# PROJECT HAIL MARY

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Based on the novel by

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Final Shooting Script

**INT. MEDICAL BAY - (ACC-G)**

CLOSE ON A MAN'S EYES as they flutter towards consciousness. A COMFORTING VOICE echoes around us:

VOICE
*Eye movement detected.*

The man groans. He's been out for quite some time.

He's lying in some sort of medical bay. Various life-support tubes connect his body to complicated equipment. ROBOTIC ARMS descend from above.

Blades extend towards the man's face. *Swipe...* They begin to shave his beard with clinical precision. *Swipe...*

The man's EYES snap open.

We will come to know him as GRACE.

VOICE (CONT'D)
*Eye movement detected.*

Grace sees: SENSORS and TUBES attached to his prone body. Robotic ARMS and BLADES in his face.

VOICE (CONT'D)
*Remain still.*

He does not remain still. He bats away the robotic arm, grabs at the IV tubes in his arms. Cries out in pain.

VOICE (CONT'D)
*Hand movement detected.*

He rips the various tubes free.

VOICE (CONT'D)
*Hand movement detected. Hand movement detected. Hand movement detected --*

He rolls out of his bunk and hits the ground with a THUD. He scrambles to his feet as the robot arm rises beside him.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Please remain still.

The arm moves towards him -- Grace lashes out at the arm -- ow! -- he scuffles backwards -- THERE -- on the other side of the bay -- A LADDER. Grace scrambles up it --

As he climbs, he sees TWO OTHER BUNKS above his. They seem to be occupied...

<u>There are other people here</u>.

GRACE
Hey -- HEY -- <u>wake up</u> --

He pulls back the sheet. And GASPS as he sees --

A DEAD BODY.

Grace nearly falls off the ladder. He looks to the other bunk. ANOTHER BODY. Appears to be male. Both bodies seem somewhat mummified. As though they've been dead for a while.

THE ROBOTIC ARM rises up --

VOICE
*Please remain still.*

Grace races up the ladder as fast as he can --

**<u>INT. CORRIDOR - (ACC-G)</u>**

Grace reaches the top of the ladder, pulls himself upright onto a strange platform.

He surveys the area, desperate to understand his surroundings. UP AHEAD -- he notices ANOTHER ROOM:

It appears to be some sort of laboratory. We see scientific equipment, experiment stations. Only...

*Everything is oriented completely sideways* (as though the room was rotated ninety degrees from our horizon.)

VOICE
*Cognition assessment --*

He looks around. The voice seems to be coming from EVERYWHERE. *Where am I?*

*There.* Behind him. What looks like a GIANT WINDOW. Grace bolts towards it, throws open the SHIELD COVER to reveal --

STARS.

Endless. Cold.

*He's in outer space.*

In the reflection of the window, we see Grace's eyes widen with recognition -- *Oh god I'm in <u>space</u>* --

Off Grace's SHARP INTAKE OF BREATH --

**FLASHES OF MEMORIES:** *Grace on a pier. A security guard. Grace running. Riding a bike. The back of a woman's head. A NASA TV broadcast.*

**EXT. PIER 31 - AFTERNOON**

Reveal RYLAND GRACE. He looks different here. Shaven and part of society.

REPORTER (V.O.)
We are minutes away from the fly-by through the Petrova Line near Venus. What do we expect to find?

His phone shows a live-stream of a NASA feed: A REPORTER and a scientist (DR. BROWNE) discuss something called Project ArcLight.

REPORTER (V.O.)
Dr. Browne, what can you tell us about the ArcLight probe which is currently making that journey?

**EXT. SPACE - NASA VIRTUAL RECONSTRUCTION**

The ARCLIGHT PROBE drifts through space. A camera focuses in on the Sun. The video feed shifts into INFRARED imaging.

The probe crosses into a stream of INFRARED LIGHT.

BROWNE (V.O.)
The image we see will be coming from the onboard microscope.

**INT. NASA TV STUDIO**

The reporter and Dr. Browne look at the screens behind them as they change to a grainy low-res video.

In it we see a mostly white background with opaque, circular black dots. The dots move around independently. Some jerking to and fro, others more slowly.

BROWNE
Oh my God.

**EXT. PIER 31 - AFTERNOON**

Grace shares a pair of in-ear headphones with a woman his age. MARISSA. They watch the NASA feed on Grace's phone.

GRACE
What do you think it is?

MARISSA
I don't know.

ONSCREEN: Dr. Browne stands up and rushes off camera.

BROWNE (V.O.)
Sorry. I have to go.

Grace looks up as --

VOICE (PRE-LAP)
*Please return to the medical platform.*

CUT TO:

**INT. CORRIDOR - (ACC-G)**

Grace struggles to get his bearings...

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ACC-G)**

...and we (finally) cut outside the ship to see the HAIL MARY in ALL HER GLORY:

Her design man-made, in line with modern space design, yet unique. As though *she was built for a singular purpose*.

**INT. CORRIDOR - (ACC-G)**

Grace searches for anything to help him understand *What. Is. Happening?* He searches the environment, aimless and desperate...

He looks at A LADDER. The only place to go is UP.

As he climbs he sees a SYSTEMS TUNNEL. Weird wiring behind a weird cloth. He knock knocks on one of four strange bomb-shaped probes we will come to call THE BEETLES.

He climbs into a VIDEOSPHERE. A FOREST appears around him.

He unzips his latex medical suit and rips out the remaining wires. He shivers. He climbs up the ladder and into the --

**INT. EVA ROOM - (ACC-G)**

It's freezing in here. He's cold and shivering. Grabs whatever he can find to cover himself.

**INT. OUTSIDE COCKPIT - (ACC-G)**

He climbs the last ladder to a HATCH labeled COCKPIT / CONTROL ROOM.

MARY
*If you'd like to open the cockpit hatch, please state your name.*

Grace opens his mouth to answer... but nothing comes.

He doesn't remember his name.

GRACE
Uhh...

He tries to remember. Squints his eyes.

**FLASHES OF MEMORIES:** *Grace riding a bike. He has some plastic bucket contraption. He's at a middle school.*

*STUDENT (V.O.)*
*Good morning Dr. Grace!*

CLOSE ON GRACE as recognition flickers across his face.

GRACE
Grace!

MARY
*Welcome, Dr. Grace.*

The hatch swings open. Grace climbs up into --

**INT. COCKPIT - (ACC-G)**

He goes past a JUMP SEAT area, calling up to the cockpit --

GRACE
Hello?! I'm here!

MARY
*Please record video diary.*

GRACE
No no no.

He climbs up to the cockpit. *It's empty.* And dark. The monitors and instruments in some sort of sleep mode.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Take me to the person in charge.
The... captain.

MARY
*Yao, Li-Jie. Deceased.*

Every surface is covered with switches and monitors. It's inscrutable. Buttons in Russian and Chinese characters.

GRACE
Where are the living people?

Grace falls into some panels, turning them on.

MARY
*Dr. Ryland Grace. End of manifest.*

GRACE
No. That can't be it. I can't be the only person here, right?

Grace drops in the pilot seat, overwhelmed.

MARY
*Pilot detected.*

The Chinese half of the cockpit LIGHTS UP and Grace jumps right out of the seat.

GRACE
Nope. No no no. Not the pilot.

He stumbles around the co-pilot seat to the window.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Call Houston.

MARY
*Unknown command.*

Grace taps through different hull mounted camera LIVE FEEDS that display on the screens as if they were windows.

Grace's breath catches in his throat as he sees a starfield... and that GIANT ORANGE SUN in the distance.

GRACE
That's the Sun! There it is! So what are we like, Neptune-ish? Let's crank up the radio and call Earth...

MARY
*Current transmission time to Earth is 11 years, 10 months, 14 days, and 6 hours.*

*What*? Grace's heart starts to POUND.

GRACE
No. You're wrong. I need a map.

Grace tries to make sense of the digital information streaming across the various screens. He notices a dot labeled HAIL MARY. The words trigger a memory. *That's us.*

Grace studies the controls. Keys THE MAP. WHOOSH. Half the window is now a mapping overlay.

He scrolls on a roller ball. Faster and faster.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh... That's so far...

And the map starts to WIDEN OUT. WHOOSH. And the HAIL MARY becomes tiny... and MORE CIRCLES fill the screen... as though we just zoomed out on our galaxy...

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's really far...

It takes Grace a moment to realize what he's looking at... there's ANOTHER CIRCLE marked "Sol" on the map... and a flashing cross designating "Earth."

*And it's nowhere near his current position.*

Grace's blood goes COLD. His eyes dart to the live-feed.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's not our sun.

CUT TO:

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (ACC-G)**

Grace flies unpeacefully down the ladder through the peaceful forest.

**INT. LAB - (ACC-G)**

Grace CRASH LANDS on the floor of the lab. Moving with URGENCY. Everything's PERPENDICULAR, but he can still move around. He surveys the panels on the walls. *There...*

"Supplies." He climbs up and stands the wrong way on a cabinet and opens a panel. Inside: a cache of well-organized, soft-sided packing cubes. Grace rifles through the contents... *A-ha.*

He tears open the cubes. A small WHITEBOARD. MARKERS.

A bunch of other stuff caroms into the lab below. Grace notices a VIEWSCREEN.

GRACE
Where is the fuel?

He hits a button to toggle through screens to find the same readout he saw in the cockpit:

*FUEL: 11,581.41 kg...*

Grace starts doing the math. He scribbles furiously. Not enough room on the whiteboard. He uses the sideways desk tabletop. We see him pulling the figures from the screens:

*CONSUMPTION RATE: 6.043 g/s...*

Grace starts dividing the numbers. As he does so, his hand starts SHAKING. *That can't be right...*

We see GENUINE DESPAIR wash over him as he stares at the numbers. *Oh God. What do I do?* He feels nauseated.

*What am I doing here?* He screams.

CUT TO:

**INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

WHITE DOTS wiggling across a BLACK FIELD. Stars? Snow? The dots drift down, filling the frame.

GRACE (O.S.)
Ooohhhhh... sound waaavees are
phyysiicaaal...

The white dots spring to life, forming a perfect GEOMETRIC SHAPE. It's beautiful. We hear a few voices gasp in surprise.

CUT WIDE to reveal Grace. He's in the center of a classroom, surrounded by sixth graders. He's in the middle of demonstrating a science experiment involving Chladni's Law.

GRACE (CONT'D)
At different frequeeenciiees...
they make different patteeernnns...

He holds a funnel connected to a tube over a homemade device. It's a plastic bucket, a stretched balloon and a bunch of sand. It's one of a bunch of MacGyver-ed science contraptions Grace has around his classroom.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Olivia, can you help me out? Make some shapes?

He gestures to a sixth-grader, OLIVIA, who has a digital amplifier also attached to the bucket device.

*Wait... Grace is a sixth-grade teacher? How does he end up in <u>outer space</u>?*

Olivia messes with the amp. She changes the frequency of the sound it's emitting. The mandala pattern changes too.

GRACE (CONT'D)
There we go!

Another student, REKHA, raises her hand.

REKHA
Are they really eating the Sun? The... space dots?

There's an uncomfortable pause.

GRACE
That is a great question, Rekha. I think it'd be better if your parents were the ones to talk to you about that. Maybe ask them?

Grace quickly changes the subject.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hey, who wants to play a game of the beanbag is lava?

Grace holds up an EARTH BEANBAG. The whole class chants.

STUDENTS
Lava! Lava! Lava!

GRACE
What is the speed of light: Olivia?

Grace tosses her the beanbag.

OLIVIA
A hundred and um...

GRACE
It's melting your hands, Olivia!

Olivia tosses the beanbag back and forth like it's lava.

OLIVIA
186,000 miles per second!

GRACE
Give her a round of applause, that's awesome!

She tosses the bag back.

REKHA
What is the Petrova Line?

GRACE
Aha, pass!

He throws the bag to another student, PARKER.

OLIVIA
You can't pass.

GRACE
I just did.

Parker throws it back. The whole class chants.

STUDENTS
LAVA! LAVA! LAVA!

GRACE
(defeated)
Come on guys.

CUT TO:

Grace grabs a roll of red colored tape.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Two years ago, a radio telescope enthusiast named Irina Petrova, she noticed a streak of infrared light from the Sun to Venus, and that is now known as the Petrova Line. That's it.

He reaches up overhead to his classroom's 3D model of our solar system. He rips a long line of tape and connects the Sun to Venus.

REKHA
That's the dots?

GRACE
They think so.

PARKER
What dots?

Grace clicks his laptop to show the NASA video of TINY BLACK MICROORGANISMS collected by the probe.

GRACE
These dots. They sent a probe up to the Petrova Line to see what was in it and this is what they found.

REKHA
Are they eating the Sun?

GRACE
They seem to be dimming the Sun. A... tiny little bit.

OLIVIA
So no big whoop?

GRACE
It's a small whoop. It's a small to medium whoop. Over the next thirty years... the Earth could cool maybe 10 to 15 degrees.

OLIVIA
So it is a big whoop.

REKHA
I heard that all the crops will die, the economy will free fall, and half the Earth will die of starvation.

Murmurs run through the class as the gravity of the situation takes hold --

STUDENTS
We're all gonna die!

He stares at the kids' scared faces and realizes he's made this problem so much worse.

GRACE
Guys, you're forgetting something! That's *if* that *were* to happen, right? They're gonna figure this out. Right now, the best minds in the entire world are on it.

CUT TO:

**INT. LAB - (ACC-G)**

Grace is collapsed against the corner. Fully succumbing to despair. *This is the man the world is counting on?*

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (ACC-G)**

Same vibe, different floor. Grace is an absolute MESS. Also he's under a giant JELLYFISH.

**INT. ATTIC - CAMERA POV - (ACC-G)**

We're looking at GRACE though a CAMERA POV. Cabinets are open, containers are dumped all over the floor. All sorts of various equipment litters the area.

MARY
*Good morning.*

GRACE
I'm up! I'm up.

His words seem a bit slurry. But he seems... upbeat? He takes a drink from what looks like A LARGE IV BAG.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ACC-G)**

Even the ship looks drunk.

**INT. MED BAY - (ACC-G)**

Grace rummages through the bins containing the crew's personal effects. Yao's and Ilyukhina's are filled with mementos, photos and letters.

**FLASHES OF MEMORIES:** *Ilyukhina singing karaoke. Yao telling a joke. Grace talking to them both.*

**INT. ATTIC - (ACC-G)**

Grace writes on a white board. Maybe we catch glimpses of some of it: "**WHO AM I?**"

**INT. MED BAY - (ACC-G)**

Grace's bag has clothes. And a single photo of himself, alone, on the deck of a large boat.

**INT. ATTIC - (ACC-G)**

Grace adds more to his whiteboard: "*Teacher - Born in Bay Area? Allergic to hazelnuts? Friends?*"

**INT. MED BAY - (ACC-G)**

In the pantry, Grace squirts mustard on a brick of uncooked ramen and shoves it in his mouth.

