

THE SPARROW

A Television Series

PILOT

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Based on the novel by
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INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - 2089

A typical hospital room with two differences: medical information is shown in mid-air on a heads-up display; and over the bed is a large crucifix.

Muffled SHOUTING comes from outside. A dozen closely spaced THUDS reverberate against the room's window.

The male PATIENT is intubated and his hands and arms are heavily bandaged. Almost fifty, his chiseled features are deeply scarred. His bright, haunted eyes snap open.

His thick hair is prematurely white. Even in this traumatized state, his intelligence shines through.

With great effort he leans forward, and -- with his teeth -- pulls the I.V. out of his arm. Thus untethered, he bends up to sitting position, never using his hands.

The patient places two feet on the floor. With great difficulty, he stands. BURN SCARS mar his bare feet.

Another round of THUDS pound the window. More SHOUTS.

Enduring considerable pain, and on unsteady legs, he walks to the window and looks out.

EXT. ST. PETER'S SQUARE 2089 (THROUGH WINDOW) - NIGHT

The Vatican plaza is packed with PROTESTERS, shouting and waving signs; they're surrounded by MEDIA and SECURITY.

An English-language chant reverberates:

CHANTING CROWD
Death to Sandoz! Killer! Rapist! Death to
Sandoz! Killer! Rapist!

A dozen ROCKS hit the Plexiglass, explaining the THUDS.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - 2089 - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

The man backs away. He looks down at his wrapped hands.

Impulsively he bites off the tape that holds the dressings on his right hand, then latches the end of the bandage to the stand holding the I.V.

Barely able to tolerate the pain, he moves his hand in a tight spiral, backing away, removing the bandage.

He gets too close to the room's door and an ALARM SOUNDS, adding urgency to his task.

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS approach rapidly from the nearby hall.

Before he can finish unwrapping his hand, four tiny RED DOTS appear in a tight cluster on his chest.

FOUR SWISS GUARDSMEN, holding high-tech siege weapons of the late 21st Century, yet wearing uniforms designed by Michelangelo, gesture for him to return to his bed.

He stands his ground, speaking calmly, at first in Latin:

PATIENT

Interficias me. Shoot me. I want to die.

Two guards shove the patient backwards, and he falls onto the bed before he can finish unwrapping his hand.

This man is EMILIO SANDOZ.

He utters a desolate, soul-wrenching MOAN.

EXT. VATICAN - NIGHT - 2089

WE SEE INTO THE ROOM from outside, the only lit window on a row of Vatican Apartments, high above --

-- ST. PETER'S SQUARE, with its ANGRY MOB waving signs: "Vatican Shielding Killer!" and "Put Sandoz on Trial."

A POSTER of Sandoz (younger, in a priest's collar) is torched, and the crowd goes wild as it burns.

Follow the sparks up to St. Peter's dome, over a barely-futuristic Rome. At its pinnacle flutters a VATICAN FLAG.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY - REDLIGHT

A TINY VATICAN FLAG flutters atop a Mars-style Rover.

Twin suns set behind a valley verdant with strange flora. A faint red giant remains in the sky -- thus, redlight.

SUPERTITLE: RAKHAT, QUARANTINE DAY 17.

A TRANSLUCENT LIZARD freezes in her tracks, afraid. She looks left, right, then behind, where --

The rover scoops her into a cage, which is gently deposited next to many other caged small creatures on the back of the rover, which then rolls up a ridge toward --

THE STELLA MARIS LANDER

A dusty, modular spaceship about the size of a large house, flying the same flag. A subtle cross motif, and a Cathedral window, hint at its religious origins.

PRELAP AUDIO: Fists rhythmically POUND on focus mitts.

SANDOZ (O.S.)

Bah bah bah BAM! Bah bah bah BAM!

INT. *STELLA MARIS LANDER* - GYM - REDLIGHT

A tiny gym, with well-worn workout equipment.

EMILIO SANDOZ, thirties, muscular, shirtless in boxing shorts, is in training mode, holding up focus mitts and calling out combinations. This hale man is the same person we saw in the hospital -- at the peak of health.

SANDOZ

Left-Left-Left-RIGHT! Focus on the rhythm! Don't think!

SOFIA MENDES, a world-class linguist at 32, whose dark, piercing eyes exude intelligence tinged with loss, is at the limits of her stamina, PUNCHING away at Sandoz.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

Ba-ba-ba-BAM! Harder, Sofia!

Something ignites within her, and suddenly she "gets" it. Her next combination is powerful and coordinated! But then, she abruptly pauses, captured by a thought --

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

Don't stop -- what's the matter?

SOFIA

(punching and speaking)

Nothing. The Singers: Bah-bah-bah-BAM!
Dah-dah-dah-DAH! The rhythm, Emilio--

SANDOZ

-- a click language like Gciriku? Even in fragments, it's too musical for that --

SOFIA

-- unless tone, consonants and vowels are
a distraction, and meaning is encoded
only in the rhythmic patterns --

Their workout is forgotten in the spell of an addictive,
compelling intellectual hunt. They start to take off
their boxing gear, and hash out this new idea --

SANDOZ

An "anti-language." Like Bangime.

SOFIA

Right! -- if the clicks were hidden in a
matrix of obfuscating sounds --

They freeze when they see SAM HAWKINS (40s, British,
professorial, brilliant and combative, Sofia's husband)
staring possessively at Sofia from the tiny gym's door.

HAWKINS

I love it when you talk dirty.
(Sofia smiles)
Quinn picked up an RF signal.

SOFIA

What? When?

HAWKINS

Now. It's live. Continuous transmission.
Possibly unfragmented.

SANDOZ

From The Singers?

HAWKINS

He's still de-modding. But it's local, so
I'm pretty sure it's not a Top 40 show.

Excitement level is nuclear. Sandoz pulls on a gym shirt
with a vivid Jesuit IHS sunburst-and-nails logo (matching
the tattoo on his upper arm.) A voice booms over the
loudspeaker: QUINN (whom we'll meet momentarily.)

QUINN (P.A. SYSTEM)

Cracked it! Upper sideband. It's live:

Over loudspeakers, ALIEN VOCAL MUSIC plays, strange,
inhuman, and irresistibly compelling. The adrenaline rush
obliterates all other thoughts and emotions.

Sandoz and Sofia exchange a glance: this is the music
that launched their five-year journey across space,
clearer and louder than they've ever heard it before.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - CORRIDOR - REDLIGHT

The MUSIC CONTINUES, mixed with distortion and static.

Hawkins leads; Sofia and Sandoz are just behind, as they race toward the Communications Lab.

Sofia and Sandoz drop behind Hawkins, to speak privately in American Sign Language with subtitles.

SOFIA
(subtitled sign language)
You can hear them breathing.

SANDOZ
(subtitled sign language)
It's like they're in the next room.
(beat)
You're trembling.

Hawkins rushes into the lab. Now Sandoz and Sofia are alone. Sofia whispers aloud to Sandoz.

SOFIA
We barged into their world. Uninvited.

Overcome with awe and fear, Sofia closes her eyes.

They listen to the alien song-makers' broadcast; they've never heard it this close, this loud, or this long.

Sandoz extends a consoling hand -- which never touches her. He pulls it away before she opens her eyes.

Now, more centered than before, she swallows her fear, opens her eyes and enters the lab. Sandoz follows her.

The ALIEN MUSIC degenerates into STATIC.

CUT TO BLACK:

END TEASER

ACT ONE

OVER BLACK:

STATIC interrupted by FRAGMENTARY BURSTS of ALIEN MUSIC, none longer than a quarter-second.

FADE IN:

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY - REDLIGHT

Five antennas on the *Stella Maris* lander search randomly, then whip to face the same direction, and the music fragments momentarily coalesce -- then fade away.

SANDOZ (V.O.)
Play the recording.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - COMMS - REDLIGHT

The ALIEN MUSIC broadcast recording begins anew as Sandoz and Sofia crowd into the small communications lab.

JAMES QUINN (29, a scientist with the fierce, competitive gaze of a chess master) struggles to resolve the signal.

Sofia crosses to Sam; already listening are polymath hipster musicologist ELLEN PACE (20s), and gay ex-Marine, Texas native, and priest D.W. YARBROUGH (40s).

FATHER ROUBIDOUX, the ship's captain and senior priest (in a collar), presides. His icy bright gaze suggests a college president skilled at taming geniuses.

They listen intently, as scientists, as fans, as human beings. Then, the music abruptly cuts off again.

QUINN
Lost it. But, twenty-one seconds without
a break! Twenty! One! Seconds!

Everyone's giddy with excitement. This is huge. Roubidoux excitedly pats Quinn on the back.

ROUBIDOUX
Bravo, Quinn!

ELLEN
I can make out the melody. Mathematical,
like Bach, but more emotional. If we can
say aliens are emotional, ha ha --

SANDOZ

-- it's undeniable. I hear more than emotion. Spirituality, even.

