEN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Following the final shuttle, Exodus 18, Earth will be fully abandoned by humanity, and those left -- if in fact there are any left -- will become a civilization of their own design.

Sam has seen this before. She watches the interview, but is more interested in watching Micah's reaction. He looks like he is reliving a painful memory.

NEWS ANCHOR

...A special thanks to Dr. Walden, and a note to our viewers that this will be our final broadcast, due to the scheduled shut down of all network television at midnight tonight.

(beat)

There is too much to say, so I will end the program as I have every day for the last eight years.

(beat)

From all of us to all of you,

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

See you tomorrow.

MICAH

See you tomorrow.

STATIC.

Sam walks over and presses STOP on the VCR. She looks to Micah for a reaction, but he has nothing to say to her. He stares into space, lost in thought.

Sam sits down at her computer and turns it on.

MICAH

Which direction will Dr. Walden be coming from?

SAM

I'm not sure.

MICAH

I can go meet him half way.

SAM

You can't. All we can do is wait.

(beat)

I have work to do.

Sam turns her attention to the computer screen. The conversation is over.

MICAH
(frustrated)
I see.

Micah grabs his bag and heads for the door.

SAM
Micah?

He stops in the doorway.

SAM (CONT'D)
(very serious)
Stay away from the Lab. And don't
break anything.

Micah laughs.

MICAH
You're a funny little thing.

He exits.

On the Computer screen: 0 NEW MESSAGE(S)

SAM
(to herself)
Elon, where are you?

She opens a new composition and begins to type.

EXT. ROCKY OUTCROP - LATER

Micah sits on the rock outcropping. He is turning over the small padlock key in his hand. He returns the key to his pocket. He waits.

INT. LAB

Sam enters the lab with her specimen cart. She surveys the damage inside the lab. It's a mess. Disheartening.

She puts on her air tube, then looks out a glass window toward the balloon. Micah is pacing back and forth in the meadow anxiously.

SAM (V.O.)
So much is happening right now and
you have disappeared!

She returns to her work. Doesn't know where to begin.

EXT. OBSERVATORY

Micah focusses his eyes on something among the rocks. About 40 feet away, there is a small stack of stones perched on a larger boulder. At his side, Micah holds a baseball-sized rock in his hand.

SAM (V.O.)

Micah is weird. I'm not sure what
he really wants from me.

Micah does his best Nolan Ryan impression, throwing all of his weight into the pitch. Miss.

EXT. OBSERVATORY

Sitting again, Micah watches Sam move among the distant structures until she disappears inside the Lab.

He grabs his shoulder bag and stands. He scans the mountaintop compound, picks a direction and walks.

INT. LAB

Sam looks out toward Micah's spot. She steps closer to the glass window and looks in both directions. He's gone.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP

Micah walks along the fenced perimeter. He comes to a spot where he can see down into the Zone below.

Then, he notices a gap in the fence. *It's the spot where Sam passed through to go to the rock sculpture.* He approaches the gap when --

SAM (O.C.)

You want to make yourself useful?

Startled, Micah whips around to find Sam a few paces back holding two glasses of water.

EXT. OBSERVATORY

Sam leads Micah to view the wrecked wind turbine. He crouches beside it and touches the bent metal.

SAM

I have to repair a broken solar panel too. I should be able to seal it, but it'll never put out as many amps as it used to.

MICAH

You do a lot of the work around here?

Sam shrugs. Micah carefully sets down his bag and rights the turbine as much as possible.

MICAH

You got a ball pein hammer?

Sam's toolbox is open and there are tools scattered about. She grabs a ball pein hammer and hands it to him.

He hammers the metal cross brace back into the proper shape. Then walks around the back to assess his work.

A LITTLE LATER

Micah is on the roof, hoisting up the turbine with a length of rope as Sam guides from below until it is out of reach. Once he gets the turbine on the roof, Micah carries it out of her view toward the center of the structure.

Sam makes sure he cannot see her and then bends down and undoes the buckles on his bag. Opens it.

ANGLE: IN THE BAG

There's what looks like a journal. A small glass bottle half-filled with clear liquid. Pens and pencils. A compass. A pocket knife.

There is a small revolver pistol. She casually opens the cylinder and checks the chambers. One is empty. Five bullets remain. She pops the cylinder back into position and replaces the pistol.

She finds a black wallet and opens it. There is old money in it -- a few U.S. Dollars, now totally useless. She finds Micah's driver's license. It's a strange relic from the past. In his picture he looks much more... normal. That moment --

MICAH (O.S.)

Hey!

Sam quickly stuffs everything back in the bag and fastens it closed. Micah walks to the edge of the roof above.

MICAH

I think it's looking pretty good.

It's getting hot out and Micah is sweating. He pauses his work, and takes off his shirt.

He gets back to work. Sam moves to a position where she can see him working. She watches his glistening body for a long time. The muscles in his back and arms flex in steady rhythm.

SAM (V.O.)

I think he likes me or something. I wish you were here to protect me.

EXT. THE ZONE - DAY

A MONTAGE of images of the Zone. We move serenely through the empty, overgrown streets of the city in ruins.

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If this was another time, if we
passed each other on a street
filled with people all going
somewhere -- would we even speak?
Please write me back soon! We're
separated by a vast ocean of Space
and Time. What do we do?

(beat)

Yours Forever, with all my love
from Earth until the end of the
Universe... I AM HERE. SAM.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

Micah is taking a break from working on the turbine. He puts his shirt back on and drinks a cup of water. He scans his surroundings and lands on Sam's apiary across the meadow. After a moment, he heads toward it.

Sam notices and hops up to follow.

EXT. APIARY - CONTINUOUS

Sam catches up to Micah at the destroyed apiary. She kneels down beside the hives.

SAM

These were my mom's bees. All our
other animals died a long time ago.
All except the bees. They thrived
here... until the storm.

MICAH
(genuinely moved)
That's incredible.

SAM
Now they're gone too. I thought
there would be dead bees
everywhere. But there was just
nothing. Except this...

Sam removes a frame from one of the brood chambers. She shows Micah the sealed purple wax cells.

SAM
The pupae were trapped inside.
(beat)
They never had a chance.

Sam is affected. Micah notices.

INT. GREENHOUSE

Micah follows Sam through the rows of the greenhouse looking at a bounty of fresh food. It's awe-inspiring.

SAM
The bees used to do the bulk of the
pollinating. We always did some of
it by hand, but now I'm going to
have to hand-pollinate everything.

Micah settles on a cluster of plants growing together: Corn, pole beans, and squash. The broad squash leaves cover the soil. The beans climb up the corn stalks.

MICAH
(to himself)
The Three Sisters.

SAM
(impressed)
That's right! It's called *companion
planting*. The corn provides a
structure for the beans to climb.
The squash spreads out over the
soil like mulch, which keeps in
moisture. And in return, the beans
enrich the soil with the nitrogen
that the other plants crave.
Everybody wins!

Sam is really in her element. Micah is drawn to her passion.

SAM

It's like these plants, along with the soil, water and air, make up their own small-scale ecosystem. It's a community of living organisms and non-living components, a system of interactions, a flow of energy. It's equilibrium and symbiosis.

Now she's really on a roll. For the first time, Micah is getting a picture of who Sam really is. He is seeing her shine. He stays quiet, enjoying the speech.

SAM

On a much larger scale, all of the life on the planet is part of one system. It all belongs here. Evolution means that no matter what happens, every organism will always try to find a way to live. That's beautiful. Don't you think?

Sam reaches to pick a ripe bean. Micah notices something written on one of her fingers. It's a tiny series of numbers and symbols, written to be as small as possible.

MICAH

What's that on your finger?

SAM

(without even looking)

E to the i pi plus one equals zero.

Micah looks confused.

SAM

It's Euler's equation.

(beat)

You don't know it?

Micah shrugs. Sam is shocked that he doesn't know this thing that she has known as long as she can remember.

SAM

(excited to share)

Oh, it's one of my absolute favorites! So elegant.

She sticks her finger a little too close to Micah's face.

SAM

It relates 5 of the most fundamental symbols in math to each other: One and Zero you know of course. i , the imaginary number, representing the square root of negative one. π , the constant that relates the diameter of any circle to its circumference. And e , Euler's constant, the base of natural logarithms. e to the $i\pi$ plus one equals zero. It's perfect.

Sam shoves her elbow in Micah's face. Sure enough, there is another tiny equation.

SAM

This one is really cool. Friedmann's Equation. You can probably tell by looking that it's derived from Einstein's General Relativity.

He can't.

SAM

It describes the life of the entire universe, from the Big Bang to accelerated expansion death. 13.7 Billion years. The whole life of the universe right there between two freckles.

She points to another on the inside of her forearm.

SAM

But this one is my favorite of all. It's called Nowak's Evolvability Equation. The symbol on the left represents all the possible strings of molecules. The right side represents selection pressures, fitness ratings--

(she's losing him again)

A lot of stuff. But the point is... All that's necessary for life to emerge are molecules subject to forces of selection and mutation. If those conditions are met, self-replication will emerge. You see?