**INT. ATTIC - (ACC-G)**

Grace adds more to the whiteboard: *"How did I get here?"*

CUT TO:

**INT. CLASSROOM**

A beautiful, paper-mache SUN slowly rotates in its central position of honor in Grace's classroom.

ANGLE DOWN from the sun to FIND GRACE. He's alone in the classroom, erasing the diagram of the Petrova Line on the whiteboard. He glances up as his door opens... and a person he doesn't recognize enters without invite.

Her name is EVA STRATT. She has the type of effortless authority about her that makes you want to sit up straight and apologize for something you didn't do.

STRATT
Knock knock.

GRACE
Who's there?

STRATT
Not good at jokes.

GRACE
Not good at jokes who?

STRATT
Dr. Grace? Eva Stratt. I'm with the Petrova taskforce.

She tosses a binder on his desk. We catch the title: "An Analysis of Water-Based Assumptions and Recalibrations of Expectations for Evolutionary Models."

She flips open the binder.

STRATT (CONT'D)
I'm interested in this section. "The Goldilocks Zone Is For Idiots, colon, Why Everyone Else Is Wrong."

Grace struggles to find his footing. *What is happening?*

GRACE
That was a long time ago.

STRATT
Do you stand by what you wrote?

GRACE
I was fired for standing by what I wrote.

STRATT
That is incorrect. You were fired for calling the leading scholar in your field “a staggering waste of carbon” at the UNESCO conference in Denmark.

GRACE
I’m sorry, but... whatever this is, I’m not interested.

He grabs his things to leave --

**EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DAY**

Stratt follows Grace out the door.

STRATT
Do you still believe water is not necessary for life to evolve?

Grace reaches his beat up little BIKE, unlocks it --

GRACE
Look, there’s nothing magical about hydrogen and oxygen. Water’s required for life on *Earth*, sure. But a completely different planet might have completely different conditions. I don’t know why that makes me such a nut.

He goes to leave.

But he is quickly surrounded by SEVERAL BLACK SUVS and SUITED AGENTS. The whole group has a MILITARY feel.

One guard, CARL, steps next to Stratt.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Hi. Sorry I didn’t catch your name.

CARL
Carl.

GRACE
Carl. Hi.

STRATT
Dr. Grace, the Petrova Line samples splashed down last night. I want you to tell me what they are and how they work.

GRACE
I am a teacher at Grover Cleveland Middle.

STRATT
You have a doctorate in molecular biology.

GRACE
And I ride a bike to work and it's not for exercise. So I'm sure there are thousands of other people who --

STRATT
It survives on the surface of the Sun. Does that sound like a water-based life-form to you?

She holds his gaze, unapologetic. And we see real *fear* in Grace's eyes as he feels the full weight of what's happening.

Grace approaches an SUV. Carl opens the door for him.

GRACE
The Sun's really dying, isn't it?

Stratt nods. *Let's go.*

**INT. TASKFORCE LAB**

Grace locks in the hood of his HAZMAT GEAR, his nervous breath fogging up his clear vinyl mask.

He's standing alone in an elaborate lab. A multitude of cameras document his every move.

GRACE
Is all of this necessary?

Stratt overlooks the room through a large OBSERVATION WINDOW. She's flanked by intimidating people in various military uniforms from around the world. She keys the speaker:

STRATT
Yes. Please analyze the Petrova sample.

Grace approaches THE CONTAINER.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Just one thing. The entire room is filled with argon. Try not to rip your suit.

GRACE
Am I... expendable? Is that why you want me?

STRATT
That's not the *only* reason.

GRACE
It's almost like... you don't care if I die?

Stratt has a conversation with the military personnel. <u>It goes on for A WHILE</u>.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hold on, you have to talk about it?

Eventually she keys the speaker:

STRATT
The consensus here is that it would be preferable if you did not die.

Grace grits his teeth. He tries to keep his nerves in check as he opens the container. Inside is a clear plastic ball. It appears empty to the naked eye.

Huh. This is somewhat... underwhelming.

<u>But Grace is in his element</u>. The excitement of doing real science again takes hold. He takes the ball over to the workstation. He splits it in half, mops one half with a cotton swab. He rubs the swab on a slide. Places the slide under a microscope.

THROUGH THE LENS: we see a much clearer image of the sample.

Grace changes the exposure.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Are they... alive?

He flicks a switch. The microscope image is now projecting on a screen riding sidecar.

GRACE
They're *moving.*

STRATT
(turns to generals)
So they're alive.

GRACE
Yes, they're moving, but that could be for many reasons --

The generals ask her a lot of questions that we can't hear.

STRATT
(to Grace)
What are they made of?

GRACE
It's gonna take a long time. It took <u>two hundred years</u> to figure out how bacteria work, so...

Stratt discusses something with the military personnel in her room. Grace can't hear what they're saying. Stratt turns her attention back to him, keys the speaker.

STRATT
Please do it faster.

Grace throws up his hands as we begin a --

MONTAGE OF SCIENCE.

-- An INFRARED microscope. Can't see inside them. Grace adjusts the settings.

GRACE
I'm going through the whole light spectrum here. Wow! You're not gonna believe this...

Stratt leans in.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Nothing happened!

-- X-Rays. Microwaves. Gamma rays in a radiation chamber...

Every time: just solid black wiggling dots.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I can't see into these buggers.
It's amazing.

-- Grace puts them in an ice bath.

GRACE (CONT'D)
X-rays, microwaves, gamma rays,
visible light, nothing!

Stratt hangs her head.

**IT'S A LOT LATER,** the military guys are exhausted. Everyone is slouched except STRATT. Sitting straight as an arrow.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Ooh ooh ooh. I've been dying to do
this all day.

Grace pokes one dot with a NANO-SYRINGE. It instantly turns translucent -- a recognizable cell with organelles.

He puts his hands up. SUCCESS.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's a cell.

STRATT
It's a cell!
(turns to military)
Wake up! It's a cell!

GRACE
It's a tiny alien cell. You guys!

STRATT
Applause.

GRACE
This is <u>first contact</u> with life
outside our...
(checks again)
Uh oh. It died.

STRATT
What?

It stopped wiggling. It's dead.

GRACE
No, this is great! Now we can find
out what they're made of.

He rushes the dead sample into the atomic emission spectroscope to see what it's made of...

GRACE (CONT'D)
You guys fired up?

The generals nod.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Yes, right?!

He reads out the spectroscope report:

GRACE (CONT'D)
Carbon, oxygen...
(deflates)
...hydrogen.

STRATT
Oh.

He kicks over a bin. Gets sprayed down and exits the lab. He walks right up to the observation window.

Face to face with Stratt.

GRACE
It's made, almost entirely... of water.

**INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - LATER**

Much later. Grace sits alone. He looks exhausted. Covered in sweat. He eats soup out of a thermos. Stratt approaches.

GRACE
Sorry if I overreacted in there. Just realizing I was wrong about the only original idea I ever had.

STRATT
What else did you learn?

GRACE
(shrugs)
They give off infrared light when they move. Like so much. I don't know how they store that much energy, but their wavelength is exactly the Petrova frequency.

STRATT
So the light is how they move?

GRACE
Yeah. They consume the Sun's energy, and then they expel it for propulsion. They toot to scoot, basically.

STRATT
Why did it go to Venus?

GRACE
I don't know.

STRATT
Okay. We'll tell you.

GRACE
What?

STRATT
I have three-hundred and forty-seven other biologists in twenty-one countries mobilizing as we speak.
(then)
So, thank you for your help. I'm glad you didn't die.

She walks away. Grace turns and sees a government team in hazmat suits take his samples.

STRATT (CONT'D)
(into walkie)
Let's pack this up.

Grace gets up and chases her OUTSIDE.

**EXT. TASKFORCE LAB - DAWN**

People are packing up stuff.

GRACE
That's it?!

He passes Carl.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's it Carl? You're gonna take all the stuff?

CARL
Talk to her.

GRACE
(to Stratt)
You're taking all the stuff?

STRATT
At the school you said there were thousands of people more qualified than you, so...

GRACE
I was being modest.

STRATT
I don't need modest. I need people who think they're right when everyone else thinks they're wrong. I need people who piss other people off.

GRACE
That's me!

STRATT
Do you want to be on the project?

GRACE
If you think I can help, then...

CARL
Just answer the question.

GRACE
...I want to help the world.

STRATT
I left you three dots.

GRACE
Just three?

STRATT
Plus the one you killed.

CARL
I would take the three.

GRACE
I'll take the dots.

Is Stratt holding back a smile? She's been playing him. But Grace nods. Feeling a sense of purpose. *Thank you.*

STRATT
Get to work, Dr. Grace.

She tosses him his EARTH BEANBAG she took from his classroom.

STRATT (CONT'D)
The world is counting on you.

She gets in her SUV and drives off. Carl stays behind.

CUT TO:

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (ACC-G)**

Grace lays on the floor under screens of giant jellyfish, remembering...

CUT TO:

**INT. TASKFORCE LAB**

A BANK OF MONITORS labeled **"ASTROPHAGE RESEARCH PORTAL"** show A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT LABS. Labels detail the INTERNATIONAL OPERATION this has become. *Berlin... Stockholm... Beijing...*

All across the globe we see scientists hard at work in well-ordered laboratories.

And then we widen to reveal GRACE'S LAB.

Which now looks like a hot mad-scientist mess. Grace stands in the center of it all, deep in thought. He's staring at a WALL-MONITOR showing a microscope view.

ON THE SCREEN: THREE ASTROPHAGE CELLS.

He scans his room, deep in thought. Something occurs to him. He looks to the observation window.

GRACE
Hey Carl?

CARL
(over walkie)
This is Carl.

GRACE
Imagine for a second that you're an interstellar microorganism...

CARL
I'm not doing that.

GRACE
Why would you leave the Sun and go to Venus? Why not stop at Mercury? It's closer.

CARL
Maybe fresh air?

GRACE
Venus' atmosphere is mostly CO2.

CARL
You don't know what these little space dots like.

An idea is percolating...

GRACE
Hey Carl, do we have an expense account?

CARL
We don't.

Grace sighs.

CARL (CONT'D)
But *I* do.

**INT. HOME DEPOT**

Carl pushes a loaded cart through the aisles. It's got an eclectic assortment of light switches, duct tape, plywood.

He stops the cart in front of the aluminum foil. A-ha!

CUT TO:

ALL THE ALUMINUM FOIL IN THE STORE rolls down the CASHIER's conveyor belt. She looks at Grace in disbelief.

He's looking at the candy. Grabs a ton of SOUR SKITTLES. Carl pays.

CASHIER
Do you have a coupon?

CARL
We don't need a coupon. We're the government.

CASHIER
Which government?

CARL
All of them.

**INT. TASKFORCE LAB**

Carl, now in a lab coat, helps Grace put the finishing touches on a PLYWOOD BOX.

The box now houses the Astrophage station. Grace finishes hooking filters and bulbs to the contraption.

CARL
So this box is Venus.

GRACE
The box is Venus. It's set to emit the same infrared light frequency as Venus' CO2 atmosphere.

CARL
So if the dots move when you turn the lights on, that means they're looking for the CO2.

GRACE
Yep. Thus proving the Carl Hypothesis.

CARL
Sick.

Grace places the slide on the microscope and seals the door. He glances at the screens showing THREE ASTROPHAGE CELLS.

GRACE
All right, you ready?

CARL
Three... two... one...

Grace switches on the light switch attached to the plywood closet. And instantly the Astrophage are GONE.

GRACE
They moved! Uh oh.

CARL
Why you saying uh oh?

GRACE
The Astrophage moved off the slide.

Grace rewinds the video of the Astrophage. They zipped right off the slide.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We lost them.

CARL
What do you mean we lost them? Go get them.

GRACE
If I open the door in the light, they're going to escape and then we'll lose them forever. At least now they're in the box.

CARL
Okay so just turn the lights off.

GRACE
There will still be light. It's gotta be total darkness. Like, total darkness.

CARL
Okay, so just put this box in another box.

Grace looks at the pop up lab. He turns to Carl. They both have the same idea.

HAND CLAP CUT:

**INT. TASKFORCE LAB - LATER**

Carl helps Grace wrap the outside of the pop up lab with foil. The plywood closet is in the center.

Every nook and cranny is now covered in DUCT TAPE and ALUMINUM FOIL. Every blinking light and infrared camera covered in electrical tape.

Grace duct-tapes an infrared camera and screen to his own head. He steps inside the lab.

GRACE
(into walkie)
Go ahead and close the door.

CARL
(right in front of him)
I can hear you.

GRACE
(into walkie)
Entering phase two.

He flips down the infrared camera over his eyes.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Okay, I'm in position. Lights off.

Carl, now back in the control room, turns off the lights. In the lab it's pitch black.

Grace unseals the door to their plywood Venus Box.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm in.

INFRARED POV: as Grace searches for the cells.

CARL
Please report, over.

There. A small HOT SPOT near the filter.

We see the HOT SPOT where the Astrophage is located. POV shifts over to the second HOT SPOT...

GRACE
There's one... There's two!

CARL
Come on, get the third one.

His camera searches the experiment table. And locates the THIRD HOT SPOT.

GRACE
Got sample three. The three musketeers. The three stooges.

Carl celebrates!

GRACE (CONT'D)
Uh oh.

Right next to the third: a FOURTH HOT SPOT. *Right there*.

CARL
What?

GRACE
Are you sitting down?

CARL
No, I'm standing like a grown man.

GRACE
Cause there's a fourth.

CARL
What?

GRACE
We're fathers, Carl.

Carl sits down.

CARL
Now I'm sitting down.

**LATER.** Lab lights come on. Grace has his phone to his ear.

STRATT (OVER PHONE)
*Stratt.*

GRACE
Carl and I made a baby.

STRATT (OVER PHONE)
*What?*

GRACE
We figured out how the Astrophage breed.

STRATT (OVER PHONE)
*Don't move.*

Grace sits in silence for a moment. Then we hear what sounds like A REAL COMMOTION.

The door opens. Carl steps into the lab. He seems even more serious than usual.

CARL
Wheels up.

CUT TO:

**EXT. TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE**

Carl drives an SUV across the tarmac. He stops beside a FIGHTER JET. AN AIR FORCE OFFICER is awaiting their arrival.

The officer hustles Grace out of the SUV. It all happens so fast, Grace barely has time to protest.

GRACE
You know, Carl, when you said a jet I thought you meant like a PJ...

The officer hands Grace a pill.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's been a long time since I've taken a pill from a stranger without knowing what it was...

**EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN**

The fighter jet spins through the air, angling downwards towards A LONE U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER. There's no land as far as the eye can see.

Grace SCREAMS.

JUMP CUT TO: Grace is fast asleep, drooling on the glass.

**EXT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - FLIGHT DECK**

The flight crew hustles a bewildered and groggy Grace out of the cockpit. Everything feels VERY LOUD.

Stratt is there to greet Grace.

STRATT
Dr. Grace, how was your flight?