ROUBIDOUX

I've always said they have souls.

HAWKINS

Unless they're like whales. Did Moby Dick have a soul?

Sofia smiles; she admires Hawkins's uncensored quality.

SANDOZ

Noted. One more time.

Quinn replays the music.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

Uvular aspiration and retroflex: the linguistic signifiers of beseechment.

ELLEN

The harmonic complexity suggests taste, intelligence, socialization, intention --

D.W.

In the fragments, I wasn't convinced, but this massive clip has a lot of soul!

ROUBIDOUX

Might even be a sung prayer.

HAWKINS

Sounds like a party I went to at a Moroccan brothel.

(winks at Sofia)

Before we met ... long story.

Ellen, the youngest at 27, is angry yet powerless, like a kid whose parents have ruined her birthday by fighting.

ELLEN

Shut up! I want to listen!

Quinn nods "thank you" to Ellen. He's not much older than she is, and as the lowest ranking, they stick together.

Chastised, the group listens until the recording ends. It is truly an astonishing moment. After a beat --

D.W.

Holy shit. That was the real deal.

ROUBIDOUX

It's a momentous day. We can all be thankful that we've finally heard the Singers at length. We've come this far in a spirit of cooperation and respect -- let's not ruin it in the home stretch. This is not the end of our journey -- it's the beginning.

HAWKINS

Thank you. That's what I've been saying.

Quinn and Ellen exchange an amused glance: bullshit.

Roubidoux gestures to Quinn "play it." Quinn hits a button, and studies the spectrogram as the music plays.

Roubidoux looks up, feeling the presence of God; Ellen taps her foot, measuring time; Hawkins gazes to the middle-distance, analytical. D.W. hums along.

Sandoz and Sofia watch the group, and listen as a team.

SANDOZ

(subtitled sign language)

Do you think they know we're here?

SOFIA

(subtitled sign language)

Maybe that was intended for us.

Sandoz nods; then they listen until the music ends.

SANDOZ

It's so close. When can we go out?

ROUBIDOUX

It's a decision for the medical officer.

All eyes on Hawkins:

HAWKINS

The rabbits are thriving: eating the alien grass, breathing the alien air and making lots of bunny love. Seems safe.

ELLEN

Safe for rabbits, maybe.

HAWKINS

So stay aboard. A musicologist needs to go outside because ... remind me?

Ellen looks away; Hawkins is not her favorite.

ROUBIDOUX

Quarantine ends in three days and I'll be leading the first team out. Tomorrow is a big prep day. Let's get some rest.

The group starts to break up. Sofia gently pulls Hawkins to bed. Sandoz watches them go.

Roubidoux indicates he needs to talk to Sandoz in his office. Sandoz nods, and follows him out.

INT. ROUBIDOUX'S QUARTERS - REDSUNSET

A small office. Roubidoux's status is emphasized by his raised desk. The distant red sun sets in the window.

ROUBIDOUX

When I step outside, three days from now, you will become Captain *pro-tem* and temporary embodiment of Rome.

SANDOZ

Why me? D.W. has seniority.

ROUBIDOUX

He's too sure of himself.

SANDOZ

Isn't that what you want in a captain?

ROUBIDOUX

No. Doubt is appropriate. It's an impossible job.

SANDOZ

Captain? Or Church representative?

ROUBIDOUX

Both. They're in permanent conflict. As Captain you may have to do things which no priest would ever sanction.

Sandoz listens sympathetically; he realizes Roubidoux is giving instruction, but mostly venting.

ROUBIDOUX (CONT'D)

We are in *terra incognita*, spiritually and physically. Do these creatures have souls? What if we have to choose between their lives and our own? What if they're brutal savages?

SANDOZ

What if we are?

Roubidoux laughs appreciatively.

ROUBIDOUX

That's why I picked you over D.W.

(quiet, serious)

There's always the chance I won't make it back alive.

SANDOZ

Very small, one hopes.

ROUBIDOUX

Yes, but if I die: *Deus Vult*. I prepared a statement transferring authority to you. Make the mission your own.

(beat)

You don't mind being excluded from the first group to walk on alien soil?

(Sandoz doesn't care)

You never worry about your place in history, do you, Sandoz?

SANDOZ

Never considered it.

ROUBIDOUX

Why'd you work so hard to come here?

SANDOZ

Same reason I went to Burkina Faso.

ROUBIDOUX

Which was -- ?

SANDOZ

The first two Jesuit teams died. Africa was ravaged by epidemics and war.

ROUBIDOUX

Those are reasons not to go.

SANDOZ

Then, I heard a recording of a language no one could crack; it was hypnotic, like Motown meets Gregorian chant. I thought meeting them would change everything.

ROUBIDOUX

Did it?

Sandoz's sinking face says it all: no.

ROUBIDOUX (CONT'D)

I hope this turns out better. Good night.

Roubidoux turns away; the meeting is over. Sandoz leaves.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

An eight-foot plexiglass window at the top of the lander atop a cozy chamber allows for a view of the night sky.

Hawkins and Sofia lie side-by-side, looking up, pensive.

HAWKINS

While we've been traveling, you and I aged five years, while our friends back home have grown twenty-one years older.

SOFIA

I think about that sometimes. Some of them will be long dead when we return.

HAWKINS

It's not all sad: even though we've only been together a decade, by the Earth clock, tonight's our twenty-fifth anniversary.

SOFIA

That's so sweet, that you tracked it. Do you feel older knowing that? Or younger?

HAWKINS

Mainly, I feel lucky.

He gives her a silver pendant on a chain, with a diamond for each star in a slightly-distorted Cassiopeia, with one extra star at the end, represented by a yellow opal.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Silver for twenty-five years; and Cassiopeia the way we see it here, with one extra star: the sun. That's the opal.

SOFIA

You had this made before we left?

(he smiles)

That's so cool -- and so geeky.

They share a kiss and look up at the real Cassiopeia, a familiar "W" in the sky, except for one extra pale yellow star -- our sun -- as seen from four light years away.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

A small and unpretentious spacecraft bridge. Quinn is on night watch. He's got the 21-second clip on a loop, quietly playing, analyzing the signal's spectrogram.

QUINN

Hey, Sandoz. The more I hear, the less I know. Are you Team Whale or Team Prayer?

SANDOZ

Neither, yet. Maybe it's their Beatles. Can you imagine trying to learn English from thirty seconds of *Sergeant Pepper*?

QUINN

No way. How many languages do you know, Sandoz?

SANDOZ

A couple dozen, spoken; another ten or so, written; and two dialects of signing. But I've got nothing on Sofia.

QUINN

You guys are both freaks.

SANDOZ

Puts us in good company.
(back to business)
Anything to report?

QUINN

Quiet as a tomb. If a spaceship landed on Earth, do you think we'd leave it alone for three weeks?

SANDOZ

In 500 B.C., maybe.

QUINN

But it's not "500 B.C." They have radio. We saw lighted cities from space.

SANDOZ

You're wondering where the aliens are.

QUINN

We are the aliens. If this was Earth --

SANDOZ

-- they'd be dissecting us by now.

QUINN

Why do you think they're avoiding us?

SANDOZ

Maybe they know what human beings are capable of. I'll take this shift, Quinn. Have a good night.

Quinn leaves. Sandoz brings up the security cams, flitting through all twelve views. Nothing to see, except for the sleeping rabbits. Sandoz sips his coffee.

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY LANDING SITE - SUNS-RISE

Hours later. A flock of shiny, featherless birds takes flight as the twin suns of Rakhat rise over the valley.

The rabbits nibble alien grass under a protective hutch.

The *Stella Maris* Lander glistens in the morning dew.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - CORRIDOR - DAWN

Sandoz tiptoes down the corridor, coffee cup in hand.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - ZOOLOGICAL LAB - DAY

Sandoz marvels at alien specimens. They're visible through a Plexiglass protective wall: lizards, snakes, birds, flowers.

He notices a FLASHING RED LIGHT and leaves the room.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - BRIDGE - DAY

Sandoz brings up various screens, counting red dots. One two three four five six; one two three four five six.

Someone is missing. Sandoz flips through the ship's cams:

CAM VIEW: PRIEST'S QUARTERS. Roubidoux and D.W., asleep.

CAM VIEW: CREW QUARTERS. Ellen listens to music. Quinn is asleep.

CAM VIEW: MARRIED CREW QUARTERS. Sofia sleeps alone.

Sandoz hustles out, concerned: Hawkins is missing.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - MARRIED CREW QUARTERS - DAY

Sofia sleeps. After polite tapping, Sandoz enters. He sits on the edge of the bed and studies Sofia for a moment before gently waking her up.

SOFIA

Hey, Sandoz. What's wrong?

SANDOZ

Do you know where your husband is?

SOFIA

Where could he go?

Sandoz shrugs. Sofia pulls the bedclothes around her.

Nearby is a phone-like device, flashing urgently.