Micah is hooked. He is so drawn to her in this moment. Not by what she is saying exactly, but by her energy, her humanity.

SAM

Evolvability is the ability of organisms to adapt, and thereby evolve through natural selection! Think about us. Humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor. *People can change*. Don't you get how important that is?

Micah doesn't say anything. But he can't take his eyes off her. Sam finally notices his intensity, which makes her shy.

SAM

Anyway, I guess you can tell I love equations. It's amazing how a short sequence of numbers and symbols can make sense out of the whole universe. Don't you think?

After a silent moment, Micah realizes that he has been asked a question. He regains himself.

MICAH

What about the markings on your ribcage? What's that?

SAM

Oh that...

Sam's not sure what she should say. Then she makes a decision and lifts her shirt up to reveal the diagram of bruises. Micah sees it up-close for the first time.

SAM

It's just this thing we do as part of our research.

MICAH

Jesus! Does it hurt?

Uncomfortable with his concern, Sam quickly pulls her shirt back down.

SAM

It's not that bad. It's nothing really.

MICAH

You know, I'm really interested in your work. I would love to see inside your lab...

SAM
(breaking eye contact)
I'm sorry, Micah. I can't. Dad
would never allow it. I shouldn't
even be talking about it.

MICAH
(after a beat)
I see.

There is a long silence. Then Sam has a thought and hops up--

SAM
Come on! I have something else I
want to show you.

She waves him on and exits the greenhouse. Micah stays behind for a moment, staring at the vines of beans strangling the corn stalks. His sense of awe from before is gradually eroded by something sombre, something dark.

He reaches down to check for the bag at his hip. But it isn't there! Alarmed for a moment. Then he remembers and bursts out of the greenhouse.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam is slowly making her way across the meadow. Micah hurries to the spot where he set his bag down.

It's there, exactly where he left it. He sighs relief. Then, he picks up the bag, raises the strap over his head and secures it across his body. How could he be so careless? He needs to stay focused.

SAM
(calling out)
Micah! Come on!

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

Sam leads Micah across the small compound. They arrive outside an old abandoned building. Sam opens the door. Micah follows her inside.

INT. OLD LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

No one has lived here for a very long time. They walk through a stripped LIVING ROOM.

SAM

This is where we used to live.

Sam leads Micah into a child's BEDROOM and plops down on the small bed. Micah hangs in the doorway.

SAM

This was my room. A long time ago.

There's an awkward silence. Sam is waiting for Micah to say something. But he doesn't.

SAM

Eventually, Dad decided we should move into the Observatory full time, so we could be closer to the work. We were the only two left on the mountain by then anyway.

(beat)

That was right after Mom died.

This gets Micah's attention. He looks right at Sam, suddenly serious. She smiles back. Then --

SAM

(mocking flirtation)

You know, you're the first boy that's ever been in my bedroom. I don't think my parents would approve...

She smiles at her joke. Micah isn't amused. Without a word, he turns and walks out, leaving her on the bed.

Sam gets up and follows. She walks down the hallway and enters another bedroom at the end of the hall. This time, she stops in the doorway. Micah stands on the far side of the room with his back to her. He's looking at a dated wedding photo of Sam's parents.

Sam picks up a hairbrush off of a dusty dresser. There is a make-up bag. She unzips it and looks at the contents like they're artefacts.

SAM

So, you found my parents' bedroom --

MICAH

(without turning around)

Sit down.

Intrigued by this game, Sam sits on the edge of the bed.

SAM

That picture was taken --

MICAH

Your mother's name was June. Is that right?

SAM

That's right. How did you know?

MICAH

And when did June die?

SAM

Like I said, it was a long time ago.

MICAH

(turning to face her)

What did he do to her?

SAM

What do you mean?

MICAH

(getting frustrated)

What did Henry Walden do to your mother that caused her death?

SAM

He didn't do anything. She got sick. That's it.

MICAH

But he -- your father was the one that kept her here. That kept all of you here...

SAM

No.

MICAH

What do you mean, "no"?

SAM

It was her. She was the one who wanted to stay. She couldn't bear the thought of giving up the beauty of Earth for the coldness of steel and space.

(staring at the brush in her hand)

He always said I was just like her.

MICAH

Sam, I need you to be honest with yourself. And be honest with me. This is important.

SAM

We're wasting time. I have work to do.

Sam stands up to leave.

MICAH

What is it exactly that you think you're doing in that lab?

SAM

You wouldn't understand.

MICAH

I want you to show me what he's up to in there. I need to see what he has you doing to yourself.

SAM

(defiant)

You can't see. Dr. Walden's lab is off-limits and that's final.

Micah chuckles. She's delusional if she thinks she can order him around.

MICAH

Right.

He pushes past her. Goes through the doorway, down the hall, and out the front door. After a moment, Sam gathers herself and hurries after him.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam emerges from the old building. She sees that Micah is not heading toward the lab. He's beelining for the Observatory. Confused, she follows him anyway.

INT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam enters the Observatory. Micah is across the room. He's going for the metal door to Henry's bedroom. Sam freezes just inside the doorway.

Micah tries the knob. It's locked.

MICAH
Unlock this door.

SAM
You can't go in there. You're not
allowed.

Micah stares at her for a moment. Then, he takes a step back and calmly kicks the door open.

Sam turns abruptly and leaves. By the time Micah looks back to see her reaction, she is already gone.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sam takes deep breaths as she makes her way across the meadow toward the Lab. She doesn't look back.

INT. OBSERVATORY - WALDEN'S ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

It's dark inside Henry's room. Daylight from the window on the far side of the room barely glows around the edges of a closed heavy curtain.

Micah enters slowly. He crosses to a desk along the wall and finds a lamp. Tries the switch. A dim yellow light illuminates the small room.

The desk is covered with books and papers. A double bed in the corner, unmade. The walls are lined with bookshelves, clippings, and photographs. He's not sure what he's looking for. He starts to the other side of the room toward the closed curtain. When -

He smells something that alarms him. He stops in his tracks and looks back at the lamp. It's smoking.

He crosses to the lamp and switches it off. Micah looks at the lamp in the near darkness...

Then he realizes. He drags his index finger across the table's surface. It's covered in a thick layer of dust.

Micah goes to the window and pulls back the curtains, flooding the dusty room with daylight. No one has lived in this room for a very long time.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

We follow Micah as he walks deliberately across the mountaintop to the entrance of Sam's lab. Without hesitation, he pulls back the plastic curtain and enters.

INT. LAB - THAT MOMENT

Sam looks like she's been crying when she hears him come in.

SAM

Dad?

She whips around. Micah is walking straight toward her. She backs up.

SAM

(forceful)

You are not allowed in here! Get out. Now!

MICAH

(trying to stay calm)

What the fuck, Sam?

SAM

I told you--

MICAH

(sharp and loud)

Sam!

They both freeze.

SAM

This isn't what you think because you don't know anything about me.

Micah moves closer to her.

SAM

(pleading now)

You need to leave now, okay?

He stares at her. Finally, Sam loses it and lets out a big bursting sob.

MICAH

How long has he been dead, Sam?

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

Sam and Micah stand before the large cairn sculpture -- Henry's grave. Sam has stopped crying by now. But Micah is seething with anger. He takes steady deliberate breaths.

SAM

My father buried my mother here.
And then I buried him here beside
her.

Micah clenches and unclenches his fists. The muscles in his neck and jaw flex. His breathing gets faster. He looks like he could put his head through a wall. He needs to get away from her.

He turns and starts to walk away without a word.

SAM

Why? Why are you being like this? I
told you, just go to Exodus.

MICAH

(whips around)
You're a little girl. You want to
pretend that you can make big
decisions? Fine. But don't lie
about the reasons.
(beat)
It was fucking irresponsible of
them to bring you into this world.
It's unforgiveable.

He turns again and walks off, leaving Sam standing at the cairn watching him go.

SAM

(yells after him)
He's my father!
(beat)
Everything was fine until you got
here!

Micah doesn't look back. As he walks, he drops his bag on the ground and continues on toward his balloon.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

Micah's bag sits on the desk. Sam looks out the window at the balloon.

From her perspective, she can see Micah pacing angrily. He picks up a large rock and heaves it with all his might across the meadow. Then, he stomps after it, picks it up, and heaves it back in the other direction. He continues this routine over and over. Eventually, he collapses to his knees, exhausted.

INT. OBSERVATORY - DUSK

Sam sits on the floor. She methodically goes through the contents of Micah's bag. All of his things are laid out in organized rows: Black wallet with money and driver license separated. The pistol, with five bullets removed. The small glass bottle of clear liquid. The journal. Two pens and three pencils. A pocket knife. A compass. Three lighters.