Grace vomits into a deck cone. He gives Stratt a thumbs up.

GRACE
Where are we?

STRATT
The ocean. The Astrophage reproduction. Can you do it at scale?

GRACE
(thinks)
Oh, in theory, just get a bunch of elbow-shaped pipes, put sunlight in one end... excuse me for a second --

He steps away and vomits into the deck cone some more. Stratt waits.

GRACE (CONT'D)
...and IR light and CO2 in the other. Repeat.

A SAILOR writes all this down on a clipboard.

STRATT
Anything else you might need?

GRACE
Uh, just some water. He gave me a pill and it's still in my throat --

A SOLDIER passes by with two venti black coffees.

SOLDIER
Two venti coffees.

STRATT
Thank you so much.

GRACE
Or coffee, that's --

He reaches for one.

STRATT
I need both.

GRACE
Or not.

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - LOWER DECK**

Stratt marches Grace through a claustrophobic corridor. She stops at a heavy metal door. Before she opens it --

STRATT
Okay, so this is kind of a tough room so don't take it personally.

GRACE
Oh I don't need anything fancy. As long as there's a bed and a shower I'm good.

Stratt opens the door...

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - HELICOPTER HANGAR - CONTINUOUS**

They've turned a helicopter hangar into their private conference room. Military personnel and top scientists from around the world.

All staring at Grace.

Stratt leads him into the room. Grace feels immediately out of place.

STRATT
Everyone, this is Dr. Ryland Grace.
(then)
(MORE)

STRATT (CONT'D)
He figured out how to breed Astrophage.

The room APPLAUDS. And quickly SPEAKS OVER ONE ANOTHER:

NARENDER
*How did you do it?*

DR. LOKKEN
*How long does the process take?*

CHIMAMANDA
*Does it reproduce by mitosis or myosis?*

Grace notices a video conference projected behind him.

SCIENTIST (V.O.)
(on video)
What is the incubation period?

*There's so many of them...*

GRACE
(um...)
Carl and I made a mini Venus out of a plywood box, and as soon as the samples recognized the spectral signature of CO2 they were like... whoomp, there it is.

More chatter. Everyone noticeably underwhelmed by Grace.

STRATT
Okay you can sit.

NARENDER
Who's Carl?

Stratt gets a chair for Grace and forces people to scoot down to make room for him. A CHINESE SCIENTIST (XI) looks up from his phone --

XI
While your experiment was crude and clumsy, our scientists have replicated his results.

GRACE
Sorry, how did you see them --

XI
We estimate an eight day doubling time under optimal conditions. Dr. Grace is right. It is the CO2.

GRACE
(whispers, to Stratt)
That's why they're going to Venus.

STRATT
Please say it for everyone.

GRACE
(whispers, again)
That's why they're going to Venus.

Stratt leans forward into her microphone.

STRATT
So that's why they're going to Venus is what Dr. Grace wants to say.

Grace takes the microphone.

GRACE
They're going to breed.

XI
Whoomp, there it is.

GRACE
(to Stratt)
I really like him.

The whole room seems to activate at that news. An AFRICAN DIPLOMAT (CHIMAMANDA) looks to Stratt.

CHIMAMANDA
So how long to make two million kilograms?

Grace looks up at that number. <u>How much</u>?

GRACE
*Two million?* Why on Earth would you need that much Astrophage?

CHIMAMANDA
Nobody told him?

The room tenses again. The GERMAN MINISTER (VOIGT) seems quite upset. He looks to Stratt --

VOIGT
*Er hat keine Freigabe* -- he has no clearance.

She turns to Grace.

STRATT
Please stand up, Dr. Grace.
(he stands)
I hereby grant you top-secret clearance to all information pertaining to Project Hail Mary.

She looks to Voigt -- satisfied? Voigt grimaces.

GRACE
What's Project Hail Mary?

CUT TO:

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - HELICOPTER HANGAR**

AN INTRICATE DIGITAL MAP of the STARS fills the screens in the room. Stratt stands at the front and explains.

STRATT
The Sun is not the only star dying. We've measured a drop in luminance of other stars.

**INT. HAIL MARY - MED BAY - (ACC-G) - (INTERCUT)**

Grace drinks from a vodka bag as he passes by a series of golden ETCHINGS lining a wall, like Voyager's golden record, telling the story of Earth and this mission.

He stops and stares at them.

**ON THE CARRIER --**

STRATT
Every star was infected by its neighbor...

The map shows our star infected by WISE 0855-0714... which was infected by SIRIUS... which was infected by EPSILON ERIDANI... The map branches outward through the galaxy.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Except one.

The map isolates on a star cluster, centers on ONE STAR.

STRATT (CONT'D)
And that is?

GRACE
Tau Ceti?

STRATT
Tau Ceti. That's right.

She clicks the next slide.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Eleven point nine light years away. It's uninfected, despite being well within the cluster of infected stars.

GRACE
Why?

STRATT
(to the room)
Tell him.

The whole room speaks in unison.

EVERYONE
We don't know!

STRATT
Which is why we decided to build a ship to go there and find out.

Grace looks at her like she's insane.

GRACE
It's eleven point nine light years away. You can't just build an interstellar ship.

STRATT
Oh yeah we can. The ship is not the problem. The energy required to power the ship is the problem.

NARENDER
It <u>was</u> the problem.

Stratt gestures to her presentation.

GRACE
(realizing)
The Astrophage is the fuel.

NARENDER
Provided we can make enough of it. And for that, we need you, my friend.

GRACE
Me?

Grace struggles to understand the ramifications of that --

**ON THE HAIL MARY --**

The golden etchings depict all the trees and animals and people and art and culture and science that, knowingly or not, are counting on Grace to save them.

**ON THE CARRIER --**

GRACE
Ooh... those little guys store a lot of energy. One mistake and that much Astrophage could vaporize California.

STRATT
Which is why you now live on a boat in the middle of the ocean.

GRACE
I live on a boat?

STRATT
You do.

GRACE
So you want to build a near-light speed spaceship, have it travel further than any human-made object has ever traveled, and visit a star just to “see what’s up?”

STRATT
Yeah.

GRACE
And then what?

STRATT
There won’t be enough fuel for a round trip, so they send their findings back to Earth on probes.

GRACE
And the astronauts? Die in space?

STRATT
Yes.

GRACE
(writing it down)
“Die in space...”
(then)
Any other plans you’ve thought of? Anything else you’re kicking around?

STRATT
There are infinite possibilities for this to go wrong. It almost certainly won’t work. It’s what you Americans would call a “long shot.”

GRACE
Hail Mary. I get it now.

STRATT
The alternative is to just do nothing, and to starve and kill each other and watch everything on this planet go extinct, including us. So...

ON GRACE, now very pale.

STRATT (CONT’D)
Cool?

**ON THE HAIL MARY --**

Grace looks at the final golden etching. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the EARTH BEANBAG from his classroom.

CUT TO:

**INT. HAIL MARY - STORAGE - (ACC-G)**

CLOSE ON A MISSION PATCH: “**Hail Mary**” above the Earth.

It’s been some time since we left Grace. He seems less frazzled (or more sober). He’s wearing his own flight suit. He organizes the personal bins as he finishes cleaning the mess he made earlier.

His eyes linger on the other FLIGHT SUITS. He studies the corresponding names:

“**Yao**” and “**Ilyukhina**”

He considers what to do next...

**INT. DORMITORY - (ACC-G)**

Grace makes his way to the dormitory. He approaches the bodies of Yao and Ilyukhina. They're still in their med bays, covered by sheets.

CUT TO:

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - LOWER DECK**

Grace and Stratt walk through the massive hangar deck and into a growing makeshift LABORATORY / RESEARCH AREA.

GRACE
That's a long time to be in space.

STRATT
And they'll be in comas for most of it.

GRACE
Is that even safe?

STRATT
Nothing about this is safe.

CUT TO:

**INT. EVA ROOM - (ACC-G)**

Grace cradles the wrapped Ilyukhina in his arms as he walks to the EVA ROOM and places her gently on some soft bins.

GRACE (V.O.)
Who on Earth is going to sign up for this?

STRATT (V.O.)
We only need three.

**INT. AIRLOCK - (ACC-G)**

Grace looks through Yao and Ilyukhina's personal photos.

STRATT (V.O.)
A pilot...

CAMERA DRIFTS ACROSS the body of YAO...

STRATT (V.O.)
An engineer...

...to find ILYUKHINA...

STRATT (V.O.)
And a scientist.

...and settles on GRACE.

He stands above the two bodies, searching for the right words.

GRACE
Commander Yao... I must've known you, but I just don't remember.

He's looking at cute pictures of Yao goofing off with friends and family.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You make a funny face in literally every picture and I admire that. You must have been very smart... and strong... and brave... and I sure hope a little of that has rubbed off on me cause I'm gonna need it.

Grace tucks Yao's photos into his flight suit.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Ilyukhina... First, I owe you three bags of Vodka. Unlike me, you seem to have had a lot of friends. This picture of you, what looks like sneaking into the Kremlin, is... legendary.

He has some letters of hers. Written in Cyrillic with love.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I wish you were still here. I wish I wasn't alone. I'm sorry, I wish I was doing a better job... You were both very loved. You deserve much more than this.
(then)
I'll do my best to make sure that you don't... y'know. That you didn't...

He can't quite say "die in vain."

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'll do my best.

Grace is out of words. He nods.

*Goodbye.*

**INT. EVA ROOM - (ACC-G)**

He shuts the airlock door. He stares at the two bodies of his crew mates through the window.

A moment of silence. Then Grace studies the panel. He's not quite sure how this works. But it seems self-explanatory.

He presses a button. The airlock begins decompression procedure.

Grace hits another button. The outer door opens.

Whoosh. The bodies of Yao and Ilyukhina are jettisoned into space. They fall away from view.

Grace stands in the ensuing quiet. Alone.

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - LATER - (ACC-G)**

Grace sits in front of that WALL-SIZED SCREEN. It's now showing waves crashing on a foggy beach. He likes the fog...

He turns to see -- ANOTHER GRACE, walking down the beach towards him. The waves crash against his feet.

An ALARM suddenly sounds.

A LIGHT begins to flash behind his head.

MARY
*Approaching Tau Ceti. Prepare for engine cutoff.*

Grace's face falls. *Oh shit...*

GRACE
What happens when it cuts off Mary?

**INT. COCKPIT - (ACC-G/ZERO-G)**

Grace races into the cockpit.

MARY
*14... 13... 12...*

*Restraints?* Grace sees the pilot seat. And the seat belt.

GRACE
Why engine cutoff? Isn't this something we should talk about?

MARY
*11... 10...*

GRACE
Ten and a half...

He dives to the chair.

MARY
*Pilot detected! 6... 5...*

GRACE
I'm not a pilot!

MARY
*4... 3...*

GRACE
What happens at zero?!

MARY
*2... 1...*

Gravity hits zero. Grace notices his shoelaces floating. And the belt buckles in his hands floating too. He instinctively lets go and pushes himself from the arm rest, causing him to float up in the air.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Welcome to Tau Ceti.*

GRACE
AAAHHH!!!

He flails about, awkwardly holding tight to one end of the seatbelt, which flips him upside down.

None of this is graceful.

Grace pulls himself downward, to the back of the chair. His foot hits a switch.

MARY
*Petrovascope operational.*

*There*. That looks familiar.

GRACE
The Petrovascope...

He grabs the Petrovascope and accidentally ziplines on the rail to the co-pilot seat. He braces himself, upside down.

THROUGH THE PETROVASCOPE as Grace scans. *There's that beautiful starfield... there's Tau Ceti...*

*Visible light. Yeah, okay.*

He's drawn to a toggle button. Some memory in his body recognizes it, even if his mind doesn't.

He toggles to IR.

His eyes widen as he sees:

A beautiful, dark red ARCH coming from the bottom of Tau Ceti. *Oh my goodness...*

GRACE (CONT'D)
You have a Petrova Line, but you're not dimming... Why?

He follows that red line as it arcs across the stars. And stops when he sees --

A GAP. Breaking the red line. A spot of darkness.

He tries to wipe it off. Looks behind the screen.

*Is that... a bug? A hole?*

He zooms in using the device's FOCUS RING...

*Is the hole... moving?*

He switches to regular light mode and --

*It's... some dark irregular shape?*

MARY
*Blip-A detected.*

GRACE
What's Blip-A?

Grace zips on the Petrovascope over to the RADAR by the co-pilot seat. A BLIP on the screen notated "A."

He doesn't notice that out the window behind him is an approaching ALIEN SPACESHIP.

Grace looks out the passenger window...

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

...and we cut outside to get the FULL VIEW OF THAT SHIP.

It's far away but three times the size of the Hail Mary. Its angular lines and strange materials suggest construction by a wholly otherworldly intelligence.

It's beautiful. It's terrifying. It's coming closer.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace PANICS. His fight-or-flight kicks in -- *get out of there, Ryland*!

GRACE
Let's go! Here we go. Let's go Mary. Pilot detected!

MARY
*Please engage restraints.*

Grace somehow manages to pull himself back into the pilot's seat. He fastens the seatbelt. *Click.*

GRACE
Pilot detected!

MARY
*Pilot detected. Engage spin drive.*

GRACE
Engage it. Engage the spin drive.

The screens on the left half of the cockpit light up like never before. Grace starts tapping random buttons.

MARY
*Incorrect.*

He tries more buttons. More lights come on.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Welcome to the Hail Mary.*

GRACE
Is it this thing?

*Ok ok ok. Hand on the throttle.* There's *some kind of safety -- unclick that -- big breath and --*

Grace *TAPS* the throttle very lightly forward.

MARY
*Thrust activated.*

OUTSIDE the engines of the Hail Mary engage and --

The Hail Mary launches forward!

Grace toggles the monitors. No sign of the ship.

Grace relaxes.

But in the window, behind Grace, the alien ship sliiiiides into view.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Blip-A detected.*

GRACE
Ahhhh!

Grace looks over and sees it.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What do they want?!

Grace pushes the throttle again. Harder this time.

Grace is jammed back into his seat.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

The Hail Mary gets up a real head of steam.

But... the alien ship pulls up right behind it.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

The Blip-A slides back into the window yet again, copying his every move.

Grace stares at the ship. *Now what?* He hits the thruster THREE TIMES...

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

The Hail Mary's thrusters flare THREE TIMES. It lurches forward... and the alien ship flares its thrusters THREE TIMES as well.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace sees the alien ship pull up alongside him. *The ship is mirroring his moves.*

GRACE
What?

Grace watches the alien ship move on one of his monitors. In IR, he can see the ship's thrust.

Grace considers what to do next. He stares at the controls. At a loss. *Where is he going to go?*

He looks at the ship. As though trying to convince himself.

Grace notices SOMETHING MOVING on the hull of the ship. He adjusts the camera, ZOOMS IN...

It looks like A ROBOTIC ARM is sliding along a series of tracks along the hull. It stops when it reaches a position closest to the Hail Mary.