SANDOZ

Your Vidder is flashing.

Sofia nods, worried, then hits "play." They watch:

A HOLOGRAM APPEARS. It shows a mini 3-D image of Hawkins, at the lander's dock, pulling on a biocontainment suit.

HAWKINS (ON HOLOGRAM)

Good morning, Sofia, and congratulations: by the time you see this, your name will enter history as the spouse of the first person to set foot on an alien planet.

Sofia and Sandoz exchange worried glances.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - DOCK - DAY (FULL FRAME)

We see Hawkins, earlier, as he records the hologram.

HAWKINS

It was an impulsive decision, but it's an issue I've worried about for years: how should humanity present itself to the Singers? As moralists, imposing our will from above? Or as equals, hoping to learn from them and their world?

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - BRIDGE - DAY

Minutes later. Sandoz, Sofia, and Roubidoux have gathered to watch Hawkins's holographic message, which continues where it left off, flickering in mid-air.

ON THE HOLOGRAM:

HAWKINS (ON HOLOGRAM)

Tonight I awoke in a sweat, realizing that if we begin by foisting superstition and talking about Jesus, the Singers may think mankind is ridiculous. Conflicts over quote-unquote "God" almost extinguished the human race.

HAWKINS (ON HOLOGRAM)

(CONT'D)

So I took it upon myself to go first.

ROUBIDOUX

(appalled)

Such a noble sacrifice.

HAWKINS (ON HOLOGRAM)

(CONT'D)

(excited, anxious:)

This is it! I'm doing it. I'm going to step onto a new planet. Sofia, I wish you could have come with me. Two worlds are going to meet! Here I go.

Hawkins pulls on his helmet, moments before he is about to step outside of the lander. The hologram blinks out.

ON THE BRIDGE

Roubidoux is furious. Sofia is amused. Sandoz paces.

ROUBIDOUX

Dr. Mendes, did you know about this?

SOFIA

I was asleep.

ROUBIDOUX

You don't seem surprised.

SOFIA

He's not big on rules. I think he tried to say "goodbye" last night.

She touches the pendant.

ROUBIDOUX

How long has he been gone?

SANDOZ

A couple hours.

D.W. and Quinn lean in the door, followed by Ellen.

QUINN
Captain? Dr. Hawkins's emergency distress
beacon went off.

ROUBIDOUX
How far away is he?

QUINN
Just over two kilometers.

Sofia's amusement turns to worry. Sandoz makes an offer.

SANDOZ
I can lead a rescue mission.

Roubidoux closes his eyes, devastated; this squarely pits
his values as a priest against his obligations as the
Captain. When he opens his eyes again, he is decisive.

ROUBIDOUX
No. I have to consider the safety of the
entire crew.

SOFIA
Forget it. I'm going after him.

SANDOZ
And, I'm going with her.

ROUBIDOUX
We cannot risk two more people. My
decision is final.

Roubidoux leaves. Sofia is angry. Ellen approaches.

ELLEN
I'm so sorry, Sofia.

Sofia nods her thanks, then walks out, despondent.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - DOCK - NIGHT

Sofia slips into the dock. She closes the door without
turning on the overhead lights; it's dimly illuminated by
safety lights.

She quickly goes to work, opening a locker and pulling
out her personal biocontainment suit.

ON THE NEXT HOOK is Hawkins's jacket. She holds it to her
face for a moment, then continues undressing.

Moments later, CLOSE ON THE HELMET as she pulls it on, moving her anniversary pendant aside to let it fit.

Sofia is now fully enclosed in a biocontainment suit.

She presses the large EXIT button. It produces a guttural BUZZ sound and a RED LIGHT. She hits an intercom button.

SOFIA

Quinn, this is Dr. Mendes. Open the door.

QUINN (INTERCOM)

I can't. Roubidoux changed the exit code.

Sofia pulls off her helmet and throws it down in anger.

EXT. RAKHAT - FOG - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A SPACE HELMET

A RED LIGHT flashes atop the helmet, in synchronization with a grating, BUZZING warning sound.

Reflected in the helmet's visor, we see Rakhat's strange trees and plants; beneath the reflections we can discern Hawkins's face, fascinated and concerned.

HAWKINS

In full bio-suit, stands in the foggy woods. He hits various buttons, trying to stop the alarm, to no avail.

For a moment, he stands frozen, contemplating a huge, possibly lethal decision, and then --

-- he unseals the helmet. A BONE-CHILLING HISS heralds the intake of Rakhat's potentially deadly air.

Hawkins pulls off the helmet, and, holding it in his hands, finally finds the switch that disables the alarm.

Helmetless, he directly experiences the wonder and awe. In the silence, BIZARRE ANIMAL cries echo in the night.

Hawkins realizes with dread the risk he has taken.

He inhales deeply, cautiously observant to see what the atmosphere does to his body. Feeling safe, he relaxes.

Helmet in hand, all alone, Hawkins walks straight into the vast, misty alien woods, disappearing in the haze.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. ROUBIDOUX'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roubidoux (seated) is giving orders to D.W. (standing.)

ROUBIDOUX

You and Quinn are now lead medics. I want you to re-up all certifications, even if the computer says you're current.

D.W.

I'll start with Emergency Response. When Hawkins returns, what should we do?

ROUBIDOUX

If Hawkins returns, I'll evaluate him, then make a decision.

The door opens abruptly; and Sofia enters, clearly upset.

SOFIA

I want the exit code, now.

ROUBIDOUX

I'm trying to protect your safety.

SOFIA

We can take the same precautions going out today as for the E.V.A. that's planned for the day after tomorrow.

ROUBIDOUX

Rushing into a crisis may compound our problems --

SOFIA

-- it's only a crisis if we allow it to become one! Sam's alone -- we have no idea what dangers he faces.

ROUBIDOUX

More reason to proceed cautiously.

SOFIA

All the risk will be on me.

ROUBIDOUX

We need you, Sofia. We'll mount a proper rescue when quarantine ends. Until then, I will pray for your husband's safety.

Sofia glares at both men, turns on her heel and leaves.

D.W.

In the war, sometimes a man would just
snap and walk straight into hostile fire.

ROUBIDOUX

Hawkins was fully in his right mind.

Roubidoux looks down; this meeting is over. D.W. leaves.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - ZOOLOGICAL LAB - DAY

Quinn is working in the zoological lab when Sandoz enters
and closes the door behind him.

SANDOZ

How far can your rover travel?

QUINN

It can go anywhere on the planet.

SANDOZ

Send it toward Hawkins's beacon.

QUINN

It's on its way.

SANDOZ

How much movement does the arm have?

Quinn demonstrates: ON THE SCREEN he brings up a live
image of the rover, rolling across the planet's surface.

Quinn puts on a wired glove. As he moves his arm and
fingers, the Rover arm matches his movement perfectly.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

Good. When it gets close to Hawkins, call
me. Not the Captain. Got it?

QUINN

Okay. Why do you think he did it?

SANDOZ

Who was the second European to reach the
New World, after Columbus?

QUINN

I have no idea.

SANDOZ

Does that answer your question?

Sandoz leaves.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* - COMMS - REDLIGHT

Sofia speaks into a radio microphone.

SOFIA
Hawkins this is Stella Maris base.
(listens)
Sam, I don't know if you can hear me.
Please come back. All is forgiven.

There's a KNOCK and then Sandoz enters. There's an awkward pause as she wonders if he heard what she said.

SANDOZ
How are you doing?

SOFIA
I've survived worse.

SANDOZ
You didn't see this coming?

SOFIA
No. We were making plans for when it was our turn, to go out together. What we might say, what it would mean.

Sandoz's PDA beeps; he glances at it.

SANDOZ
The rover is close to his beacon.

Sofia stands; she and Sandoz head out in a hurry.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - ZOOLOGICAL LAB - DAY

Sandoz, Sofia and Quinn watch a broadcast from the Rover.

ON A SCREEN, via rover-cam, they see a moving view along the banks of a river. A display counts down distance: 40 meters, 30, 20, all the way to 5 meters. The rover stops.

QUINN
We should see him.

Quinn taps on a screen; the view does a 360-degree spin, spinning away from the river, until it finds Hawkins's bio-exposure suit -- empty. His helmet lies clumsily abandoned next to it.

IN THE ZOOLOGICAL LAB Sofia gasps.

SOFIA

Why would he take off his suit?

Quinn puts his hand in the remote control. Behind him, on the screen, we see the Rover imitate his movements to pick up the suit and helmet; then it begins rolling home.

SANDOZ

When your rover returns, open the gate.

QUINN

Roubidoux won't give us the code.

SANDOZ

It's open from outside.

Quinn nods his understanding. Sandoz and Sofia leave.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - DOCK - DAY

In their underwear, Sandoz and Sofia struggle to pull on their biocontainment suits. Partway through putting on her suit, Sofia freezes, stifling a sob.

SOFIA

I'm afraid, Emilio.

