

P A L E  
B L U E  
D O T

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OVER BLACK:

AN ASTRONAUT

slowly floats into shot, an arm reaching for something we can't see.

CLOSE UP ON A WHITE GLOVE

fingers outstretched. On the far side of screen the edge of something flat, grey and man-made appears.

A WIDE REVERSE

On the astronaut framed against a GIANT MOON. The astronaut closes on the INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION. The SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY is docked below.

A razor sharp shadow line dropped by the shuttle wing moves across the grey painted aluminium surface towards the astronaut.

GLOVE FINGERS close around the yellow grab rail on the DISCOVERY.

LAURA

Contact.

MALE VOICE

We copy. Heart rate 72.

LAURA

In the foot restraints.

MALE VOICE

That's good work up there, Laura.

WE FIND A WOMAN'S FACE

This is Mission Specialist LAURA WALLACE (40). It is her first space walk, her first NASA mission, but if she's nervous or intimidated she doesn't show it. Laura was the girl in Junior High who finished calculus tests early, so she could go run two miles before track practice.

To her, life is a series of tasks and she is the tool God made to get them done.

In the distance, the SUN rises for the sixth time today, golden light moving across the shuttle.

THE SCREEN FILLS WITH WHITE LIGHT.

LAURA  
Damn, that's bright.

OUT OF TOTAL WHITE-OUT bleached facial features appear.

HANK (O.S.)  
You OK?

LAURA  
That's so bright.

She blinks as white light moves across her face in a sharp line.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Sun-bounce off the panel. I'm OK.  
Ready to swing out.

We PULL OUT to find that she has attached herself to the CANADARM of the Space Shuttle *Discovery* -- a long, folded robotic arm designed to help astronauts do difficult work.

HANK (O.S.)  
Swing out in five, four, three,  
two, one.

The arm begins a SLOW SWING wide, extending to its full one hundred feet, then angles in towards the ISS.

CHITHRA (O.S.)  
Panel 4 on its way to you now.

LAURA  
Roger that.

ANGLE ON THE EARTH

below her, a swirling mass of oceans and continents.

HANK  
Attach t-line.

LAURA  
Safety tether attached.

CLOSE ON LAURA

focused on the job, her face framed inside her helmet. The suit she's wearing weighs 250 pounds, but in zero gravity she can't feel the weight. Outside the temperature is -100 celcius in the shade, but in direct sun the shuttle can heat to 260 degrees.

There is no oxygen in space, just a cold vacuum that would boil your body fluids and asphyxiate your brain in minutes if you didn't have the suit, which Laura does -- allowing her to float there waiting as the replacement panel is lifted to her by a long robotic arm.

She watches it come, focused on the job, no time to sight-see.

BELOW HER

A wall of airborne sand pushes across the Atlantic from the Sahara, as a perfect spiral of *Hurricane Daniel* off Mexico's Pacific coast throws mile long arcs of lightning from cloud to cloud.

CUT TO:

INT. AIR LOCK. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - "DAY"

Laura comes in through the air hatch. PRIYA CHITHRA (30s) and Mission Commander HANK LYNCH (40s) help her out of her suit.

HANK  
Not bad, huh?

LAURA  
What?

Beat. *Is she serious?*

HANK  
Wallace, you just spent seven hours in space, surrounded by God's celestial beauty. Tell me you looked around.

ANGLE ON LAURA

She didn't.

LAURA  
Next time.

CUT TO:

INT. CREW QUARTERS. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - "NIGHT"

Laura and the crew sleep strapped into insulation bags attached to the shuttle walls. In micro G, the unconscious astronauts seem frozen -- arms bent, hair stood out on end.

We FIND LAURA, at peace, dreaming zero G dreams. We HEAR a MAN's voice.

DREW (O.S.)  
That's right, honey. Mommy's up in  
space right now.

We hear a little boy's voice.

NEIL (O.S.)  
Why?

DREW (O.S.)  
Well, she's -- you remember mommy  
showed you -- how there's a  
building in space -- a station --  
and the people in it, they need  
food and water. And somebody to fix  
the fridge when it breaks. So we  
send astronauts to fly up there and  
do a job.

NEIL (O.S.)  
And mommy's an astronaut.

CLOSE ON LAURA

Her eyelids moving as she dreams.

DREW (O.S.)  
That's right. It's all she ever  
wanted to be, and she did it. Yay,  
mommy!

A long beat and then we hear a LOW TONE and the song HERE  
COMES THE SUN by the BEATLES fills the cabin. The lights come  
up gently. The crew stirs, moving slowly. All except Laura  
who's EYES SNAP OPEN at the tone. She springs into action.

CUT TO:

INT. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - "NIGHT"

The CREW eats, dressed in branded fleece, getting used to  
zero gravity.

HANK  
So today is EVA two. We'll be  
offloading the MPLM. Chithra and  
Henckle are on the arm. I'm on  
point with Wallace and Cole.

ANGLE ON LAURA

She eats efficiently, rolling each tube from the bottom,  
folding her foil packets.

A German Astronaut, MILES HENCKLE (30s) is sitting next to her. He is looking at a PHOTOGRAPH. In it we see a WOMAN posing with a BABY. He shows her.

MILES  
Eleven months. My wife says  
yesterday he points up, says *daddy*.  
You have three, ya?

LAURA  
A girl and two boys, twins.

MILES  
You must miss them.

LAURA  
It's only a few days. And -- you  
know -- they're here with me.

She points to her head.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Their voices. *Get it done, mom.*  
*Make us proud.*

Over the PA we hear:

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)  
*Morning Discovery this is Houston  
control.*

Laura stands, chit chat over.

LAURA  
Go time.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)  
*Laura that song was from your  
family who hope you have a  
wonderful space day today.*

She tags the intercom.

LAURA  
Roger, Houston CMS. Standby.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)  
*Discovery crew messages are on  
board and printing. If you can work  
it in, we'd like to get post sleep  
cryo config performed in the next  
15 minutes or so.*

LAURA  
Roger Houston. Starting sequence.  
Calling o2 first. Hydrogen second.

Laura navigates a dizzying array of panels and switches.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Tank one, 816. T2 813. Tank 3 816.  
Tank four 814. T5 814. Manifold  
pressure optimal. H2. Tank one 212 -  
-

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN HATCH - "DAY"

Laura stands in her space suit with Hank and COLE. Hank reaches for the airlock control.

HANK  
In 3, 2, 1.

He pushes the button. The hatch opens.

ANGLE ON THE PLANET EARTH

As it is revealed by the retreating door, oceanic, bathed in brilliance.

ANGLE ON LAURA

As celestial light hits her. The view is indescribable. Despite her professional demeanor, Laura can't help but take in the magesty of the universe.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY - "NIGHT"

Laura, Hank and Cole put finishing touches on the panel she's repairing. It's dark now, the sun hidden on the other side of the Earth.

Below her, the NEON LIGHTS of the Shanghai night GLOW and PULSE, reflecting off her visor.

HANK  
Okay. Last bolt.

He fastens it.

HANK (CONT'D)  
That's it, folks. Time to pack up  
and go home.

The three astronauts process that, the end of the mission. Beat.

HANK (CONT'D)  
Maybe five more minutes.

ANGLE ON LAURA

That's fine with her. She doesn't want this trip to end.

CUT TO:

INT. COCKPIT. SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY - DAY

The crew is strapped in for the return to Earth.

HENCKLE  
ISS Decouple complete.

HANK  
I have the stick. Beginning descent.

He fires thrusters and begins their break from orbit. We PUSH PAST the PILOT and CO-PILOT and move towards Laura, sitting in back. Her job is done. Around her, the crew is talking, laughing.

Laura stays focused, a tool without a task. She tries to hang on to the feeling, to remember every moment, to slow time.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXOSPHERE - DAY

As the SHUTTLE descends from outer space, encounters atmospheric resistance, it's tiles beginning to heat up.

CUT TO:

EXT. STRATOSPHERE - DAY

Blue skies, just high enough to see the curvature of the Earth.

**BOOM BOOM.**

The distinct double-thunderclap of the sonic boom that accompanies every Space Shuttle as it re-enters earth's atmosphere, racing through the sky at 6,000 miles per hour.

**BOOM BOOM.**

The loud rumble of the Discovery crew out-running sound itself can be heard all across the Gulf Coast.

The belly of Discovery glows **BRIGHT LAVA-ORANGE**.

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY - CONTINUOUS

COMMANDER LYNCH, steady hands at the controls, eases the orbiter into its descent to the Eastern coast of Florida.

Laura, focused, attentive, monitors the onboard safety systems. The noise is deafening but the crew hammers on.

HANK

There she is.

Through the windshield we see CAPE CANAVERAL, Runway 33 straight ahead.

HANK (CONT'D)

Gear down.

They make their approach to Cape -- the ground closing in fast -- and **TOUCH DOWN** on the hard macadam like clockwork.

HANK (CONT'D)

Chutes.

A button is pushed.

**PARACHUTES** rocket from the rear of the orbiter. The astronauts are thrown forward against their restraints, as the G force of the fast brake kicks in.

Discovery rolls to a stop.

HANK (CONT'D)

Well done, astronauts.

They unbuckle.

HANK (CONT'D)

Let's go home.

Laura removes her restraints, rising slowly. We notice all the astronauts move sluggishly, feeling the effects of gravity for the first time in two weeks.

CHITHRA

Ugh. Earth sucks.

They move out of the cockpit, into the MAIN HOLD and towards the exterior door. Hank claps Cole on the shoulder, grinning.

Ahead of us, the SHUTTLE DOOR is opened, sunlight pouring in. The cabin around Laura goes dark.

From her POV we approach the doorway -- the darkness around the doorway closing our frame from 2:35 to 4:3. Laura enters frame and --

EXITS THE SHUTTLE onto the --

EXT. RUNWAY 33. CAPE CANAVERAL - DAY

Now in full daylight, we realize we're still in the shrunken aspect ratio -- as if back on Earth Laura's life is smaller somehow, more claustrophobic.

ANGLE ON LAURA

as she blinks against the sunlight.

ANGLE ON THE RUNWAY

A LARGE CROWD is gathered on bleachers, NASA personnel, families and the general public.

HANK waves to the crowd, as do the other astronauts. They are celebrities for a day, American heroes.

ANGLE ON THE CROWD

We see DREW WALLACE (40s) and the kids. Drew is a NASA public relations executive. He's a handsome guy with a good smile, who worships his wife.

DREW  
(points)  
There she is. There's mommy.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

She looks a little stunned at the change of focus -- from mission to celebration. An hour ago she was on the International Space Station, hundreds of miles above the Earth.

She works up a smile, waves.

NASA boiler suited WORKERS approach and help the crew to a flag draped stage. Hank takes an offered MICROPHONE.

HANK  
Thank you, Cape Canaveral!

**Thunderous applause.** The crew can't help but smile.

HANK (CONT'D)

This bird was in the best shape of any I've flown. We did it. We'll do it again. Darn it, we're gonna be doing it for a heck of a long time.

The crowd goes nuts. Laura deals with gravity, squints.

HANK (CONT'D)

Also -- to the crew and family of the Columbia -- we miss you every day -- let's have a moment of silence.

Everyone on the stage and in the crowd goes silent, bows their heads. A long beat as we see the faces in the crowd, including Laura's family.

HANK looks up.

HANK (CONT'D)

Thank you. We'll go say hi to our own families now. Y'all have a great day.

The ceremony ends. Laura makes her way off the stage a little shakily. Below on the runway, her family awaits.

DREW

There's my girl.

Laura's daughter RUTH (15) is a few paces away. Laura's twins, NEIL and ED (6), hold foil "Welcome Home" balloons. They see her, and --

NEIL AND ED

MOM!!!

-- come running for her, arms outstretched, their BALLOONS flying away. Even Ruth is tearing up. The boys hit their mother at full speed--

LAURA

-- Oof.

Laura bundles them into her arms. Kisses every smiling face. Drew puts his arms around Laura. She leans into him.

DREW

We missed you so much.

He gives them all a big hug that lifts her off the ground--

LAURA  
Careful. I might break.

Laura at the centre of a bundle of her family looks up.

ANGLE ON THE SKY

As the balloons float up and up towards the clouds.

CUT TO:

INT. FRANK PAXTON'S OFFICE. CAPE CANAVERAL, FL - LATER

Laura waits as Paxton thumbs through a flight report. His office is a museum to the last 30 years. Photos of his identical haircut over years, overseeing construction of a prototype ENTERPRISE, posing with SALLY RIDE, JOHN GLENN etc.

PAXTON  
So. How do you feel?

LAURA  
Walking's more of a pain in the ass  
than I remember.

PAXTON  
Get's easier. How was it?

LAURA  
Mission accomplished, sir.

PAXTON  
That's not what I asked.

LAURA  
Best two weeks of my life.

Paxton smiles up from his paperwork. For all his work he's never been to space. This is as close as he'll ever get.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Boat ran like a clock. Systems held up. Crew were top class.

PAXTON  
There'll be a routine psych follow up at 3 days, 14 and 30 to 45 -- just to go over lessons learned in hindsight and help you adjust to your new role on the ground.

LAURA  
It's not necessary.

PAXTON

Well, it's regulation, so -- any  
confusion up there? Panic?

LAURA

I'll admit, first time you step out  
of that bay -- it's not nothing.

PAXTON

Did you feel any immediate danger?

LAURA

We all took the same risk.

PAXTON

You know what I mean.

Laura considers, wanting to give an honest answer.

LAURA

Sir, I never felt so alive.

Paxton smiles. He sits back from his desk.

PAXTON

I'll be honest, I don't know how  
many more of these launches we're  
gonna do.

LAURA

That's a mistake.

PAXTON

I know, but -- a lotta suits in  
Washington think our budget'd be  
better spent elsewhere. Bombs  
maybe. But in the meantime,  
Atlantis is around the corner for  
us --

LAURA

-- Two years to blastoff, sir.

PAXTON

And we'll need a Mission  
Specialist. Would you be willing to  
return?

Laura has to stop herself from blurting out: ABSOLUTELY.

LAURA

I hope to serve NASA and my country  
any way I can for as long as I can.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM. PAXTON'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Paxton escorts Laura into a waiting area, where a **MAN** leans against the wall and thumbs through an old issue of Time.

PAXTON

You're one of the good ones,  
Wallace.

MAN (O.S.)

-- not what you said when I got  
back.

The man smiles, **MARK GOODWIN**, a 45-year-old All-American type  
with an edge of surfer.

PAXTON

That oughta tell you something. You  
met Mark Goodwin? In from Houston.  
He's the driver seat for the  
Endeavour launch.

(to Mark)

Our other pilots are all busy that  
day huh?

MARK

I believe every single one, sir.

LAURA

(offers her hand)

Laura Wallace. Wow. You go --  
January 27th right? Congrats.

MARK

An honour to serve. How was it?

He points up and whistles an ascending note. Laura laughs.

LAURA

Amazing.

MARK

Amazing.

He stares at her. No sale. She's wrong footed. The moment  
hangs. It's awkward. Laura draws breath to speak when --

MARK (CONT'D)  
Ok, there it is.

LAURA  
Excuse me?

MARK  
Yeah. Wow.

LAURA  
Sorry. *There what is?*

MARK  
Plain as day.

PAXTON  
Commander Goodwin has a "theory" he  
can tell who's been to space by  
looking at them.

MARK  
More than a theory, chief.

Laura is a little thrown. Mark sees her self-consciousness.

MARK (CONT'D)  
It's OK. Coming back is hard.

LAURA  
It is.

Laura throws a nervy glance at Paxton. Mark sees and smiles.

MARK  
Already trying to get back there,  
aren't you? You go get 'em, tiger.

He throws a loose salute and walks away. She watches him go.  
All the way.