It seems to be holding something.

Grace zooms in further. It looks like some sort of CYLINDER.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What is that --

Grace unbuckles from his chair, back to floating in zero-g.

The robot reaches out... and releases the cylinder into space.

Grace tenses as he sees the cylinder slowly spinning end over end. Heading towards the Hail Mary. *It's sending me something?*

MARY
*Blip-B detected.*

GRACE
What's a Blip-B?

Grace looks at the RADAR. Sees the designations. BLIP-A. And now BLIP-B, moving towards the HAIL MARY.

MARY
*Current distance from Hail Mary is 800 meters.*

GRACE
It's sending me something.

Grace glides over to the window.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It could be a message? It could be a bomb. Is it a bomb?

**INT./EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

The Blip-B spins calmly towards the Hail Mary.

BACK INSIDE

Grace watches from the window.

GRACE
Shields up!

MARY
*There are no shields on board the Hail Mary --*

GRACE
Why not?!

MARY
*30 meters... 20 meters...*

He's about to reach for the thruster --

But it's too late. Grace braces for impact. And the Blip-B...

...gently bonks off the Hail Mary.

Beat.

Grace looks around. He's okay.

GRACE
Well I guess there's egg on both our faces, Mary.

MARY
*Blip-C detected.*

GRACE
What's that?

ON THE HULL CAMERA -- the robot hand emerges again. With another CANISTER. This time it lets go of the canister very very SLOOOOOOWLY.

ON THE RADAR: the BLIP-C!

GRACE (CONT'D)
Why is it moving so much slower than the last one?

It slooooowly moves on the radar.

GRACE (CONT'D)
They think I'm dumb.

We cut out. We cut in. The canister is headed RIGHT for the ship.

GRACE (CONT'D)
If we were gonna catch it, what would we do?

MARY
*Would you like to go on a space walk, Dr. Grace?*

He thinks. *Not really.*

**INT. CORRIDOR/EVA ROOM - (ZERO-G)**

Grace tries to pull himself down the corridor with urgency... but he's still not comfortable with zero-g. He bounces off the walls as he makes his way to THE AIRLOCK.

MARY
*To begin your spacewalk, put on your EVA suit and proceed to the airlock.*

He opens the inner door and stares at the CUSTOM EVA SUIT.

The suit looks VERY COMPLICATED.

**INT. EVA ROOM - (ZERO-G)**

Grace rummages through the library of OPERATIONS MANUALS. He pulls out a MASSIVE BINDER and starts flipping through it --

**INT./EXT. AIRLOCK - (ZERO-G)**

Grace struggles inside the suit while still trying to read the manual.

GRACE
Yessss!

He hooks his head in the loop. Helmet on.

Except he forgot to take his glasses off. They're all messed up. He hits himself in the head to knock them into place. A few hits and he gets them right.

Grace closes the inner airlock door. He clips himself onto the tether. The airlock starts to pressurize...

**OUTSIDE**

The canister slowly, beautifully rotates.

**BACK INSIDE**

The pump stops. Grace takes a deep breath.

The outer door opens.

LIGHT FROM TAU CETI fills the airlock. Grace takes in the awe-inspiring view. *There's the alien ship... Tau Ceti in the distance... the endless starfield...*

GRACE (CONT'D)
No.

He retreats back into the airlock.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's just crazy.

But his tether goes taught, pulling him BACK OUT into space. His body SLINGSHOTS out of the ship and around onto the airlock exterior. He looks up, heading his way...

<u>The canister</u>.

It's continuing its slow journey towards the Hail Mary. Grace studies its trajectory, tries to ascertain where it will land. Not far, a hundred meters, but for a person who has never been in space before, <u>it might as well be a mile</u>.

Grace climbs on the hull. The ship is crisscrossed with rails and latch points for EVA tethering. Rail by rail, Grace flails and scrambles to the spot.

He locks himself in place. Waits. The cylinder flips towards him. <u>But he's too far away</u>.

Grace takes a few big zero-g steps, then LEAPS --

*And catches it*.

But the tether goes taught! He's pulled back to the ship and fumbles the canister --

He lands on the ship and stands... canister still in hand!

Grace holds it up triumphantly.

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G)**

Grace stares at this strange canister. It floats in mid-air. He thinks.

*How do I examine this? Is this thing dangerous?*

*Let's get to work.*

-- He tries to open the canister. He twists it counterclockwise...

GRACE
Righty tighty left loOS --

-- He tries brute strength. Bangs it on the table.

-- He points a SPECTROMETER at the canister. Checks the readout.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Xenon's a gas.
(then)
I think this thing's broken.

He shakes the device and smashes it on the table.

-- He heats it up in a tabletop furnace in the clean room area. But without gravity... it starts to MELT the furnace.

A THERMAL CAMERA shows the heat traveling around the furnace and melting it. As Grace attempts to turn it off. Ow. Ow.

MARY
*Warning. Lamp equipment not rated for zero gravity.*

-- Grace spins in parallel with the canister. Thinking.

His hands droop above his head.

He squeezes his eyes shut...

MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - HANGAR LAB**

DR. KRISTINA LOKKEN walks with Stratt into an area filled with lab equipment.

LOKKEN
We need equipment to analyze the Astrophage at Tau Ceti.

They walk past Grace, who works with an unfinished version of the familiar electron microscope.

STRATT
Hi Dr. Grace.

GRACE
Hi.

Lokken continues.

LOKKEN
Most of this equipment won't work in zero-gravity.

STRATT
And we have a team to develop and build zero gravity versions of all this equipment.

LOKKEN
We would need years for that and we have months.

STRATT
What's the alternative?

LOKKEN
We make gravity.

Grace pokes his head up from the corner.

GRACE
A centrifuge?

LOKKEN
A centrifuge.

GRACE
They used them to make butter during the Civil War, actually. Fun fact.

CUT TO:

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G)**

CLOSE ON GRACE as his spin settles. Of course!

WIDE. He floats upside down against the architecture of the lab. He CLAPS.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace flies in and pulls a lever he didn't recognize before. ENGAGE CENTRIFUGE. KA-CHUNK -- the ship rattles.

Grace pumps his fist. A little victory. Until...

ALERTS ring out through the corridors...

Behind Grace, through the window. We can see the crew module is now MOVING.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G/CENT-G)**

The Hail Mary begins to rotate.

A tiny Grace can be seen craning out the window to watch as the crew capsule separates from the fuel tanks via long cables and begins to SPIN...

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G/CENT-G)**

Grace watches through the cupola as the sun begins to move through the room.

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G/CENT-G)**

ONSCREEN**: Pitch Rate** climbs to **20.71 degrees per second... Lab Gravity** climbs towards **1.00 g...**

The floating garbage starts to float down.

And suddenly this room makes sense. The strange vertical orientation rights itself. The lab becomes upright as Grace and the canister float down.

MARY
*Lab operational.*

The canister settles down just as the table rotates in underneath it.

Gravity achieved.

Grace sits down at the table. Extends the spectrometer. Studies the canister. *What?*

GRACE
Still Xenon.

He lays his forehead on the can.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Up is down, left is right, xenon's a solid, aliens are real, and I'm wrong about everything and everything's wrong.

He looks at the canister. *Wait.*

He grabs the can and twists it CLOCKWISE to open.

GRACE (CONT'D)
*Lefty* tighty, righty loosey...

It's like butter. The cylinder clicks open.

Grace pulls the halves apart. A very uncool and smelly cloud of gas comes out.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh noooo!

MARY
*Foreign presence detected.*

Grace rushes the canister over to the glove box off to the side of the lab.

IN THE BOTTOM HALF he reveals what looks like... some sort of sculpture. *Or model.* Whiskers hold up TWO METAL SPHERES. One large, one small. And a parabolic shape connecting the two. *Don't know what this is.*

He turns his attention to the TOP HALF of the canister. Inside is ANOTHER MODEL. This one's much more complicated. Dozens of whiskers connect dozens of spheres.

Grace unfurls the model. It forms a sort of disc with ONE LARGE SPHERE in the middle and thirty-one smaller spheres radiating around it.

**LATER.** He goes to the screens, scrolls through the star charts. He positions Tau Ceti at the center of the diagram... looks to THE LARGE SPHERE.

He spins the star chart so it matches the model on the table. Thirty-one stars click into position *just like the model.*

One star in particular has been MARKED. Grace finds it on the screen. A star labeled "**40 Eridani.**"

GRACE
Eridani... you're a long way from home.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace is now adjusting the model. He has a SOLDERING IRON out and he's soldering A SIMILAR MARKER to A STAR. He checks the viewscreen to make sure it's the right one.

"**Sol.**" *This is my home.*

GRACE
I'm a long way from home too.

**EXT. SPACE**

TAU CETI looms over THESE TWO SHIPS from distant worlds as the Hail Mary stops spinning.

The airlock door on the Hail Mary starts to open...

**INT./EXT. AIRLOCK - (ZERO-G)**

We're back in zero-g as the airlock opens. Grace (in his EVA suit) holds up THE CANISTER. Aims it at the center of the alien ship. He lets it go. *It floats away...*

...and into the mysterious lattice of the ship.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace sets up a web of ropes to help him move around the lab in zero-g.

MARY
*Blip-D detected.*

Grace pulls himself over to a monitor. He pulls up a hull camera and sees ANOTHER CANISTER rotating towards the Hail Mary. *Here we go again.*

GRACE
Alright.

**INT. AIRLOCK - (ZERO-G)**

Grace opens the door...

And the canister just floats right inside.

GRACE
What?

He looks out at the alien ship.

*They aimed it at the airlock this time.*

He gives a little wave. It waves back.

*Did I just wave at a spaceship?*

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G)**

Grace opens the new canister. It's another model. It takes Grace a moment to realize what he's looking at... *it's a small ship... and another one... wait...*

It's a perfectly scaled model of the Hail Mary and the alien ship. And there's an umbilical tunnel connecting the two.

Grace stares at the model. Realizes what this means.

*They want to meet.*

MATCH CUT TO:

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

It's now happening in real life. The two ships have maneuvered right next to one another. And there's an umbilical tunnel extending out from the alien ship.

*Just like on the model.*

**INT. AIRLOCK - (ZERO-G)**

Grace stands in his EVA suit, nervously watching the tunnel extend TOWARDS HIS AIRLOCK.

The Hail Mary SHAKES as the tunnel makes contact.

*Here we go.*

**INT. TUNNEL - (ZERO-G)**

The airlock door swings open to reveal A DARK TUNNEL.

Grace searches the darkness with a FLASHLIGHT, but can't see anything beyond a couple feet.

Grace turns on his helmet lamps. He throws out a rope. Pushes himself into the darkness.

Grace floats cautiously through the tunnel. His sweeping lights illuminating just enough to see a few steps in front of him. He tries to keep his breathing under control as he sees up ahead...

*...a wall.*

It's a dead end, of sorts. Grace approaches and sees the whole wall is composed of different colored and textured HEXAGONS. Almost all of them are opaque, but one, near the bottom, is TRANSLUCENT.

Grace pulls himself low. Tries to look through the small window. Sees only darkness. He taps on the window. *Tap, tap, tap...*

He glances back through the window. Darkness. And then...

A CLAW enters frame.

Grace JUMPS. <u>What the hell is that</u>?

The claw taps on the window. *Tap, tap, tap.*

Grace tries to keep his panicked breathing under control. He sees movement on the other side of the window. He (somewhat reluctantly) lowers himself down to the window once again.

THROUGH THE WINDOW: a claw is holding a small figurine of AN ASTRONAUT.

*Is that...*

GRACE
Is that me?

ANOTHER CLAW enters frame. Holding something else... a small replica of the HAIL MARY. Just like the one in the canister.

The claw gives the ship a tap, making is SPIN in zero-g.

GRACE (CONT'D)
My ship...

It stops the ship, then takes the astronaut figurine and moves it into the Hail Mary.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I don't understand.

Grace glances over his shoulder. Gets the message:

GRACE (CONT'D)
You want me to go back in my ship?
But I just got here.

The claw seems to INSIST --

GRACE (CONT'D)
Okay okay.

Grace gives a tepid thumbs up.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'll talk to you later... Bye.

He backs into the airlock and shuts the door.

**INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS - (ZERO-G)**

Grace looks back though the window. He can barely make out THAT WALL on the far end.

The wall begins to smoke... it's burning? Dissolving, maybe.

Grace struggles to see what the hell is happening. But now there is only darkness.

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G)**

Later. Grace keeps a tense eye on the VIEWSCREENS. He has a camera view of the tunnel.

GRACE
What are they doing, Mary?

The tunnel is PULLING AWAY in a cloud of VAPOR.

USING HIS ROPES, Grace floats himself over to the cupola window. He arrives in to see the separated alien ship beginning to SPIN!

*What are they trying to do?*

Thinks.

*Maybe...*

MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G/CENT-G)**

The alien ship spins, reflected in the window of the cockpit as Grace, in the pilot's chair, futzes with some settings on some screens.

MARY
*It is not advisable to alter the centrifugal orbit of the ship.*

GRACE
Thank you Mary.

He hits an override button and pulls the centrifugal lever --

So begins

A GRAVITY TANGO

In which the Hail Mary spins a new way to match the spinning of the alien ship. Which adjusts into alignment with Grace's. The two crafts accommodating one another.

**INT. LAB/EVA ROOM - MOMENTS LATER - (CENT-G)**

Grace rips lights out of sockets, grabs duct tape, yanks out a video camera.

**INT. AIRLOCK - (CENT-G)**

Grace (in his EVA suit) waits for the airlock to cycle.

He does his best to keep his BREATHING under control.

The DOOR OPENS. Grace checks his arm computer. Yes, the tunnel is still pressurized. And he notices something else...

...the external oxygen levels are high. *That's strange.*

He makes his way down that dark tunnel.

This time he's prepared. He stops every few meters and tapes FLASHLIGHTS and CAMERAS to the walls. Giving him (and us) a MUCH BETTER view of things...

And there, at the end, is a new wall, now mostly TRANSLUCENT.

GRACE
Oh my. This is new.

As Grace moves forward, his LIGHTS illuminate the darkness beyond... He sets the lights down at the base of the wall.

Grace KNOCKS on the wall. Like he's at someone's front door.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Anybody home? I like what you've done with the gravity.

There's no response. Grace pulls out a CRUDE MODEL he's made of the alien ship.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I made you a ship.

He tapes the model to the wall.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I only made one. I'm not sure how many of you there are.

From the darkness, Grace hears abstract CLICKING and CHITTERING -- but still no sign of any creature.

He peers through the clear wall and sees a SILHOUETTE skittering up the tunnel wall.

He backs away slowly --

And AN ALIEN slowly emerges into the light.

At first glance, it looks like a LARGE CRAB-LIKE ROCK. It's about the size of a Labrador, with FIVE LEGS radiating out from a central carapace. No sign of an eye or face anywhere.

Each leg has an elbow and ends in a sort of hand with three fingers. Its entire body seems to be made of segmented ROCK.