SANDOZ

Close your eyes.

She closes her eyes; but Sandoz keeps his open for an extra moment, to appreciate her physicality up close.

They sit face to face. It's more intimate than either had expected, but stops just short of physical contact.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

Take a deep breath. Hold the fear in your hands. Now, exhale. Thank the fear for being there. Then, set it aside.

(pause)

Inhale the strength we will need today.

(she does)

Exhale. Now, open your eyes.

They lock eyes. Sandoz speaks in sign language. Then, Sofia repeats his signing, as she speaks the words aloud.

SOFIA

(as she signs)

"Tap the quiet strength within, so that I may better bring Sam home to safety."

Sofia leans close enough to Sandoz to whisper in his ear.

SOFIA (CONT'D)
That was lovely. Was it a prayer?

SANDOZ
I know you better than that, Sofia.

SOFIA
Whatever it was, thank you.
(beat)
You don't have to come with me.

SANDOZ
I'm going anyway.

A VIDEO SCREEN shows the Rover approach, with Hawkins's suit and helmet. The rover's hand unlocks the door.

Sandoz and Sofia pull on their bio-suits and helmets, then open the door, and step into the blinding daylight of the three suns shining on the planet Rakhat.

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY LANDING SITE - DAY

Sandoz hits the ground first, then turns to help Sofia down. She avoids his hand and jumps off on her own.

Everything is forgotten as they drink in the strangeness and splendor of a new world.

Their awed faces go slack with wonder beneath the remarkable sights reflected in their visors:

-- a sky with three suns;
-- a nearby forest of alien trees;
-- the strange grass beneath their feet;

The grass rustles. The head of a tiny green animal pops out of the tall brush, as nervously attentive as a Meerkat. Sofia points.

The Little Green Guy looks at Sandoz -- then at Sofia -- and then, afraid, it SHRIEKS and LEAPS twenty feet away.

Sofia can't help registering her delight.

Sandoz points down, at two strong shadows, cast by the twin yellow suns; and a faint shadow made by the red one.

They are still only a few feet from the lander.

They turn their attention to a grimmer detail as Sofia walks a few steps to the rover. She lifts her husband's empty helmet from its bed; her heart sinks.

She hands the helmet to Sandoz.

SOFIA
(convincing herself)
It's in good shape. He took it off
carefully and intentionally.

SANDOZ
He felt safe.

SOFIA
When Sam's on a tear he ignores all signs
of danger and just goes.

SANDOZ
That must drive you crazy.

SOFIA
Hardly.

Sandoz waits to see if she's kidding; she's serious.

SANDOZ
We can follow his boot prints.

Sofia looks down, where her husband's boot prints have left an impression. It kills all conversation.

They trudge forward, leaving behind the lander, and entering the nearby wooded area.

EXT. RAKHAT / WOODS - DAY

Sandoz and Sofia walk through a heavily wooded area.

The only sounds are WIND high in the tree canopy; their own FOOTSTEPS; and ALIEN BIRD SONGS.

After a few steps, Sofia grabs Sandoz's arm and makes them both halt. In the distance they hear RUSHING WATER. They must be getting closer; they pick up the pace.

EXT. RAKHAT / RIVER BANK - DAY

The two searchers emerge from the woods and find themselves on the banks of a strange river.

A glittering cloud of fuchsia butterflies circles them, alighting on their suits, before flying away, a dynamic Spirograph in the sky. Sofia and Sandoz share the moment.

The boot prints continue along the river bank, sometimes obvious, sometimes subtle; they continue to follow them.

EXT. RAKHAT - RIVER BANK - UPSTREAM - DAY

They come to a bend in the river.

Sofia sees a bright orange emergency tent ahead of them. She breaks from Sandoz and races at top speed to it.

Sandoz catches up with her.

THE TENT

sags uselessly; one of its guy lines has been cut.

Sofia meets Sandoz's eyes; there's nothing good to say about this ominous sign.

Footprints circle the tent: Hawkins spent some time here.

They kneel to look inside the tent; it's abandoned.

Sofia stands and stares into the distance.

She sees Hawkins, in his space suit liner, approaching along the riverbank. Sofia races to her husband. Her voice comes through a speaker, like a ticket seller.

SOFIA

Sam!

HAWKINS

Sophie!

Sofia throws her arms around her husband; it's awkward, as she's in a space suit, and he's not. Sofia pulls away.

SOFIA

Are you okay?

(he nods and smiles)

Why didn't you wait for me?

HAWKINS

(gesturing)

Adventure called.

Sandoz catches up with them, and overhears.

SANDOZ

You just wanted to be first.

Hawkins laughs -- there's a lot of truth there.

HAWKINS

I like that I'm just an unaffiliated human, one of the billions. Roubidoux brings too much Jesuit baggage.

SANDOZ

It's a Jesuit expedition.

HAWKINS

The Jesuits paid, sure, but in my mind, it's a human expedition. Species-to-species. The dogma can wait.

SANDOZ

This is all retro-fitted rationalization for something you wanted to do anyway.

HAWKINS

(shit-eating grin)

Maybe. But, I was still first.

Sandoz can't contain himself; he pushes Hawkins hard, knocking him to the ground.

SOFIA

Sandoz!

HAWKINS

It's okay, Soaf.

Hawkins stays on the ground, catching his breath.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

I had it coming.

SANDOZ

Did I hurt you?

HAWKINS

Only my pride. Did you bring food?

SANDOZ

We can eat back in the lander.

HAWKINS

I'm famished. What do you have?

Sandoz opens a pouch; inside are a dozen Power-Bar type foodstuffs. He hands one to Hawkins. Hawkins takes it, then roots through the bag and takes five more.

SOFIA
We're running low on oxygen.

HAWKINS
(as he eats)
Don't need it. The air is safe and clean.

Sandoz exchanges a concerned glance with Sofia.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
I'm doing fine. Human physiology is incompatible with the local viruses.

SANDOZ
Yes, I've read the reports, but --

HAWKINS
-- maybe you just love the locker-room smell of spacecraft air. Whatever.

Hawkins resumes eating. Sandoz examines a meter on his sleeve; it shows "GREEN." He shows it to Sofia.

Sofia watches carefully as Sandoz unseals his helmet.

Sandoz takes a deep breath and removes the helmet. The recklessness contributes to the pleasure of sensation: it's like being naked in a blizzard. Finally, he exhales.

A lungful of fresh air rejuvenates him; then he takes off a glove and kneels to scoop up a handful of dirt. He cautiously sniffs it; his face registers delight.

Both Hawkins and Sandoz look to Sofia, expectantly.

Sofia quietly unseals her own helmet and removes it. She takes a few tentative breaths.

She looks skyward; then slowly spins around, ecstatically seeing, feeling, smelling and hearing this new world.

She meets Hawkins's eye; they share a smile; they need no words to share this magic moment. Having no one with whom to share his own exuberance, Sandoz watches them.

Sandoz and Sofia sit with Hawkins, who talks as he eats.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

The things I've observed in these first few hours are going to revolutionize biology and genetics.

SANDOZ

We should head back to the ship.

HAWKINS

We will. Give me a second, okay?

Hawkins indicates he needs to urinate, and walks behind some nearby trees. Sofia and Sandoz speak quietly.

SOFIA

Something's off with him.

SANDOZ

Seems the same to me.

SOFIA

You don't know him the way I do.

(shouting)

Sam? Let's go. Sam!

No reply. They hear twigs breaking.

Sofia and Sandoz stand and look around: Hawkins is gone.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

He just walked away.

SANDOZ

That son of a bitch.

They race into the grove of trees where Sandoz went.

IN THE GROVE

They see no sign of Hawkins. Continuing farther, they see that there are two paths Hawkins might have taken: one goes to the river; the other goes deeper into the woods.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

He could have gone either way.

SOFIA

I'll go into the woods.

Sofia goes into the woods, Sandoz heads toward the river.

EXT. RAKHAT - RIVER BANK - DAY

Sandoz scans the area downriver, then upriver. Seeing movement above a churning area of rapids, he proceeds.

SANDOZ

Hawkins!

Sandoz walks quietly and deliberately, scanning the area ahead of him.

IN A CLUSTER OF TREES NEAR THE RIVER

HAWKINS is briefly visible. Sandoz doubles his pace.

Hawkins sees him, turns and rushes away.

EXT. RAKHAT / WATERFALL - DAY

Hawkins stops running, his progress blocked by a steep, dangerous waterfall with a drop of two hundred feet.

He catches his breath, then slowly looks around, savoring the spectacular views from this high vantage point.

Below him is the STEEP, RUSHING WATERFALL;

To his left is AN ARID PLAIN in the distance;

Then he turns all the way around and discovers himself uncomfortably close, and face-to-face with --

SANDOZ. The waterfall's ROAR blocked the sound of his approach; the two men have to shout to be heard.

SANDOZ

I'm worried about you, Sam.