Sam picks up the glass bottle and unscrews the cap. She lifts it to her nose and takes a sniff. It's pungent and makes her cough. She screws the cap back on tight and returns it to its place. Then, she picks up the journal and begins to flip through the pages. She removes a dried flower and carefully lays it at the end of a row. She lands on a page with a wallet-sized photo. She removes the photo and looks closely. It's a young woman, maybe a teenager. It looks like an old yearbook photo. She's pretty, but not beautiful. She has dark hair and dark eyes. Sam flips the photo over. The back is blank. After a moment, she lays it next to the flower.

Sam gets up and crosses to the window. It's getting dark outside and Micah still hasn't come back. He has built a small campfire.

INT. OBSERVATORY - A LITTLE LATER

The sound of Sam's computer booting up.

Meanwhile, she is going through her end-of-day transmission. She puts in the tape that says "SIGN OFF" and is about to press play when she stops herself. After a moment, she picks up the radio's microphone, holds it to her mouth and depresses the button.

SAM

This is Sam Walden, transmitting on
frequency 9043 kilohertz daily.

Listening on frequency 9560
Kilohertz daily. That's 31 meter
band frequency 9560 kilohertz.

(beat)

This is Sam Walden-- Over and out.

She sets the microphone down and crosses to her computer.

0 NEW MESSAGE(S)

SAM
(quietly)
Where are you?

After a moment, Sam takes a deep breath and opens a new composition window.

On Screen: "Dear Elon,"

We watch Sam while she continues to type. Her usual passion is not there. We can't read what she is writing, but she seems defeated, resigned.

EXT. MEADOW - NIGHT

Micah lays down on his back in the grass beneath his balloon. He looks up at the starry sky.

EXT. SNOWY WASTELAND - DAWN - FLASHBACK

Micah walks along a row of makeshift wood and tin shanty-buildings through deep snow. He ducks inside one of the structures.

INT. MICAH'S SHACK - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Micah is comforting a very sick woman. He's trying not to look devastated.

He carefully tucks the woman's hair behind her ear. Then leans in and kisses her forehead.

INT. BALLOON COCKPIT - DAWN - FLASHBACK

View from above, from the cockpit of the balloon, of a small enclave of buildings in a snowy, high elevation landscape.

The "enclave" looks like it is dying. Like a dirty scar on the drifts of snow that will soon be healed by the Earth -- subsumed by the ice, as if it was never there at all.

INT. BALLOON COCKPIT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Over Micah's shoulder the enclave in the distance becomes smaller and smaller and, eventually, disappears.

His WIFE is with him, but she is dead and wrapped in a shroud, revealing only her face. He weeps over her body.

Micah pulls his wife's shroud up and around her face.

EXT. BALLOON - DAY - FLASHBACK

Out the window, clouds float by.

INT. OBSERVATORY - THE NEXT MORNING

Sam watches Micah outside through the window. He is pulling tools from her shed. A shovel, a pick axe.

Micah takes the tools and disappears behind the ridge.

EXT. RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Micah has found a nice flat spot with a view of the southern sky. He sets the shovel against a nearby boulder. Then, pick axe in hand, he sets his feet, swings the pick axe over his head and brings it down hard into the rocky ground.

SAM (V.O.)

Dear Elon...

EXT. OBSERVATORY MEADOW - LATER

Sam shuffles across the meadow in the direction of the Lab. Hands in pockets, she seems reluctant to cover the distance.

SAM (V.O.)

I don't understand why you have disappeared now of all times. Are you mad at me? I wish I knew what you think about all this.

EXT. RIDGE - SIMULTANEOUS

Micah has almost finished digging the grave. It's an impressive amount of work, and he's sweating.

SAM (V.O.)

Micah and I had a fight yesterday, and I think he's really angry with me. I'm not even sure if he's still willing to take me with him to Exodus.

INT. LAB - SIMULTANEOUS

Wearing her oxygen tube, Sam ambles through the wreckage of the lab. She runs her fingers along the terrariums and scientific equipment. She casually flips through various notebooks. Hundreds of pages of hand-written data and notes, all for nothing.

SAM (V.O.)
But, what I'm saying is... if he *is*
still willing... then so am I.
(beat)
I never thought I would be writing
this.

Sam looks across the room at Henry's desk and worn chair. It's empty. She will never see him again.

SAM (V.O.)
It's over. I know that now. My life
on Earth is over.

She crosses the room and sits in her father's chair. She carefully places her hands on the edges of the arm rests, worn-smooth by his hands over the years.

SAM (V.O.)
It's been over for a long time.

After a moment, she notices movement out the window in the distance. She gets up and crosses to get a better look.

She sees Micah approaching the balloon. He's dirty and sweaty. He goes to the capsule, unlocks the door and enters. A few seconds later, he emerges, carrying a shrouded body. Then, he disappears again behind the ridge.

SAM (V.O.)
I'll be heading to Exodus soon. And
then we'll be together on Io just
like you always said. Write back
soon, okay? Yours, Sam.

EXT. RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Micah gently lays the shrouded body in the hole. He stares inside at the shrouded form.

Then, he scoops up a shovel-full of earth and pours it into the grave.

EXT. RIDGE - EVENING

The grave is completely filled by now. Micah sits on a large flat boulder nearby, staring out at the endless bank of clouds below the evening sun.

Sam comes around the ridge carrying Micah's bag in one hand and a small bouquet of yellow zucchini flowers in the other. She stops several feet away.

SAM

(after a moment)

You dropped your bag.

Micah doesn't look at her.

She carefully sets his bag on a nearby rock. Then, she walks over to the rounded hump of soil, places the flowers on top of the grave, and turns to walk away.

MICAH

She was supposed to be a teacher.

This stops Sam. She turns to face him. But he still doesn't make eye contact.

MICAH

We both were. That was the plan... We had a lot of plans. When we got old, we were gonna move out of the city and buy a farm. Grow our own food and teach at the local high school. But first we were going to change the world... We were so young.

(beat)

Then the world changed first. She never had a chance.

(beat)

I'm sorry I yelled at you. I've got this temper... She could always calm me down. She was better than me. And she *knew* better than me too. I was the one who wanted to stay. She would have followed me to the end of the world... and she did.

(beat)

It wasn't supposed to be like this, you know?

SAM

I'm sorry, Micah.

He looks at her for the first time.

MICAH

Sam, I'm going to tell you something now, and you're not going to like it. But this is something I have to do.

He stands up and crosses to her. He takes a deep breath and launches into his argument.

MICAH

I've decided that I'm taking you to Exodus. And I can get you there in the balloon. I know you won't understand this right now, but it's not up for debate. You've got your whole life in front of you, and I can't leave you here alone.

SAM

(coldly)

Okay.

Sam doesn't seem upset at all. This isn't the reaction he was expecting.

MICAH

Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm taking you away from here. You're going to Io and you aren't coming back...

SAM

Okay.

MICAH

Okay... Good.

Micah is relieved. He was expecting a fight.

SAM

(expressionless)

When are we leaving?

MICAH

Well... soon.

(beat)

I mean, we have to plot the course and then wait for favorable wind conditions... But soon. It will have to be soon. We've got a long way to go, and we're running out of days.

SAM

Okay.

She turns and walks away, back toward the Observatory.

Micah watches after her, concerned. This isn't the same girl. She's defeated, a watered-down version of the Sam we have known until now.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - LATER THAT EVENING

Sam is wearing an apron. She readies her pots and her hot plate.

SAM

What would you like to have for dinner?

MICAH

How about I cook for you?

Micah takes the apron off of Sam and puts it on himself. She ties it behind his back. They exchange a look. This is a nice shared moment of domesticity.

INT. GREENHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Micah walks through the rows of the greenhouse and picks tomatoes and spaghetti squash. Sam watches. The greenhouse is beautiful, but she knows soon she will never see it again.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - LATER

Micah dices the tomatoes while Sam sits at the table watching. He cuts the squash in half and uses a fork to make stringy spaghetti.

MICAH

This will have to do for the spaghetti.

Micah drops the tomatoes into a pan of hot vegetable oil.

SAM

I haven't told Elon the truth yet... about my dad.

(beat)

I'm scared it will ruin everything between us.

MICAH

Don't you think it's best to be honest with him?

SAM

I haven't heard from him in days. He's never disappeared like this before. It's weird.

MICAH

I'm sure it's nothing.

A beat.

SAM

What was it like? *Before*?

MICAH

I'm sure your father told you about it--

SAM

I want to know what it was like for you. Where did you grow up?

MICAH

I grew up in the suburbs. In a neighborhood. But, by the time I was your age, I was in the city every chance I got.

(beat)

But I can tell you this much about what it was like before... Everyone that was living on this planet, going to the store and watching TV... We weren't ready for this. No matter what warnings we got from people like your father. Or things we saw with our own eyes... The future we got was unthinkable... for everybody.

(beat)

Life was normal and then it wasn't.

SAM

Unexpected things can be good too.

Micah shrugs and stirs the sauce.

SAM

What was it like where you lived before you came here?

MICAH

Cold.

SAM

Were there other people?

Micah nods.

SAM

What happened?

MICAH

We couldn't grow food year round.

(beat)

We had no idea there were places
like this that were safe. You were
lucky to grow up here.