Grace stands there frozen, shining his lights onto it. So does the alien. Not sure what to do.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hi...

The alien approaches the ship model taped to the wall, inspecting it. It SHRIEKS and SLAMS up to it!

Grace nearly jumps out of his skin. He races back, raises his wrench above his head, prepared to defend himself --

GRACE (CONT'D)
GAAAAAHHHHH!!!!!!

The alien skitters back away from the wall and raises its arm similarly...

ALIEN
*GRRRRRVVVVVVVVVVV!!!*

GRACE
No no no no! I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

Grace drops his wrench and puts his arms up.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You scared me when you went "BLAAHH!"

The alien raises two legs, matching Grace.

It takes Grace a moment to register what's happening. *Is it just doing what I'm doing?*

Grace tests his theory. He slowly waves his arms around. The alien does the same.

They begin to mirror one another. Like some sort of bizarre pantomime.

He jumps. Grace does an old west style "quick draw" move. It matches him. Then, last, Grace waves.

The alien WAVES BACK.

Its "voice" sounds like a collection of whale songs. Chords overlap to create an almost musical cacophony.

The dust motes in the tunnel ORGANIZE into a pattern. Just like they did at the start of the movie in Grace's classroom.

The alien moves forward. Grace hesitates, still apprehensive. But then he moves forward as well.

He shines a light on the alien, getting a better look at it.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I can't seem to see a face...
Mysterious. Faces are overrated.

The alien taps on the glass. Grace does the same. TAP TAP TAP.

The alien returns the gesture. TAP TAP TAP TAP.

*Has he seen Close Encounters?*

Grace gives it a go: TAP TAP TAP TAP TAAAPPP.

GRACE (CONT'D)
This is fun.

The alien taps <u>harder</u> on the glass. Grace, surprised, moves back reflexively.

And now the alien seems to appear ANNOYED.

ALIEN
*<u>Rrrrreeeeeo</u>oOOORRRR* --

The alien waves its arms, gesturing with conviction.

*Is it trying tell Grace something?*

Grace turns around. And as he does so, he sees --

*There.* Up in the seam of the tunnel... there's a PACKAGE of some kind.

GRACE
You're pointing. You're not tapping. Sorry.

He goes over to the wall. And finds a large CONTAINER.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Another present.

It has an embossed image of THE HAIL MARY.

Grace opens the sphere. And removes what looks like a long string of beads. Grace unfurls it, gets a better look.

Two circles of threaded beads connected by a bridge of thread. Each circle has eight beads attached.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I don't have one of these, I love it. Thank you!

The alien makes an upset whale sound and gestures towards Grace's head.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Put this on my head? Take off my head?

Grace stares at the beads. *Hmm. Something about this seems familiar...*

The alien takes its two front arms and waves them in two circles. Seems to be gesturing at the tunnel itself.

Grace looks up and around. *What is it about the tunnel?*

The alien moves its arms with purpose. It's trying to tell Grace something. Lifting up where his head would be.

The alien gestures "no," then repeats the upward motion. It almost looks like it's telling Grace it's okay to remove his helmet.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Take my helmet off? No. It'll...
(mimics head exploding)
That's a big ask.

The lights Grace placed at the base of the wall FLICKER.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh! This has taken a turn. Thank you for the... what I hope is not handcuffs.

He makes his way back towards the airlock, container and threaded beads in hand.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about the whole helmet thing. Unfortunately I need oxygen to breathe, so...

As he walks, he looks at the ring of beads. He takes a deep breath.

*Wait...*

He holds the chains up.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Two rings of eight. O2.
(turning back)
This is oxygen!

No answer. The alien doesn't even know what Grace is saying.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I still don't think I can do it though, sorry. It's just... if I'm wrong, I'm really wrong.

Grace looks back. The alien still watches him with interest.

*Do I dare trust it?*

Here goes nothing...

Grace removes his helmet.

He takes a breath. *Oxygen*.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Okay.

*Maybe this thing's not trying to kill me...*

Grace looks to the alien. Gives a thumbs up.

The alien wiggles with excitement. Jazz hands.

HOLD ON GRACE as he sees the alien with fresh eyes.

CUT TO:

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace has the various models the alien gave him spread out on his lab table.

He studies the models. *Wait.*

He picks up the other model. The two orbs with the arcing line between them.

GRACE
It's a Petrova Line...

CUT TO:

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace, now in a jumpsuit, enters the tunnel. He's carrying a huge box of stuff with the Petrova Line model at the top.

The clear wall is now more dimensional, deeper and more complex. He hurries to it, energized --

GRACE
We're here for the same reason!
You have a Petrova Line problem
too. You need to solve it, I need
to solve it.
(holds up model)
That's why you made me this?

The alien gets EXCITED. It starts waving its arms, gesturing right back at Grace.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm going to take that as a yes.

Grace can't contain his relief. *He's not alone in this.*

And the alien seems to feel the same way.

It jumps and twists with delight. Grace watches in wonder.

GRACE (CONT'D)
If we're gonna save our planets we
have to learn how to communicate.

He places his bag down. He starts rummaging through it.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Y'know, they say math is the
universal language. I thought
maybe we find out if that's true.

He pulls out a tape measure. Extends it. Rocky seems delighted by it.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You see the numbers? I like numbers. I prefer them to people, most of the time.

It pushes open a new AIRLOCK DRAWER that's been installed at the bottom of the wall.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh you want this? Okay.

A blast of hot air comes out.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Whoa! That is really hot in there. Is that ammonia?

Grace drops the tape measure in the drawer. The alien pulls it shut and then open on his side.

The tape measure's plastic housing begins to MELT as the alien picks it up. It plays with the tape measure, extending it over and over again.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Look, see the numbers? No, they're on the other side...

The alien ignores the numbers, starts bending the tape measure into abstract shapes.

GRACE (CONT'D)
So do it again... if you do it again, don't let it snap back, hold it like that, and you look --

The alien gets completely tangled up in the tape measure.

GRACE (CONT'D)
How about something else.

Grace rummages through his bag. He pulls out an analog clock.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Look at this, a clock! We both have time, right?

The alien stops playing with the tape measure.

GRACE (CONT'D)
These are the hands. And these are numbers.

Grace points to the 1 and the 2 and the 3.

GRACE (CONT'D)
One, two, three, they point to the numbers.

The alien doesn't understand.

GRACE (CONT'D)
And if you'll notice there's numbers there, and there's also numbers here --

But it still doesn't seem to understand. It gets bored with the clock and returns to playing with the tape measure.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Okay...

And as Grace studies it... and studies the simple, black and white numbers on the clock face... he realizes something. *Wait...*

Grace looks behind the alien. To the airlock. Where everything is DARK.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It is dark.

Come to think of it, there's no lights on the alien ship...

GRACE (CONT'D)
I got an idea. Wait.

He holds up one finger. The alien mirrors him.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Yeah. Don't go anywhere. Stay. Oh yeah, and I'm Grace. I'm gonna call you Rocky. 'Cause you look like a giant rock.

He rushes back to the airlock, trips --

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm fine!

Rocky waits for Grace...

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace is doing some kind of arts and crafts project.

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace returns with a NEW VERSION of HIS CLOCK. He's replaced all the flat ink with raised numerals.

GRACE
Echolocation, right? You need surfaces to see.

Grace holds the clock up against the wall. Rocky immediately seems more engaged than before.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Try this...

Rocky gets excited and starts jabbering.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You see the numbers, right?

Rocky raises his hands and sort of waves them.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What is that? Is that good? Jazz hands means "good?" We do this.

Grace gives him a thumbs up. Rocky gives a sort-of thumbs up. More thumbs down.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Nope. That's thumbs down. We do the thumbs up.

Grace demonstrates. Rocky tries again. It doesn't look any different.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's close enough.

Rocky raises another hand and holds up one finger. *Wait.*

GRACE (CONT'D)
You want me to wait? I wait?

Grace is impressed. *They're learning each other's gestures.* Rocky disappears back into his ship.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm really excited to be working with you on this. Fired up.
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I'm talking so much. It's just, I haven't been around anyone in a long time.

Rocky returns carrying A CYLINDER.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh wow. What have we got here?

Rocky holds it up so Grace can get a better look at it. The cylinder has five horizontally aligned windows. Each window has a shape. *Are they letters?*

The symbol on the right rotates away and is replaced by another. After a few seconds, it happens again. And again.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's a clock. I showed you a clock and you're showing me a clock.

Grace points from his clock to the cylinder.

Rocky does jazz hands/thumbs up. *Yes, good!* Rocky starts making a lot of noises and gestures.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Right... Um, I gotta be honest I'm not sure I'm getting all of this.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace tears apart storage. Making a mess as he searches for... A LAPTOP and a TABLET and a roll of VELCRO TAPE.

*Shhhrrrappp.* In a frenzy, he tries to attach the devices together.

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace sits on the floor of the tunnel near the window-wall, Rocky stands on the other side.

GRACE
Check this out.

Grace shows off his new multi-device tool (Translation Station). He opens an app called "Tympanum Waveform Analyzer."

GRACE (CONT'D)
I thought I might record you.

He holds up a microphone. Rocky recoils and makes a noise.

GRACE (CONT'D)
No it's okay. It's just a microphone.

Grace opens a new file. We see a Fourier Transform feature and a piano keyboard.

*Okay. Ready.*

Grace points to the number "1" on HIS CLOCK.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Let's start with one.

He holds up one finger.

GRACE (CONT'D)
One.

Grace points at the number "1." Then points to Rocky.

Rocky makes a sound.

ROCKY
*WeeeoooUUUuuu...*

ON THE LAPTOP: the waveform analyzer dissects Rocky's sound into a series of notes.

GRACE
Okay, one... and...

The waveforms record into his master file. He labels the first set "**One**" and plays back the notes.

*One...* Rocky starts to jump up and down when he hears his own language.

GRACE (CONT'D)
One! Okay...

**EXT. SPACE**

The Hail Mary and Rocky's ship float together, linked by the tunnel.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace (finally) updates his video journal.

GRACE
So, uh. I met an alien. And we're learning to communicate...

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace sits next to the wall with the translation station.

GRACE
Let's do names.
(holding up the mic)
Okay let's start with you. Rocky.

Rocky slams two legs together. The etchings on each leg fit together to create an abstract pattern.

ROCKY
*WeeuumMMMTttcchkkkeeeruuKKKKuuu...*

ON THE LAPTOP: the waveform analyzer records Rocky's very long name.

GRACE
You done?

Grace labels the waveform "**Rocky.**"

GRACE (CONT'D)
My name, can't wait to hear this -- is "Grace." What's your word for my name? Go ahead.

He holds out the microphone.

ROCKY
*Ppt.*

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace continues his video journal entry.

GRACE
...you know, enough to order at restaurants. We have about 250 words.

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace has a desk on his side. Rocky has set up a sort of workbench on his side of the tunnel.

GRACE (V.O.)
My atmosphere would kill him, and his mine. But I like to keep a wall in my relationships anyways.

Rocky combines two forms of liquid material. Grace watches, fascinated.

GRACE (V.O.)
He's a mechanic. I think. He uses a metal form of xenon. It can make anything.

The liquids form that same tan gray METAL that we see everywhere on Rocky's side of things.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace holds up the tan gray metal.

GRACE
Look at this. I'm calling it "xenonite." And if I can't understand what he's saying, which is most of the time, he puts on a little puppet show for me and my tiny brain. And you know what? I don't mind it. He's kinda growing on me. At least he's not growing in me, which was a concern for a little while.

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace walks down the tunnel toward the wall.

GRACE (V.O.)
His sun is dying too, so maybe we can help each other.

He holds up a vial.

GRACE
Recognize this?

Rocky's entire posture changes. He hunkers his carapace a little lower. He tightens his claws.

GRACE (CONT'D)
We call it "Astrophage." It means star eater.

He points from the Astrophage to Rocky. *They've developed a bit of a shorthand.*

Rocky's voice seems quieter than usual.

ROCKY
*Uuuueeeeiiiiaaa...*

Grace checks the laptop as it analyzes Rocky's voice. ONSCREEN: "**Translation: <unknown>**" Grace quickly types "**Astrophage**" into the database.

Rocky says something else. The translated words flash past on Grace's screen:

**Astrophage on me star. Bad bad bad...**

GRACE
(reading the translation)
Astrophage on me star. Bad bad bad bad bad bad... yeah. Same.

Grace nods. Relief in his voice.

Rocky bounces around the tunnel.

**Rocky happy not alone.**

Grace stares at the translation. *Wait...*

GRACE (CONT'D)
Me too. Why are you alone?

Rocky lowers his carapace again.

**Was twenty-three Eridians on ship. Now only one.**

Grace hears the sadness in Rocky's notes.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Twenty-three... wow. What happened to them?

Rocky slumps his carapace down onto the ground. He goes completely still. Then makes a new sound.

**<unknown>**

Grace understands. He adds the new word to his database:

"**Died.**"

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. How did they die?

**Rocky not know. Only Rocky not died. Rocky could not fix.**

Grace stares at Rocky. Sees his pain and loneliness.

**How many human crew on Grace ship, question?**

GRACE (CONT'D)
Um... There were three of us and two died on the way here. I wish I knew why.

Grace shifts uncomfortably. Genuine sadness in his own voice as the reality of his circumstance washes over him.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Now it's only me.

And now Rocky goes quiet. The way he lowers his carapace seems to convey an empathetic response.

They sit in silence. Then Rocky speaks.

Grace looks at the translator: **Only us.**

GRACE (CONT'D)
Correction. Us.

**Grace Rocky save stars.**

Grace stands up and approaches Rocky. He puts his fist on the wall. Rocky bumps him back.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Deal.
(then)
This is called a fist bump, by the way.

Rocky says something.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What's that?

He walks back to his translator.

**Fist my bump.**

GRACE (CONT'D)
Fist my bump? No. It's fist bump.

**Is same.**

GRACE (CONT'D)
It's not the same.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SPACE**

The Hail Mary and Rocky's ship spin together.

GRACE (PRE-LAP)
Yeah, exactly...

**INT. TUNNEL - LATER - (CENT-G)**

CLOSE ON a metal ball. Widen to reveal it's the sun of a large scale replica of the Tau Ceti system. They both have matching models on their sides.

GRACE
...Astrophage has to reach Tau Ceti otherwise we wouldn't see the Petrova Line.

Rocky uses the model on his side to illustrate what Grace needs to do to finish putting his model together. Grace is at the top of a ladder trying to follow Rocky's instructions.

Grace accidentally bumps his replica, breaking it. Rocky whistles. The laptop reads:

**Grace very bad at make model.**

GRACE (CONT'D)
Do we really need this whole model?

ROCKY
<*complicated sounding sentence*>

Grace struggles down from the ladder, puts on his glasses, and looks at the laptop again.

**Need know why star not die. Need plan. Need model to make plan. Grace question is dumb.**

GRACE
Oh boy.