Laura snaps out of a daze to see Paxton disappearing --

LAURA  
Wait, sir? Where do I report to  
now?

He shrugs re-entering his office.

PAXTON  
Nowhere. Go home with your family.  
Month paid leave starts now.

Laura tries to return his grin but doesn't quite manage it.

CUT TO:

EXT. TWO LANE BLACKTOP. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

The Wallace SUV heads home.

DREW (O.S.)  
I'm saying it's a choice.

CUT TO:

INT. SUV (TRAVELING) HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Drew drives. Laura is in the passenger seat. The kids are in back. Laura looks out the window, taking in her return -- trees, houses. But also trash on the side of the road. All the problems of mankind, right where she left them.

DREW  
You're either -- the kind of person  
who sees problems, or you see  
solutions.

Ed and Neil bicker in the backseat.

RUTH  
They kicked him outta school.  
What's the spin there?

LAURA  
Who?

DREW  
Her boyfriend.

RUTH  
He's not my -- he's Jenny's  
boyfriend and he got expelled for  
blowing up a toilet with a cherry  
bomb. Turn that into a public  
relations win.

DREW  
Well, maybe your school was the  
wrong school for him. Maybe this is  
the push he needs to get his act  
together. See? The glass is half  
full, not half empty.

RUTH  
What do you think, mom?

LAURA

I think the glass is too big.

RUTH

What does that mean?

DREW

Your mom's an engineer.

Laura turns in her seat, explains.

LAURA

See, if you got a glass that's only ever filled half way, you've got more glass than you need to get the job done.

The kids look at her like she's from Mars.

A CEILING FAN

dissolves in over her face, spinning in the Texas heat.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. WALLACE HOUSE. HOUSTON, TX - EVENING

Laura and Drew (dressed) lay on top of the made bed, looking up. Laura's packed bags are in evidence by the closet. We hear sound of life from the rest of the house.

LAURA

The azaleas look good.

DREW

I watered them every day.

(beat)

Or I would have, if I didn't forget. Those are new. I put em in this morning.

LAURA

I missed you.

DREW

Yeah?

(beat)

Babe, we went to space.

He looks over at her.

DREW (CONT'D)

I'm so proud of you.

LAURA

It was -- I don't know -- it's hard  
to put in words.

DREW

I bet.

LAURA

To be up there.

DREW

Did you see the Great Wall of  
China? How about Texas? See us  
waving up from the back lawn?

-- Ed runs past their doorway screaming, a LIT SPARKLER in  
his hand. Drew sits up.

DREW (CONT'D)

Ed Wallace! Freeze, boy. Get back  
here.

Ed tromps back into the bedroom, sad-faced now, the sparkler  
still burning.

DREW (CONT'D)

Never bring a lit anything into  
this house? Not a candle, not a  
match -- certainly not a firework.

LAURA

Sparkler.

DREW

You know the rules, boy. Bed. Now.

Ed looks like he might cry.

LAURA

I did miss the 4th.

Ed looks up, sensing an opening.

ED

You get sparklers up there?

LAURA

Not even one.

(whispers)

Maybe you and me ought to do  
something about it. Don't tell Dad.  
Got any more where this came from?

Ed has a giant smile across his face.

-- KA-BOOM-- FIREWORKS EXPLODING.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALLACE BACKYARD - LATER

-- the home-variety but it's still an impressive display.

-- A LIT FLAME LIGHTS FUSES -- as Laura runs around lighting mortars, black cats, cherry bombs. The twins look on in awe. Drew pulls Ruth to a safe distance.

LAURA

-- I'm being careful.

DREW

Laura, that's too close!-

-- POP POP POP POP -- inches from her face, a series of bottle rockets spray off in all directions -- **LAURA YELLS IN DELIGHT.**

Everything SLOWS DOWN, the fireworks becoming abstract. In the darkness we might not notice the EDGES OF FRAME WIDENING, as the fire light becomes --

THE ELEMENTAL INFERNO OF A SHUTTLE BOOSTER AT LIFT OFF --

and we --

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN CABIN. SPACE SHUTTLE DISCOVERY - DAY

Now back in WIDE SCREEN. Laura is pressed into her seat as Discovery lifts high from the ground. **She yells into the helmet.** Fighting real pain.

Pressure three times gravity pins her head. A deafening rattle grows louder and louder, swallowing all sound. In the corner of her eye she sees HANK, fighting to hit a switch.

HANK

Separation in three! Two --

There's a lurch forward as Discovery's solid rocket boosters decouple and fall, slowing the orbiter's momentum. Brief respite as Laura is pinned to her seat as thrusters engage.

She grimaces. If the vibrations don't shake the shuttle to pieces they might her. It slows. Sheer hell recedes.

In a cabin window, day gives way to night in seconds, real life on timelapse as Laura breaks past the edge of the world.

She floats. She can breath again.

Tears fill her eyes. She looks out of the window at stars.

Outside, A SINGLE FIREWORK detonates. Its bloom filling the view.

BACK TO:

EXT. WALLACE BACKYARD - NIGHT

Sparkling fireworks fade into the night sky. With the fade, the edges of the screen shrink back to 4:3.

WE FIND Laura leaning on the house, staring up. She sips a beer. Drew works the grill.

DREW

Y'all done burning down the subdivision? We are almost eating here --

Ruth, texting on her phone, ignores the family.

LAURA

Hey. Come over here.

RUTH

Pourquoi?

LAURA

Just do it missy.

Ruth stomps to her mom. Laura pulls into her, wrapping both her arms around, resting her chin on top of her head.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Did you grow while I was gone?

RUTH

How could that even be possible?  
You were gone like a week?

LAURA

Thirteen days thanks for counting.  
Wait. What did I miss? Spill.

Laura tickles her daughter who fights her off but there's a hint of a smile on Ruth's lips. It'd disappear in a second if anyone could see. Laura kisses her and relents into a hug.

RUTH

Dad killed your azaleas and bought new ones from Lowe's.

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)  
Ed got mad coz they'll never name a hurricane after him. Neil ate five popsicles and puked in the yard.

LAURA  
I meant with you. What's up?

RUTH  
Me? Well. I had my first period.

LAURA  
Oh my god! Ruth!!?

RUTH  
And I got a man-friend. He got me pregnant coz of the whole new womb sitch so I'll prolly get anorexic about that. Gonna get into drugs this weekend to cheer myself up. Oh I'm totes gay. So no wedding, chill?

Ruth pecks her mother on the cheek and walks away.

LAURA  
So long as you're happy.  
(beat)  
You were joking about the thing right?

Laura gestures south. Ruth disappears back into her phone.

RUTH  
Rad heart-to-heart, mom. Nailed it.

LAURA  
You know I missed you, right??!

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. WALLACE HOUSE - DAY

The next morning. Laura wanders in, wearing her bathrobe, looking groggy. Drew is dressed for work, a "NASA Public Relations" I.D. around his neck, slurping cereal.

DREW  
Hi, sleepyhead. How's rocket lag?

LAURA  
What time is it? Where're the kids?

DREW

Half eight. Carpool picked 'em up.  
I better be going too --

Drew sets the bowl in the sink past Laura, kiss on the cheek.

DREW (CONT'D)

-- we're almost done cutting all  
the footage together from the  
mission. I've got Commander Lynch  
coming in later to start the  
interviews for the press kit. Not  
all on vacation you know.

LAURA

You know how I love a vacation.

DREW

You earned it. Enjoy. You OK?

LAURA

I'm fine. Getting used to -- stuff.

DREW

I get it. Just rest. Mission  
accomplished. My hero.

He kisses the top of Laura's head and leaves for work. Laura stands in her pajamas in the middle of her kitchen. Marooned.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

*Fuck it. She can't just sit around.*

CUT TO:

EXT. ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

An upscale old folks home situated on a golf course. We FIND AN OLD WOMAN sitting on her first floor patio, a low patio wall between her and the links. She has the nasal plugs of an OXYGEN line in her nose. This is MIRIAM "NANA" HOLBROOK, the *materfamilias*, a woman who can do the Sunday Times crossword puzzle in under an hour and then kill a rattlesnake with a shovel.

As we watch Nana raises a cigarette to her lips.

LAURA

There are better ways to kill  
yourself than smoking with your  
oxygen machine.

Nana turns. Laura is there, holding a tool box.

NANA  
How's that, fucker?

Laura kisses her Nana on the head, sits down next to her.

LAURA  
Well, I'm back.

NANA  
(teasing)  
Did you go somewhere?

LAURA  
Up, then down.

Beat. Nana smokes.

NANA  
You show those Ivy League assholes  
how it's done?

LAURA  
Damn straight.

Beat. They watch the golfers.

NANA  
(beat)  
Your father played golf. Said it  
was good for business.

LAURA  
He was unemployed.

NANA  
He was an idiot.  
(looks over)  
You here to make sure I'm still  
breathing?

LAURA  
Drew said your disposal's out.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S APARTMENT. ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY - DAY

Laura lays on the floor, her head and arms buried in the cabinet under the sink. She's working the disposal with a screwdriver.

LAURA

I'm supposed to be on vacation.  
I've already color coded three  
rooms in my house and signed up for  
six school committees.

Nana sits on a red scooter, watching. She pours some whiskey  
in her coffee.

NANA

You should get a hobby, like me.

LAURA

Drinking's not a hobby.

NANA

Well, government says I'm too old  
to do it professionally.

Laura comes out from under the sink, wipes grease on her  
pants.

LAURA

Fixed.

She stands, goes to wash her hands.

NANA

They giving you a medal?

LAURA

NASA? For what? All I did was my  
job.

NANA

Good girl. No special treatment.  
When's the next mission?

LAURA

Endeavour goes in a few weeks.  
Atlantis is in two years. That's my  
shot.

Beat. Nana studies her.

NANA

Well, you're not getting any  
younger.

Laura nods.

NANA (CONT'D)

So you're just gonna have to work  
harder.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

She can do that.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK. LYNDON B. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - AFTERNOON

Laura runs hard on the training facility's outdoor track, behind her looms the gigantic SATURN V ROCKET, casting a long shadow over the track in the afternoon sun.

She's suddenly aware of a shadow gaining on her from behind. A young woman, tall, athletic, ERIN ECCLES (20s) wearing a NASA CADET tracksuit pushes past her, apparently without much effort. Laura watches her pull away.

On the next lap the same girl is doing "clap up" press ups on the grass by the track. Controlled. Strong. Easy.

With a burst of energy, Laura sprints. It's intense, ugly running - pushing the limit. She doubles over, sweat pouring.

MARK (O.S.)  
Relax. You'll run faster.

Mark jogs past. Laura tries to speak between breaths. Fails.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Loose. No hurry. Just -- let go.

Mark rips into an fluid upright sprint action. We linger on her. As Mark disappears at impressive speed, he bellows:

MARK (CONT'D)  
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!!

-- at a comical volume. Laura laughs, shaking her head.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Laura sits in the SUV, doing pickup like a regular parent. She watches the daily routine of other families.

ANGLE ON KIDS

And their parents, pickups by foot and by car.

ANGLE ON LAURA

This is how civilians do it -- leisurely, like there's all the time in the world, like nothing else exists in the universe, not even death.

To calm herself, Laura begins to mutter a checklist.

LAURA  
UTS to urine transfer hose. Closed.  
Connect urine tranfer filter to  
faeces PD. Check.

ANGLE ON HER BOYS

Coming out the front doors.

ANGLE ON LAURA

not seeing them, focused on the checklist. We PUSH IN on her face.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Clip recepitical ASSY to transfer  
hose. Check. URA valve. Vent. Open.

AROUND HER the car disappears, replaced by the INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION.

CLOSE ON LAURA

Lost in the moment, triple checking her space suit.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Management drain valve. Dump. Flush  
PKG, screen and honeycomb. Check.

There is a PORTAL WINDOW beside her. Halfway through the checklist she pauses, turns, looks out.

ANGLE ON TWO ASTRONAUTS

tethered and floating outside, framed by the Earth's atmosphere.

SUDDENLY --

THE REAR DOORS of the SUV OPEN, the boys climbing in. Laura starts at the noise, turns.

NEIL  
Hey, mom.

ED  
Hey.

LAURA  
Hey, guys. How was -- sorry -- how  
was school today?

Ed leans forward.

ED  
What's a cocksucker?

CUT TO:

INT. BOY'S ROOM. WALLACE HOUSE. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT

The boys are asleep in their beds. We FIND LAURA in the doorway. She studies them. Over their beds are mobiles of the planets. All their toys are space toys, the posters on the wall.

Laura studies the planets spinning above their beds on the mobile. She goes down the hall. Music comes out of Ruth's room. The door is open a crack. Laura looks in.

ANGLE ON RUTH

She's on the bed, Facetiming with a friend. She laughs, happy. She looks up, sees her mother -- sticks out her tongue, but playfully.

ANGLE ON LAURA

She waves. She should be happy, but she feels outside of everything.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - NIGHT

Laura and Drew are in bed. They make love.

CLOSE ON LAURA

She loves her husband. She's trying to be present.

ANGLE ON DREW

Above her, absorbed, worshipping her. The EDGES OF FRAME vibrate around him, trying to burst free, to open up.

CLOSE ON LAURA

She gives herself to the act -- trying to fake it till she makes it.

The world around them opens slightly, and for a moment it seems Laura will escape her head, but then DREW FINISHES --

The walls close in again.

He rolls off her, breathing hard, snuggles up.

DREW  
I missed you, pooh bear.

He closes his eyes. Laura lays beside him, looking at the ceiling.

PLIMPTON (O.S.)  
And you're settling back in?

CUT TO:

INT. WILL PLIMPTON'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura sits across from Will Plimpton, the Nasa psychiatrist.

LAURA  
Never settle. My Nana taught me  
that.

PLIMPTON  
(beat)  
How are you feeling physically?

LAURA  
I'm in top shape, sir.

PLIMPTON  
After just a few days in zero  
gravity your bone and muscle mass  
begin to shrink dramatically. You  
were up two weeks. I've seen men  
carried off the shuttle, too weak  
to stand.

Laura stands, showing him she's fine.

PLIMPTON (CONT'D)  
Frank told me you graduated top of  
your class from the naval academy,  
valedictorian in both high school  
and college. I guess my question is  
-- can you stop?

LAURA  
Stop what?

PLIMPTON  
Working.

LAURA  
I'm an astronaut with three kids.  
When exactly am I supposed to stop?

PLIMPTON  
Aren't you on paid vacation right  
now?  
(she nods)  
And didn't I see you on the track  
here yesterday, and in the gym this  
morning?

LAURA  
Bone density. Muscle mass.

PLIMPTON  
Throw a frisbee. Fly a kite.

Laura laughs at a private thought.

PLIMPTON (CONT'D)  
What?

LAURA  
My Nana says frisbees are for dogs.

PLIMPTON  
Tell me about her.

LAURA  
Miriam Holbrook -- fifth generation  
west Texan, Daughter of the  
American Revolution -- husband died  
in a drilling accident, raised  
three kids by herself, got her  
engineering degree at night.

PLIMPTON  
So -- tough.

Beat. Laura thinks about that. To her Nana is just what a  
woman needs to be. No adjectives necessary.

LAURA  
Three guys chased my dad home from  
school one day with axe handles.  
She put the first warning shot in  
the dirt.

PLIMPTON  
The first.

LAURA

In Texas a leg shot's considered a warning.

PLIMPTON

(beat, then)

Why were they chasing him?

LAURA

Who?

PLIMPTON

Your dad.

LAURA

He pissed in the gas tank of their car.

Beat. They think about that -- where she got her drive and strength, because it wasn't from her father.

PLIMPTON

Take a walk, go to the beach.

LAURA

I will.

He studies her. She's lying.

PLIMPTON

Michael Collins.

LAURA

Apollo 11. He piloted the moon lander that delivered Neil and Buzz.