He serves Sam and then makes a plate of food for himself. He sits down across from Sam. As she begins to eat, a smile crosses Sam's face.

INT. OBSERVATORY - THE NEXT MORNING

Sam walks carefully over to the window and looks out.

Micah is outside, taking a shower. Sam watches him. She looks curiously at his sinewy body.

INT. OBSERVATORY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Sam sits on the couch flipping through the mythology book, examining the nude bodies of gods and goddesses.

Micah enters in a towel. Sam watches him closely. Then, she stretches back in her seat trying to look sexy and succeeding. Micah notices.

SAM

Micah...

MICAH

What?

SAM

Nothing.

MICAH

Okay...

He picks up his shirt and is about to put it on--

SAM

What do you think about me?

This stops him. He looks at her. She's beautiful. He doesn't know what to say.

MICAH

What do you mean?

SAM

Do you think I'm pretty?

He doesn't move. He just stands in the doorway holding his shirt.

MICAH

I have to ready the balloon.

Sam stands up and takes a step toward him. He puts on the t-shirt, grabs his jeans and turns away from her. Then he pulls the jeans on under his towel.

MICAH

Soon we'll be leaving.

Sam takes several slow steps toward him.

MICAH

You need to be ready.

He leaves.

EXT. BALLOON - LATER

Micah sits on the ground, looking over a large map of global wind currents. Beside him is a tattered paperback titled, *BALLOON FLYING HANDBOOK: THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION*.

After a moment, he takes a windsock out of a small pouch and attaches it to a stick in the ground. He notes the wind direction and goes back to his map.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - SIMULTANEOUS

Sam packs jars of vegetables into a crate. Then, she fills plastic jugs with drinking water. She doesn't notice Micah arrive in the breezeway.

MICAH

We're going to have to wait for the wind to change directions before we can leave.

SAM

It will. It always does up here. I usually have to adjust the wind turbine every couple of days.

MICAH

That's good... For now, we wait.

Sam goes back to her work. Micah is about to leave, then stops himself.

MICAH

What were you planning to do if I hadn't shown up here?

Sam stops what she's doing, but doesn't look at him. She has no response.

MICAH

You were just going to stay here...
and *die* here all by yourself.
(beat)
People aren't meant to be alone,
Sam.

SAM

You think I don't know that?

MICAH

I don't know... Do you?

EXT. BALLOON - LATER

The wind sock is still pointing the wrong direction.

Micah is going through the cockpit, getting rid of anything that adds unnecessary weight. Sam stands outside the hatch door. He hands her cannisters and boxes.

INT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Sam is seated at her computer. Still: "0 NEW MESSAGE(S)"

She turns around and looks at Micah, lying on the floor in the sleeping bag reading her father's book.

Sam gets up and crosses to the BATHROOM. She enters and closes the door but does not shut it all the way. She catches her reflection in the mirror. After a moment, she takes off her clothes. She peeks out through the crack in the door at Micah on the floor. She puts her hand on her chest.

Micah looks up. They lock eyes. Sam freezes, caught. But she doesn't look away. Micah can see a sliver of her naked body through the crack in the door. They hold each other's gaze for a long moment.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - THE NEXT DAY

Sam uses a long knife to slice off the white wax caps from a honeycomb frame. She slides two of the four frames into holders in a large cylindrical bucket, then closes the clear lid. She turns a hand crank, causing the honey trays to spin faster and faster inside the makeshift centrifuge.

Sam unplugs a drain hole at the bottom of the honey extractor. The honey, along with bits of wax and pollen, drips first through a wire mesh filter, then through cheesecloth into a smaller bucket.

She removes the empty frames and loads the other two into the extractor.

Micah enters, carrying a box-shaped section of one of the hives. It's filled with 10 frames of honeycomb. He sets the box on the table beside Sam and watches her crank the handle of the extractor until the frames inside become a blur.

MICAH

I'll go get the last of it.

EXT. APIARY - MOMENTS LATER

Micah lifts the honey super off the final hive. He notices something moving underneath and kneels down to get a closer look.

MICAH

(to himself)

I'll be damned.

Trapped beneath a layer of wire mesh, a lone bee goes about its business. It seems to be unaware that all of its hive mates are gone.

INT. KITCHEN AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Micah bursts in, empty-handed and a little out of breath. Sam looks up from her work, intrigued.

SAM

What's going on?

MICAH
(smiling)
You're never going to believe this.

EXT. APIARY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam and Micah are both kneeling, watching the bee's every move. Sam's eyes are beginning to water.

MICAH
That's how I found it. I think it's trapped under that grate.

SAM
She.

MICAH
What?

SAM
She's trapped. The grate is called a "Queen Excluder." The slots are big enough to let workers and drones through, but they're too small for her.

(beat)
She must have just hatched, which would make her a Virgin Queen.

Micah is visibly excited.

MICAH
(excited)
I can't believe it! But... how?

SAM
I don't know.

MICAH
What does this mean?

They both watch the bee for a long time.

SAM
When Lucy survived the Zone, my dad was convinced he had stumbled onto the key to human survival on Earth. He tried everything to discover the scientific explanation for her survival. But he couldn't figure it out. He became obsessed. He started experimenting on himself.

(beat)

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Then mom got sick. And things just got worse. There was nothing he could do, and it drove him crazy.

There's a long moment of silence.

SAM

This bee doesn't mean anything.

(beat)

No one is coming back.

She carefully lifts the Queen Excluder off the hive and turns it over in her hands. The Virgin Queen walks around on the wire mesh for a moment. Then stops. And flies away.

Sam watches the bee until she loses her in the sky. Then she replaces the excluder and walks back toward the Observatory.

After a moment, Micah follows.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

Sam sorts belongings to bring with her.

She picks up the heavy illustrated animal book. Weighs it in her hand. Rejects it. She'll have to leave it behind. She stares at her bag. She can't believe she's really doing this.

MICAH (O.S.)

Take it.

Sam looks up to see Micah in the doorway.

SAM

What?

MICAH

The book. Bring it with you if you want. We can manage.

He smiles. Sam picks up the book and places it in her duffle.

SAM

Why did you come here?

MICAH

What?

SAM

What did you have to tell my father that was so important?

MICAH
It doesn't matter. Not anymore.

INT. OBSERVATORY - EVENING

Sam reclines on the couch, watching the nature documentary, when--

Her computer DINGS. Sam hops up and rushes to the computer.

1 NEW MESSAGE(S)

Sam lights up, relieved to finally hear from Elon. She opens the message and reads quickly. We can't see what she is reading and we can't hear V.O. We can only watch her reaction. Her smile fades. She grows very serious. Whatever Elon has written is devastating for Sam.

SAM
(tears forming)
What?

EXT. OBSERVATORY MEADOW - SIMULTANEOUS

Micah is performing a thorough examination of the balloon. He checks gauges and tests electronics. Everything is in order.

ELON (V.O.)
Dear Sam, I am sorry that I haven't been able to write. I have something to tell you. I didn't want to say anything in case it didn't happen. I didn't want to worry you unnecessarily.

Micah stands next to the cockpit. He stares at the stubborn wind sock. Then he turns and looks out over the clouds, wind in his face. He's anxious.

ELON (V.O.)
I don't know how to tell you this, so I will just tell you...

INT. OBSERVATORY - SIMULTANEOUS

Sam has finished reading the letter. She breaks down.

ELON (V.O.)
I applied to the Solar Sail mission to Alpha Centauri, to find us a new home world.
(MORE)

ELON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(beat)
I was accepted.

SAM
No!

She stands up and kicks down her chair. She starts throwing her books, sobbing.

EXT. OBSERVATORY MEADOW - SIMULTANEOUS

Micah stands staring down angrily at the wind sock. He takes a pull of the clear liquid from the small glass bottle and finishes it off. He's not drunk, but the alcohol has taken effect.

ELON (V.O.)
Will you wait for me? We can still
see each other face to face, but it
won't be for many many years...

Micah holds the empty bottle upside down, and the last droplet is whisked away by the incessant wind. There's a high-pitched resonating tone from the steady wind blowing across the mouth of the bottle. He turns to face the wind and chucks the bottle with all his might. Then he turns back to the windsock.

MICAH
You motherfucker.

He kicks at the windsock until it topples over.

ELON (V.O.)
Yours Forever, With all my Love
from Io until the End of the
Universe. I am here. Elon.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

Through the window, we see Micah walking towards the observatory. Sam is on the bed when he enters. She's been crying. He doesn't notice. He's about to boil over.

MICAH
The fucking wind! We are never
going to get out of here in time if
the fucking wind doesn't fucking
change!

Sam gets up. She takes a step toward him carefully.

SAM
Calm down. It will change.

A long moment of silence.

Sam walks over to the stereo and presses PLAY. It's music. No one says anything for a long time.

MICAH
This song--
(beat)
I remember this.

Sam begins to dance amorously, but almost as if he isn't there. Like she is dancing with her fantasy beau in her mind.