HAWKINS

I'm fine! Come with me!

SANDOZ

We have to consider the rest of the crew.

HAWKINS

They'll be there when we get back.

SANDOZ

What about your obligations? Your wife?

HAWKINS

You think Sofia misses me for a second?

At that instant, Hawkins slips, when the damp, unstable earth beneath him crumbles under his weight.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

Damn it ... it's slick.

Another ABRUPT COLLAPSE as more of the fragile bluff is crushed under his weight; Hawkins slips out of view.

SANDOZ

Hawkins!

Sandoz rushes over, looking down to see --

-- A SLIPPERY LEDGE OVER THE HUNDRED-FOOT WATERFALL.

Hawkins struggles for footing on a wet, narrow ledge. He looks helpless and pitiful, barely hanging on.

For a long beat, Sandoz hesitates: the volatile emotions of the situation overtake his reflexes.

HAWKINS

Help me!

Finally, Sandoz gets on his stomach and extends a hand.

SANDOZ

Take my hand!

Hawkins stands on the slim sliver of rock, unsteady in his boots, and just reaches the tip of Sandoz's fingers.

THEIR HANDS CLASP.

Sandoz strains to pull -- and then a freezing GUSH of water hits Hawkins squarely across his whole body and splashes Sandoz in the face.

It's not clear who let go of whom; but in the chaos of the freezing water, their hands somehow separate.

Hawkins loses his grip and plummets --

-- he TUMBLES down the waterfall's rocky face.

His body is CHURNED UNDER at the bottom of the waterfall.

It sinks into the water at the base of the falls.

It never reemerges from the turbulent water.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. RAKHAT / WATERFALL - DAY

The violent waterfall heaves; a chunk of soft limestone gives way and tumbles down the steep cliff.

ATOP THE FALLS

Sandoz watches for any sign of Hawkins, to no avail.

He stands, distressed and adrenalized, and shouts.

SANDOZ
(shouting)
Sofia! Sofia!

Sandoz paces, pondering his part in what occurred.

SOFIA

runs from the woods to Sandoz's side; she saw nothing.

The rushing river drowns out the words that Sandoz whispers to Sofia; but their effect on her is immediate.

Sofia backs away in shock, her agony palpable.

Staggering backwards, her legs give out, and she falls to her knees. Sandoz tries to catch her; she bats him away and hides her face, her pain too private to share.

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY - SUNS-SET

Two despondent figures, Sandoz and Sofia, slowly cross the majestic Ignatius Valley toward the lander, their hearts too heavy to appreciate the gorgeous twin-sunset.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - ZOOLOGICAL LAB - DAY

With sealed gloves that maintain a sterile barrier between him and his work, Quinn mounts slides from biological samples that the rover has collected.

Ellen enters as he slices into a flower stalk. Beyond Quinn's field of focus, two other flowers of the same species lean forward, as if they're watching him.

Ellen taps his shoulder; Quinn looks up. She directs his attention to the kinetic flowers, which by the time Quinn looks, have bent back up, and appear perfectly normal.

Quinn goes back to his dissection; as soon as he begins to cut, the two flowers lean forward again. Ellen watches, amazed; it's too good not to share.

ELLEN
Quinn, look, look now!

Again, by the time he looks, they're normal again.

QUINN
What? I'm trying to mount slides.

ELLEN
Watch.

She taps on the glass. Nothing happens. She clicks her tongue, as you would at a monkey in the zoo. Nothing.

Then she WHISTLES a simple tune. The flowers lean toward her. She stops whistling. They relax.

QUINN
Holy shit.

ELLEN
What are those? Plants? Animals?

QUINN
A little bit of both: "planimals?"

ELLEN
Vegans are going to starve in this place.

Quinn smiles; then he notices movement on a small MONITOR which shows the outside view:

ON THE MONITOR: Sofia and Sandoz leave the nearby woods and approach the ship. Their body language is wrenching.

QUINN
Where's their protective gear?

ELLEN
Where's Hawkins?

Quinn pulls his hands out of the gloves, and he and Ellen race out of the zoological lab.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - DOCK - DAY

Ellen and Quinn are waiting in the dock when the airlock pops open. Sandoz enters first, followed by Sofia.

Both of them are wrung out.

ELLEN

Sofia, what's wrong?

(no reply)

Where's Sam?

Sofia just shakes her head; Ellen puts out her arms and holds Sofia, who buries her head in Ellen's shoulder.

Quinn looks at Sandoz, desperate for answers.

SANDOZ

Dr. Hawkins fell. He didn't survive.

Sofia avoids Sandoz's eye. Realizing that he might be the last thing she wants to look at, Sandoz quietly leaves.

INT. MARRIED CREW QUARTERS - DAY

Ellen delivers Sofia to her and Hawkins's room; the two women separate; Sofia closes the door and stands alone.

With nervous energy, she straightens out the bunk; she arranges the objects on the tiny built-in desk; she picks up Hawkins's Oxford sweater from the desk's chair.

She carefully folds the sweater, opens a cabinet and puts it away, atop a stack of his other clothes.

This may be the last time she ever performs this small task, and the truth of her loneliness becomes palpable.

She closes the cabinet door, then sits on the bunk, and contemplates her future.

INT. PRIESTS' QUARTERS - DAY

The compact room is divided into three bunk areas, for Sandoz, Roubidoux, and D.W., who's reading on his bed.

Over D.W.'s bunk is a rainbow Marine flag ("Served With Pride"), family photos and the icon of St. Sergius.

Sandoz sits on his own bed (Puerto Rican flag, Golden Glove certificate, African crucifix) and sighs deeply.

D.W.

Quinn told me. I'm so sorry.

SANDOZ

I was holding his hand -- closer than you are to me here. Then he fell.

D.W. stands and rummages in his personal compartment, finding a bottle of bourbon. He pours three fingers, and hands the glass to Sandoz.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

You lost friends in the war.

D.W.

There's no worse feeling.

SANDOZ

Did you ever see it happen?

D.W.

Yes. You're playing it over in your head. Wondering what you could have done. Blaming yourself.

(Sandoz nods)

You can't do that very long. You have to let that shit go or it'll kill you.

SANDOZ

What did you do?

D.W.

The usual: fury, self-hatred, guilt. That didn't help, so I became a priest.

(beat)

That didn't help, either.

SANDOZ

How'd you get past it?

D.W.

Radical acceptance. Being gay, a Marine, a priest: there's no shortage of people who hate me. They don't need my help. *Deus vult*, baby. All part of the plan.

SANDOZ

And if you can't see the plan?

Sandoz stands to leave. D.W. blocks his progress, to give him a hug and hold him tight. He whispers:

D.W.

It doesn't get easier. But sometimes, you get stronger.

Sandoz frees himself from the big man's hug and leaves.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER / ROUBIDOUX'S OFFICE - REDLIGHT

Roubidoux, working at a computer, looks up and sees Sandoz in his doorway.

He gestures for him to enter. Sandoz remains standing.

ROUBIDOUX

Discipline and obedience are central to the Jesuit identity, and to the operation of a spacecraft. What were you thinking?

SANDOZ

Our brother crewman was in danger. I felt a responsibility to try to help him.

ROUBIDOUX

Your responsibility is to God, the Order and the Mission. We lost one man. Your recklessness could have cost us two more.

SANDOZ

I apologize. I will meditate on the vow of obedience and pray for discipline.

(beat)

There's a sin weighing heavily on me. I know it's an awkward time, but ...

Roubidoux nods. He turns off the computer screen, dims the overhead lights and steps out from behind his desk.

Sandoz closes the door and sits across from Roubidoux, their knees almost touching. They begin Confession.

SANDOZ (CONT'D)

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been two days since my last confession.

ROUBIDOUX

Go on, Emilio.

SANDOZ

I watched Hawkins fall. I wish it had been me.

ROUBIDOUX

You know about Survivor's Guilt Syndrome?

SANDOZ

That's been my whole life: all around me people die meaningless deaths, and I'm the one left standing.

ROUBIDOUX

You and Dr. Hawkins had a complicated history, but you treated him with respect.

SANDOZ

Truthfully, I couldn't stand him. I feel responsible for what happened.

ROUBIDOUX

You did everything you could, Emilio.
(Sandoz says nothing)
You did, didn't you?

SANDOZ

I don't know.

Roubidoux is growing upset; he silently prays, eyes closed tight, then makes the sign of the cross.

ROUBIDOUX

Bless you, Emilio. May the Lord relieve your suffering. I recommend you revisit the Jesuit Spiritual Exercises.

SANDOZ

I wasn't finished.

ROUBIDOUX

Saying more may be antithetical to the purposes of confession.

ROUBIDOUX (CONT'D)

Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace. I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

SANDOZ

(studying Roubidoux, realizing what's really behind his discomfort)
You're glad he's gone, too.
Is that it?

Direct hit: Roubidoux is stunned into silence.