PLIMPTON

So you know that after he dropped them, he circled the moon for hours, farther from Earth than any man has ever been -- no light, no radio. And he wept, consumed by darkness, and then -- when he saw the sun again -- he wept some more. Inside the capsule he wrote: *I am now truly alone and absolutely alone from any known life. I am it.*

Beat. *What can she say to that?* The words are like live wires she doesn't want to touch.

LAURA

I'm fine.

PLIMPTON

You need rest -- and time. To process what happened. To ground yourself. Literally.

ANGLE ON LAURA

As she thinks about that.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura carries a tray to a table. She is hailed by everyone as she walks -- a returning hero. She approaches FRANK PAXTON. He is standing with ERIN ECCLES the young woman from the running track.

If Laura is the Terminator, Erin is the T-1000; newer, faster, more cunning. But she's also kind, hopeful, an optimist.

Paxton sees Laura.

PAXTON

Wallace, got your sea legs back?

LAURA

Yes, sir.

PAXTON

This is Erin Eccles. She's training for the Atlantis mission.

Erin sticks out her hand.

ERIN

It's an honor.

Laura shakes her hand.

LAURA

I saw you on the track this morning.

ERIN

Right.

LAURA

You need to keep your head up.

ERIN

(taken aback)

I'll -- thanks for the tip.

PAXTON

Laura's in the running for Atlantis  
too.

LAURA

Can't beat experience.

Beat. Laura holds Erin's eye, but Erin doesn't back down.  
Paxton sees the tension, doesn't try to defuse it.

PAXTON

Okay, well -- good luck to you  
both.

He walks away.

ERIN

He seems like a good guy.

LAURA

A real pro.

ERIN

So what's it like up there? Must be  
quite a rush.

LAURA

It's a job, kid. Not kite-boarding  
off Kuai. Remember that when you're  
on a three axe spin at four G's.

ERIN

Thanks. Do you think maybe -- I  
don't know -- I could call you  
sometime for advice?

This takes Laura off guard. She softens.

LAURA

Sure.

ERIN

Great. Do you have a cell phone,  
granny, or are you still on a land  
line?

Beat. Laura smiles. *Fuck you, too.*

LAURA

Chin up.

Laura walks away, finds a table, pushes her food around,  
watching Erin wander over and mingle with a GROUP OF MEN. *Is  
she flirting?*

MARK (O.S.)  
Hey, Moonglow.

Laura looks up. Mark is standing there with two young girls--  
**CHELSEA** and **EMILY**, 9 and 6.

MARK (CONT'D)  
I'm giving my ladies a tour.  
Chelsea, Emily, this is Laura.  
She's a colleague of Daddy's.

CHELSEA  
Are you an astronaut?

LAURA  
Yes, I am.

Laura smiles, shooting a friendly salute. They salute back.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Great to meet you. Your Dad's  
always telling everyone how cool  
you are.

They're thrilled to hear this. Mark mouths a "Thank You"--

MARK  
You know girls, Laura here was in  
space last week. Maybe you've got a  
question for her?

Laura smiles as they struggle to come up with anything --

EMILY  
Uhm --

CHELSEA  
Where'd you get that brownie?

LAURA  
Over there. And they're so good.

Mark offers five bucks which they snatch and go running:

MARK  
Don't tell mom you ate that!  
(to Laura)  
Separated. It's a lot of work.

LAURA  
They seem like great kids.

MARK  
They are. Do you bowl?

LAURA

What?

MARK

Bowling. Indigenous cultural praxis  
of the North Americas? Promotes  
social cohesion via pointless  
competition, alcohol abuse and  
shared footwear.

-- Mark eats the end of her brownie. She notices.

LAURA

With you and the girls?

MARK

With the club. You're a member now.

LAURA

What club?

Mark flags two astronauts passing by. He points both fingers -

MARK

Roll tonight?

JIM

Yep.

PETE

Yep.

Mark points to Laura and looks expectant --

LAURA

What club?

MARK

The most select group formed in the  
history of mankind.

Mark solemnly taps a patch on his flightsuit. A rolling Earth  
scatters tenpins, NASA and CRB embroidered above and below.

MARK (CONT'D)

A secret society where every member  
has been to heaven to look upon the  
face of God. The one. The only:  
*Circle of the Rolling Ball.*

Laura waves him off laughing --

LAURA

Fun as that sounds -- I'm not  
really a joiner. Plus kids and blah  
blah -- dinner don't make itself.

MARK

Earth families. You got a new  
family now. *Semper volvens*.

LAURA

You want me to say that to my  
husband? That -- bad latin.

MARK

Tell him it's training. That's what  
the rest of us do.

Just then, Emily and Chelsea return, with a tray of desserts.

MARK (CONT'D)

Sugarlanes 8pm. Ask for Wernher von  
Braun.

(to her kids)

Girls, lets go see if we can eat  
this riding a centrifuge. C'mon --

Mark grabs the tray and bails leaving Laura shaking her head.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S SUV. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT

Laura behind the wheel, phone to her ear.

DREW (O.S.)

(on the phone)

What training? You're not supposed  
to be back yet.

LAURA

I know. I told them. But it's just -  
- simple stuff. More of a debrief.  
I won't be late.

DREW (O.S.)

Well, if it's good for NASA, I  
guess it's a win for me too.

LAURA

That's the spirit.

She hangs up.

REVEAL: Her car is parked outside SUGARLAND LANES.

CUT TO:

INT. SUGARLAND LANES. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT

CLOSE UP ON A BOWLING BALL

It arcs through the air, landing on a waxed lane headed into the triangle of hope --

-- *CRASH* -- pins tumble and spin leaving a badly split spare.

LAURA

Darn it.

By the ball return, Mark pals around with Pete and Jim.

JIM

Trajectory apex error.

LAURA

I like the challenge. Make it a little fairer on you boys.

Laura takes a swig from a Yuengling. Mark brandishes her ball --

MARK

May I?

LAURA

Depends. You got any idea what you're talking about?

MARK

My great grandfather invented this game. Swear to god. Great great.

Mark close to Laura, cupping her hand in his-- AND DRAWS her arm back in large, slow practice throws.

MARK (CONT'D)

Secret is -- little twist at the end there. You see?

Laura feels the closeness of his body. They move together.

LAURA

Lil' twist? You coach the boys like this, that the secret in this club?

JIM

We ask him not to. Gets so weird.

PETE  
Help us. Can you?

JIM  
The secret is he's hammered.

MARK  
Oh, that's no secret at all.

Mark heads to his beer but not before calling out to Laura:

MARK (CONT'D)  
Remember what I told you!

Laura steps up to the line. She takes a deep breath before heaving the ball down the lane and -- PICKS UP THE SPARE!

The astronauts go berserk. Laura rains high fives.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Go on. Say it.

LAURA  
All student, no teacher.

MARK  
I like it. I'll take that. And now  
"the Teacher" steps up. *Gathers.*

Mark grabs a ball, winds up -- flexes wildly and slides to the line. Hurls the rock where it soars and--

-- skews hard into the gutter. Mark holds his perfect form.

MARK (CONT'D)  
And shake hands with the kingpin.

Laura and the guys fall about laughing.

CUT TO:

LATER -- the astronauts shoot the shit post-game. Laura notices Mark up at the bar making the barmaid laugh.

PETE  
How you doing since you got back?

JIM  
Tongue still feel weird?

LAURA  
YES! What is that?!

PETE

No one knows. They think the brain  
adjusts to speaking in zero G. Goes  
in about a week.

LAURA

I'm great. Pretty great. Feel a  
little like -- I don't know.  
Y'know?

The astronauts nod in unison.

PETE

You crack up yet?

LAURA

I'm sorry?

PETE

Not a question of if, just when.

JIM

How hard.

PETE

Amen.

LAURA

Wait -- what are you saying?

PETE

Saying watch yourself for the first  
few months. You saw what few people  
ever see. Felt things no one feels.  
Don't go walking around pretending  
you're like everyone else and life  
is what you always thought it was.

LAURA

Why not?

JIM

Because you'll lose your shit. Plus  
it isn't the truth. Is it?

Laura stares levelly back at them. She opens a fraction.

LAURA

What is?

JIM

Beats the shit out of me.

PETE

Me too. And yet, here we all are.  
Right here. No place else.

JIM

Right now. No time else.

PETE

Just like we all saw. Right?

Mark swings in, placing an armful of beers on the table.

MARK

As requested: five Yuenglings.

JIM

And four of us, Professor.

MARK

How could this have happened?

MARK AND PETE AND JIM IN UNISON

Must've been a rounding error.

Laura laughs.

JIM

*That's* why he likes you so much.  
You laugh at his old jokes.

MARK

Only old joke here is you, buddy.

LAURA

Ouch.

MARK

Come on. We love each other.

PETE

I assure you, we do not.

MARK

Then how come we shared all the  
sordid details of our entire lives?

LAURA

Ooh sordid details? Like what?

PETE

I could have done without it.

JIM

Me too. Some of that stuff --

LAURA

C'mon. Spill.

MARK

Nothing. I'm a saint.

LAURA

Oh you are, huh?

PETE

A saintly man and a manly saint.  
St. Mark of the Star Filled Sky.

JIM

Yup. He's a -- what he said. Sure.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALLACE HOUSE. HOUSTON, TX - MIDNIGHT

Mark's truck rolls up the driveway. Mark bails to the passenger side, making an exaggerated bow --

LAURA

And a gentleman.

Laura laughs, returning the gesture with a regal nod. On her way out of the truck, Laura SLIPS, falling onto Mark.

MARK

Still working on those Earth legs?

LAURA

Or just intoxicated.

Laura regains her footing, bracing against Mark. She looks up at her house, lets out a wistful sigh. Mark nods.

MARK

You don't know what to tell them.  
That's OK. You can't. Not really.

LAURA

(realization dawning)

They'll never know.

MARK

You're lucky here. Remember that.  
Might not seem like it. But you  
are. They need you. You need them.

LAURA

Do you ever stop missing it?

MARK

I wish I could lie, but I can't.  
You can turn away and hide, but I'm  
afraid there's nothing like it.

Laura is suddenly aware it's unclear whether he means space, NASA or a house with a family waiting. They're inches apart.

LAURA

I better go.

Mark nods, stepping back. Laura heads unsteadily inside.

MARK

See you on deck, sailor.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. WALLACE HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Laura enters the house, dropping her bag on the kitchen floor and slowly, quietly making her way up the stairs. As she moves down the hallway, she notices a light still on: Ruth's.

CUT TO:

INT. RUTH'S BEDROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Laura finds her asleep, hand marking place in a Harry Potter. Laura carefully dog-ears her page. Puts the book away.

As she watches her daughter sleep, Laura chokes up suddenly, overcome with emotion. Desperate.

She crouches down hugging her knees and looks up at Ruth's ceiling, covered in glow-in-the-dark plastic stars and heaves huge silent sobs as her daughter softly sleeps.

We hear:

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST (O.S.)

TWR Jett.

LAURA (O.S.)

Auto. Down. Guarded.

CUT TO:

INT. NASA PARTICLE FREE SUIT CHAMBER. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura stands suited up in the centre of a incredibly brightly lit room attended by ENGINEERS and suit specialists reading checklists to her from clipboards.

**CHYRON: ATLANTIS ELIMINATION TRIALS. DAY ONE:**

The engineers speak very fast.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST  
EMER cab press valve.

LAURA  
Check and check.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST  
Suit CKT return valve.

LAURA  
Open.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST 2  
Reverse o2 umbilicals.

LAURA  
Suit Power. Check.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST  
Suit Power.

LAURA  
Audio con. Normal.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST 2  
Audio control.

LAURA  
Connect Comm Con Head to PGA.  
Check.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST  
Connect Comm Control Head to  
PGA.

The engineers start laughing as Laura gets ahead of them without a clipboard or needing any prompting. Continues alone-

LAURA  
UTS to urine transfer hose. Closed.  
Connect urine tranfer filter to  
faeces PD. Check. Clip recepitical  
ASSY to transfer hose. Check. URA  
valve. Vent. Open. Management drain  
valve. Dump. Flush PKG, screen and  
honeycomb. Check. Check. And Check.  
Stop the clock. Done and done.

Laura puts her hands in the air in victory laughing. Whoops.

NASA SUIT SPECIALIST  
All other crew hate checklists so  
much they want to kill us by now.

LAURA  
You kidding? Gotta love a checklist-  
(stage whispers)  
Maybe they're just lazy.

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE SIMULATOR. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura, Mark, Hank and Erin --in astronaut gear-- strapped into a shuttle simulator that's nearly as old as they are.

A machine built in the 70's -- slow and prone to breaking down. The astronauts busily check their instruments as --

-- A FLASHING RED LIGHT FILLS THE CABIN --

LAURA  
Error 143B. Check life support.

Sirens. Erin yanks a Mission Protocols binder. Flips through.

ERIN  
Copy that. Houston, Endeavour reporting LSS crew cabin warning.

MISSION CONTROL  
Roger Endeavour, confirm O2 level?

MARK  
O2 solid. Power essential busses?

ERIN  
ESS1BC, ESS2CA and ESS3AB reading confirmed.

MARK  
Houston, do you read? DC and O2 seen and green.

MISSION CONTROL  
Copy Endeavour.

Sirens and blinking warning lights continue. Laura winces.

LAURA  
Still a lot of Christmas up here.

HANK  
PRS restart indicated Houston?

MISSION CONTROL  
Endeavour CAPCOM is a hard restart.

Erin's thumbing through a second binder. A second, more staccato siren begins SHRIEKING.

LAURA  
Need action here, Eccles.

ERIN  
Almost there --

HANK  
O2 dropping. Venting fast.

Erin is throwing switches on her console. No luck.

MARK  
Eccles?

ERIN  
I'm -- gimme a second.

LAURA  
We don't have a second, rookie.

Erin focuses, finds it, flips a series of switches on her console -- flashing lights and sirens suddenly STOP. Everything still.

ERIN  
Got it.

Beat. They wait, then --

MISSION CONTROL  
Green lights. All systems go. End drill.

Mark takes off his headseat.

MARK  
Nice work, legs. Well -- who's hungry?

Mark unbuckles his harness, strolls out of the simulator.

ANGLE ON ERIN

She's breathing hard, exhilarated. She looks over at Laura, who frowns. Erin gives her a big smile.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura walks down a busy NASA hallway. She stops at one door that's slightly ajar. She turns 180. Walks away. Gets a few feet down the corridor -- stops. She looks back.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTRE - DAY

KNOCK KNOCK. Laura pokes her head in to see --

-- Mark, fast asleep at his desk. The tinny sounds of Steely Dan coming from an early iPhone on his desk.

Laura closes the door quietly and walks over to him. She leans close, getting just inches from his face--

-- and SLAMMING HER HAND ON HIS DESK-- Mark startled awake, gasps a big, shocked breath. Laura laughs. Mark plays cool.

MARK

I'm awake. I am. Wide awake.

LAURA

What you doing for lunch?

Mark places a paper bag on his desk.

MARK

Got a packed lunch.

She reaches into the bag, pulls out a SIX-PACK OF BUDWEISER.

MARK (CONT'D)

It's late notice but I could see if the maitre D has a table for two.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECLUDED ROAD. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DUSK

Laura's SUV parked on a SIDE ROAD in the Johnson Complex. The decommissioned Saturn V Rocket visible from her windshield.

Inside, Mark and Laura split an order of fries. Mark pops the top of a can of beer; hands it to Laura.

As she sips, a car drives by. Laura repositions to hide the fact she's drinking. Mark laughs at Laura's cautiousness.

LAURA

It's like we're back in high school smoking under the bleachers.

Mark takes a big swig from his can.

MARK

You never smoked under *no*  
bleachers. Uh uh.

LAURA

What? Why?