Micah watches her dance. She's moving across the room toward him.

SAM
(turning to him)
Dance with me.

Micah doesn't move.

SAM
Come on.

She grabs at his hands playfully. He doesn't dance. But it does make him laugh.

Sam let's go of his hands and dances alone.

Micah leans against the wall and watches her.

MICAH
You look... very...
(beat)
You bring out the beauty in this place.

Sam looks up at him. All of the sudden bashful.

She looks down and carefully tucks her hair behind her ear.
[It recalls the earlier shot of Micah tucking his wife's hair behind her ear.]

Micah almost gasps in recognition. In a moment, his eyes well with tears.

Sam glances back up at him just in time to see his knees buckle. She catches him and they slide down the wall to the floor together.

SAM
Hey. It's okay.

Micah avoids eye contact with her. He's trying not to get choked up. He makes a feeble attempt to pull away from her, but she holds him tighter, his head against her chest.

SAM
(whispering)
It's okay.

He relents. He can feel her warmth, her breath, hear her heartbeat. He returns the embrace. They both bask in this moment, not looking at each other, just feeling each other.

Sam kisses Micah's forehead. [Again, it recalls the shot of Micah kissing his wife.]

Micah looks up into Sam's eyes. She returns his intensity. She leans in slowly, deliberately, and kisses him on the mouth. Innocently but seriously too. He kisses back for a moment. Then stops and pulls back slightly.

MICAH
I'm sorry.

SAM
Don't be.

She kisses him again.

MICAH
We can't...

SAM
We have to.

He has no response. She pulls her shirt off over her head. They stare at each other intensely for an extended moment, their breathing begins to quicken.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - SIMULTANEOUS

The structures on the mountaintop are tiny in the distance. The music faintly drifts through the night sky.

INT. OBSERVATORY - TELESCOPE CHAMBER - LATER THAT NIGHT

The massive doors of the dome ceiling slowly churn open.

Sam adjusts the coordinates of the telescope and indicates for Micah to take a look. He does.

SAM
See that glimmer? To the side of
Jupiter?

MICAH
That's the colony?

SAM
That's the colony. It's actually
orbiting Io, but the colony is so
much brighter than Io in the sky
that Io becomes obscured.

We see the telescope's view of the solar system.

MICAH
I never thought I'd see it.

SAM
There it is. So far away.

Micah is genuinely astonished. He stares for a long time.

SAM
There's this art exhibit I really
wish I could have seen before we
leave.

MICAH
Art exhibit?

SAM
Yeah. At the Museum of Art. One of
the last exhibits from Before.
"Modern Myths."
(beat)
Would you have taught your students
about myths?

MICAH
Yes. I would have.

SAM
You know, just because Io exists,
doesn't mean we have to go there.

Micah shoots her a serious look.

SAM
Don't you think someone has to
start things over? Someone has to
stay behind and repopulate the
planet.

MICAH

No. I don't think that.

SAM

It wouldn't just be our relationship with the planet that's starting over. It would be humanity on Earth. And not just humanity, but all human ideas.

(beat)

God abandoned Earth. Not that I believe in God, but... It would be clearing away all the religions and history and ideas that came before.

(beat)

If I decided to stay behind, would you stay with me?

MICAH

What are you saying? You want to be a myth? You want us to be a myth?

Micah shakes his head. She seems so naive now.

SAM

Don't be mad. Just think about it. Maybe we were looking at things all wrong. Maybe we belong here together.

Micah is suddenly overcome with shame.

MICAH

(staring off)

What we did was a mistake.

SAM

Don't say that.

MICAH

Look, you're just confused. What we did... Nothing has changed.

Sam starts to cry.

SAM

It's not an accident that you found me... that I found you.

MICAH

Do you know why I came here?

SAM

Why?

MICAH
(after a beat)
I'm taking you to Io to be with
Elon... To be with other people.
That's final.

A long moment of silence. Micah turns and starts down the spiral staircase, leaving Sam on the platform alone.

INT. OBSERVATORY - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Sam sits in front of the computer typing. It's dark, except for the green monitor that glows on her face and the cool moonlight that spills in through the windows. She pauses typing and glances across the room at Micah.

He's asleep on the floor. Breathing heavily.

She turns back to the computer and reads what she's written. Satisfied, she hits SEND and powers off the computer.

Quietly, Sam stands up and pads across the room in bare feet.

Sam kneels beside Micah. She looks at him closely. She examines his face. She moves closer. It looks like she is going to kiss him.

SAM (V.O.)
(softly)
Dear Elon... You have betrayed me.
You didn't keep your end of the
promise.

But she doesn't kiss him. She just looks closely at his face, his lips, the air moving in and out of him.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

Sam walks out into night. The wind blows into her face. Her hair streams behind her. There is a strange glow at this altitude where the light from the moon reflects off the bed of clouds below.

SAM (V.O.)
But I lied to you too. My father is
dead. He's been dead for a long
time.

Sam walks out onto the plateau surrounding the observatory. She reaches into the air above her like she is trying to touch the stars. The entire Universe at her fingertips.

SAM (V.O.)
I've decided not to go to Exodus.
You deserve to know that Micah and
I have fallen in love.

When she looks back down toward the horizon, something has changed. The wind has died down. It's eerie calm for a moment.

Then, the wind picks back up. But's blowing the opposite direction, pushing her from behind. Her hair reaches out in front of her face.

SAM (V.O.)
We have made love to each other and
have decided to start a life
together here on Earth.

She looks up at the balloon looming in front of her -- strange, otherworldly, and out-of-place -- lit by the soft blue glow of the moon and a million tiny stars.

SAM (V.O.)
I hope you can understand. Sam.

She begins to walk toward the balloon, almost in a trance.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - THE NEXT MORNING

Micah steps out of the observatory and feels the strong wind on his face.

MICAH
(calling out)
Sam! The wind...

He quickly covers the distance to the balloon capsule. He finds the toppled windsock and picks it up. It points steadily in the right direction.

Micah lets out a victorious laugh and holds the windsock high above his head. He looks up and admires the cooperating windsock. In the background, we can see the balloon.

Micah's smile fades. The balloon looks strange. It's not completely deflated but it's slumped, obviously at lower pressure than when he arrived.

He backs up to get a better perspective. When he looks up at the balloon, it's clear that something is not right.

Micah begins to methodically check all of the parts of the balloon.

He notices something wrong with the Helium Release Valve controls. It's been bumped to a partially open position.

MICAH

What?

He looks closely, and then erupts.

MICAH

Fuck!

Micah forces the lever to the closed position. He looks in the direction of the Observatory, seething with rage.

EXT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Micah marches up to the Breezeway, gun in hand.

EXT. KITCHEN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Sam is in the process of canning fresh vegetables for the winter. She separates tomato seeds for next year's crop and lays them out to dry.

Micah bursts into the breezeway.

Sam looks up from her work, startled. He's staring her down and breathing hard. She notices the pistol in his hand.

SAM

Is everything okay?

MICAH

What have you done?

SAM

What are you talking about?

Micah hangs his head.

MICAH

We are so fucked, Sam. We're so fucked.

SAM

Is this about the balloon?

He looks back up at her.

MICAH

(in disbelief)

Wow.

SAM

I can see that you're upset, but--

Micah calmly lifts the pistol and pulls the trigger.

BANG. A jar of tomatoes explodes, sending shards of glass across the room.

Sam freezes.

Wielding the pistol like a hammer, Micah smashes a shelf of jarred vegetables.

MICAH

We don't have enough Helium left in the envelope to get off the fucking ground.

He stares at her. She's in shock.

MICAH

Well?!

He smashes more glass jars. He's on a rampage.

MICAH

What do you have to say for yourself?!

SAM

You're bleeding.

Micah looks at the blood dripping down his hand. Then, he closes his eyes and takes a moment to calm himself.

MICAH

What are you thinking, Sam? You don't want me. You want Elon.

(beat)

I'm not who you think I am.

SAM

What are you talking about?

MICAH

You want to know why I came here?

(beat)

I came here to kill your father...

Micah stares at her in silence and watches this sink in.

Sam can't comprehend what she's hearing. Her mind is spinning. Confusion gives way to horror.

MICAH

Of course I know who Henry Walden is. I've known all along. I came here to put a bullet in him.

SAM

(in disbelief)

No.

As he speaks, Sam begins to fathom this betrayal.

MICAH

We started the enclave because of him. I watched a dozen people starve to death because of him. I killed a man, over medicine that was already gone... I beat him to death.

(beat)

I left people, Sam. I abandoned them to die when I came here.

Sam is consumed with emotions as she listens. Anger and Heartbreak at the same time.

MICAH

And I had to watch my wife die a slow and painful death because of him, and there was nothing I could do about it... That's how I saw it.

(beat)

After I killed him, I was going to float the balloon into the Zone with my wife's body and die there, with her in my arms. That was my plan.

(beat)

I came here for him, but I found you instead.

This last bit touches Sam. There's a long moment of silence. Then, Micah starts to cry. Sam doesn't know what to do.