Roubidoux makes the sign of the cross, stands and turns on the lights; this confession is over. He moves behind his desk, higher than Sandoz, and no longer calls Sandoz by his first name: Roubidoux is back in Captain mode.

ROUBIDOUX (CONT'D)

This should have been a great day for the Order and the Church; but instead, you may have created the first atheist martyr.

SANDOZ

I will attempt to make amends to his widow, Sofia; and to the Church.

ROUBIDOUX

You will do no such thing. What was said in confession will stay in confession. Are you clear that this is an order?

(pointed)

I don't think it will come as a surprise that I've chosen D.W. to be Captain *pro tem* when I go out.

Sandoz nods his understanding, and leaves.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - CORRIDOR - DAY

Sandoz knocks on a door. Sofia opens it and peers out.

SANDOZ

I brought you a sandwich and some fruit.

SOFIA

Thank you.

She opens the door wider. Sandoz hands her the food. There's a long pause, then --

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Could you sit with me a while?

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - MARRIED CREW QUARTERS - DAY

Minutes later. Sandoz watches Sofia examine images on her slate from her late husband's life.

PHOTOS: *Hawkins in a British boys' school; on the Oxford rowing team; receiving a medal from The Queen ...*

MORE PHOTOS: *Hawkins and Sofia on their honeymoon; Sofia helping him into a spacesuit; kissing on launch day.*

Sofia turns to face Sandoz.

SANDOZ

He led a remarkable life.

SOFIA

Why do you think he got up in the middle of the night and went outside by himself?

SANDOZ

He's a rulebreaker. You said so yourself.

SOFIA

That's not the full story.

Sofia closes the photo page and clicks open a diary.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

I started reading his diary.

(Sandoz nods)

I never peeked when he was alive. But, I wanted to know why he did what he did.

SANDOZ

Because he could.

SOFIA

No. Sam was obsessed with you.

SANDOZ

The Jesuits?

SOFIA

You.

SANDOZ

He thought priests were ridiculous.

SOFIA

He believed you were the better man.

SANDOZ

Sam was rich. He had more degrees than a thermometer. He was offered a knighthood.

SOFIA

Money and prestige are meaningless up here. He wanted what you have, Emilio.

SANDOZ

I took a vow of poverty.

Sofia is getting choked up; she reads from the diary.

SOFIA

He wrote this: "By every meaningful measure, Sofia will always be closer to the Priest than she'll ever be to me."

SANDOZ

(this is news to him)

Oh.

SOFIA

He saw it when we were working together,
in our love of languages, in the
intensity of our work on the Singers'
transmissions.

SANDOZ

Did he talk about it?

SOFIA

Never.

SANDOZ

Did you tell him about Africa?

SOFIA

No. It would have crushed him.

Sofia looks forlorn; Sandoz reaches forward to hold her;
she moves closer, but relents before they touch. Sofia
asks a difficult question from their deep past:

SOFIA (CONT'D)

What happened in Burkina Faso? Why'd you
suddenly leave?

SANDOZ

I was a newly minted Jesuit, looking for
God's will, and all I could think about
was you. It was tearing me apart.

SOFIA

But it was okay to work with me again
after I was married, is that it?

SANDOZ

No, it was the music. I heard the
Singers, and realized that the only hope
of translating their words lay in teaming
up with you again.

SOFIA

Because of our work in Burkina Faso.

SANDOZ

I've never felt that kind of connection,
before or since.

SOFIA

When they hired me, did your superiors
know what happened between us in Africa?

SANDOZ

Every detail.

SOFIA

Everything that happened personally, too?

(Sandoz nods)

Roubidoux and D.W. know?

(Sandoz nods again)

And they still wanted me?

SANDOZ

We talked at length about the temptation
and Roubidoux decided I was strong enough
to handle it.

SOFIA

That's ... kind of creepy.

Sofia's eye catches a picture of Hawkins on a screen-
saver and her train of thought grinds to a halt.

SANDOZ

I'm sorry for your loss.

SOFIA

Thank you, Sandoz.

SANDOZ

We should hold an informal memorial
tomorrow evening. Something simple.

SOFIA

Tomorrow. Okay. But now, I'm beat. I'm
going to try to rest.

Sandoz watches as Sofia drifts off to sleep. He makes a
blessing gesture without touching her, then leaves.

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY - REDSUNSET

The dim red sun sinks behind the distant mountains.

As the night sky comes into view, the *Stella Maris* lander
is silhouetted against familiar constellations, except
for Cassiopeia, with its extra star: the sun.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - MULTIPURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT

Ellen Pace plays a witty and moving composition that
juxtaposes themes from Mozart with the alien music.

Quinn and D.W. sit on either side of Sofia. Roubidoux
sits alone in the back, slightly judgmental.

Slides from Hawkins's life play on a monitor. Sandoz wears casual pants and a dress shirt; no priest collar.

SANDOZ

Sam Hawkins. Scientist, explorer,
husband, professor, author and friend,
Sam enjoyed an enviable certainty in his
beliefs -- or, "non-beliefs" -- to the
end of his days paired with a commitment
to service --

Sandoz pauses when ALARMS sound. RED LIGHTS flash. D.W.
checks his slate and reports:

D.W.

The ship's perimeter was breached. A
threat is approaching the entry way.

D.W. hits a button, and the pictures of Hawkins's life
are replaced by infrared surveillance shots from outside.

D.W. (CONT'D)

The bogie isn't slowing down. Six meters.
Four meters. We should be able to see it.

They all watch, tense, as the grainy infrared external
cameras cycle: AFT CAM; PORT CAM; ENGINE CAM; BOW CAM --

D.W. (CONT'D)

There. Look. It's bipedal.

ACROSS THEIR FACES, hoping to see, for the first time,
one of the alien Singers up close.

ON THE SCREEN, in grainy infrared darkness, a two-legged
creature lurches forward.

This is the moment they've all been waiting for.

SOFIA

Zoom in -- zoom in, now!

One of the cameras pushes to the limits of its ability.
Sofia is the first to recognize the blurry shape.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

It's Sam. He's alive.

They hear POUNDING on the entry portal. Sofia races out.

ON THE SCREEN, standing outside their entry way, is SAM
HAWKINS, naked but uninjured, pounding to be let inside.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Sofia races toward the lander's dock.

Running just after her is Sandoz; not too far behind him are D.W., Ellen and Quinn. Roubidoux walks.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - DOCK - NIGHT

Sofia races into the dock and tries to open the door -- it's still locked. POUNDING comes from the outside.

SOFIA

Sam! Listen to me! It's open -- press the entrance button.

A light illuminates; the door opens and Hawkins enters, barefoot and not wearing a stitch of clothing.

Hawkins stares at her -- for a beat he seems psychologically unbalanced -- then they embrace.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Sam. Are you okay?

HAWKINS

I'm cold.

Sofia and Sandoz enter to see Hawkins, alive and shivering. D.W. wraps him in a blanket.

The others back away, giving Sofia and Hawkins space.

Sofia touches her husband's hair; caresses his cheek with her palm; looks up and down to drink in the fact that he's here, he's alive, and he's uninjured.

SOFIA

Sammy, I'm so glad you're back. I thought we lost you. I thought I was alone.

He pulls her head onto his shoulder and strokes her hair for a moment, and then whispers into her ear.

HAWKINS

Sophie, it feels so nice to have you in my arms again.

They separate, aware that the others are watching.

Sandoz, more than anyone, is stunned to see Hawkins.
Quinn and Ellen watch from the doorway.

Sandoz stares at Hawkins, confused.

SANDOZ
You fell. A long, long way.
(Hawkins nods)
Too far to be talking to us now.

HAWKINS
Tell me about it. Weird, huh?

Sandoz studies Hawkins for a moment, then, quietly:

SANDOZ
Prove you're really Hawkins.

HAWKINS
What? Who else would I be?

QUINN
You think he's what -- an alien imposter?

SANDOZ
I want to be certain. Sofia, ask him
something no one else could know.

SOFIA
I recognize my husband.

SANDOZ
I watched him die. Ask him. Please.

Sofia thinks about it.

SOFIA
Our neighbor's cat, Boots, killed too
many song birds. What did you do?

HAWKINS
What I did to Boots was wrong.
(they wait for an answer)
I kidnapped the cat and gave it to a
retired friend who promised to keep it
indoors, a couple hundred miles away.

SOFIA
(convinced)
What happened to you, Sam?

HAWKINS
I think I died.

SOFIA
What do you mean by that?

HAWKINS
Lights out. Adios, amigos. The big sleep.

Roubidoux, D.W., Sandoz and Sofia stare, confused.

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
I know, crazy talk, right? Sandoz, how far did you watch me fall?

SANDOZ
A couple hundred feet, at least.
(drilling down)
How much do you remember?

HAWKINS
More than you would think.

Hawkins lets Sandoz hang for a moment before continuing.