Grace goes back to the model.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You know I used to have one of these in my classroom and it was a lot simpler to set up.

Rocky has more to say.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Uh, one sec. What? What?

He goes back over to the translator.

**Why schoolteacher in space, question?**

GRACE (CONT'D)
That is a great question.

He goes back to the model. Rocky still has more to say.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You know what?

CUT TO:

Grace is back at the wall. He's rapidly adjusting his software.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Try this.

Rocky speaks. And this time, the computer translates the text to speech:

DEEP RASPY VOICE
*Why is a schoolteacher in space, question?*

Grace smiles, excited. *He's effectively made an audio translator.*

But that voice is wrong.

GRACE
No.

DEEP RASPY VOICE
*Don't like that voice.*

GRACE
Can't un-hear it really.

DEEP RASPY VOICE
*Scary.*

He toggles the voices.

GRACE
Let's try this.

Rocky's voice now is a SULTRY FEMALE.

SULTRY FEMALE
*Oooh. Why is a schoolteacher in space? Mmmmm.*

GRACE
Nope. No need to even continue.

He toggles the voice again. It's now a NORTHERN BRITISH FEMALE VOICE:

NORTHERN BRITISH VOICE
*Why is a schoolteacher in space?*

Grace starts laughing.

NORTHERN BRITISH VOICE (CONT'D)
*What's so funny, question?*

LATER. They're still at it.

PERSNICKETY VOICE
*Why is a schoolteacher in space?*

GRACE
I mean?

PERSNICKETY VOICE
*It has charm but -- no.*

LATER STILL.

GRACE
Meryl Streep?

MERYL STREEP VOICE
*Why is a schoolteacher in space?*

GRACE
God. She can do anything.

He toggles to another voice.

EVIL FEMALE VOICE
*Why is a schoolteacher in space?*

Grace and Rocky both shake their heads.

EVEN LATER STILL. A friendly voice.

FRIENDLY VOICE
What's a schoolteacher doing in space?

*They both like that.*

GRACE
That's not bad.

ROCKY
(in the friendly voice)
I like.

GRACE
Alright. And, an answer to your question, I have no idea how I got in space. I don't remember.

ROCKY
No worry. Grace find out when Grace go home.

*Well, not really, but... that's too much to get into right now.*

GRACE
...I'm gonna to go to sleep.

ROCKY
No understand word.

GRACE
"Sleep?" Uh...

*Hmmm. How do I explain this?*

GRACE (CONT'D)
Just go like this.

Grace lays his head on his desk. Rocky seems upset.

ROCKY
Died? Is died? Died? No no no.

GRACE
No. Not died. Just lay here for twenty-nine thousand seconds and then we... wake up!

He mimes waking up. Rocky bounces around, excited.

ROCKY
Oh understand! We call this:
*<Eridian noise>*

Rocky goes limp. Then pops back up.

GRACE
Oh yeah?

ROCKY
Yes.

GRACE
Okay. Here we go. Sleep...

Grace types "**Sleep**" into the translator, then starts to leave.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Goodnight sir.

ROCKY
I watch Grace sleep.

GRACE
No that's fine. That's a little weird. I'll be good. Goodnight.

Grace keeps leaving. Rocky seems agitated.

ROCKY
No not safe. Eridians must watch sleep.

GRACE
That's really interesting. That sounds like a something... We can unpack that tomorrow.

Rocky lowers his carapace. His actual voice goes quiet. It's almost as if *Rocky's scared*.

ROCKY
Rocky watch crew many days. Crew not wake up.

Grace stops. His eyes soften.

CUT TO:

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace tucks himself into bed. Rocky sits in a shelf on his side of the wall, directly above Grace.

GRACE
That's where you're gonna be?

ROCKY
No. It's usually closer.

GRACE
I wonder if it would work from a little farther back?

ROCKY
But Grace won't feel comfortable safe.

GRACE
Look, I'm seeing so many sides of you lately and it's great. Right now I'm seeing the underside of you.

Rocky thuds his carapace down on the wall above Grace. Grace turns on his side.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm kinda a side sleeper anyway. Goodnight.

Rocky moves to be in front of him.

GRACE (V.O.)
So. We watch each other sleep.

Grace pulls his blanket over his face.

GRACE (V.O.)
Eridians don't sleep like a human does.

CUT TO:

**INT. TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Another day. Rocky sleeps. Motionless. Grace works nearby. Keeping watch.

GRACE (V.O.)
They seem legitimately paralyzed.

Grace watches from closer now.

GRACE (V.O.)
If danger comes, he can't wake up. It's a survival norm... Someone has to keep you safe.

CUT TO:

**EXT. OCEAN - DAY**

The aircraft carrier cuts through the vast blue seas.

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - LOWER DECK**

Stratt leads a group through the lower hangar deck. It's fully transformed into a multiple-laboratory science hub.

STRATT
Flight team, I want you to meet Dr. Ryland Grace...

Grace works at a desk in a clear plastic shipping container turned lab. Like a class pet in a terrarium. Stratt KNOCKS on the container to get his full attention.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Grace!

Reveal she's addressing THREE ASTRONAUTS: COMMANDER LI-JIE YAO, OLESYA ILYUKHINA, and MARTIN DUBOIS. (We may recognize Yao and Ilyukhina as the bodies from earlier.) Their THREE BACKUPS stand nearby.

STRATT (CONT'D)
He is currently the world's leading authority in Astrophage biology.

Grace waves from behind the plastic.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Dr. Grace, these are the three astronauts going on the mission and their backups for redundancy. Yao, Ilyukhina, and DuBois -- our pilot, engineer, and science officer.

She gestures to the astronauts, none of whom are Grace.

GRACE
Umm... It's an honor.

Grace greets them.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm excited to share what I've learned about Astrophage and spin drives. We have one thousand and nine of these little engines that could on the Hail Mary, and...

Yao radiates authority at the front of the group.

YAO
(in Cantonese, to Stratt)
<*Why is he talking to us like children?*>

STRATT
<*Bear with him, he grows on you.*>

YAO
Okay.

STRATT
(to Grace)
You’re doing great.

Grace turns and starts leading them towards a VACUUM CHAMBER.

YAO
Once the mission is complete, we have the option to end our lives on our terms.

DUBOIS
The alternative is slow, miserable death by starvation.

ILYUKHINA
I want to do lethal injection, with a little bit of heroin.

YAO
I will have what she’s having...

Inside the chamber, the group joins NARENDER and gathers around a demo spin drive.

NARENDER
Following on from Dr. Grace’s discovery, we’ve built an IR emitter set to the wavelength of CO2 which attracts the Astrophage to this revolver face. The drive then rotates outwards, we increase the IR, the Astrophage get excited, thrust the ship forward, and so on, so on.

Grace holds up a small test tube.

GRACE
This is less than a gram of Astrophage and it’s actually less than a fraction of what we need for this demonstration. Take a look.

YAO
To do what?

GRACE
To melt a metric ton of metal.

Grace leads them out of the vacuum chamber and over to the safety zone. Scientists and technicians cross as they prepare the test.

The astronauts are suitably awestruck. They take their places next to the viewing station.

ON THE SCREENS: we see the inside of the vacuum chamber. A flash of light! And the metal is now a GLOWING BLOB. It happened almost instantaneously. Everyone applauds.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Powerful stuff.

STRATT
Let's move on. Shall we?

She turns. Grace follows behind her with Yao.

GRACE
Commander Yao, I really appreciate your sacrifice.

YAO
We are all equal in this effort.

GRACE
I would choose just not to go at all. I don't have the bravery gene that you all have. Trust me, it's special.

YAO
It's not a gene. You just need to find someone to be brave for.

HOLD ON GRACE as he considers that.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace looks over what he can remember on his "WHO AM I?" whiteboard. We hear a LOUD KNOCKING ring out around him.

**INT. AIRLOCK - (CENT-G)**

He enters the airlock.

MARY
*Movement detected.*

GRACE
I wonder who it is.

He (somewhat reluctantly) opens the door...

Rocky is wearing a complicated device. It almost looks like an extraterrestrial hamster ball.

ROCKY
Hi Grace.

GRACE
You're in a ball.

ROCKY
So Rocky no die in Grace atmosphere. I come up.

Rocky rolls right past Grace into the ship. *Click-click-click...* Grace hurries to keep up with him.

GRACE
Oh you're coming up --

MARY
*Foreign body detected.*

ROCKY
Grace and Rocky big science how to kill Astrophage together.

Rocky makes a whole lot of sing-songy noises as he takes in the ship. He sounds excited. He rolls right past Grace, eager to see EVERYTHING.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
I keep going this way?

GRACE
Okay, hold on --

Grace grabs the translator laptop.

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (CENT-G)**

Rocky rolls though a 360 view of the GRAND CANYON.

ROCKY
This room boring.

GRACE
Rocky!

Grace chases after him.

**INT. SYSTEMS TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace RUNS down the tunnel after Rocky...

ROCKY
What this? What this down here, question?

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Rocky rolls into the lab and makes a whole bunch of animated sounds and gestures.

ROCKY
Amaze amaze amaze. What this?

GRACE
No no no!

ROCKY
Science. Save Earth. Save Erid. Good plan.
(then)
Dirty dirty dirty dirty. Why room so messy, question?

Rocky's right. The lab is a real mess. Grace makes a self-conscious attempt to tidy up --

GRACE
Well I wasn't expecting company, was I?!

Rocky stops on a dime, nearly tripping Grace. He's a real whirlwind.

ROCKY
Uh. This room for garbage? Dirty dirty dirty.

GRACE
No -- this is the lab. This is where the science happens.

ROCKY
What this? What this? What this?

Rocky bangs into a piece of equipment.

GRACE
That's the evaporator --

ROCKY
Want to see all human technology. What this?

Rocky kicks a colored disco ball.

GRACE
That is the disco ball.

ROCKY
Must make room for Rocky workshop.

Rocky rolls over to the more open part of the lab.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
This room work good.

He nearly breaks the electron microscope. Grace goes to check it's okay and Rocky rolls onward.

GRACE
What is happening here? Why are you here?

ROCKY
We go Petrova Line. We collect Astrophage. We study it. We go home. We collect. We save Earth.

GRACE
And when you say "we?" Uh... where?

Rocky rolls behind equipment.

ROCKY
(peekaboo)
I see Grace!

Rocky rolls into Grace's "WHO AM I?" whiteboard, nearly knocking it over.

GRACE
Whoa!

ROCKY
Apology apology apology. Rocky new to ball.

Grace grabs the whiteboard.

GRACE
Rocky, stay! Rocky my hand is up. We can't just show up in a space ball unannounced and move into someone else's spaceship, right? There have to be boundaries.

ROCKY
Boundaries.

GRACE
We have one mission.

ROCKY
Mission.

GRACE
But we're two *distinct* individuals.

ROCKY
Individuals.

GRACE
Both working on our distinct individual parts of that mission.

ROCKY
Mission.

GRACE
Separately.

ROCKY
Separately.

GRACE
(sigh of relief)
Okay.

ROCKY
Where my bedroom?

Rocky rolls right on out of the room --

GRACE
Bedroom?! For what??

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace hides from Rocky in his daybed area as he gives another video log.

GRACE
So I have a new roommate now.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace cleans up mustard stains while Rocky is on the other side of the lab, looking around.

GRACE
Be careful back there, okay?

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace continues his video log.

GRACE
The chore wheel is pretty lopsided.

**INT. DORMITORY - (CENT-G)**

Rocky directs Grace to build him a giant aquarium around one of the beds.

GRACE
Where on Earth does that go?

ROCKY
Not on Earth. More high, more left.

GRACE
It goes this way? All the way out here?

ROCKY
Yes. Out and pointy.

GRACE
What??

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

We can see Grace's video log on one of the lab monitors.

GRACE
He tells me *what* to do, he tells me *why* to do it, he tells me *how* to do it, he tells me *when* to do it, and then when I do it, he's like, *"what are you doing?"*

**INT. DORMITORY - (CENT-G)**

Rocky and Grace argue about building Rocky's bed aquarium.

GRACE
I'm just saying you're going to get out of the ball to get into a much bigger ball?

ROCKY
Yes for sleeping.

GRACE
Why!? You don't even use a bed!

MARY
*It sounds like you're having an argument. Conflict is normal amongst crew members. Maybe take a trip to the mental health node.*

GRACE
You have the, like, *Hellraiser* thing that you sleep on. What do you need a bed for?

ROCKY
Grumpy, angry, stupid. How long since last sleep, question?

GRACE
Don't talk to me.

The ROBOTIC ARM tries to get involved.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Armando, yes? Can I help you?
(mocking its movements)
You're doing a lot of this.

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace continues his video log.

GRACE
And then he's like, *"no understand, no understand"* and then it's like, *"need a word."* You know what the word is? Bossy.

**INT. DORMITORY - (CENT-G)**

Grace spins around with a big piece of clear xenonite, holding it to his face.

GRACE
I'm like one of the villains in the *Superman* movie. I'm just trapped in hell. Get me outta here!!

He lies down on his bed.

MARY
*Are you tired?*

GRACE
I'm just taking a break from this. It's a lot.

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace continues his video log.

GRACE
His eating habits are... exotic.

**INT. DORMITORY - (CENT-G)**

Grace eats ramen out of a mug. Rocky is fascinated, crawls way too close to Grace to observe.

ROCKY
Grace look disgust when eat.

GRACE
How do you look when you eat?

ROCKY
Is look beautiful.

GRACE
Show me.

CUT TO:

SPLAT. Out of focus in the foreground, Rocky's entire carapace opens and a fleshy gray blob plops out of his body into a pan of Eridian meat.

Still out of focus, Rocky's wet insides mash around the meat. Grace spits out his food.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh my God...

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace continues his video long. He whispers.

GRACE
He has incredible hearing. He can see through walls. Personal space is at a premium.

ROCKY (O.S.)
Who is Grace talking to, question?

GRACE
(whispering)
There's no way you can hear me right now.

ROCKY (O.S.)
Can hear. Who are you talking to?

GRACE
(quieter)
You can hear this?

ROCKY (O.S.)
Yes. Grace say, *"you can hear this."*

GRACE
(even quieter)
What about this?

ROCKY (O.S.)
Yes.

GRACE
Oh my god. Look at this. Look how far away he is.

Grace leans out and points the camera towards the rest of the lab, revealing an enormous xenonite habitat for Rocky.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That is where he is.

Grace points at Rocky, way on the other side of the room.

ROCKY
Hello Grace. Hello Grace friend. Did Grace find sampler instruction?

GRACE
Yes I found the sampler instructions. I'm coming.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace turns the corner holding the sampler box and its enormous instruction manual.

GRACE (V.O.)
He's really smart about some things...

Rocky is calibrating a device that looks a bit like a quartz raygun and a pincushion tablet.

GRACE
Oh my god he's got a gun!

ROCKY
Oh. This?

GRACE
Yeah that!

ROCKY
No no no. This to screen in front, and now this to that over here.