MARK

You're a straight arrow. You never  
did a wrong thing in your life.

LAURA

I've done plenty of things wrong.

MARK

I bet you never even came second.

Beat. It's true.

LAURA

Look, Mr. Know-it-all, I done  
plenty of tawdry shit, I'm here to  
tell ya --

MARK

Hit me.

Laura thinks for a moment but she is genuinely stumped.

MARK (CONT'D)

How about -- smoking under the  
bleachers?

LAURA

Nope. Never did that.

Mark laughs and takes another sip. He stares out the  
passenger window and sighs. He suddenly seems very lost.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Hey, you okay?

MARK

Yeah. My kids --  
(sighs)  
-- none of this is easy.

Laura nods. She thinks. Then --

LAURA

The other night the guys were  
talking about being in orbit --

MARK  
You felt it right? Up there.

Laura stops. This is a step out of her comfort zone.

LAURA  
Felt what?

MARK  
You tell me. Maybe you didn't.

She searches for words to describe the indescribable.

LAURA  
Like being blasted completely apart  
and put back together and instantly  
I felt like -- I felt like --

MARK  
You understood it all.

LAURA  
Yes. Oh my god. Yes. What the hell?

MARK  
A sense that everything's a part of  
everything else. All separation  
between things is illusion.

LAURA  
Out of nowhere. I was looking down.  
I realized -- I realized --

MARK  
You realized who you are and why  
we're all here. Right? We're the  
fringe that feels.

Laura is suddenly wide open. She leans and KISSES HIM, fully  
and deeply -- just as quickly, she pulls away.

LAURA  
God I'm so sorry. I can't do this.

MARK  
What are we doing? We're just kids  
smoking under the bleachers.

He leans and kisses her. Laura kisses back. More passionate  
than the first. She reaches for his belt. They pull at each  
other. Urgent. Hungry. Unstoppable.

As they do EVERYTHING SHAKES around them -- as if they're  
strapped to a booster rocket.

THE EDGES OF FRAME SLIDE AWAY -- the claustrophobia of her world expanding -- the adrenaline and wonder of space returning.

Mark pushes a hand down her body into her pants. She gasps. Kissing deeply, Laura pushes into him. Yanking hard at his jeans, her hands grab his bare ass. And they start to fuck.

OVERHEAD

The ROOF OF THE SUV shudders, separating, the SKY revealed. THEY BEGIN TO RISE out of the car, the blue sky above turning black, STARS surrounding them.

LAURA AND MARK

fuck like they're alive. Like they're the only two people on earth who are.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALLACE HOUSE. HOUSTON, TX - EVENING

Laura sits alone in her car. In front of her home. **PANIC MODE**. Convinced that what has just happened is written on her face.

LAURA  
Okey. Dokey.

She forcibly releases a white-knuckle grip on the steering wheel, trying to collect herself and spots a crushed beer can in the footwell. She dives to grab it before anyone sees.

She drops it in the recycling container, drops the lid and takes a deep breath.

CUT TO:

INT. FOYER. WALLACE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Laura enters the house like she was burgling the place --

ED & NEIL  
Mommy!

-- THE TWINS RUSH TO HUG HER, Laura puts on a brave face, desperate to look normal. Drew pecks her cheek. She winces--

DREW  
Hi, Mommy!

Ruth wanders in.

RUTH  
Nana's here.

Laura turns. Nana is sitting at the kitchen counter, drinking scotch.

NANA  
Little fuckers were just showing me their Lego.

DREW  
She said you invited her to dinner.

LAURA  
Oh shit. I, uh -- I did. I'm so sorry.

She goes over, kisses Nana on the head.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
You look good.

NANA  
I'd slap an Okie for a cigarette.

LAURA  
Outside.

NANA  
Yeah, yeah. Be a doll. They're in my purse.

Laura goes into the --

HALL

Nana's purse is on the hall table. Laura grabs it, but misses, knocking it over. Her wallet and cigarettes spill out, and something else -- A HANDGUN.

ANGLE ON LAURA

Seeing it. She looks around to see if anyone else saw, but the hall is empty. She picks up the gun, holds it. A .38 special.

NANA (CONT'D)  
(calling)  
Somethin fall on you, or you coming back?

Laura lowers the gun. She thinks about putting it back in Nana's purse, but doesn't feel comfortable with the idea. She opens the coat closet, puts the gun in her jacket pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. WALLACE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Laura comes back, gives Nana her smokes.

DREW

Hey, how was work today?

LAURA

Just -- you know -- same old.  
How can I help?

She forces a smile at them, the happy family enjoying the normal dinner time chaos.

CUT TO:

INT. NASA'S NEUTRAL BUOYANCY LAB. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

An ENORMOUS WAREHOUSE that holds a SWIMMING POOL the size of a football field. Underwater is a SUBMERGED SPACE SHUTTLE and International Space Station. This is where NASA's astronauts train for space walks.

**CHYRON: ATLANTIS ELIMINATION TRIALS. DAY 39:**

Laura's is standing on a METAL PLATFORM, wearing a modified underwater space suit, helmet on.

The platform is lowered into the water.

CUT TO:

INT. NEUTRAL BUOYANCY TANK. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - LATER

Underwater Laura works a panel upside down under the ISS. Heavy suited gloves wield tethered tools with precision.

LAURA

Removing thermal shroud on Rotary Joint Motor Controller on the upper face of the P3 truss.

(beat, notices)

Control? I got a light on suit psi regulator. Request sys error check.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM. NEUTRAL BOUYANCY LAB. DAY

Test director examines dozens of screens and monitors.

TEST DIRECTOR  
Diver SD02 move in take a look.

The camera view closes in on Laura suspended in the water.

SAFETY DIVER 02  
I have bubbles from the helmet.

BACK TO:

LAURA

She reaches a hand to the back of the helmet to investigate and pries at the joint -- bubble get suddenly worse.

LAURA  
Suit breach. I have a breach in the rear lateral seal. Pressure dropping. Yup, getting wet in here.

SAFETY DIVER 02  
Scramble safety team. I'm going in.

TEST DIRECTOR  
Dive scrub. Dive scrub. Get her out of there people.

The test director hits an abort button and the exit elevator moves into position. An underwater speaker sounds an alarm.

Laura struggles with the back of her helmet trying to locate the source of the breach, she tugs at the seal and suddenly water floods her helmet upside down.

LAURA  
Shit.

SUPPORT DIVERS from all over the pool move into action, heading for Laura. Laura looks at a gauge. She speaks calmly.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Suit pressure dropping. 31.8 kPa.  
31.7 kPa. Steady dropoff rate.

She pushes hard trying to right herself. A SINGLE LOOP of webbing from the suit to the umbilical wraps around a hidden rung of handrail on the underside of the station panel. She tugs her leg. Caught.

Upside down, her helmet fills with water, her eye submerges.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS.

The TEST DIRECTOR and TECHNICIANS anxiously converge, watching as the accident plays out live on screen.

TEST DIRECTOR  
C'mon. Get her out of there.

Off radio he turns to his assistant. Panic in his eyes.

TEST DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
Suit PSI dropping fast. Get a view  
from under see why she's  
stationary.

Over the radio Laura's voice rings out, coolly.

LAURA  
Control. Got a lot of water in the  
helmet. Pressure's gone. Estimated  
8 seconds before I'm under here.

CUT TO:

INT. NEUTRAL BUOYANCY TANK - CONTINUOUS.

Through a tangle of umbilicals and bubbles divers work to free Laura. Suit pressure is way below pool pressure, water now pouring in. A waterline rises up the glass of her helmet.

But Laura eyes on her watch counting seconds as they pass.

LAURA  
3 seconds.

She takes a last breath. Blinks. Calm as water fills her nose  
--

LAURA (CONT'D)  
I'm under --

-- and her mouth. Laura is now drowning. Support divers search her suit extremities for where she is stuck.

Laura remains calm. Points accurately to her tethered leg.

A diver sees where she's indicating. He swims down and unloops the loop of webbing. The heavy waterlogged suit starts to float freely away from the structure.

The SAFETY DIVERS work together kicking hard with the broken suit as fast as they can towards the scaffold platform.

Laura's eyes are open. Her face peaceful. A bubble escapes her nose but otherwise she is motionless. Strained. Control.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The engineer calls out.

TEST ENGINEER  
She's been without o2 for two  
minutes.

BACK TO:

Laura loaded onto the elevator platform. Pulleys clank into action. Craning her out of the pool agonisingly slowly.

As Laura breaks the surface divers move fast to release the suit helmet. Water gushes out of the suit.

Laura gasps. Drinking air.

SAFETY DIVER  
Commander Wallace. Can you hear me,  
Laura?

Laura coughs and breathes deep. Looks him in the eye.

LAURA  
I'm fine. Rear convolute in the  
restraint layer split from the  
bladder layer. Here.

Laura holds up the section of her suit, that failed.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Get it fixed.

Technicians work around her to extract Laura from her suit.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Paxton is being briefed on the incident.

TEST DIRECTOR:

Watch the footage. She held her breath upside down over 2 minutes, heart rate below 120 bpm the whole time. In fact the longer it went on, the calmer she got.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY.

Laura on a bench. Alone for the first time. She raises her hands to her face. They're shaking. She closes her fists.

Her phone rings. DREW flashes. Laura takes a deep breath and answers. Before she can say anything he is in full flow.

DREW (O.S.)

Hon, I've just had the twins' form teacher on the phone. They're asking if you could give a talk to the kids at school next week. I'll get a photographer from the Chronicle. The optics'll be great for the program.

Laura blinks hard, still shaking. There's no way she can tell Drew what just happened in the tank.

LAURA

Ok. Uh-huh.

DREW

Be great to give them an answer today. Can I confirm? PTA are gonna love us for this.

The changing room door swings open. MARK rushes in, concern and fear on his face. Laura raises her hand to stop him.

LAURA

Say yes. Listen, I gotta go.

Laura ends the call.

MARK

I came soon as I heard. You OK?

Mark moves to hold her. To kiss her. Laura pushes him away. Still processing near-death. Or not. Numb. Separate.

LAURA

Not here. I'm fine. Suit failed. Small accident. No body count.

MARK

Minutes with a pressure leak? Shit.  
What did you do?

LAURA

What can you do? Just hold your  
breath and hope. Bite down.

MARK

(impressed)

*Bite down?*

LAURA

Look at me. I'm fine. Nothing wrong  
a dry towel won't fix.

He smiles suggestively.

MARK

Well -- I'm expert rated with both  
beach and bath towels.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Mark and Laura are a tangle of clothes and limbs, gasping,  
finishing a quickie up against the door. Afterwards --

LAURA

That's the last time, okay?

MARK

If you say so Commander.

LAURA

We can not keep doing this.

MARK

You're probably right.

LAURA

OK. Good. So -- OK?

MARK

Roger that. Unless -- well -- I was  
thinking, before I fly next month,  
maybe we could find some time, just  
us. Go away someplace.

LAURA

(her heart races)

Away? Where?

MARK

I don't know. Someplace beautiful.

Beat. Laura thinks about it -- to hold onto this feeling for more than just an hour, to disappear inside of it. But then --

LAURA

I can't. I can't get the time.

MARK

Whole weekend in Florida. Just us.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

confused by all this -- *she wants to go / she shouldn't go.*  
*She should end things.*

Mark sees her indecision.

MARK (CONT'D)

Don't decide now. Dry out. Go home.  
Have a drink. None of this means  
anything anyway.

LAURA

What?

MARK

Look around. What do you see? A desk, a chair, the place you work. And out the window -- trees, houses -- kids on skateboards. America. You know what science sees? Protons, neutrons, electrons.

He touches her chest.

MARK (CONT'D)

And this, us -- our hearts -- it's just blood and muscle -- atoms in motion, energy being transferred. It doesn't mean anything. So why not take our protons and electrons and go to the beach? Live.

ANGLE ON LAURA

*Could it be that simple?*

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura runs hard, trying to keep her thoughts at bay. Ahead of her she sees ERIN ECCLES, her stride easy, her form good.

Laura ACCELERATES.

ERIN turns, sees her coming, speeds up. The two women race. Erin's legs are longer, but she doesn't have Laura's drive.

Slowly, but surely Laura gains on her, pulls even.

CLOSE UP ON ERIN

The strain shows on her face. She looks over, uncertain.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

She's in top shape again. If she has to, she'll run this bitch down for the next ten years.

ERIN

realizes this, slows, lets Laura pull ahead.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

Pulling away. We see the triumph on her face.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura's at her desk, annotating technical manuals. She continues reading as she opens her desk drawer and takes out a small bottle. Knocks out two orange pills. Swallows cold coffee and finds a card on her desk. It's nothing special, just a piece of folded over yellow paper.

Inside, the card reads: "*Lunch? My truck or yours?*"

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL ROOM. HOUSTON, TX - EVENING

Laura and Mark fall back on a tangle of sheets. Laura turns to Mark, watches him as he dozes. It's possible he's fallen asleep right there. She whispers very quietly:

LAURA

I love you. I love you. I love you.

-- there's no way Mark heard it. But then --

-- he reaches, wraps an arm around her, and pulls her closer. She pushes into him. He whispers in her ear:

MARK  
I love you. I love you. I love you.

Laura is ecstatic. They kiss. Like lovers in love.

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE SIMULATOR. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Another drill. Laura is there with Chithra and TWO other ASTRONAUTS. An ALARM rings.

MISSION CONTROL  
Mission fail.

LAURA  
Run it again.

CHITHRA  
Laura, it's late.

LAURA  
Run it again.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRYWAY. WALLACE HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark. Everyone has gone to bed. Laura tip toes up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the darkness, Laura passes by the bed where Drew is sleeping. We see he is still awake. Laura doesn't. Drew stares into darkness. Laura goes into the --

INT. BATHROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Laura opens the medicine cabinet. She's tired, burning it at both ends. She grabs the PILL BOTTLE, shakes out TWO MORE ORANGE PILLS, takes them.

Around her, the bathroom light feels too bright. She winces, squints up at it.

ANGLE ON THE BULB

The light flaring until THE SCREEN FILLS WITH WHITE LIGHT.

LAURA  
Damn, that's bright.

OUT OF TOTAL WHITE-OUT bleached facial features appear.

HANK (O.S.)  
You OK?

We are BACK IN SPACE, in widescreen, Laura floating in her space suit.

LAURA  
That's so bright.

The Earth floats below her.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
So bright.

Hypnotized, LAURA reaches up, unfastens her helmet, seduced by the view. She LIFTS OFF HER HELMET, lets it float free.

Somewhere in her brain she believes she can do this, become a being of pure light, celestial.

She takes a DEEP BREATH, and for a second it seems like it will work -- she will transcend mortal bounds -- then her face changes.

LAURA BEGINS TO CHOKES, her eyes start to bug out. Inside her body, fluids begin to boil. ICICLES FORM on her eye lashes, her skin turning blue.

She tries to scream, but nothing comes out.

As we watch she DRIFTS AWAY. We watch her go until she's just a white dot in the distance, another astral body floating through infinite space.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - NIGHT

Mark walks to his car, alone. It's late and the place is quiet. Mark reaches his truck, opens the door and jumps --

MARK  
What the fuck?

-- Laura is hiding in the footwell, waiting for him.

LAURA  
I told Drew to go to his mom's without me. I'm working late.

Mark looks around, worried that someone might see. He hurries into the truck and closes the door.

MARK

You scared the shit out of me.

LAURA

Well, I'd love to make it up to you.

Laura runs her hand up Mark's leg but he pushes her away.

MARK

Not here. We're slipping. We have to be more careful.

LAURA

Okay. Okay.

Laura pulls away, clearly hurt.

MARK

It's fine. Let's go to my place.

He starts the engine and backs out of the parking space.