EXT. RAKHAT / WATERFALL - DAY (HAWKINS'S MEMORY)

Hawkins careens down the cliff.

*HAWKINS (V.O.)
As I fell through the air, my thoughts weren't profound. It was a keen sense of disappointment realizing that I would die before I got to meet the Singers.*

EXT. RAKHAT / UNDERWATER - DAY (HAWKINS'S MEMORY)

Hawkins's eyes remain open as he plunges into the churning water at the base of the waterfall. A cloud of blood surrounds his broken, rapidly-sinking body

*HAWKINS (V.O.)
The shock of the impact and icy cold river made it so I suffered no pain when my lungs filled with water. My mind raced. I focused my thoughts -- I tried to survive through sheer will power.*

Bubbles rise from Hawkins's mouth; then he's still.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - DOCK - NIGHT

Sandoz, Sofia, Roubidoux and Sofia stare at Hawkins, now seated and wrapped in a warm blanket.

D.W.

Did "will power" save your life?

HAWKINS

Hell no. So I let go and waited to make my final scientific observation: death.

(beat)

But death never came. A kind of loving energy filled me, and I knew everything was going to be okay. Bizarre, huh?

SANDOZ

Then, what happened?

HAWKINS

I woke up, refreshed, like I'd just had a great nap, about fifty meters away from the lander. Then, you saw: I came aboard.

SANDOZ

And the intervening twenty hours?

HAWKINS

A blank. I'm just sorting it out myself. It's been quite a day.

(beat)

I need a moment with my wife. Excuse us.

Hawkins takes Sofia's hand and stands. They leave.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - GALLEY - NIGHT

In the small galley, Hawkins, now wearing a crew jumpsuit, pours coffee for himself and for Sofia, who is seated. She watches him with concern.

He serves the two coffees, then closes the door to the corridor, giving them privacy; then he sits with Sofia.

HAWKINS

Where do I begin?

Sofia, stone-faced, braces for the worst.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A few minutes later. Sandoz, D.W. and Roubidoux can see through the window into the galley where Hawkins and Sofia confer. The three priests whisper.

ROUBIDOUX

What do you think we've witnessed?

D.W.

Something unusual, that's for certain.

ROUBIDOUX

It may be more.

(cautious, quiet)

The relevant criterion is "spontaneous, instantaneous and complete healing."

D.W.

It fits this situation to a 'T'.

ROUBIDOUX

(to Sandoz)

You're positive you saw him fall.

SANDOZ

Yes.

ROUBIDOUX

Do you think you were hallucinating?

SANDOZ

What?

ROUBIDOUX

It's not an accusation. I'm trying to rule out ordinary explanations.

SANDOZ

I'm aware of what you're doing. I saw the man fall, and I wasn't tripping.

D.W.

Shh. Here he comes.

They look THROUGH THE WINDOW into the galley. Sofia is crying; Hawkins puts his arm around her. They walk out.

IN THE CORRIDOR the door opens. Sofia, distraught, rushes away; Hawkins stays behind to talk to the three priests.

SANDOZ

Why is she crying?

HAWKINS

She's afraid.

SANDOZ

What did you do to her?

HAWKINS

Nothing. I just told her what happened.

SANDOZ

And she's crying? But you're alive.

HAWKINS

That's the least of it. There's something else.

SANDOZ

What?

HAWKINS

I'm still groping for words to describe my experience. You might think I'm a hypocrite.

ROUBIDOUX

We want to hear, Dr. Hawkins.

Hawkins smiles gently, exhibiting an easy-going vibe that was never evident before, in contrast to his words:

HAWKINS

I still think organized religion preys on the weak and uneducated. Okay?

ROUBIDOUX

Please stop, if this is just another opportunity to mock our beliefs.

HAWKINS

It's not. In spite of that ... what freaked Sofia out -- maybe you can help me understand -- is that this God thing -- the God thing seems okay now. I mean, after decades of nothing, now I actually feel the God thing, I know it's true --

D.W.

We just say "God," it's easier --

HAWKINS

"God" -- saying that word is like spitting up a hairball -- but against all rationality and without any hope of proof, I admit, I believe ... I have to say it? "God." I believe God is real.

Sandoz stares with incredulity: he's always wanted to feel that, and never has. Hawkins touches his chest:

HAWKINS (CONT'D)

I get what you lot are on about. It's in here, always has been, right?

(MORE)

HAWKINS (CONT'D)
 (wondering aloud, worried)
 Or, maybe I had a stroke.

Hawkins looks to the three priests, concerned.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - CLINIC - NIGHT

CLOSE ON HAWKINS, being loaded into an MRI-type scanner, issuing instructions to Quinn, who's running the machine.

HAWKINS
 Just leave the settings exactly the way I
 put them, and there's less chance that
 you'll microwave me, okay, Quinn?

Quinn nods nervously. D.W. and Roubidoux watch carefully as Hawkins is swallowed lengthwise by the MRI scanner.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - MARRIED CREW QUARTERS - NIGHT

Sofia lies rigid on her bunk, staring at the ceiling, when there's a tap at the door.

SOFIA
 It's unlocked.

Sandoz comes in and sits at the built-in desk, inches from Sofia. They consider each other for a beat, then:

SOFIA (CONT'D)
 My husband has lost his mind.

SANDOZ
 He's not insane. People spend their lives
 searching for that kind of spiritual
 connection.

SOFIA
 You sound envious.
 (no reply)
 Oh, please. We're on a new planet -- the
 greatest discovery in history! -- and
 everyone is blithering about God.

SANDOZ
 I'm not.

SOFIA
 You don't need to: you've devoted your
 entire life to the Jesuits.

Sandoz doesn't disagree.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

It's a familiar feeling, in my gut. Even the whiff of theocracy is upsetting.

SANDOZ

Sofia, that's not where this is going. We didn't come here to impose our will on anyone -- especially not you.

SOFIA

That's what the men said who destroyed my country, weeks before they executed my father.

They freeze when they see Hawkins in the doorway.

SOFIA (CONT'D)

Honey -- how'd the MRI go?

HAWKINS

It wasn't a stroke. I'm in excellent shape. No breaks, no bruises.

Sofia embraces Hawkins; but with her hands where only Sandoz can see them, she signs in deaf sign language:

SOFIA

(subtitled sign language)

Please leave.

SANDOZ

(subtitled sign language)

I didn't mean to offend you.

SOFIA

(subtitled sign language)

Just go away.

As Sandoz backs toward the exit, he speaks aloud.

SANDOZ

Good night, Dr. Mendes. Dr. Hawkins.

Sandoz holds Sofia's eye as he backs out the door.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - ZOOLOGICAL LAB - DAY

Quinn watches as Ellen, using the sterile glove chamber, feeds ground-up plant matter to a hungry alien lizard.

Sandoz enters and watches them. Ellen withdraws her hands from the chamber.

SANDOZ

What are you learning about the local life forms?

QUINN

Life here is water- and carbon-based like us, uses the same four proteins, even has DNA; beyond that, it's bizarro land.

SANDOZ

Have you had anything die on you?

QUINN

A couple of the lizard-things, a few of the water-creatures, I'm just getting the hang of caring for them.

SANDOZ

Did they stay dead?

Quinn and Ellen hesitate; they've talked about this.

ELLEN

Hawkins is either confused, or lying: people don't die and come back to life.

SANDOZ

I watched him fall.

ELLEN

Stress and sleep-deprivation make people see things. You were angry at Hawkins for running away, and you're in a new, hostile environment.

SANDOZ

Meaning, what? I don't know what I saw?

QUINN

I liked when you thought he might be an alien shape-shifter. Woo-woo.

SANDOZ
I had to rule it out.

QUINN
Better check all of us, Padre. I might be
a shape-shifter, too.

SANDOZ
(teasing, shutting him up)
That's settled: you definitely are.

ELLEN
You've read about the first missionaries
in the Americas, in the 1600s-ish?
(he nods)
They saw miracles and wonders! God and
the Virgin Mary talked to them, in places
that are now covered with shopping malls.

SANDOZ
Yes.

ELLEN
Do you think that really happened?

SANDOZ
We have no way of knowing.

QUINN
I'm pretty sure I know: it didn't.

ELLEN
The human mind plays tricks on itself;
the laws of nature never change.

QUINN
If "God" changes scientific laws once in
a while just to show his hand, then He-
with-a-capital-H is kind of a prick.

SANDOZ
I know what I saw.

QUINN
I was talking about the 1600s
missionaries, Padre, not you.

SIRENS sound before Sandoz can answer; Quinn rushes to
the emergency monitor on the side of the lab and brings
up images from outside the ship.

THE SECURITY CAMERA SCREENS show the area surrounding the
Stella Maris lander; and one by one their view is
obscured until they're all useless.

ELLEN

Something's outside, it's blocking all
the surveillance cameras!

SANDOZ

It might be the Singers.

The LANDER BEGINS TO ROCK back and forth.

QUINN

(afraid)

Or, it might be an attack.