Grace has moved a screen over close to Rocky's work area so he can point his device at an image of a Petrova Line. His tablet turns the light into a texture.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
And now I can see screen.

*Well I'll be damned.*

Rocky points the device back at Grace.

GRACE
Please don't point it at me.

ROCKY
Oh. Point over here.

GRACE
You're pointing at me again.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace sits in front of Rocky. He picks up the xenonite replica of Rocky's ship.

GRACE (V.O.)
...but his species doesn't know about things like relativity and radiation.

Grace holds the replica out to Rocky.

GRACE
And the rest of the crew?

ROCKY
In mid of ship, there.

Rocky points to the middle of the replica.

GRACE
And where did you keep the Astrophage?

Rocky points to the back of the ship near the engines.

ROCKY
In Rocky workshop.

Grace takes this in.

GRACE
I think the radiation is what made your crew sick, Rock. The Astrophage probably just protected you from it. This isn't something you could've fixed.

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace continues to hide while doing his video log.

GRACE
But I guess together we're pretty smart.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace and Rocky stand with the large scale xenonite solar system model between them.

GRACE
I don't wanna do the puppet show.

ROCKY
No. Do puppet show.

Grace pulls out the xenonite replica of the Hail Mary. He uses it in conjunction with the solar system model.

GRACE
This is us, and we're flying along. The problem is, because the solar system is constantly moving, the Petrova Line is gonna constantly be moving.

Grace gets frustrated performing the puppet show.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Right? Am I still doing it? Do you still want it?

ROCKY
Yes yes. Showtime.

GRACE
Not enough time to get a good sample.

ROCKY
No no no. Use planet gravity to move with line.

Rocky points to the OTHER END OF THE PETROVA LINE. Where A PLANET intersects with the Astrophage arc.

GRACE
You mean... sort of like, rest in its orbit.

Grace does a puppet show to explain.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I didn't think of that...

ROCKY
I did!

GRACE (V.O.)
We figured out a plan. We're going to orbit the planet where Astrophage breeds, collect a sample, and find out why they aren't eating Tau Ceti.

**INT. ATTIC - (CENT-G)**

Grace finishes his video log.

ROCKY
Who is Grace talking to?

GRACE
I'm not talking to anyone.
(whispers)
I need a break.

ROCKY
Break from what?

GRACE
Forget it. This isn't gonna work.
(dropping camera)
It's fine. Let's go.

CUT TO:

**EXT. SPACE**

The Hail Mary separates from the tunnel and slowly takes off, leaving Rocky's ship behind, floating alone in space.

**INT. COCKPIT (ACC-G)**

Grace keys the controls as Rocky watches. ON THE SCREENS: we see the navigation system calculate the route between "Hail Mary" and "Tau Ceti E."

GRACE
150 million kilometers away... racing along at 162 kilometers per second... means we should arrive at Tau Ceti E at...

MARY
*The time to destination is eleven days.*

Huh. That's quite a while.

GRACE
Oh boy. Thank you Mary.

MARY
*You're welcome Dr. Grace.*

ROCKY
Thank you Mary.

MARY
*You're welcome Rocky.*

**EXT. SPACE**

The Hail Mary travels through space.

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (ACC-G)**

LIGHT catches ocean waves. The reflections sparkle across the screen like stars. Rocky uses a bas-relief device with a sensor perched on a tripod.

GRACE
Welcome to Earth.

They've pulled down the walk grate on a hinge so they can enjoy the visuals of the room together.

MARY
*You are in the mental health node.*

ON THE SCREENS: A big wave crashes towards them.

GRACE
Whoa, careful Rocky. Look out below!

Grace is now hyper-animated, excited to be showing Rocky his world. He points down below them.

GRACE (CONT'D)
The beach is always changing. You could go to the same spot every day and you're always looking at a different beach.

ROCKY
Show me more of Earth.

GRACE
It would be my pleasure.

CUT TO:

A BEAUTIFUL OAK TREE seems to tower all around them. Grace leans against the tree's trunk on screen.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Ahhh, trees.

Grace mimes climbing up the tree.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You climb to the top if you can --

CUT TO:

Now they're in a flock of flamingos. Grace's arms are outstretched as they soar over a lake with the birds.

GRACE (V.O.)
*He's so excited about us both getting to go home. There's no harm in pretending for a while.*

CUT TO:

Now they're catching a wave. Grace bends likes he's on a surfboard.

GRACE
Touch the wave Rock, touch the wave! Yeaaah!

ROCKY
Is wiping out. Hanging ten.

CUT TO:

They're high up in a CITYSCAPE.

GRACE
The Big Apple, baby!

Grace gestures and Rocky copies his movements.

CUT TO:

They're watching the film *Rocky* -- *"Adrian!" "Rocky!" "Adrian!" "Rocky!"*

GRACE (CONT'D)
In three, Apollo trains him, and in seven, he trains Apollo's kid.

Grace boxes the air. Rock does his best to mimic him.

ROCKY
Ooh yeah. Punch punch punch punch.

GRACE
Nice!

CUT TO:

YELLOW WORDS SCROLL across pastoral images of Korean people standing in wheat and other random images from home. Karaoke.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(singing)
*I say either, you say --*

ROCKY
(same pronunciation)
*Either.*

GRACE
Nope.
(singing)
*I say neither, you say --*

ROCKY
*Nee-either.*

GRACE
No.

CUT TO:

They sit in a SNOW COVERED FOREST.

ROCKY
I like Earth.

GRACE
Me too.

CUT TO:

Floating in the fog of San Francisco. Grace leans up against Rocky's ball.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I miss the fog. What about you Rock, what do you miss most about home?

ROCKY
(thinks)
My mate.

GRACE
(sits up)
Wait, what? You got a mate?

ROCKY
Yes.

GRACE
I mean not that you're not -- uh, what's their name?

Rocky emits a series of whale sounds. It's lovely. There's no translation.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's beautiful.

ROCKY
Grace have mate, question?

GRACE
No. I mean I did.
(thinks)
She said I had my head in the clouds and I didn't really want to live in the real world. She was right.
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
(then)
Anyway, now she's with Mark.

ROCKY
Rocky hate Mark.

Grace smiles.

GRACE
But enough about me, *you* have a mate. How long you been together?

ROCKY
186.3 years.

GRACE
So it's like the honeymoon phase.

ROCKY
No understand.

GRACE
That's a joke, Rock. You've been together a long time.

ROCKY
Is not enough.

**EXT. SPACE**

The Hail Mary travels through space.

**INT. MED BAY - NIGHT - (ACC-G)**

Grace is in his med-bed and Rocky's habitrail is above him. He's taken over Ilyukhina's bunk and peeks over the bed to look down at Grace.

Rocky taps his fingers. *TAP. TAP. TAP.*

GRACE
Hey Rock, do you have to watch so loud?

ROCKY
(re: his tapping)
This thing?

GRACE
Yeah.

ROCKY
It's how I count the seconds that you are sleeping.

GRACE
I know.

ROCKY
Did you start sleeping? Is it now?

GRACE
Not at all. Is there a way to watch where I can't see you?

Rocky backs up.

ROCKY
I do this. Back and back. How this?

GRACE
Keep going.

Rocky is out of sight.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Perfect.

ROCKY (O.S.)
Goodnight Grace.

GRACE
Goodnight Rocky.

Rocky peers back out over his bed.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I can totally see you.

Rocky retreats. Grace shuts his eyes again. He can hear Rocky poke his carapace back out.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Rocky, it's time to go to sleep, okay?

ROCKY
Okay. You start.

GRACE
I'm trying. We got a big important day tomorrow, right?

ROCKY
Yes. Save Earth. Save Erid. Go home.

Grace nods.

GRACE
Yeah... go home.

CUT TO:

**INT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - ADMIRAL'S BAR - SUNSET**

It's after hours. The Hail Mary team is becoming a unit.

Ilyukhina is doing karaoke. She's singing "Wind of Change."

She tries to get Yao to sing with her. He finally relents to everyone's enjoyment.

Grace is at the bar. He notices that DuBois and Shapiro are holding hands. They clock him. He looks away, busted.

Grace tries to play it normal. Takes an awkward beer swig.

**EXT. U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER - MOMENTS LATER**

Grace finds Stratt outside, looking out from the ship as the Sun goes down.

GRACE
There you are. I signed you up for *Love Shack*.

STRATT
That's not my song really.

GRACE
Did you get your free hat?

STRATT
Yeah. I kind of... bought them.

GRACE
Oh, uh...
(change of subject)
You don't sing, huh?

STRATT
Yeah, I do. I actually sang in an eastern German youth choir.

GRACE
You're very mysterious.

STRATT
No I'm not.

GRACE
I always wanted to be mysterious. I talk too much. That's my problem. Like... right now. I didn't mean to bother you.

STRATT
You don't bother me --

GRACE
It's such a weird party.

STRATT
Is it?

GRACE
Yao is singing, everyone's so happy, people are hooking up, and they all know they're going to die.

STRATT
Camaraderie helps them do their job, y'know. Not so much me, so...

GRACE
It must be hard to ask everybody to... you know.

STRATT
Actually it isn't.

GRACE
Yeah... So, what do you think? Think we're gonna pull it off?

STRATT
What, the whole thing?

GRACE
Yeah.

STRATT
God willing.

GRACE
You believe in God?

STRATT
It beats the alternative.

Grace laughs. He salutes her and heads back inside.

**INT. ADMIRAL'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

Grace is sitting at the bar -- when he hears a voice singing a familiar song...

STRATT
*Just stop your crying, it's a sign of the times --*

Every stops, mouths agape, in total silence as she sings with a sweetness and strength.

She sings through to the chorus. Grace and everyone are in total disbelief.

And as the song reaches its crescendo --

STRATT (CONT'D)
And that is enough.

She puts down the microphone. She walks away, passing Grace as she leaves, and gives him a knowing look.

CUT TO:

**EXT. PLANET**

A BRIGHT GREEN PLANET cuts a vibrant sphere in the stellar patchwork. Dark and light bands of color suggest a turbulent atmosphere, evoking the gas-giants Saturn and Jupiter.

It's stunning.

Grace stands on the hull in his EVA suit, unlocking the SAMPLER from the hull and extending it.

GRACE
(in awe)
Wish you could see this, Rock.

**INT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

Rocky is in his ball in the Hail Mary cockpit.

ON THE VIEWSCREENS: various angles of Grace working outside on the hull.

ROCKY
Rocky can see. Boring.

GRACE
What? This is not boring.

ROCKY
Name of planet, Tau Ceti E, is same name as star plus “E.” Boring.

**INT./EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

*It’s so darn beautiful.*

GRACE
I guess it could be a little more evocative.

Rocky looks at the texture map monitor and sees the ship is inside the Petrova Line.

ROCKY
Astrophage sample in position, question?

GRACE
Yup. Trays are live looking both ways.

ROCKY
It is time go.

Grace laughs.

GRACE
It’s time go.

In regular vision, it seems the same.

But in an INFRARED VIEW of the scene, it looks like Grace is surrounded by a swirling river snowstorm of tiny streaking, glowing dots.

Grace opens two slats on the SAMPLER BOX which extends off the hull.

Grace stands in the middle of TWO RIVERS OF ASTROPHAGE. Tiny salmon swimming in opposite directions.

In infrared, the scene is beautiful in a wholly different way.

ON SAMPLER: we see Astrophage gather on the gills of the sampler panels, accumulating IR light. Grace, tethered, lets himself float off the hull, soaking it all in.

ROCKY
What is Grace doing, question?

GRACE
I'm having a moment.

ROCKY
What is moment?

GRACE
This. Can you feel it?

ROCKY
No.

The red river vanishes, we're back in visible light.

Grace shuts the slats and pulls the release lever. He detaches the sampler from the hull and it floats up beside Grace, attached to his tether like a weird metal balloon.

GRACE
Y'know, back on Earth if you discover something you get to name it. You were technically the first one here, so...

Grace starts making his way back to the airlock again, tugging the sampler with him as he goes.

ROCKY
Yes. Name is, medium rough texture circle planet.

GRACE
Okay... well, if medium rough texture circle planet is taken, we should have a backup.

Grace easily floats over the gap in the hull that tripped him up earlier. He reaches the outer airlock.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Maybe go with something personal.

He sits down and stares at the GREEN PLANET.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What's your mate's name again?

Rocky starts to make the same sound he did earlier --

GRACE (CONT'D)
Rocky, it's okay. I remember.

ROCKY
Need human word for Rocky mate.

Grace looks back at that beautiful planet and smiles. As the pale-green light washes over him...

GRACE
Adrian.

ROCKY
Adrian... Is beautiful.

GRACE
Exactly.

Grace raises two arms like Rocky on the steps.

And does a little kick of his feet on his way back into the airlock.

**INT. HAIL MARY - LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace places the sampler in the middle of the lab table. Rocky scampers up his tube to a viewing position on the ceiling, above Grace.

Grace draws goggles with a dry-erase marker on Rocky's habitrail, then put on his own goggles, so they match.

Grace opens up the sampler, revealing two large PANELS.

*They're both covered with a black, sticky substance.*

*Like the same amount. The same apparent density.*

Grace glances up at Rocky and nods.

Science prep. Grace scrapes the Astrophage from the sampler and divides it into containers. He methodically begins to run his tests.

ROCKY
What doing, question?

GRACE
Spinning up the centrifuge. May take a second.

ROCKY
What doing now, question?

GRACE
I'm comparing the amount of Astrophage going to Adrian with the amount coming back.

ROCKY
What about now?

GRACE
Still doing it.

ROCKY
And now, question? And now? What about now? And and and --

GRACE
Rocky!

CUT TO:

Grace studies the population count... hmmm...

GRACE (CONT'D)
Well that's weird.

Rocky scurries through his hamster tube to get a better look.

ROCKY
What?

Grace shows Rocky the temperature of two metal plates. The same temperature.

GRACE
It's the same amount both coming and going.

ROCKY
But if Astrophage going to Adrian to breed, there should be more leaving.

GRACE
It should be double, it doesn't make sense. It's either not reproducing or... not leaving the planet for some reason.

ON THE MICROSCOPE SCREEN: Grace finds focus...

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh my God.

The familiar black dots of Astrophage are all over the sample. But so are translucent cells, smaller bacteria-looking things, and larger amoeba-like things.

ROCKY
What? What is Grace see question?

Grace tilts the screen to Rocky.

GRACE
Life.

Rocky grabs his device and points it at the screen.

They take in the amoeba. Bacteria. And whatever else.

For a moment, we're INSIDE the petri dish.

GRACE (CONT'D)
This is not just Astrophage. It's bacteria, it's protozoa...

ROCKY
It's like cells on Erid.

GRACE
And Earth...

ROCKY
What this mean?

GRACE
Well... if there's a whole active biosphere in this Petrova Line, it stands to reason there's a whole active biosphere on Adrian, which means... there's life on Adrian.

ROCKY
Life on Adrian.