MARK (CONT'D)

Seriously don't ever do that again.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM. MARK'S APARTMENT. HOUSTON, TX - LATER

Laura sleeps in Mark's bed, their clothes thrown all over the place. Mark leans in, whispers in her ear:

MARK

Hey. They're gonna miss you at home

--

LAURA

Fifteen more minutes. I don't think I've ever felt this good.

She closes her eyes -- floating in the vacuum of the moment.

ANGLE ON MARK

His impatience shows. Maybe he's not as into Laura as we thought. He shakes her lightly.

MARK

It's late. You should go.

She hears his tone.

LAURA  
Oh. Okay, I'll --

She sits up. He smiles at her, touches her face.

MARK  
(lying)  
I just don't want you to get in  
trouble.

LAURA  
No, that's -- you're probably  
right.

She grabs her clothes, gets dressed.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALLACE HOUSE - NIGHT

Laura creeps up to her darkened house. She takes a moment to collect herself, to put her night with Mark behind her. She tries a more neutral expression. She takes a deep breath, readies herself, and enters the house.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. WALLACE HOUSE - NIGHT

The kitchen is a disaster. Dishes everywhere. Drew stands in the middle of it all, exhausted. In an apron washing up.

LAURA  
Hey. Sorry.

DREW  
I've been trying you for hours --

LAURA  
Late night putting training modules  
in. I'm here. You tuck the kids in?

DREW  
What time do you think it is?  
They're fast asleep. Laura listen --

LAURA  
(defensive)  
What? Work got harder than I  
thought. I just -- been a rough  
couple weeks y'know.

DREW  
Nana's in the hospital.

LAURA  
What? How?

DREW  
She had a stroke. I've been trying  
to call you for hours.

The news hits like a gut punch. Fear. Shame. Intense shock.

LAURA  
Can I see her?

DREW  
I'll take you in the morning.

LAURA  
Is she OK?

DREW  
Visiting hours from ten. I can take  
you over there, I told work I'd --

LAURA  
FOR GOD'S SAKE! Stop washing the  
damn dishes and tell me she's OK!

DREW  
She hasn't woken up --

He takes off the gloves, walks over and looks at her.

DREW (CONT'D)  
If you're here, I can take you in  
the morning.

And without any physical contact he walks up to bed.

Laura stands in shock. She can't respond to Drew's coldness.  
*He knows? What does he know? Why is she thinking this now?*

Laura reeling, sleepwalks to the sink. Picks up the dish Drew  
put down. Suddenly she stops.

LAURA  
If I'm here?

-- a droplet of water begins to float upwards from the sink,  
as if suspended in zero gravity.

Laura looks on as a number of droplets float up from the  
sink, followed by a dirty mug. She stares in terror as--

-- **she floats upwards.** Laura pushes from the kitchen counter floating through her house as if it were the innards of an orbiting ship. Tears of shock and shame float from her eyes as Laura pushes her way through the darkened house.

Each tear leaves her face sealed. A perfect sphere.

**BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP. A hospital vitals monitor beats.**

CUT TO:

INT. INTENSIVE CARE. HOSPITAL. HOUSTON, TX- DAY

In the corridor, Drew speaks to doctors we only half see. All of them. Suspended.

Inside the room, Laura holds Nana's hand. The old woman looks smaller now. fragile. Tubes and machinery are all that's connecting her to this world.

Laura squeezes her paper thin hands.

LAURA

I don't want you to worry, Nana.  
The doctors say you're gonna be  
just fine. You just need --  
(looks around, leans in)  
Get your lazy ass out of bed,  
soldier. You're not done here.  
There's still work to do. Don't you  
quit on me.

Nana stirs, mouths something. Laura leans closer, puts her ear to Nana's lips.

NANA

Fucker.

Laura smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALLACE HOUSE. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Drew pulls the SUV onto the drive. Laura sits in silence, trying to process everything.

DREW

Did you sleep at all?

LAURA

I'm fine.

DREW

You don't have to say that. You  
don't have to --

LAURA

I'm not fine. I'm not fine at all.  
There. That work for you? Does that  
make it all better? What? What?

Drew soaks it up. He looks straight ahead.

DREW

That glovebox was locked. I didn't  
know why so I got the key and I  
unlocked it.

LAURA

How? Wait. You got the key?

DREW

Is not the point. The point is  
you're driving around with a loaded  
gun in your car so I need to know  
why? You're acting so strange. I  
never know where you'll be. What  
time you're coming home. And now  
with Wally in the hospital-

LAURA

-- you got the key off my key ring?

DREW

A gun. In here, Laura.

LAURA

Why would you do that?

DREW

And we don't own a handgun.

LAURA

Why wouldn't you just ask me? Wait  
what did you think was in there?

DREW

FOR CHRISTS SAKE LAURA WHY IS THERE  
A FUCKING GUN IN OUR CAR?

Laura looks like this is way -- way too much for her.

LAURA

I had to put it someplace safe.

This is hard to say out loud. Her compartments collapsing.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
It's Nana's. She had it in her  
purse when she came to dinner. I  
didn't feel -- I didn't want her  
walking around with it.

Drew reaches out for her but she shrinks away from him.

DREW  
Why didn't you tell me?

Laura gets out of the car.

LAURA  
Why didn't you ask? What did you  
think I was doing?

Drew is open mouthed. Doesn't know what to say. Laura walks.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - EVENING

Laura busies herself with a fourth or fifth load of laundry,  
sorting through mismatched socks in a manic way.

Ruth enters.

RUTH  
Mom? Is Nana gonna be OK?

LAURA  
She's pretty poorly but the doctors  
are taking real good care of her.

RUTH  
Can I come see her next time?

LAURA  
Of course. She'd like that.

RUTH  
I finished my American hero project  
for school. Want to see?

LAURA  
Of course, baby. Well done.

Ruth runs off. Laura continues to fold and pile. Fold. Pile.  
Lost in thought.

RUTH (O.S.)  
Ta-da.

-- Ruth steps into the laundry room in a flight suit. NASA patch on her shoulder, helmet under arm. She looks nervous.

Laura lights up. She runs to Ruth, wrapping her up in a hug. Ruth steps back so she can read her name badge: **L.WALLACE**.

RUTH (CONT'D)  
Pretty sick I could just do my mom.

LAURA  
Oh, sweetheart.

Laura hugs Ruth tighter; she begins to cry.

RUTH  
Are you okay?

LAURA  
I'm fine -- I'm perfect. You're perfect. I love you so much.

Laura shuts her eyes tightly as she squeezes her daughter.

**AN ALARM SOUNDS.**

Laura looks up. The same as the simulator. Ruth smiles happily, walks out. Laura reaches for her but Ruth just keeps walking. As though she can't hear or see anything at all.

**LIGHTS FLASH.**

The laundry room vibrates with a pulsing, hot light. Laura's eyes widen. She looks around for a solution and then--

**LAURA GRABS HER CELL PHONE.**

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT. HOUSTON, TX - CONTINUOUS

Mark is seated at the table with his daughters as the three of them dig into a box of delivery pizza. The place is pretty sad, all boxes and the bare essentials of furniture. His phone rings: LAURA. He presses END.

MARK  
This is cool, huh? Pizza night  
yeah!

BACK TO:

LAURA PANICKING IN HER LAUNDRY ROOM. ALARM BLARING.

Searches the boxes of washing powder and stacks of towels obsessively searching for anything to turn off the klaxon. Her phone again: searches email footers. MARK GOODMAN. HOME.

BACK TO:

Chelsea and Emily laugh mouths both very full. *Phone rings.*

CHELSEA

I got it!

Chelsea leaps up and heads for the phone, but Mark stops her--

MARK

Not with those grease-fingers you don't!

MARK (CONT'D)

(grabs the cordless)

Yello?

LAURA (O.S.)

It's me.

A flicker on Mark's face -- closest we've seen him to losing his cool. After a second, he's got a handle on it:

MARK

Pete. Give me a second, I'll go check on that. Girls? Daddy's gotta find something --

CUT TO:

EXT. MARK'S APARTMENT. HOUSTON, TX - MOMENTS LATER

Mark closes the door behind him before saying anything.

MARK

My daughters are here. They could have answered the phone.

Mark looks in the window at his daughters, who are still mostly distracted by the pizza.

LAURA (O.S.)

I'm a bad person. I just -- I want to tell the truth. I can't take it. I can't take this. I'm so alone.

MARK

Whoa. You are *not* a bad person.  
 You're an incredible person. You  
 hear me? You're the most incredible  
 wonderful woman I've ever met. And  
 you're not alone. I'm here.

CUT TO:

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS  
 Laura takes a warm towel, holds it to her face.

LAURA

No, you're not.

MARK (O.S.)

Yes I am.

LAURA

It's just too hard.

MARK

How's your grandmother?

LAURA

They say all we can do is wait.  
 They said she's stable. Thank you  
 for asking. OK. I'm OK.  
 (she calms)  
 I'm sorry. Are you mad I called?

MARK (O.S.)

How could I be mad when all I want  
 is to hear your voice?

LAURA

I should never call you at home.  
 I'm sorry.

MARK (O.S.)

Don't be. But be careful. No one  
 can know about us. If anyone at  
 Johnson knew --

LAURA

You don't have to say it.

MARK (O.S.)

-- we'd be finished. Grounded.  
 Forever.

LAURA

We're being careful.

MARK

Look, I'm here. I'm always here for you. Right now I gotta go.

LAURA

Wait there's something else I was calling about.

MARK

Laura, what? What is it?

LAURA

I've been thinking about that trip -- our trip -- and I -- I can make it work?

From his face we can see that he is NOT excited by this development.

MARK

Wha -- OK. Could we talk about this later?

LAURA

The trip away? To someplace beautiful. I want to do it.

MARK

You sure you can up and go while your grandma's sick?

LAURA

It's a couple of days. 48 hours. I'll make it work.

Beat. He sighs.

MARK

Laura -- I'm -- here's the thing -- I can't go. The launch is next week and there's -- I'm just gonna put my head down and get in the zone. You understand, right?

For a moment, Laura can't breathe, but she pushes through it -- a soldier.

LAURA

No. Of course -- I get it. The mission comes first.

Her PHONE BLOOPS, signaling an incoming call.

She looks down.

ANGLE ON THE PHONE

The Caller ID reads: HOSPITAL.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Shit. I'll, uh -- I gotta go.

She switches lines.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Hello?

SFX: AN ANGRY BEEPING begins to sound, an alarm.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S SUV (TRAVELING). HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Laura drives recklessly, as the alarm gets louder.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. HOSPITAL. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Laura runs down the hall. We hear voices.

DOCTOR (O.S.)  
*Ten cc's adrenaline. Prep the paddles.*

The ALARM SHRIEKS.

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S ROOM. HOSPITAL - DAY

On the bed, Nana is in FULL CARDIAC ARREST. NURSES and DOCTORS work on her, trying to save her life.

ANGLE ON LAURA

standing forgotten in the background. She doesn't know how to do this, to be here, to watch this fearsome woman who raised her die.

WE PUSH ON HER FACE as she starts reciting a checklist.

LAURA  
The three essential buses are  
ESS1BC, ESS2CA and ESS3AB.

EVERYTHING SLOWS DOWN -- death comes, inevitable, irreversible -- the cardiac team stops working, steps away.

LAURA blinks back tears.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
The -- three -- essential -- busses  
--

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

A few MOURNERS stand by the grave site, a MINISTER speaking. Drew has his ARM AROUND LAURA, who fights tears.

WE PUSH INTO a CLOSE UP and realize Laura is murmuring something.

LAURA  
ESS1BC receives power from three redundant sources.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - NIGHT

The RECEPTION after the funeral. Family friends are around, lending support. Neil and Ed play.

ANGLE ON LAURA

Sitting on the sofa with Ruth, just the two of them. Ruth is crying. Laura pats her hand, staring straight ahead.

LAURA  
(under her breath)  
DC power from fuel cell 1 through the ESS bus source FC 1 switch on panel R1 --

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - NIGHT/DAY

Laura lays awake in bed, eyes open in the dark.

LAURA  
(quietly)  
-- when the switch is positioned to on and from main dc buses B and C

We PUSH IN on her face, as NIGHT becomes DAY. She doesn't move.

ANGLE ON THE CEILING FAN

From her point of view. Then Drew appears. He's got a cup of coffee for her.

DREW  
Hey, how'd you sleep?

ANGLE ON LAURA

Laid low by grief, then -- SHE BOLTS UP.

LAURA  
What time is it?

DREW  
What?

Laura jumps out of bed, starts dressing frantically.

LAURA  
It's launch day.

DREW  
Laura, maybe -- you can skip this one.

But Laura throws on her shirt.

LAURA  
Can you take the kids to school?

DREW  
Of course, just -- babe --

He grabs her gently, trying to slow her down.

DREW (CONT'D)  
I'm worried about you.

LAURA  
I'm fine.

She grabs some shoes, runs out, leaving DREW to stare after her. Over this we hear:

EVENT ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
(over the P.A.)  
*It's a beautiful day for a launch,  
seventy-nine degrees, no wind. The  
Shuttle Endeavor has been gassed up  
and she's ready to go.*

CUT TO:

EXT. BANANA RIVER VIEWING SITE. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - DAWN

Tourists are gathered near the large countdown clock at the Banana River Viewing Site on Cape Kennedy.

Laura's parked away from people. On the roof of her truck. Nervous. She reaches in a coolbox and cracks a beer. Looks in her hand. One orange pill. Knocks it back with the beer.

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

Flight Director walks the aisles of mission control, headset on, listening to the calls. Pete is on command:

PETE  
T-minus 4 minutes, stand by for readiness check.

MISSION FLIGHT DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Roger that Command.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEWING SITE. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

Kids chase each other around. Laura watches them in the sun. She's chewing gum. Amped. On edge.

PETE (V.O.)  
Cooling systems: Go/no go?

MISSION FLIGHT DIRECTOR (V.O.)  
Go.

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

The team at work, focused.

PETE  
Fuel cells: go/no go?

MISSION FLIGHT DIRECTOR  
Go.

PETE  
Life support: Go/no go?

CUT TO:

INT. COCKPIT. ENDEAVOR SPACE SHUTTLE - SAME TIME

We see MARK and the crew, suited up, running their final checklists.

MARK  
Life support is a go.

From his face we go to --

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEWING SITE. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

Laura, watching the shuttle, praying for its safe launch. Tension builds. Of all people, she's knows exactly how dangerous this is. But it's different sitting on the other side of the fence. Worse. Tannoy starts a direct audio feed.

LAURA  
Oh shit. It's gonna go.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)  
Launch T-minus ten seconds.

The large clock rolls backward from ten seconds. The crowd gathered starts chanting numbers backward --

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

PETE  
Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEWING SITE. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

Laura is living every second of this. It's agony.

LAURA  
Five. Four. Three. Two.

PETE (V.O.)  
--ONE! Solid booster ignition.

The countdown clock rolls to **ZERO**. The crowd cheer.

Laura winces. Willing a skyscraper to soar. In the distance, a **BRIGHT FLASH** of smoke and light as *Endeavour's* twin boosters ignite. The lion roar of man. She holds her breath.

PETE (V.O.)  
Liftoff. We have liftoff.

*Endeavour* arcs skyward, flame reflected on the water of the Banana River. Every inch of ascent costing Laura everything.

LAURA  
Clear the tower. Clear it.

Her beating heart the fuel of ascent. Inches past the tower.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Go. Yes! Go.

At this early hour, the booster is brighter than the rising sun. Monstrous plumes of smoke and steam, thousands of feet long billow from the launch site.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Go. GO! GO!!!

The small crowd thinly cheers -- how could they not?

Laura -- eyes fixed on the orbiter-- starts laughing with the joy of it all. She looks around herself. Marooned on her home planet. No one she can share anything with. Deeply alone.