MICAH

I blamed him for my own failures. I blamed him for *my* guilt. But it was *me*, Sam. It was always me. I made all the wrong decisions. I failed... at everything.

(beat)

I'm sorry, Sam. I'm so sorry.

At this, Micah falls to his knees and breaks into deep sobbing. He is pitiful. Sam actually starts to feel sorry for him.

MICAH

I was so young when I met her. We were both so young. And now she's dead... because of me.

He looks up at her suddenly.

MICAH

I couldn't save her, Sam.
(beat)
You were all I had left.

He puts the pistol in his mouth and closes his eyes.

SAM

Wait!
(scrambling)
I know where we can get more helium, if that's what you want.

He's not pulling the trigger. But he's not taking the gun out of his mouth either.

SAM

But it's in the Zone. And it's far...

Micah opens his eyes and removes the pistol from his mouth. He stares at her hard.

SAM

Farther than I've ever gone. Longer than I've every stayed submerged...

MICAH

What are you talking about?! You sabotaged the balloon in the first place!

SAM

We would have to spend the night below.

After a moment--

MICAH

Is that even possible?

SAM

I think so... theoretically.

MICAH

Don't fuck with me, Sam.

(beat)

Why are you telling me this?

Sam gathers her thoughts. She starts pacing back and forth.

SAM

You feel like you need to save me
and take me to Exodus, right?

(beat)

So you can have a reason to live.

Micah is thrown by the bluntness of her observation. He doesn't answer. But she has his attention.

SAM

I believe the Zone can give you
that meaning. You've never seen it
like I have. You don't understand
its power.

(beat)

Once you truly experience the Zone
for yourself, I don't believe you
will want to leave this place. I
think you will understand like I
do, and you will want to stay and
live here on Earth... with *me*.

(beat)

So, here's the deal I'm
proposing... After we go to the
Zone together, including a visit to
the Museum of Art... If you still
want to get the helium and fly me
to Exodus, then I won't fight you.

(beat)

Deal?

Micah is in disbelief at what is happening.

MICAH

(after a moment)

We get the helium first. Then we go
to the museum.

(beat)

You actually have an idea of where
we might find helium tanks?

SAM

Yeah.

MICAH

You're not making this up?

SAM
I'm not making this up.

She holds his stare.

INT. OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sam crosses to the computer desk. Micah follows, a towel wrapped around his hand. She takes down the hand-drawn FUN ZONE amusement park map.

SAM
It's a theme park.
(beat)
See here?

Sam points to a drawing of a colorful balloon in the center of the park. It's a tethered gas balloon ride.

MICAH
I'll be damned.

SAM
I've always wanted to go to a theme park.

Micah is getting visibly worked up. Excited and nervous at the same time.

MICAH
Are there tanks there?

SAM
I don't know. I told you, I've never been.

MICAH
Jesus. Is it safe?

SAM
No. But I have breathing masks. And enough air tanks that we can fill up.
(beat)
I think.

MICAH
It's a shot in the dark. But it's all we got.
(beat)
Damn, I never expected to see the Zone this way.

SAM
It's amazing down there. You'll
see.

EXT. BREEZEWAY - LATER THAT MORNING

Sam lays out the safety equipment for the Zone mission on the table in front of Micah: air cylinders -- way more than usual, breathing masks, regulator valves, hoses.

Sam starts a compressor. She fills the tanks with air.

Micah is pacing around the ATV. He has a troubled look.

MICAH
Sam. I've been thinking.
(beat)
We'll never make it back up the
mountain with the helium tanks.
They're too heavy. We'll have to
inflate the balloon at the bottom
of the hill and leave for Exodus
from there.

She looks at him, caught off guard. She hadn't considered this scenario.

MICAH
So if there's anything else you
want to take to Exodus, get it now.

INT. OBSERVATORY - LATER

Sam sits on the floor, putting the last few items in her duffel. Next to the animal book, she puts in the mythology book, and the Yeats poems. She picks up her mother's hairbrush and places it in the bag too. Finally, she is about to pack her father's book. She picks it up and turns it over in her hands. Then, she sets it back down.

She stands up and crosses to a wall of photographs. She carefully removes the self-shot Polaroid of her and Henry that we saw before. She looks at it for a long moment. Is she really doing this?

At that moment, her computer DINGS.

Reluctantly, Sam makes her way across the room and sits down in front of the monitor.

On the Screen: 1 NEW MESSAGE(S). From Elon.

She takes a breath and opens the message. We hold on Sam's face as she reads.

ELON (V.O.)

Dear Sam, I'm sorry to hear about your Dad. I know how much you loved him.

(beat)

I'm really sorry I didn't tell you about joining the Centauri mission sooner. I guess I was scared. I didn't want it to ruin everything between us. I hope you can understand.

(beat)

I can't bear to think that I have betrayed you. I care so much about you, Sam. I still feel the same about you as I always have. I still believe it's our destiny to be together. I hope you do too. I hope you will change your mind and come to Io after all. It's your choice, of course, but I have to let you know how I feel.

(beat)

I will be entering Cryosleep soon. By the time you receive my next message... *if* you receive my next message, you will have just woken up on the Io Colony. I will have discovered a new Home for us at Centauri. We will look the same as we do now, but we will have dreamed about each other for decades.

(beat)

I will pray that you change your mind and have a safe journey to Io. Please don't worry about me too much.

(beat)

I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me. Sweet Dreams, Sammy.

(beat)

I love you. Yours Forever, Elon.

On the screen: "... I love you..."

By the time she finishes reading, Sam is on the verge of tears. She stares at this last line, collecting her thoughts. How is she supposed to respond to this?

EXT. KITCHEN AREA- LATER

Sam and Micah are at the table going over a map of the city. Micah points to a green rectangle on the map.

MICAH

How about here? Have you been to this park?

SAM

Yeah. That should work. It's just a big flat field.

MICAH

Are there many trees? Or is it open?

SAM

It's open.

MICAH

Okay, good. We'll drop the balloon there, then go get the helium.

Sam isn't listening. She's locating something else on the map.

SAM

(smiling)

Here it is. The Museum of Art.

Micah let's out an exasperated sigh.

SAM

What?

MICAH

Nothing.

(beat)

We just need to stay focussed. There's no room for error.

SAM

I'm focussed.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - LATER

Micah opens the release valve completely and deflates his balloon.

EXT. HENRY WALDEN'S GRAVE - A LITTLE LATER

Sam carefully balances a rock on the monument.

EXT. RIDGE - SUNSET - SIMULTANEOUS

Micah kneels on the ground beside his wife's grave and pulls the wallet-sized photo of her from his pocket. He places it on top of the mound of soil and weighs it down with a heavy rock.

INT. LAB - A LITTLE LATER

Sam takes a last look. She bends down and peers into a terrarium. It's a particularly intricate, thriving miniature ecosystem.

Micah appears in the doorway.

MICAH

Come on. Let's pack this thing up.

EXT. OBSERVATORY MEADOW - A LITTLE LATER

Sam and Micah finish loading the balloon's capsule, deflated envelope and two cans of gasoline onto a large steel trailer attached to the ATV.

EXT. THE PATH - MINUTES LATER

Sam drives her motorized bicycle down towards the fence. Micah is on the ATV - towing the balloon.

EXT. THE CAIRNS - MOMENTS LATER

Sam and Micah put on their air cylinders and ready their masks.

MICAH

I haven't been to sea level in years.

Sam and Micah put on their masks and start breathing through the regulators. They turn on their WIRELESS TRANSMITTERS and put in earpieces.

MICAH

Can you hear me?

SAM

Still works. I haven't had a use
for these in a long time.

They ride their bikes down to the fence.

Sam unlocks the fence. Sets her watch. It BEEPS as the timer
starts.

They push their vehicles through the gate. Sam goes back to
close and lock the gate. She double-checks the locks.

Micah is already on his way down the trail.

EXT. CRUMBLING ROAD - DAY

Sam and Micah drive along a crumbling road covered with
vines.

EXT. CITY RUINS - AFTERNOON

As they roll through the city, Micah looks at the dead relics
of his civilization and the vicious vines that are swallowing
them.

Sam stops the bike and cuts the motor. Micah does the same.

MICAH

Why are we stopping?

SAM

Incredible, right?

MICAH

I've seen cities from above, but
it's different to be down in it.

(beat)

It's awful.

He takes the map out of his pocket and unfolds it. Sam looks
at him as he studies the map. She's disappointed, but she
doesn't press him about it.

MICAH

We're close to the launch spot.
Let's drop off the balloon and get
moving. We have a lot of ground to
cover.

He starts the ATV back and continues down the street. After a
moment, Sam follows.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SUNSET

Sam and Micah zip down the flat abandoned highway. The ATV's trailer no longer carries the balloon capsule and envelope.

INT. EMPTY HOTEL BALLROOM - NIGHT

Sam and Micah lie side by side on the floor of a large empty room -- it's very dark. Sam shakes a Forever Light. The dim glow illuminates the map and not much else.