The three race out of the lab.

INT. *STELLA MARIS* LANDER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

Sandoz, Quinn and Ellen rush onto the bridge, joining
Sofia, Hawkins, Roubidoux and D.W.

D.W.

Silence the alarm!

Quinn kills the alarm. They freeze in place, listening as
they hear a group of a dozen heavy animals (or something)
climbing around on the lander.

QUINN

Could it be rain?

D.W.

A rain of cats, maybe.

Quinn is trembling; Ellen is frozen with fear. Sandoz
notices Sofia squeeze Hawkins's hand for comfort.

As abruptly as they began, the noises stop; as if the
animals had scurried away. Suddenly all is silent save
for their breathing and a few faint ship's pumps.

ROUBIDOUX

Bring up the surveillance cams, Quinn.

Quinn taps his slate. The screen shows views from a dozen
surveillance cams, every single one obscured.

D.W.

Every cam is blocked. I recommend we
prime the defensive weapons.

ROUBIDOUX

That's prudent. When they're fully
charged, fire three warning bursts.

SANDOZ

No! We traveled billions of miles to meet them! We can't fire on them!

ROUBIDOUX

We cannot perform any research, we cannot convey the word of God, we cannot do anything if we're not safe.

SANDOZ

How can we find God, if we start from a place of fear? Our Papal charter states "we come in peace." That's who we are.

ROUBIDOUX

Sandoz -- you disagree with every decision I make, with every doctrine of the faith, with evidence of the divine that we've seen. That is your prerogative but I will not let you endanger my crew.

(to D.W.)

Charge the weapons.

D.W. begins clicking through warning screens, activating the ship's external guns.

SANDOZ

Firing blind is like throwing a hand grenade into a crowd. I'll go out.

ROUBIDOUX

No, you won't.

Sandoz catches Sofia's eye and says two words in American sign language:

SANDOZ

(subtitled sign language)

Stall him.

SOFIA

(to Roubidoux)

If they're friendly now, they won't be after we fire on them.

ROUBIDOUX

We have to assume they may be hostile.

HAWKINS

What would happen on earth if a space lander fired on us? We'd obliterate it.

Sandoz taps Quinn, and makes the gesture of "pushing a button." Quinn nods. Sandoz backs out of the room.

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - DOCK - NIGHT

Sandoz runs into the dock and seals the door behind him.

He starts to pull on a biocontainment suit as he walks into the airlock. D.W.'s face appears on a Comm screen.

D.W.

*The cannons put out fifty thousand volts.
You'll get hurt.*

EMERGENCY SCREENS light up in the dock, warning against leaving the lander, counting down to the time the weapons are going to fire. Sandoz sees he has 55 seconds.

The door opens. Quinn's rover is visible just outside, having pressed the entry button. Beyond that, biological material of some sort is falling down onto the ground.

Forty seconds until gunfire. Sandoz ditches the bio-suit and heads straight for the door, wearing no protection.

He gathers his courage and walks outside.

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY LANDING SITE - NIGHT

Sandoz steps into the dim night, dislodging an avalanche of SERPENTINE VINES, which rain down over him. Sandoz furiously brushes them off before realizing they are --

Flowers. Tens of thousands of exotic flowers.

The ground around the ship is blanketed with gorgeous blooms of every hue, a blanket of fragrant color.

Sandoz takes a few steps, looks back, and notices the lander, too, is strewn with flowers.

He sees the defensive weapons charging and snaps into action, running toward the nearest security camera, pulling flowers off of it to make it functional.

SANDOZ

Stop -- don't shoot! It's flowers!

INT. STELLA MARIS LANDER - BRIDGE - NIGHT

On the bridge's main screen, one box in the grid of twelve security cams clears, showing Sandoz shouting.

SOFIA

Stop the guns.

D.W. reflexively hits the "abort" switch, instantly halting the firing of the weapons. Roubidoux prepares to speak into a microphone.

Quinn points his slate away from the others, so they won't see that he used the rover to open the door.

EXT. RAKHAT / IGNATIUS VALLEY LANDING SITE - NIGHT

Sandoz walks around, delighted and dazed, picking up and smelling the flowers on and around the lander. Roubidoux's voice booms over loudspeakers.

ROUBIDOUX (P.A. SYSTEM)
Sandoz, what's going on? Are you okay?

Sandoz turns to face the camera that he cleared. He nods.

ROUBIDOUX (P.A. SYSTEM)
(CONT'D)
What was blocking the cameras?

SANDOZ
Flowers. Hold on a sec. I see something.

Sandoz turns his back on the lander. In the distance he hears something, a creature making a sweet and pathetic VOCAL UTTERANCE unlike anything he's ever heard.

The sound comes from the dark woods nearby.

ROUBIDOUX (P.A. SYSTEM)
Stay near the ship, Sandoz!

Sandoz ignores Roubidoux's plea and cautiously walks toward the sound, which increases in pitch and tempo as he approaches -- the way a puppy cries.

Then, as he grows nearer to the woods, silence.

Sandoz gets spooked -- is this a trap?

He nervously looks around, then a TWIG BREAKING causes him to freeze. He backs away, then stumbles on something.

On the ground, he sees what he almost tripped over:

A NEST-LIKE BASKET WOVEN FROM VINES, the size of a crib.

The CRYING now sounds intelligent, more baby than animal but still utterly unfamiliar. Sandoz kneels, to look in.

INSIDE THE NEST

-- is an ALIEN GIRL, wrapped in colorful cloth and flowers, about the size of a four-year-old; her face is covered with fine downy fur; her ears are a little higher on her head than a human child and the eyes are bigger.

SANDOZ just stares, dumbfounded.

IN THE NEST, the alien girl's eyes grow large and hopeful upon seeing Sandoz; her ears wiggle expectantly. Sandoz silently watches her for a long time. Then:

The creature TITTERS and puts out her arms -- the "pick me up" gesture recognizable from small children anywhere.

Behind the fear and caution, Sandoz is fascinated. He backs away a few steps; she CRIES unhappily.

He returns her line of sight, and she makes a HAPPY COOING sound.

Though he is scared, Sandoz can't help but be charmed.

The alien girl reaches out for Sandoz, staring him in the eye, waiting to be picked up.

Sandoz looks out to the woods -- then back at the lander -- then he leans down and picks up the fuzzy little girl.

She puts her arms around his neck and presses her face into his shoulder, cooing. Sandoz gently pats her back.

Sandoz looks into the trees, where a dozen silhouetted shapes, tall and bipedal, form a line facing the lander.

The alien girl, suddenly afraid, tightens her hold, instinctively clinging to Sandoz for protection.

With his free hand, Sandoz makes the sign of the cross; then he faces toward the woods and stands his ground.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - 2089

CLOSE ON SANDOZ'S FACE -- skin marred by alien tattoos, a shock of white hair, and those bright, haunted eyes.

A thirtysomething woman in a business suit enters the room. She's unsmiling yet empathetic and smart, with a simple, unpretentious beauty. This is SISTER JULIA.

She takes command of the room, gesturing for the Swiss Guardsman to leave. Then, she closes the door and sits on a seat next to Old Sandoz. He meets her gaze.

SISTER JULIA

Father Sandoz, I'm Sister Julia. How much do you know?

(Sandoz stares)

You're in Vatican City. Forty-three years have passed on earth, since you left, but you aged only about a decade.

A VOLLEY OF ROCKS hits the window. Sandoz startles.

SISTER JULIA (CONT'D)

Ignore them. A pack of assholes, if you ask me. We're fighting the extradition.

(off his confusion)

They want you to be charged with murder. For events on another planet? Absurd.

OLD SANDOZ

(straining)

Don't defend me.

SISTER JULIA

There's a hundred times as many who think you're a living miracle. Going all the way up to the office of His Holiness.

OLD SANDOZ

Don't defend me.

SISTER JULIA

We have to. You're the only survivor.

This hits Old Sandoz like a blow. He locks eyes with her, incredulous -- they're all dead? Sister Julia nods.

She waits for him to comprehend that, then:

SISTER JULIA (CONT'D)

The early reports from Rakhat described a paradise. Then, all transmissions abruptly stopped.

(Sandoz nods)

Two years later, the U.N. Mission found a planet consumed by war. What happened?

OLD SANDOZ

(suffering to speak)

We were careful, conscientious, loving. It didn't matter.

(pained breathing)

(MORE)

OLD SANDOZ (CONT'D)

I went to Rakhat looking for God. I found
proof of His existence.

Sandoz grabs the last few inches of bandage in his teeth.

Suffering excruciating pain, he pulls it all the way off,
revealing what was hidden beneath the dressings:

HIS HAND is shockingly mangled, and its unnaturally long
fingers dangle uselessly from the wrist, like a living
Halloween skeleton.

SANDOZ

God is real, I know that now ... He's
cruel, impulsive and a monster.

Sister Julia stares in dread. Sandoz closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END