Over this:

NASA FLIGHT CONTROL (O.S.)  
*Discovery's three liquid fuel main engines now throttle back to sixty-seven percent of rated performance.*

CUT TO:

VIDEO FOOTAGE

Of the DISCOVERY LAUNCH, weeks earlier. We see the main rockets firing, flames white against the blue sky.

NASA FLIGHT CONTROL (O.S.)  
*-- reducing stress on the shuttle as it breaks through the sound barrier.*

We PULL BACK to FIND we are in --

INT. AUDITORIUM. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Drew moderates a panel with Laura, Hank, Chithra, Cole and Henckle. There is a mostly packed house of a hundred people in the audience.

DREW

And Commander Lynch, take us back  
there for you -- this was your  
second ride on the big slingshot,  
right?

HANK

Yes, I flew Columbia, March 2002.

(beat)

Look, when you're strapped to a ten  
ton rocket full of explosive jet  
fuel all you can do is hold on  
tight.

On SCREEN we see footage of the astronauts in the cockpit  
during takeoff.

ANGLE ON LAURA

Everything -- her time in space, her Nana's death, the  
intensity of the affair with Mark, and now his absence  
literally from the Planet Earth -- is tying her brain in  
knots.

DREW (O.S.)

And obviously, Endeavor is up there  
right now, circling the globe  
sixteen times a day. Any advice for  
them?

Laura looks out into the audience, sees --

ANGLE ON MARK

Sitting in the audience, smiling at her.

HANK (O.S.)

Yeah, get it done and come home  
safe.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

Her heart leaps. *How is this possible? Did he come back just  
for her?*

She glances at her husband. *Does he see?* But Drew is talking.  
Laura turns back.

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE

Mark is gone, a STRANGER sits in his seat. It was her mind  
playing tricks. Her hopes.

DREW (O.S.)  
And Specialist Wallace, what are  
you thinking at this moment?  
(beat)  
Laura?

She turns.

LAURA  
What?

ANGLE ON DREW

He nods encouragingly.

DREW  
How was take off for you?

LAURA  
Me? I'm -- well -- you hope  
everything goes well. There's  
excitement. Mostly I'm just focused  
on the job. We don't get much time  
up there. We've gotta make every  
second count.

HENCKLE  
She's the serious one.

DREW  
Says the German.

People laugh. Chithra speaks up.

CHITHRA  
I'll be honest. What I miss most is  
the team --

On SCREEN we see the ASTRONAUTS in zero gravity -- they are  
floating through the International Space Station -- at play --  
swallowing balls of water that float and rotate.

CHITHRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
-- the mission, moving together,  
looking out for each other.

There's an AIR BUBBLE inside one of the water bubbles and it  
acts as a camera, exaggerating people's faces.

ANGLE ON LAURA

watching the footage, remembering.

ON SCREEN

We see the crew relaxed, goofing around. The camera finds LAURA, her ponytail floating. We expect her to be the serious Laura we've seen, but she is smiling widely.

The WATER BUBBLE floats between her and the camera. She makes a face at it -- at us.

ANGLE ON DREW

watching his wife. He loves seeing her so happy. He looks over at her on the stage.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

She's crying a little, seeing herself up there, a simpler time. What she wouldn't give to go back.

ANGLE ON DREW

He assumes this is about her Nana's death. He feels guilty. *It's too soon.* They should have rescheduled.

DREW

And, uh, Laura, you had a wedding anniversary when you were in space, didn't you?

Laura wipes her face quickly.

LAURA

I did.

DREW

How many years?

LAURA

(self-conscious)

Drew --

(beat)

Seventeen years.

DREW

Must be a helllofa guy.

LAURA

Not bad.

(to the audience)

He's my husband.

They laugh.

DREW  
What did you do on your anniversary?

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTER SPACE - "DAY"

We are CLOSE ON THE FACEPLATE of Laura's HELMET. Reflected in it we see a shower of bright white dots rain across her vision in slow motion --

Her face is filled with wonder.

LAURA (O.S.)  
I worked.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

After the event, Laura grabs her coat from the coat check. Sleepless. Wrecked.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Laura?

She turns to find Chithra approaching.

LAURA  
Hey, that was -- nice.

CHITHRA  
Yeah.  
(leans in)  
Hey, are you okay?

LAURA  
I'm fantastic thank you.

CHITHRA  
If you needed someone to talk to. I get you don't really like me, but we shared things neither of us will ever forget. Mark Goodwin well he's --

LAURA  
Sorry. What are you talking about?

Chitra looks at her like -- come on. Gets nothing back.

CHITHRA  
Mark. People talk Laura.

Laura checks reflexively. DREW is standing over by the windows, schmoozing with some VIPs.

LAURA  
Uh huh. About what?

CHITHRA  
Fine. Whatever. Be very careful.  
That's all I'm saying.

LAURA  
Of what? What do I need to be  
careful of? Am I in danger here?  
Are you threatening me?

CHITHRA  
God no. I'm trying to -- Hey,  
really never mind. Like for real.  
Jesus.

She walks away. Laura is angry. Shouting after her.

LAURA  
I don't know what you're talking  
about. I'd never do anything as  
dumb as you're insinuating. I don't  
compromise myself OK? Not ever. If  
you know me at all. You know that.

Chithra flips her the bird without turning. Laura, stares  
back, breathing heavy, ready to hit someone --

Drew comes over, a PR smile plastered on his face.

DREW  
Hey, beautiful. Whatdyo say we get  
you home? It's been a long day.

Laura allows herself to be led towards the exit.

**SFX: A SIREN BLARES --**

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE SIMULATOR. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura, intense yet detached, is at the helm of the simulator--

**RED LIGHTS FLASH.**

Calmly, she turns back to the crew member responsible--

LAURA  
OK. Erin. On you.

**A SECONDARY ALARM SOUNDS.**

Erin thumbs her book too quickly, missing the section.

ERIN  
Shit. Shit.

LAURA  
Stay frosty. Get it done.

ERIN  
I hear you. Okay.

Erin starts hitting buttons. Nothing is working.

LAURA  
Or there's nothing left to bury.

ERIN  
For God's sake.

Erin flips one last switch and --

**The simulator shuts down. Failure.**

LAURA  
OK. Failure review. What happened?

ERIN  
I'm sorry I --

LAURA  
Is not good enough. Not in any  
situation in here. You are not  
prepared. You're poorly prepared,  
we fly we die. Understand?

ERIN  
Yes.

LAURA  
Failure to prepare is preparation  
to fail.

ERIN  
I get it.

LAURA  
No, you don't. This isn't some team  
it's cool to be on. We work at the  
edge of the possible. It never  
gets safe. Not ever. We win:  
mankind moves forward.

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)  
We lose: everybody dies. That's the job. Show it some respect or quit.

Laura unbuckles her harness and leaves the simulator.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
This happens again I'm writing a formal letter requesting your RTU.

ERIN  
Whoa, that's a little harsh isn't it?

Laura rounds on Erin. She's terrifying --

LAURA  
Right now we're sitting in a hydrogen fire you failed to stop. H2 burns at 5500 fahrenheit. Steel is butter in a pan at half that. I'm being harsh? Am I?

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT

It's a beautiful night for baseball. Parents and neighbors gather to watch the game. LAURA sits in the stand. Drew is on his feet, cheering on his sons.

ANGLE ON NEIL

At the plate. ED takes a lead off second base.

DREW

calls out.

DREW  
Wait for your pitch.

ANGLE ON LAURA

She has her phone out. She's typing.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN

She's WRITING an EMAIL TO MARK.

*My Dearest, I know you won't get this until you come back.*

ANGLE ON THE FIELD

As American boys play the national pastime under the lights.

We hear Laura's voice.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*I was there at the take off. In the cockpit with you. In your heart. Leaving the world behind us.*

ANGLE ON NEIL

He swings at a pitch.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*I remember the moment I decided I had to go up there. I was nine years old. And I saw this picture -- I know you've seen it -- called The Pale Blue Dot. Taken by the Voyager 1 space probe from 6 billion km away.*

ANGLE ON DREW

He claps his hands.

DREW  
Come on, slugger.

He turns to Laura.

DREW (CONT'D)  
Are you watching?

LAURA  
Yeah, I just -- I gotta finish this review.

She goes back to her note.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*And the picture, all these colored lines against the night sky -- except one of the lines has a dot in it. Just a little speck. You'd miss it if you didn't look hard. And my teacher said -- that's us.*

AT THE PLATE

NEIL swings on a pitch, connects.

THE BALL leaps off his bat, headed for the outfield.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*Us. Millions of people on this tiny  
 blue ball. Floating in nothing.*

THE OUTFIELDER charges the ball, but it drops.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*So precarious. So fragile.*

ED TAKES OFF, running for third.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*And then -- to be up there. In  
 space. More alone, more vulnerable  
 than you've ever been in your life.*

THE OUTFIELDER kicks the ball. NEIL rounds first.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*But instead of being afraid -- this  
 thing rises in you. Joy. To be part  
 of it. To see all of it.*

THE THIRD BASE COACH waves ED home. He runs.

LAURA (V.O.)  
*I never felt anything like it my  
 entire life. Suddenly everything  
 that used to be important is  
 nothing at all, and things you  
 never even thought are everything  
 to you. It's beautiful. To be here.  
 All of us. Every minute of our  
 lives. All we have to do -- is be.  
 Just be. Live it all. As real, as  
 hard as you can.*

NEIL runs for second.

ANGLE ON LAURA

She hits send, her eyes watering. Drew is jumping up and down.

DREW  
 Go, go!

Laura stands, as ED SLIDES, beats the throw into HOME PLATE. Safe. Drew grabs her, jumping up and down.

DREW (CONT'D)  
 Did you see that? Did you see it?

Laura smiles, wipes her eyes.

LAURA  
I saw.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S SUV. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Laura sits in her car, parked in the same place where she and Mark first made love.

A FLASH

Of Mark and Laura in this car, a few weeks earlier. Their mouths together.

LAURA

In the present, stares at the trees rustling in the wind.

The RADIO is on.

RADIO ANNOUNCER  
*And in other news, The Space  
Shuttle Endeavor landed safely  
today, just about twenty minutes  
ago. Welcome home, astronauts. This  
one's for you.*

MUSIC RISES

ANOTHER FLASH

Of Mark and Laura in this car, a few weeks earlier. Making love.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

In the present, the music playing. She hasn't slept in days. Atlantis is 18 months away. It's just too long to wait. She needs the boost now, the rush, a sense of purpose, meaning.

As we PUSH IN, she makes a decision. No more half-measures. She isn't that kind of person. If you do something, you do it, commit, finish strong.

She puts the car in gear, peels out.

CUT TO:

INT. MASTER BEDROOM. WALLACE HOUSE - DAY

Laura packs a suitcase, not really paying attention to what she takes.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. WALLACE HOUSE - DAY

Laura sits at the kitchen table, writing a note.

ANGLE ON THE NOTE

*Dear Drew. There's no easy way to say this. I've fallen in love.*

She balls it up, throws it. Tries again.

*Kids, Mommy needs to take a little time for herself.*

ANGLE ON THE CORNER OF THE ROOM

Where this note too, crumpled into a ball, flies into frame and comes to rest near the first.

ANGLE ON LAURA'S SUITCASE

In the hall, as she grabs it.

ANGLE ON LAURA OVER THE CRUMPLED NOTES

as she hurries out the front door with her suitcase. Her engine is revving too high. Clearly, she's not thinking straight.

CUT TO:

**A GIANT "WELCOME HOME!" BANNER**

EXT. MARK GOODWIN'S BACKYARD. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Mark's daughters are throwing a huge welcome back barbecue. Kids splash in the pool, Hawaiian shirts puff cigars, potato salad and deviled eggs is unwrapped.

Manning the grill is the man of the hour: Mark. Completely recovered from being in space just hours earlier.

MARK

No. Uh-uh. Charcoal. You need twenty-two medium-sized charcoals lit in a chimney starter. 22. Let those burn to eighty percent grey and spread it evenly. I'm giving you the keys to heaven here.

Even Mark's estranged wife **MARY** seems to be welcoming the hero home. Mark reaches out, playfully swatting her ass.

MARY  
Don't push your luck, flyboy.

MARK  
There any other way to play?

Mary shakes her head, laughing and walks off.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Telling you guys, stint up there,  
it's a cure-all. Lets the ladies  
realize how cool you are and just  
how much they all miss you. Who  
wants a burger?

Everyone does, especially from an American hero. As Mark hands out charred flesh:

LAURA (O.S.)  
Save one for me?

Mark turns to find -- **Laura, all dressed up and holding a potted African violet.**

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Welcome home, space-boy.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE. MARK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mark pokes his head into the garage to make sure the coast is clear before pulling Laura in with him. As soon as the door closes, Laura goes for a kiss, Mark pushes her away.

MARK  
What the fuck are you doing here?

LAURA  
I left him.

MARK  
What? Have you been drinking?

Laura hands Mark the African violet as if that explains it.

LAURA  
It's a barbecue. You're back, I  
brought you this, and I left Drew  
so we can be together.

Mark looks at the potted flower in his hand, the full extent of this finally crashing down on him.

MARK

Laura, what the fuck?

Laura shudders. She presses her hands to her temples.

MARK (CONT'D)

This is unbelievable --

VOICE (O.S.)

Dad?

Emily, Mark's daughter, stands at the open door.

MARK

Sweetheart! Hey! Daddy's just talking here OK? Be right out --

EMILY

Momma wants to bring out the cake.

MARK

OK. Cool.

Emily leaves. But the door's open, they're entirely exposed.

MARK (CONT'D)

You just need to leave. Now.

LAURA

But I --

MARK

Right fucking now.

He hands the African violet back and storms out.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. MARK'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Laura rushes through his house, on the verge of tears. She's desperate to get out before the water works start but the house is one of those big, suburban monsters-- square footage and dining nooks at every turn. But, then--

-- there's the door. Laura rushes for it, the potted African violet clutched to her chest. She's nearly there when **Erin**, in a cute outfit and ponytail, spots her.

ERIN

Laura! How about this, huh? That  
Mark's something else isn't he?

Laura pushes past her, leaving a stunned Erin behind.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. WALLACE HOUSE - DAY

Drew comes home with the kids. They've been to the grocery store.

DREW

Okay, wash up, then come help me  
clean up.

The kids go upstairs. Drew comes into the kitchen, puts the bags on the counter. He starts to unpack them, then NOTICES THE CRUMPLED NOTES on the floor.

He goes over, picks up the first, reads.

CLOSE UP ON DREW

His face goes pale. He snatches the second note, then the third.

RUTH

comes in behind him, sees her father. Something is clearly wrong.

RUTH

Dad?

CUT TO:

AN ORANGE PILL

As Laura pops it. She is --

EXT. TRACK. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - NIGHT

Laura runs hard, sweating, fleeing her demons. It is two o'clock in the morning.

A SHAPE appears before her. She swerves. It's a SECURITY GUARD.

SECURITY GUARD

Ma'am.

LAURA  
It's okay. I work here.

SECURITY GUARD  
Track's closed, ma'am. I gotta lock  
up.

LAURA  
Where am I supposed to go?

SECURITY GUARD  
You don't got a home?

CUT TO:

INT. NANA'S APARTMENT. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT

Laura lugs suitcases into Nana's place. It's empty and dark. She drops her suitcase in the hallway and looks around.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN. NANA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Laura sits in her grandmother's kitchen staring at the African Violet on the table in front of her. Utterly intent. Nothing distracts her concentration. Not sleep. Not the sunset. Just single minded, terrifying focus. She's doesn't even blink.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM. NANA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Laura lies wide awake on Nana's unturned down bed. Clothed. Shoes on. She looks at the framed picture of her, Drew and the kids on the nightstand. Smiling. In love.

Clock reads 4.30am. She grabs a bottle of pills from the nightstand and takes two. Lies back staring at the ceiling.

*Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock.*

The BEDSIDE CLOCK is getting inside her head.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. NANA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The alarm clock FLIES out of the bedroom and SMASHES on the wall.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura carries the same African violet down the row of offices until she reaches the door marked "GOODWIN".

Outside the door, she stops, listens: is that laughter from inside? When she can take it no more, Laura opens the door --

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

**Mark and Erin, a little too close.** Mark looks up, surprised--

MARK

Heyyy! Laura?! OK.

Something suspicious about Mark and Erin's body language.

MARK (CONT'D)

Erin's been having a little trouble with some, uh, shut down protocols.

LAURA

She had a lot of trouble with them the other day.

MARK

I said we'd give her a few pointers  
--

ERIN

You're a peach. Thanks Mark.

(to Laura)

Bye.

Erin passes Laura, their eyes locking. Mark closes the door behind her and turns to Laura.

MARK

We need to talk.

LAURA

I've just got so much I want to say. I forgot to give you this.

She hands him the African violet. He puts it down.

MARK

What did you say to Drew?

LAURA

Nothing. I left a note. All that matters is that you want me and I want you. I don't care --

Laura leans in to kiss but he pulls away--

MARK

-- see I do. I care. You of all people know that. This, right here, this matters. To me. To us.

LAURA

I wrote a note. He deserved to know.

MARK

What? Exactly. Did he deserve?

LAURA

I told him we were in love.

Mark looks as if he's been shot.

MARK

You said what? Oh fuck me. We're screwed. You've screwed me.

Laura shrinks away from Mark, unsure how things ended up like this. Mark looks at his watch.

MARK (CONT'D)

Look, I'm not even supposed to still be here. I've got to be in Orlando. Flight leaves first thing. When I get back, we'll fix this. I have no idea how but -- fuck me.

LAURA

Where are you going? Orlando?

MARK

Work. It's a boring trip.

Laura grabs Mark desperately. She never wants to let him go.

LAURA

You have to stay. We have to talk.

MARK

I can't. PR junket stuff, Paxton's breathing down my neck -- no choice.

Laura's heart sinks. She's heard that line before and it's enough to make her panic inside. She buries it.

MARK (CONT'D)  
Why? Why mess everything up when it was going so good?

Laura can't respond. She's overcome. Searches for words --

LAURA  
I wanted it to be real.

Mark shakes his head and goes out the door leaving her alone.

Laura stares ahead. No tears. Numb.

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE SIMULATOR. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - LATER

Laura sits alone in the quiet simulator, the only crisis now inside her head. There is a KNOCK. She looks up.

PAXTON  
Thought I'd find you out here.

She looks at him blankly.

PAXTON (CONT'D)  
Just got the word. It's official:  
you are selected for crew duty.  
You're going back Commander  
Wallace.

LAURA  
Atlantis?

PAXTON  
You betcha.

Laura stares straight ahead. No reaction. Flat. Nothing.

PAXTON (CONT'D)  
Not quite what I was expecting --

Laura looks at him as though from deep in a dream.

LAURA  
I don't know what to say.

PAXTON  
Say thank you. I know how bad you wanted this.

LAURA

Thank you.

PAXTON

Everything OK, Laura?

Laura deploys a broad 100 watt grin.

LAURA

Everything A-OK, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

Laura walks down the hall. She sees DREW ahead, coming towards her.

DREW

What the hell are you doing?

LAURA

No, it's okay. I got Atlantis. They chose me.

She tries to go around him. Drew grabs her elbow.

DREW

Who is he?

Laura tugs her arm away.

LAURA

You wanna --  
(looks around)  
-- keep your voice down.

DREW

My voice? I lied to your kids last night, told them you were working a double shift.

LAURA

I was. I did. That's -- I don't know what you think --

He produces the crumpled paper from his pocket.

DREW

*Dear Drew. There's no easy way to say this. I've fallen in love.*

LAURA

No. That's --

DREW

Who is he?

(beat)

Laura, you need to come home. We have to talk about this.

LAURA

No, I -- they chose me. I told you. Atlantis. I'm going back up. So I've gotta --

DREW

It's eighteen fucking months from now. You need to come home with me. Right now.

Beat. Everything is spinning for her. There's too much pressure.

LAURA

UTS to urine transfer hose. Closed.

DREW

What?

LAURA

Connect urine tranfer filter to faeces PD. Check. Clip receptical ASSY to transfer hose. Check.

He stares at her. She is clearly losing her mind.

DREW

What?

Laura walks away from him, running her checklist, trying to stay ahead of the feelings.

DREW (CONT'D)

Laura!

LAURA

URA valve. Vent. Open. Management drain valve. Dump. Flush PKG, screen and honeycomb. Check.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOWERS. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - LATER

Laura stands motionless under the shower head in the Johnson gym. Hot water streams over her.

She stares at her hand. Puts it in her mouth. And bites.

Her teeth sink into her own flesh. Deep. Blood streams across the back of her hand. Laura stares straight ahead. She doesn't wince. Doesn't cry out. Just bites down as hard as she possibly can. Harder. She opens her jaws and her mouth and teeth are covered with blood.

She looks down at her hand. A deep semicircle bite mark pumps blood between her fingers onto the tiles.

She wipes it across the shower wall. Staring into space.

CUT TO:

INT. LOCKER ROOM. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - LATER

Laura dials her phone.

PHONE

Hey you've reached Mark Goodman's  
cell. I can't take your call right -

-

Dials again.

PHONE (CONT'D)

Hey you've reached --

She dials again.

PHONE (CONT'D)

Hey you've reached Mark Goodman's --

Again.

PHONE (CONT'D)

Hey you've reached --

Again.

PHONE (CONT'D)

Hey you've reached Mark Goodman's --

CUT TO:

INT. TOOL ROOM. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - NIGHT

Laura finds a tool box. She grabs a thin triangular file. She takes out her office key. Begins to file the edges. Cutting a row of jagged saw teeth the length of it.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - NIGHT

Late. Everyone gone. *Almost* everyone. Laura makes her way toward Mark's darkened office. She tries the handle: **locked**.

Laura reaches into her bag, pulling out a drill hammer and her newly made bump key. She hits it a few times without success -- wincing at the noise -- then.

-- **CLICK**--

-- the tumblers bump. The key turns. And the door opens.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Laura slips in, shutting the door behind her.

Mark's office is the same as it ever was-- more man-cave than workspace. Two framed pictures-- Mark with his family and Mark with the *Endeavor* crew-- Laura picks up the picture of the crew. She runs her finger across it.

She goes through Mark's drawers but doesn't find much more than a few Playboys and a giant tub of cheese puffs.

Laura wakes up Mark's computer. Laura eats a few cheese puffs as she leans in, pecking at a few keys. She yanks opens the desk drawer. Mark's passwords are written on a Post-It taped to the side of the drawer. She logs in. Something catches her eye: an email, sent from Mark.

MARK (V.O.)  
*Hey, space girl --*

Laura stops. She checks the address-- **ErinHawley@nasa.gov**.

MARK (V.O.)  
*You were unbelievable last night.*

Searches the inbox for messages with Erin's name. Hundreds. She sees the African violet in Mark's trash can.

ERIN (V.O.)  
*Hey. I miss you! I miss your body.  
 So hot you're emailing from space.*

CUT TO:

INT. ERIN'S CAR. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

We FLASH to images of Erin and Mark undressing each other. The two of them having sex in the back of Erin's car.

MARK (V.O.)

*It's mind blowing out here. I want you to experience this. I want us to share this magic. I only wish you were right here with me.*

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD. MARK GOODWIN'S HOUSE. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

We flash to Mark's Barbecue. Mark is sticking his hand under Erin's shirt. She leans into him. In the distance, we see his ex wife and kids preparing the grill.

MARK (V.O.)

*Can't wait for our weekend away. You're gonna love Orlando. There's this place I know. Can't get a reservation. I know a guy.*

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEAR LAKE PARK. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT

Erin and Mark lay in the bed of Mark's truck with blankets and pillows. They look up at the stars.

ERIN (V.O.)

*I'll be on flight UA1946. There's a two hour layover in Atlanta -- gross -- Gets in at six in the morning. I cannot wait to see you.*

CUT TO:

INT. MARK'S OFFICE. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Laura scribbles down **UA1946**. And **4.30am**. She clicks email after email, until finally:

MARK (V.O.)

*Erin I never felt this way my whole life. Since being up here I feel like I have a whole planet of love I want to give you. I want to make you feel as wild and free as you make me feel every second we're together. Love your Spaceboy.*

Laura looks up from the screen. No reaction. No histrionics. Nothing. Flat. Emotionless. Numb.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM. NANA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Dozens of pieces of paper are arranged around the room. On the floor. On furniture. Emails. Printed out. Wrinkled from so much handling. The broken African violet from Mark's trash, it's there too, like the sun in her solar system.

LAURA PACES. A combination of very animated and oddly calm. Moving fast. But her expression remains utterly flat.

She stops her pacing at the kitchen counter and unscrews a vodka bottle. Pours one. Drinks it. Pours another.

LAURA

DC power -- DC power from fuel cell 1 through the ESS bus source FC 1 switch on panel R1 when the switch is positioned to on and from main DC buses B and C through RPCs when the ESS bus source MN B/C switch on panel R1 is positioned to on.

She knocks the second back and winces.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Positioned to ON. Positioned to on.

ANGLE ON THE DESK

We see an ENVELOPE of CASH. Next to it is a CAN OF MACE. And something else -- the .38 SPECIAL, fully loaded.

LAURA

checks her heartrate with two fingers and the second sweep of her watch.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Positioned to on.

She picks up the bottle of pills and shakes it rhythmically. There should be enough to get her there.

Laura goes over to her wall, where she's pinned ROAD MAPS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES.

ANGLE ON THE WALL

There are ROUTES drawn on the MAP. First, a flight path in red Houston to Orlando, with a layover in Atlanta.

"Travel time: 756 minutes. ETA: 08:32"

The other routes are less certain. DRIVING ROUTES, drawn in black marker. Most of them are abandoned halfway, ETAs and travel times crossed out here and there.

But now, finally, she might have it. Laura plots small roads across six states. She does a calculation before writing:

"ETA: 05:30. Liftoff in T-6 mins."

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

Flight plan filed.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Positioned to ON.

CUT TO:

INT. TARGET. HOUSTON, TX - DAWN

Laura pushes a SHOPPING CART down the fluorescent aisles, grabbing items:

-- a hunting KNIFE --

-- an oversized HAMMER --

-- yellow dishwashing GLOVES --

-- a bumper pack of diet sodas --

-- 2 bags of Twinkies --

-- a length of rubber surgical tubing --

-- a PACKAGE of DEPENDS ADULT DIAPERS

-- and, finally, from a polystyrene head in the hair products aisle --

-- a BLACK WIG.

CUT TO:

THE CHECKOUT COUNTER

A bored clerk rings her up.

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

Chewing her lips, antsy. She takes out her pill bottle, pops two pills.

CLERK  
Paper or plastic?

LAURA  
What?

CLERK  
The bag. You want paper or plastic?

LAURA  
Plastic. No, paper. No -- wait --  
what's the tensile strength of both  
bags, approximately?

The clerk stares at her.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
The yield. Have they been stress  
tested? Maybe double bag the paper.  
Or -- wait -- this it -- paper  
inside plastic. Or -- shit, shit.  
I'll just -- throw it in the cart.  
Everything. Come on, get the lead  
out.

CUT TO:

EXT. TARGET. HOUSTON, TX - DAY

Laura tosses her things into the back of her SUV and slams  
the door shut. She hurries to the driver's side.

Inside, she tears open the Depends package. She struggles to  
strip off her pants, to pull on a pair.

There's is nothing irrational to this in her mind. She has a  
job to do -- drive 800 miles in the fastest time possible. At  
80 miles an hour, she can do it in 10 hours. Erin's flight  
lands in 10 hours and 20 minutes.

Laura can't afford to take a bathroom break.

She gets the diaper on, muscles her pants back on, leaving  
them unzipped, unbuttoned, starting the car.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S SUV (TRAVELING) RURAL LOUISIANA - LATER

MUSIC BLASTS. Laura smokes cigarettes and stares to the  
horizon. Eyes wide. Eating highway. Nothing can stop her.  
Nothing can get in her way, until --

-- sirens flash.

Laura sees in her rearview: a patrol car signaling pull over.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY. RURAL LOUISIANA - CONTINUOUS

Laura at the side of the highway. The **POLICE OFFICER**, hefty and drowsy, ambles over. When the officer finally reaches the SUV Laura has the window down offering her best smile.

LAURA

Sorry about that officer. Lost in my thoughts, I guess.

POLICE OFFICER  
Licence, registration.

Laura reaches for the glove compartment, opening it --

-- **revealing the handgun** --

-- having forgotten it was there, Laura scrambles to knock gun out of the glove box and under the passenger seat.

Holding her breath, she turns back to the officer, who is looking down the highway. She hands him her paperwork.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)  
So. We all in some type of hurry?

LAURA  
Little bit.

The Police Officer spits, taking his time, proving a point. He's got no where to be--

POLICE OFFICER  
Navy flyer, huh?

LAURA  
Yes, sir.

The Officer looks at her over his sunglasses.

POLICE OFFICER  
You don't sir me, Commander. Petty Officer, First Class, USS Nimitz. Iraq. Two tours. Where'd you serve?

LAURA  
Low Earth Orbit.

POLICE OFFICER  
How's that?

LAURA  
I'm an astronaut.

POLICE OFFICER  
For real? What's it like up there?

LAURA  
Only place where anything makes  
sense.

POLICE OFFICER  
I hear that.

He hands back Laura's licence and registration.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)  
Take it a little easier, Commander.  
This ain't no spaceship.

LAURA  
I surely will.

CUT TO:  
EXT. ROADSIDE. WESTERN FLORIDA - DAY

An SUV attempting to break the sound barrier.

CUT TO:  
INT. LAURA'S SUV (TRAVELING). WESTERN FLORIDA - DUSK  
Laura drives with the intent expression of the opening scene.

LAURA  
Eight hours add 74 minutes, with 4  
minute stop for fuel -- OK. Good.  
The benefit of all mankind.

She drives.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
For the benefit.

Suddenly looks like she might cry. Gets it back. No tears.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
For mankind.

She nods. Absolutely certain.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
For all mankind. For the benefit of  
ALL MANKIND.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - HOUR BEFORE DAWN

It's drizzling outside. Laura, now wrapped in a giant TRENCH COAT, and wearing a dark WIG, enters the ARRIVALS TERMINAL. She couldn't look crazier.

CUT TO:

INT. ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Laura walks through the empty airport. She pulls at her trench coat, tightening it as if it were a suit of armor.

Nearby, an **AIRPORT JANITOR** vacuums the loudly patterned carpet. Laura walks up and taps the man on the shoulder--  
-- startling him half to death. Pulls an earbud from his ear.

LAURA  
Baggage from the Houston flight?

AIRPORT JANITOR  
Uh, I'm not sure. Over there maybe?

The Janitor points to a crowd beside a luggage carousel.

LAURA  
Thank you, sir.

Laura heads for the carousel. The Janitor watches her go, an eyebrow cocked at her bizarre getup. He shrugs and goes back to his vacuuming. This is Florida after all. He's seen worse.

CUT TO:

INT. BAGGAGE CAROUSEL. ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -  
MOMENTS LATER

ERIN waits beside the baggage carousel, yoga stretching.

Even after a red eye, Erin is rested and put together.

-- which, can not be said for Laura as she peeks out from behind a nearby column, spotting Erin. Laura observes. Hands shoved deep into the pockets of her trench coat.

Erin senses something, someone, and turns her head just as--

-- Laura steps behind the pillar. It's a close call but --

-- **BEEP BEEP BEEP** --

With a heavy lurch, the conveyor starts. Erin spots her bag -- a bright red suitcase-- grabs it and starts for the exit.