SAM
(pointing)
See. We're here.

MICAH
We're almost there. That's good.
(beat)
I know it was hard for you to leave behind your father's work -- your work. But, did you ever think that... Maybe what happened was Earth's way of adapting. What if the end of humankind on Earth doesn't mean the end of the world?

SAM
But then why do you want to save me so badly?

MICAH
I don't give a damn about the human race. Things go extinct, time presses on. But that doesn't mean I'm going to let anything happen to you.

Sam smiles.

MICAH
(indicating the tanks)
So, how does this work?

SAM
After we switch to fresh tanks, we just turn the airflow down to 50%, try to relax, and we should be fine.

MICAH
Is your alarm set?

SAM
(checks her wrist)
Yes.

MICAH
Okay. Let's do this.

Micah takes a deep breath. Sam quickly changes Micah's air tank. Then she does the same for herself.

Micah lies down facing Sam. She carefully tightens Micah's demand valve.

SAM
Is that okay?

Micah nods. Sam does the same to her own valve.

MICAH
Sam, I'm going to get you to Io.
Elon's waiting for you. It might be
the last thing I do, but I am going
to get you there.

SAM
Elon won't even be at the colony.
He joined the Centauri mission.
There's no one there waiting for
me.

She closes her eyes. After a beat, Micah does the same.

INT. EMPTY HOTEL BALLROOM - DAWN

The morning sunlight reveals that the ballroom is nearly pristine -- untouched by the flora of the Zone. There is a sound coming from a corner of the room.

Sam's alarm is going off.

But Sam and Micah are asleep. They do not hear it. Micah starts to wheeze in his sleep. The alarm is still ringing.

ANGLE ON MICAH'S OXYGEN TANK GAUGE

He is out of air.

Sam finally, slowly wakes up. She looks down at the watch and turns off the alarm. Micah is still sound asleep.

Sam quickly grabs a new oxygen tank and trades it with Micah's empty tank.

The air flows. He starts to breathe easily. Sam watches him sleep.

That moment, Sam notices the ballroom. It's like it is frozen in history, a time capsule from before the Cataclysm.

Sam walks around the room as if in a dream. She looks perplexed -- is this even real?

Sam walks over to a window and looks out at the clear sky. For a moment it seems like the world has been returned to some better time. Then she notices a tendril of a Zone vine across the corner of the window.

Micah wakes up suddenly and with a start. He springs up, alarmed. Sam walks over to him calmly.

MICAH

(flustered)

Sam! We didn't switch the tanks! I can't breathe...I can't breathe!

SAM

(calming him)

Shhh. Yes you can. Micah, it's okay. You're breathing fine. See? Don't worry, I switched yours while you were sleeping. You have plenty of air.

Micah breathes deeply. Regains himself. Looks at her. He places a hand on her shoulder.

MICAH

Thank you.

EXT. THE ZONE - THAT MORNING

Sam and Micah are riding again. They stop in front of a derelict construction site. Hulking machinery sits frozen in the pit that was to be the foundation of a building.

Micah takes out the map of the city. Sam gazes at the machinery in the construction site.

SAM

They look like dinosaurs trapped in a tar pit.

Micah looks at the construction site.

MICAH

Yeah... they do.

Sam turns to the map and searches for their position.

SAM
We must be close.

Sam walks toward the road, looking off into the distance.

SAM
Look!
(pointing)
We're there.

In the distance, we can see the top of a rollercoaster.

SAM
Come on!

Sam pedals her bike and starts up the motor. Micah watches and then starts after her.

EXT. THE FUN ZONE AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY

Sam and Micah are stopped at the gate to the park. They stare up at the "FUN ZONE" sign like it is an ancient arch, a gateway to another land.

They ride through the threshold slowly. Everything is falling to pieces. They stop at a large PARK MAP just inside the entrance. It's a giant replica of the paper map. Sam looks at the towering structures all around her.

SAM
All this stuff was built just for
"amusement." Can you imagine?

Micah studies the giant map and quickly finds the YOU ARE HERE mark.

MICAH
This way.

He hops back on the ATV and heads down a curving paved path.

EXT. THE FUN ZONE AMUSEMENT PARK - MOMENTS LATER

They ride deeper into the park, past ride entrances and dilapidated food stands.

The amusement park is exciting for Sam, but for Micah it is just sad. Another relic of a better time.

They come around a bend and arrive at the entrance for the Balloon Ride. A faded wooden sign says:

UP, UP AND AWAY!

MICAH

Here it is.

The deflated balloon and circular gondola are perched atop a rotting wooden platform covered in vines.

Micah dismounts first and heads straight for the balloon. He walks around the platform, looking for an entrance point. Sam follows, but she is distracted by the crumbling fantasyland all around her.

SAM

I always wanted to see a place like this.

(beat)

I guess it was different when it was working. When it was filled with people.

Micah circles the platform until he finds the hatch-style door. It's locked with a padlock. He crosses to the toolbox in his trailer. Takes out a hammer and a flashlight and returns to the door.

MICAH

Alright. Stand back.

Micah readies the hammer over the lock. Sam braces herself. Micah hits it hard and the lock snaps.

Micah opens the hatch.

MICAH

Let's hope there is something left.
Wait here.

Micah turns on the flashlight and disappears into the darkness.

Sam looks at the giant overgrown roller coasters in every direction.

MICAH (O.S.)

(from inside)

I can't believe it.

Sam snaps back into the moment just as Micah emerges from below the platform wheeling a hand truck loaded with a large helium tank. He can't contain his excitement.

SAM
Is that full?

MICAH
It is! And there are a lot more.
Way more than enough.

Sam does a bad job at hiding her disappointment with a forced smile. Micah notices.

MICAH
Sam, this is a good thing. This is
why we came here.

Micah loads the heavy tank into the ATV's trailer.

SAM
I know.

Then he heads back for more.

MICAH
(calling)
Well come on! Give me a hand.

After a moment, she follows him inside.

EXT. THE FUN ZONE AMUSEMENT PARK - A LITTLE LATER

Micah snugs another tank onto the trailer, which is nearly packed with helium tanks at this point.

MICAH
Let's load up a couple more. That
should be more than enough. Then we
need to get back to the balloon.

He heads back toward the hatch. But Sam doesn't follow.

SAM
After we go to the museum, right?

Micah stops and turns toward her.

MICAH
What?

SAM
You said we need to get back to the
balloon... But we have to go to the
museum first.

Micah looks away, frustrated.

MICAH

Sam. Come on. You know we can't risk that. Not now.

Sam can't believe what she is hearing.

SAM

But that was our deal! We get the helium and then we go to the museum. I don't understand what's changed.

MICAH

Jesus, Sam. We're not risking everything to go to some fucking museum. Alright?! It's time to be serious.

He turns and disappears through the hatch.

Sam turns away. Her gaze lands on a kiddie ride, where little kids would ride in colorful SPACE SHIPS.

That moment --

BOOM! An explosion from below.

The platform collapses. A plume of dust pours out.

Sam regains herself. She is frantic. She rushes to the edge of the wreckage. It's hard to see through the dust.

SAM

Micah!

No answer. Sam searches for definition in the fog of dust. Tears are forming in her eyes. After a moment--

MICAH (O.S.)

I'm okay... But I'm stuck. What does it look like from out there?

SAM

(searching for words)
Holy crap...

MICAH (O.S.)

Sam, we're going to be okay.
Everything is going to be fine, but first I need your help. Okay?

Sam doesn't answer. She just stands there. Then suddenly, she turns and starts to walk away from Micah and the wreckage.

MICAH (O.S.)

Sam?

(beat)

I need you to use the ATV to pull
the gondola. Can you look for a
length of heavy chain?

She starts to run and doesn't look back.

MICAH (O.S.)

Sam? Can you hear me?

(beat)

Sam?

As Sam gets farther away from him, his voice becomes
overwhelmed by static.

EXT. ROLLERCOASTER - DAY

Sam climbs the scaffolding of a vine-covered rollercoaster.
Near the top, she comes to a set of rusted rollercoaster
cars. She climbs inside and sits down. A single vine has
reached the pinnacle, and a dark purple flower blooms.

It's a far cry from the image of her parents in the slide-
viewer.

Sam looks up at the sky and closes her eyes. She is breathing
heavily. She reaches for her mask and starts to mess with the
strap. We get the sense that she is toying with the idea of
taking it off! Sam's breathing gets heavier and heavier. She
brings both hands to her mask...

But she can't do it. Frustrated with herself and angry, Sam
begins to cry.

After a moment, she pulls herself together. She reaches for
her regulator valve. She slowly turns down her airflow.

She reaches the 50% mark and keeps going. She is turning her
airflow all the way down! That moment --

A shiny black INSECT lands on her hand. It calmly walks
around on her finger. Sam holds her hand in front of her
face.

Then, it flies off her hand and crawls inside the flower on
the twisted vine.

Sam stares at the flower for an extended moment, then
realizes that she can't breathe!