Head down, Laura steps from behind the column and walks after Erin, reaching in a trash can and pulls out a newspaper.

CUT TO:

EXT. ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Laura's pretending to read the newspaper as she follows Erin. They make their way past a line of taxis and shuttles.

CUT TO:

INT. PARKING GARAGE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Erin climbs stairs. Hearing footsteps behind her, she stops.

***The footsteps stop, too.***

Erin waits for a suspicious second but there's no sign of anyone in the garage or stairway. She continues on.

CUT TO:

INT. PARKING GARAGE - GARAGE

Erin wheels her suitcase in the darkened parking garage, hurrying now. She looks over her shoulder to see --

-- **A figure following her.** Forty feet back, looking downward, her wig pulled low to cover her face--

-- **Erin speeds up. Glancing over her shoulder.**

-- **The mysterious figure behind her also speeds up.**

-- **Erin is getting really afraid now. Tripping over herself to get up a ramp she closes on her car turning a corner:**

-- **Erin takes off at a full sprint**, her bag bumping and rolling behind her away from the crazy pursuer.

-- **But the crazy silhouette doesn't stop. It launches into headlong pursuit of its prey.** As it lopes, it reaches in the pocket of its trench coat and removes a pair of bright yellow **DISH WASHING GLOVES**. It pulls them on.

ERIN  
Stay away from me! Stay away!!!

Erin rushes to her rental car, fumbling with her keys--

-- **WHICH SHE DROPS** --

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Shit! Shit! Shit!

-- Erin scrambles to the ground, reaching for her keys. She grabs them, unlocks the car--

-- haphazardly tosses her suitcase inside--

-- before diving in herself--

-- **slamming the door shut and locked.**

Erin looks out the window but there is no sign of her stalker. It's gone. *Vanished*. Erin hurries her seat belt on. Deep breath. Collects herself. She puts the keys in the ignition and turns the engine--

-- **BAM BAM BAM**--

ERIN (CONT'D)  
AHHHHHH!!!!

-- a HAND SLAPS THE WINDOW. Yelling:

LAURA  
Open the door! Please. Open up.

Erin stops, her eyes squinting in recognition --

ERIN  
Laura is that you?--

-- at the sound of her name, **LAURA STARTS CRYING**. It's ugly stuff-- big tears, heaving, the works.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
What are you doing? Are you okay?

Laura's heart is thumping in her ears. The world swims around her. Her mouth bone dry. Shuts her eyes and tries to focus.

LAURA  
Open the door. I beg you. I'm scared. Someone is out here.

Her terrified eyes pleading. She looks completely convincing. Erin's hand goes to the door lock. Laura's hand goes into the pocket of the trenchcoat --

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Please --

A FLASH

A WHITE GLOVED HAND closes on a tether, two hundred miles above the earth, as Laura flies in geosynchronous orbit.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
*Safety tether detached.*

BACK TO:

AIRPORT PARKING LOT

Laura pleads.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
You have to help me. Please.

ERIN  
What's going on why are you here?

Laura's hand comes out of the pocket of her coat holding a her Nana's .38 Special, hidden behind her leg.

A FLASH

Mark stares into camera. It is the moment he first met Laura.

MARK  
(smiles broadly)  
*Oh, there it is.*

IN THE PARKING LOT

Laura is distraught. Concerned, Erin opens her window.

LAURA  
What is happening to me?

ERIN  
What are you doing here Laura?

Laura's fist tightens. Her finger moves to the trigger.

A FLASH

The DELIVERY ROOM. Laura lays in bed with the TWINS in her arms. She has just given birth.

She touches their little hands. They look up at her, not crying, filled with wonder --

IN THE PARKING LOT

Laura's head swims, her eyes blurry.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Are you OK? What's happened to you?

LAURA  
I want. I want. Please. Why can't you all just -- see? I -- I'm --

Laura starts to raise the gun -- inch by inch --

ERIN  
Laura talk to me? Why are you here?

A FLASH

NANA sips from her coffee cup, alive again.

NANA  
So you're just gonna have to work harder.

IN THE PARKING LOT

Laura focuses on Erin.

-- the gun's progress slows, fighting herself for every inch.

LAURA  
I don't know.

Laura opens her hand. The gun drops from her fingers into space. Floating away from her weightless in slow motion.

Laura looks down at it impossibly floating at zero G speed away from her then back at Erin's confused expression.

A FLASH

RUTH stands in her homemade astronaut costume, the name tag reading *L. Wallace*.

RUTH  
Ta da.

IN THE PARKING LOT

Erin looks around, fear returning.

ERIN

Laura? This is a teensy bit crazy.

Laura throws her head back and lets out a guttural howl of anger and pain as she raises her other hand and --

**-- BLASTS ERIN IN THE FACE WITH A CAN OF MACE.**

In her eyes a chilling expression of limitless rage and glee.

ERIN (CONT'D)

Aaaaaaargghhh!!! You bitch!

**LAURA REACHES THROUGH THE WINDOW AND OPENS THE DOOR --**

**-- GRABS ERIN BY THE HAIR, TRYING TO PULL HER FROM THE CAR--**

**-- BUT THE SEAT BELT SAVES HER. SHE'S STUCK. THEY STRUGGLE FOR A FEW MOMENTS WITH HER HALF IN AND HALF OUT OF THE CAR. KICKING AND PUNCHING AND FIGHTING.**

CUT TO:

Laura's screaming twin sons fight on her kitchen floor, wrapped up in a tangle of pulled hair and kicked shins.

BACK TO:

SUDDENLY LAURA SEEMS COMPLETLEY AWARE OF HER BEHAVIOUR

She releases her two big handfuls of Erin's hair.

LAURA

Oh my god. I'm sorry.

Erin kicks her hard away. **AND SHE SLAMS A FOOT ON THE GAS--**

**-- CRUNCHHH--**

-- her car lurches forward, directly into the bumper of the car parked opposite--

-- Laura lies on the gravel, the mace in her gloved hand, stunned at what she's done. Breathing. Eyes wide and wild.

**-- BEEP BEEP BEEP--**

-- Erin crashes more cars, setting off car alarms. She reaches out to slam the door, shifts into drive and takes off

**-- SCREEETCH--**

-- the side of the car scraping along the concrete wall as Erin drives like a (blind) bat out of hell.

Laura sinks to her knees. She looks up at the sky.

LAURA (CONT'D)  
Help. Help me. Help me.

-- **FLASHBULB EXPLODES WHITING OUT THE FRAME** --

CUT TO:

INT. ORLANDO POLICE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Laura's 2-pound drilling hammer sits on a metal table, where a beefy man, **DETECTIVE LOPEZ**, takes evidence pictures.

Lopez replaces the hammer with Laura's wig. He snaps a new photo. He repeats the process with a long list of items--

-- the yellow dish washing gloves--

-- **FLASH**--

-- plastic garbage bags, rubber tubing, rope of varying lengths, the mace, a knackered African violet, \$585 in cash, an 8-inch Gerber folding hunting knife --

-- **FLASH**--

Another detective enters. Picks up the knife, whistling.

DETECTIVE LOPEZ  
That is so not the best part.

Detective hands over a large, open package of **ADULT DIAPERS**.

DETECTIVE CAIN  
No way.

Laura is turned to the left, for a series of mug shots.

DETECTIVE LOPEZ (O.S.)  
Got no time for bathroom breaks.  
Said that's how they did it in  
space. Said she's an astronaut.

DETECTIVE CAIN  
If I can be Spiderman --

Laura turns towards the camera, brow furrowed in embarrassment. She looks terrible. Like a caught kid.

Laura's hair is a stringy mess, tear-smeared make-up streaks her cheeks, even that can't cover the circles under her eyes--

-- **FLASH** --

A mugshot of total confusion and shame.

CUT TO:

INT. BREAK ROOM. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MORNING

Colonel Paxton is busy with a coin-operated coffee machine in the NASA breakroom. He slaps the machine --

PAXTON  
Piece of crap.

Coffee drips into a styrofoam cup. A subordinate, rushes in--

SUBORDINATE  
Chief. Gonna want to see this.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Dirk leads Paxton down a NASA corridor to an open office.

Several NASA employees are crowded around a television.

We see the **ORLANDO POLICE CHIEF** giving a press conference. The news headline reads: **ASTRONAUT IN KIDNAP SEX SCANDAL**

REPORTER  
(on screen)  
*Is it true that Laura Wallace is  
being charged for attempted murder?*

POLICE CHIEF  
*There will be a full briefing later  
today. Thank you.*

The chief leaves the lectern as cameras **FLASH** and reporters jockey to get one last question in. The newscast cuts from the press conference to an **ANCHOR**. She breathlessly delivers:

ANCHOR  
*Stayed tuned for the breaking news  
on what across America is being  
called the Astronaut Love Triangle.  
We'll bring you unbelievable  
details on this amazing true story  
right after this break --*

The program cuts to some fancy graphics: **NASA LOVE TRIANGLE**.

PAXTON  
Oh. My. God.

DIRK  
On Fox it's "Diaper Love Triangle".

Paxton looks like he's going to be sick.

**RING-RING. RING-RING.**

A phone in the adjacent office. Paxton grimaces. Other phones start ringing throughout the building.

CUT TO:

INT. LA QUINTA INN. ORLANDO, FLORIDA - AFTERNOON

ERIN is alone in her Orlando hotel room, blinds drawn. The TV is on mute, but she still watches. Her picture flashes onscreen.

*RING RING.* Erin **SHRIEKS** at the phone. She picks it up.

MARK (O.S.)  
Erin?

ERIN  
Where are you? Why aren't you here?

CUT TO:

EXT. ORLANDO AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

MARK is hunched over a payphone outside Terminal B.

MARK  
I'm boarding a flight home. I don't know what that maniac said to you but none of it's true.

ERIN  
She didn't say anything. She was crazy. She was this totally crazy person. She seemed so -- sad.

MARK  
Fuck her! Worry about me. About us.

Erin stares into space. She's smart, she knows the deal.

CUT TO:

INT. ARRIVAL TERMINAL. GEORGE BUSH AIRPORT - MORNING

Mark steps off his flight. The paparazzi are already there, thronging the gate, flashing pictures.

REPORTER

Mark! Mark! Mark! Fox News. Can you comment on the allegations against-

Mark holds up his hands. Deploys the million dollar smile.

MARK

Guys guys. C'mon settle down. I can't comment on that. But I'd be real happy to talk about my recent trip into orbit aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavour to repair the International Space Station.

REPORTER 2

Mark how many astronauts are you sexually involved with right now?

REPORTER 3

Did you engage in extra-marital sex in space?

The awful reality dawns on Mark as he realises he'll never be remembered as anything but this. The smiles cracks and fades.

REPORTER 3 (CONT'D)

Jeff Simmons National Enquirer. Are you the real life space cowboy? Are you the gangster of love?

Peerless hero to national clown in 24hrs. And he knows it.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURA'S JAIL CELL. ORLANDO, FLORIDA - EVENING

Laura sits in silence, staring out her window into the fading evening sky. She turns and Paxton is sitting in the cell.

PAXTON

How are you feeling?

LAURA

Fine.

She doesn't look it.

PAXTON

I came out of respect for you and your service. Do you have any idea the damage you've done? To yourself- To the program. To everything we represent. Everything you loved.

Laura knows.

LAURA

Sir -- you said some real nice  
things about me over the years and-

PAXTON

Laura. I-

LAURA

Was it true? Any of it. Was I --

Paxton's eyes are filled with sadness.

PAXTON

Laura. You were everything I said.

Laura lets out a gigantic shuddering sigh of relief.

LAURA

Thank you.

PAXTON

What happened?

Laura looks out of the window up into the sky.

LAURA

I thought -- I felt something.

PAXTON

Felt what?

Paxton gives her a pitying look. She smiles through tears.  
Shrugs. Paxton stands there. At a total loss.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

I got to go. I got fires to fight.

LAURA

I don't imagine we'll see one  
another again. Goodbye sir.

PAXTON

Goodbye, Laura.

Paxton waves and a guard opens the door to let him out.

Alone. Laura shuts her eyes tight and we --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PARKING GARAGE. HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Laura's sitting in the wreckage her fight with Erin left behind all around her. She's deep in a trance until, finally--

-- a distant police siren breaks the silence.

-- *Laura stands up shakily -- looks around herself --*

-- *she hastily grabs something up off the ground --*

-- *and runs.*

Takes the stairs two at a time. Wild-eyed. Moving as fast as she can. Pulls at the rubber gloves, trying to get them off. Tosses one in a trash can, drops the other and keeps running.

But, Laura isn't going down the stairs. **She's going up.** She's not trying to escape, she's trying to get higher up. Up to --

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOF - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

It's RAINING HARD NOW. Sirens closing in. Panicked, Laura hides the gun behind the rear wheel of a truck axle.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Ten.*

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE *DISCOVERY* - DAY

We're close in on Laura's face. This is it. The FINAL COUNTDOWN. She's nervous. Apprehensive. We hear the crackle of a headset:

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Nine.*

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOF - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Laura, soaking wet now, sees a nearby trash can and pulls her 8-inch Gerber folding knife from her boot, tosses that into the can.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Eight.*

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE *DISCOVERY* - DAY

As the countdown continues, Laura looks around in a moment of sheer panic. What if this is a terrible mistake?

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Seven.*

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOF - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Another trash can, Laura removes her wig: tosses it.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Six.*

CUT TO:

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE *DISCOVERY* - DAY

Laura grips the armrests of her seat.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Five.*

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING GARAGE ROOF - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

There's no direction to where Laura's going. She's not making any sort of escape. She's just zig-zagging across the parking lot, tossing evidence, as --

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)

*Four.*

**-- police cars surround her.**

Laura's like a cornered animal. Around her, officers get out of their cars, pulling guns.

Laura turns and steps up to the ROOF WALL. Ignoring their cries, she climbs on top.

The COPS APPROACH, guns drawn.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Three.*

CLOSE UP ON LAURA

The ground far below her. She's staring into the middle distance.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Two.

We PUSH ON her deep blue eyes and -- reflected there -- we see what she's staring at.

ANGLE ON THE PLANET EARTH.

further away than it has ever been before and getting smaller. A pale blue dot, insignificant in the vast infinity of space.

LAURA (V.O.)  
-- *to fly into the great unknown --*

ON THE WALL

Laura raises her hands, but is she surrendering or getting ready to fly?

LAURA (V.O.)  
-- *to see what it's like.*

A RAPID MONTAGE OF FLOWERS OPENING PETALS. LAURA'S CHILDREN. DREW TOUCHING HER HAND. SEEDS SPLIT AND GROW. RAIN SPLASHING ON WATER. LAURA UNDERWATER. A SHOAL OF FISH CHANGE DIRECTION. RUTH DRESSED AS AN ASTRONAUT. THE PICTURE OF LAURA AS A LITTLE GIRL NEXT TO HER NANA. LAURA ON A BEACH LAUGHING. THEN SCREAMING INTO HER HELMET AS SHE EXITS THE ATMOSPHERE.

THE CAMERA PANS

Away from the pale blue dot into the blackness of space. It finds LAURA floating free, no tether, no ship. Alone in the universe.

LAURA  
*The terror and the joy.*

EVEN FASTER CUTS. Her kids. Dancing. A baby's eyes. Laura floating in the water: looking at the stars. Then sitting on the floor of a JAIL CELL.

Equally alone.

LAURA (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
*To feel it all.*

A flash of agony. A flash of bliss.

EXTREME CLOSE UP ON HER FACE

As she stands on the wall, the RAIN running down her face, illuminated by red and blue flashing police lights.

This is it, the moment of truth.

MISSION CONTROL

*One.*

CUT TO BLACK

THE END