She fumbles for the regulator valve, finds it, and turns her air all the way back up. She draws big gasping breaths.

EXT. THE FUN ZONE AMUSEMENT PARK - MINUTES LATER

Sam walks back toward the collapsed platform. She's dragging a length of heavy chain. As she gets closer, the static cuts out. We hear the sound of Micah's heavy breathing and straining as he tries to free himself.

MICAH (O.S.)
Sam? Are you there?

SAM
(as if nothing happened)
I found the chain.

There is a long moment of Silence.

EXT. ROADWAY - DAY

Sam and Micah are speeding back towards the city. Micah's trailer carries the helium tanks.

They ride in silence.

EXT. PARK LAUNCH SITE - AFTERNOON

Sam helps Micah lay out the balloon's envelope on the ground next to the capsule.

Then they carefully unload the helium tanks. They don't speak to one another at all.

Micah affixes a long rubber tube to the balloon and then to the first tank. He slowly turns the valve on the tank and the balloon begins to inflate.

Sam turns and crosses to her bike.

MICAH
Sam...

She stops and looks at him. But he doesn't know what to say.

She continues to her bike, disconnects her small trailer and gets on.

MICAH
We leave in an hour.

Sam gives Micah one last look, then -- Rides off.

Micah watches after her for a moment. Then turns back to the balloon.

EXT. ART MUSEUM - SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

Sam arrives at a large overgrown courtyard. In front of her, marble steps lead up to an impressive stone building, with the words MUSEUM OF ART carved in marble.

Sam climbs the wide front steps. The giant front door stands partially open. She slips inside.

EXT. PARK LAUNCH SITE - SIMULTANEOUS

Micah switches to a new helium tank.

Then, he looks off in the direction Sam went. After a moment, he turns back to the balloon and watches it take shape.

INT. ART MUSEUM - MOMENTS LATER

Sam wanders through the grand entrance hall. Even inside it's covered in vegetation. The glass from the massive solarium ceiling is broken all over the ground.

There is a sculpture in the center of the room, but it is impossible to identify, completely wrapped in green vines.

INT. ART MUSEUM - STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

Sam climbs the stairs of the museum, stopping to read the exhibit titles painted on the walls at the top of each floor.

EXT. PARK LAUNCH SITE - SIMULTANEOUS

The balloon is almost fully inflated by now. Micah keeps looking to see if Sam is coming back. He's visibly nervous.

He glances at the trailer that Sam left behind. All of the air cylinders are empty except for two small emergency tanks.

He checks the pressure of his current tank. It's getting low.

INT. ART MUSEUM - FOURTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Sam emerges from the stairwell onto the fourth floor.

On the wall in large letters it says: MODERN MYTHS

Inside the long open room, there are renditions of ancient myths in a pastiche of styles and stories. Sam studies each piece closely, enamoured.

That moment, the static in Sam's earpiece cuts out and she hears something in the stairwell. She smiles faintly. Then directs her attention back to the paintings.

SAM

Fourth floor.

The echoing footsteps grow louder. And finally Micah enters, holding the two small emergency air cylinders.

Sam looks at him. They lock eyes.

INT. FOURTH FLOOR EXHIBIT - MOMENTS LATER

Sam leads Micah across the large room. He looks at the paintings like he's looking at memories.

On the far side of the room, Sam fixes on one particular painting obscured by vines, save an arc of white that we recognize as the neck of a swan. She clears away the tangle of plant life covering the painting.

It's Cezanne's "Leda and the Swan."

MICAH

(calm, matter of fact)

Come with me.

She ignores him. Her back is to him. She gazes at the painting, obsessed.

Yeats's poem, "Leda and the Swan," is etched into a brass plaque on the wall beside the painting.

Sam runs her finger over the words.

SAM

(reading)

A shudder in the loins engenders
there
The broken wall, the burning roof
and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of
the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with
his power
Before the indifferent beak could
let her drop?

MICAH

Sam?

SAM

What does it mean?

MICAH

Leda gave birth to Castor and
Pollux. They were cast into the sky
and became the constellation,
Gemini... She was related to the
Gods. Not only that... The swan was
Zeus. Zeus in disguise. She gave
birth to God's children.

They both stare at the painting for a long time. Then --

MICAH

Sam, when I was trapped under the
gondola this morning, I really
thought you had left me there to
die, and I wouldn't have blamed you
if you had... I'm not asking you
why you left or why you came back,
okay.

(beat)

The point is... I realized that I'm
not ready to die... not anymore.

Sam continues staring at the painting.

MICAH

Before I met you, I was finished
with people, finished with life...
Mainly, I was finished with myself.
But you awakened something in me I
thought was already dead... Hope.
Hope for the future. I've decided
that I'm going with you to Io. I'm
not just taking you to Exodus. I
want to go to Io myself. I want to
rejoin humanity.

(beat)

This whole time, I've been thinking
it was my purpose to save you. But
you saved me.

After a moment -- he reaches out his hand for her.

MICAH

Let's go, okay?

Finally she turns and looks him in the eyes.

SAM

I'm happy for you, Micah. I really am.

(beat)

But I made a decision this morning too... I'm not going with you to Io or to Exodus. You'll have to go without me. You'll have to go on your own.

They look at each other for a while without saying anything. Then --

Sam's watch beeps. It's time to change air tanks one last time. Micah hands Sam one of the small tanks.

MICAH

Here. Change your tank. We can talk about this at the launch site.

He walks back across the long room and sits on a bench. Sam doesn't follow him. She turns back to the painting.

Micah takes off his pack and switches his tank. He looks across the room at Sam. She's small in front of the museum wall.

MICAH

Sam. Change your tank.

But she doesn't. She continues to stare at the painting.

SAM

Lately, I've been having this recurring dream where I'm in the Zone, and I'm not wearing a mask... I spark a lighter, and it's dark purple, but I'm fine. The air is sweet... It feels so real.

(beat)

And if you think about it, that's what will have to happen eventually. If there is a future for our species on Earth, then someone will have to be the first human to survive in the Zone.

MICAH

Maybe there is no future for humans
on Earth.

SAM

Maybe.

(beat)

But *I* was born here. If anyone is
equipped to breathe this air, it's
me.

(beat)

On Io, I'm just a number. But here,
I have the opportunity to be so
much more than that...

MICAH

Sam, change your tank.

SAM

Now is as good a time as any.

Sam pulls out her lighter. Sparks it. Deep Purple, almost
Black. They both see it.

Micah rises. His pack in hand. He starts across the long room
to her.

MICAH

Sam, what the fuck are you talking
about?

Sam is breathing heavy now. She looks at Micah intensely. He
quickness his pace.

SAM

Promise me something... If I
survive, you will tell everyone on
Io what you saw.

Then she turns back to the painting. She slowly lifts her
hands to her mask.

MICAH

Sam! What are you doing? Sam!

Micah is running now. He is almost upon her when--

SAM RIPS HER MASK OFF OVER HER HEAD!

She breathes in deep, ecstatic breaths.

MICAH

(devastated)

Sam!! No!!!!

Micah rushes to her side. Sam turns to face him. Without her mask on (with its wireless earpiece), his cries are muffled.

Micah grabs at his own mask. He starts to pull it off--

Sam grabs his head forcefully with both hands. Holding his mask in place. She looks straight into his eyes. He's crying.

SAM

It's okay.

EXT. SKY - DAY

A blanket of rolling purple clouds rush by frame, little pockets of green poke through from below. Amber light rims the contours of each soft bump.

We soar across snow capped mountains. Foggy forests of tree tops pass through frame.

We fly through thin wisps of golden clouds against a cerulean sky.

The Balloon rises into our frame. Micah hangs on the outside of the capsule gazing down at the world rushing by below.

EXT. THE ZONE - DAY

We glide slowly along the abandoned streets.

Past buildings covered with vines.

Through crumbling homes.

SAM (V.O.)

Dear Elon, By the time you read this, you will be 18 years old and preparing to explore Alpha Centauri. I will be 60 years old here on Earth. It seems our Romeo & Juliet story has been traded for Peter Pan and Wendy...

INT. OBSERVATORY - DAY

We move through the lived-in interior of the observatory. No one is there.

SAM (V.O.)

I know this isn't what you wanted, and I'm sorry for that.

(MORE)

SAM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I think we were both looking for
worlds to call our own... but
different ones. I hope you find
what you're looking for. I realize
we will never meet in person, but
who knows... my granddaughter might
want a Penpal someday... Until that
day... I AM HERE. Love, Sam.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Empty sand dunes. We wonder if this is what the entire world
has become.

Then a figure. A human figure.

It's Sam and she isn't wearing a mask. She's a few years
older. She seems to be all alone. But then --

Sam pauses and looks back over her shoulder. We follow Sam's
gaze to land on --

A four-year old girl, trailing behind her.

Sam smiles.

SAM
Come on. We have work to do.

Sam's DAUGHTER hurries up to her and takes her hand.

Their hair blows in the wind as they continue across the
dunes until we can barely see them.

CUT TO BLACK.

END.