Rocky freezes. Then he shoots bolt upright, raising his carapace in a way we've never seen before.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Oh, Grace! Life is reason!

GRACE
You said it buddy, life is reason...

ROCKY
No, no, no. No, no understand. No understand. Lifeisreasonlifeisreas onlifeisreasonlifeisreasonlife --

Rocky makes so many noises so fast the laptop can't keep up.

GRACE
Use your words, life is reason for what?

Rocky scampers closer to the screen, gesturing wildly.

ROCKY
Life is -- uggghhh.

GRACE
Life is the reason for what??

ROCKY
Life is reason star not die. Life on Adrian is reason Astrophage in balance. Life on Adrian makes Astrophage die.

Grace stops in his tracks.

GRACE
Like a predator. That would keep the population stable...

ROCKY
Astrophage has predator on Adrian.

GRACE
Life is reason star not die...

ROCKY
Yes!

GRACE
Why didn't you just say that?!

Grace blocks toward the cupola. Rocky follows in his ball.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I mean, if there is some kind of microbial predator that's keeping a balanced ecosystem on Adrian, it didn't happen overnight.

ROCKY
Agreement.

GRACE
If Astrophage is an invasive species everywhere but here... maybe it didn't invade Adrian, because this is where it's from. Is that crazy?

ROCKY
Maybe this is where all life is from. Is that crazy?

Grace sits down next to Rocky.

He shakes his head, then nods.

GRACE
Yeah.

**EXT. ADRIAN**

As we ANGLE IN on the pale-green planet in question...

GRACE (V.O.)
If we're going to find the predator, it'll be in the clouds where Astrophage breeds.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace and Rocky are in intense discussion. Grace plays with a basketball.

GRACE
Check.

He bounces it off Rocky's habitrail --

GRACE (CONT'D)
Rocky with the assist!

-- then dunks it.

GRACE (CONT'D)
The problem is, this ship wasn't built to go into the atmosphere. If we get within five kilometers, we'll be ripped into a million pieces and then we'll burn up. Game over.

ROCKY
Not problem. I make chain. I make long chain. I put collection device on end.

GRACE
Oh yeah, five kilometers of chain. Sure.

ROCKY
Like this chain.

Rocky holds up a piece of XENONITE CHAIN.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Look, see?

GRACE
You can do that?

ROCKY
Yes.

GRACE
Like fishing?

ROCKY
What that.

CUT TO:

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (CENT-G)**

Grace and Rocky are watching a YOUTUBE video that demonstrates fishing.

GRACE
It's barbaric, but... it's fun.

ONSCREEN -- the fisherman yanks a thrashing GIANT BASS out of the water.

GRACE (CONT'D)
It could work.

ROCKY
Thumbs up, baby.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Rocky addresses the camera.

ROCKY
The plan is like fishing. We get very close to Adrian atmosphere and lower collector into clouds with chain. Then Grace go onto hull to reel it in.

Rocky's holding the prop Hail Mary. It now has a lengthy chain attached to it.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
If ship not at exact right angle and speed, we die! So we must fly backwards and at precise angle to keep proper velocity.
(MORE)

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Despite Grace still have no pilot experience.

GRACE
But I've been practicing, haven't I?

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace is strapped in doing training maneuvers in the pilot seat.

ROCKY
Ooh doing good -- bad, oh bad -- angle wrong -- too far -- ANGLE WRONG -- LESS LESS LESS --

GRACE
I'm barely pulling it!

ROCKY
No is bad. Grace Rocky dead.

A LOUD ALARM starts blaring --

ROCKY (CONT'D)
All Rocky plural, all Earth, die. We die, we die, we die --

Grace slams his hands on the controls.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace preps the Astrophage sampler. Rocky addresses a CAMERA directly.

ROCKY
Mission update. Rocky has built predator collector. Grace pilot training work in progress. Very little progress. What think, Earth?

Rocky waits for a response.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Hello? Hello?

GRACE
They can't hear you pal.

ROCKY
What?

GRACE
We're not actually talking to Earth. Earth's too far away. Y'know, we just record these messages and we tell 'em what we learned, and then when we're done we'll send them all back in a probe.

ROCKY
Why not you tell them yourself when you return home, question?

GRACE
Yeah, um...

Grace knows there's an aspect of this mission he hasn't discussed with Rocky. He considers his words carefully.

GRACE (CONT'D)
This... is a one-way ticket for me pal.

ROCKY
What?

GRACE
We had enough Astrophage to get out here... but not enough to get back.

Rocky shifts as he thinks about it. He seems distressed. Grace moves things around, tidies up to keep himself busy.

ROCKY
So what happens Grace, question?

GRACE
Oh I have enough food to last me at least a couple years. Maybe a couple more if I stretch it out.

ROCKY
So Grace die, question?

GRACE
Yeah, once we're done, I'm... gonna die.

Rocky's movements suggest he's growing increasingly agitated.

ROCKY
Why didn't you tell me?

GRACE
It slipped my mind.

ROCKY
No. What Grace say not true. Grace say Grace go home.

GRACE
Look, listen, listen. I got to meet you. I got to do all this amazing stuff. I'm good. I've made my peace with it.

ROCKY
What mean? What mean, make peace?

GRACE
It means... I know I'm not going home. I know why.
(doesn't really believe it but wants Rocky to)
And... it is... okay.
(then)
Thumbs up?

ROCKY
No.

GRACE
Tiny thumbs up?

ROCKY
No.

GRACE
We got stars to save, okay?

Rocky thinks in silence. Then.

ROCKY
Grace. You are --

Rocky thinks...

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Ugh. I need word.

GRACE
What word do you need?

ROCKY
To risk self, to help another.

Grace thinks about it.

GRACE
"Dumb?"

ROCKY
Grace.

Grace types it into the translator. **"Brave."**

He walks out of the room. Rocky lowers his carapace.

*Click-click-click...*

HOLD ON GRACE. Alone in the silence. And it seems like he was telling Rocky the truth -- he's resigned to his fate.

But then.

*Click-click-click-click-click...*

ROCKY (CONT'D)
How much Astrophage you need, question?

GRACE
Two million kilograms.

ROCKY
I can give.

Grace straightens up. *Wait... what?*

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Add six more years to Rocky journey home.

Grace's heart starts to pound. *That can't be right...*

GRACE
That's too much.

Grace fully absorbs what Rocky's saying. *What it means*.

ROCKY
Rocky no let anyone die again and I will not let Grace die.

Grace turns to face Rocky.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Grace go home.

Grace is at a loss. Overwhelmed. All the emotion he's been holding in to survive *pours out at once* --

GRACE
Okay.

His voice breaks in his throat. Rocky seems confused by the emotion pouring out of Grace --

ROCKY
I thought you made peace, question?

GRACE
I didn't mean any of that! That's just something you say.
(then)
Thank you. Get over here.

Grace laughs in relief, joy. He grabs Rocky's sphere and hugs him TIGHT --

ROCKY
Whoa whoa. What's happening.

GRACE
A hug. It's usually not something one does by themselves.

ROCKY
Oh. I do the same?

GRACE
Will you just get in here?

Rocky presses up against the side of his ball, hugging back.

ROCKY
How do you know when the hug is done?

GRACE
You just feel it.

ROCKY
Oh. Are you feeling it now?

GRACE
Nope.

ROCKY
Oh, okay. Yeah.

CUT TO:

**EXT. RUSSIAN LAUNCH CENTER**

WIDE ON THE PLATFORM as the final Hail Mary stage readies for launch. Grace stands with Stratt beneath the massive boosters.

GRACE
We ran the sampler simulation again this morning. Shapiro and DuBois nailed it again. They're running a test right now, with the spin-drive.

STRATT
What about the others?

GRACE
They'll be ready.

STRATT
I expect so. They have a great teacher.

It's the closest she's come to complimenting him. He nods.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Can you take a compliment please?

GRACE
No.

STRATT
It's an order.

GRACE
Okay. If it's an order I'll take it. Thank you.

STRATT
(re: the launch platform)
What do you think?

GRACE
It's pretty impressive. You're good.

STRATT
Three days, huh?

GRACE
Yeah, so... What are you gonna do for the next twenty years? You got a plan?

A BRIGHT FLASH in the distant buildings behind them.

And two seconds later...

**A DEAFENING EXPLOSION shakes the world.**

Ka-BOOOOOM! Grace is blown from his feet by the shockwave. The windows in all the buildings around him SHATTER.

Sirens BLARE as chaos ERUPTS.

Grace struggles to get his bearings from the ground.

A PILLAR OF SMOKE plumes from the distant buildings.

Grace rolls to his hands and knees. Sees Stratt. She's already upright. Running towards the smoke.

Grace struggles to his feet. Ears ringing.

Stratt and Grace race towards the calamity as SIRENS and SMOKE overtake the world.

They look so small.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ADRIAN**

The smoke transitions into the clouds of Adrian.

**INT. HAIL MARY - COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace looks down at the smoky clouds...

*Here we go.*

**EXT. ADRIAN**

The HAIL MARY slowly descends towards Adrian's atmosphere.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Grace and Rocky sit side-by-side, Grace in his pilot chair and Rocky in his module. Pilot and co-pilot.

Grace rotates his chair around and turns the pilot mode to manual...

MARY
*Manual mode activated.*

...then back around front to initiate a 180 degree YAW MANEUVER with the joystick.

**EXT. ADRIAN**

The Hail Mary rotates so that it's pointed backwards to the direction of travel.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

The ship shudders as Grace tries to adjust to flying the ship backwards.

GRACE
Orientation is good.

Grace moves his seat, the same way he did while practicing.

**EXT. ADRIAN**

Grace fires the engines, countering the direction of travel.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G/PLANETARY-G)**

The Hail Mary goes from zero-g to 1.5-g in under a second. Grace is pressed backwards in his chair, Rocky holds tight.

Grace looks to Rocky. *Here goes nothing...*

Rocky looks... nervous. Hovering.

Grace begins the pitch maneuver. 1%...2%...5%...

GRACE
That's not half bad!

ROCKY
Is full good!

Grace fights with the controls. He's now flying backwards, at an angle, under intense g-force.

The angle climbs to twenty-one degrees. Holds.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Time go fishing, question?

GRACE
It's now or never.

Rocky slams his claw on the drop button.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (PLANETARY-G)**

Rocky releases THE SAMPLER: it's a large SPHERE attached to a multi-segment xenonite chain. Multiple SPOOLS are required to house five kilometers of chain -- they release in order.

The sampler plummets down into the atmosphere...

**INT. COCKPIT - (PLANETARY-G)**

Rocky reports his readings.

ROCKY
Three thousand. Probe signal good.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (PLANETARY-G)**

The chain continues to unspool in furious fashion. The final spool releases --

**INT. COCKPIT - (PLANETARY-G)**

ROCKY
All spools released.

Grace watches Rocky with bated breath.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Starting collection.

Grace steels himself. Tries not to look terrified.

GRACE
Now comes the fun part.

ROCKY
Grace go out on hull to retrieve collector? No fun at all.

Grace unclips from his seat. He has to fight the gravity angle to climb out of the cockpit. As he goes --

GRACE (O.S.)
It's a joke.

ROCKY
Oh, humor. Confusing.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (PLANETARY-G)**

The airlock opens. Grace climbs onto the hull. The ship's alignment means the door is on top (facing the spacescape).

BENEATH THE SHIP -- the fiery red glow roils out from around the edges of the Hail Mary, partially obscuring the green hues of Adrian below.

*The ship itself is protecting Grace from the heat.*

GRACE
Oh, you gotta be kidding me.

ROCKY (OVER COMMS)
*What problem, question?*

GRACE
It's fine.

Grace attaches his tether and starts climbing along the hull. He winces with each step -- this is painstaking labor.

GRACE (CONT'D)
The sky is slightly on fire.

ROCKY
*Words of encouragement.*

GRACE
You can't just say "words of encouragement."

Grace turns and stares down through a GAP. It's far. And hot. He jumps over the gap.

Rocky can see what he's up to using his sonar-vision.

RAKAKAKAKAKKA. The ship shudders.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Did you feel that?

ROCKY
*Yes.*

GRACE
I'm not worried. Are you worried?

ROCKY
*Yes.*

GRACE
Great.

ROCKY
*Get ready with winch.*

Grace diverts the line and repels to an OUTRIGGER.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*Collector has closed. Move winch into position.*

Grace struggles to insert the winch onto the chain's anchor plate, confirms it's properly seated.

*Deep breath.*

He hits the activation button.

The winch springs to action. A gear pops out of the center, the cog catches a chain link. The gear then *turns* and drags the chain into the internal workings of the winch. Once inside, it rotates the link 180 degrees... *and ejects it.*

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*Careful...*

Then it ejects the next link... and the next...

Grace cranks the lever. Loose links fly out in a veritable blizzard as the winch hauls the chain up towards the ship...

GRACE
How long is this supposed to take?

WHAM! The sampler arrives with a CLANG.

ROCKY
*Sampler should be here soon.*

GRACE
Yeah. It's here.

ROCKY
*Amaze! Amaze! Amaze!*

Grace struggles to detach the chain from the winch. He finally does it, then almost drops it!

Thankfully it's hooked to a tether around his body.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*Careful, sampler is important.*

GRACE
Yep.

Grace climbs back onto the hull as the ship starts to shake.

MARY
*Warning: Altitude decreasing.*

ROCKY
*Hurry hurry.*

GRACE
I'm coming back.

The ship RUMBLES again.

ROCKY
*Hurry hurry. Get inside now.*

Grace looks to the engine block as --

The ROOF RACK breaks off the hull and -- WHAM -- knocks him to the ground.

He watches helplessly as the sampler falls out of view.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*Grace? Grace? Grace is safe, question?*

GRACE
I'm okay.

ROCKY
*Good good good. Come inside with predator collector now.*

Grace scrambles to the edge and manages to get his eyes on the sampler, dangling well near the bottom of the hull.

GRACE
Uhh...

ROCKY
*What problem, question?*

The roof rack, now wedged around the airlock, is rattling, about to snap the camera and fall off the hull, taking the rope and Grace with it.

IN THE COCKPIT: the LIFE SUPPORT panel pops up on the main screen. "EXTERNAL TEMPERATURE EXTREME."

MARY
*Warning: Exterior Temperature Elevated.*

ROCKY
*Grace must move now. Go, go.*

Grace looks at the line connecting him to the roof rack. Then back down at the collector, his mind racing.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*Why not moving? Grace? Grace?*

Rocky sees the collector is dangling from the hull.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*No Grace. Bad idea. Come inside.*

GRACE
I'll be there in a minute.

ROCKY
*No no. Grace will die. Can repeat mission. Try again later.*

GRACE
I don't think there is a later.

ROCKY
*Abort abort abort!*

The roof rack groans. Grace can see that it's going to fall over the far side of the airlock and drag him off the hull.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
*Grace will die! Abort mission!*

Grace dives down the side of the hull, SLIDING HEADFIRST -- he grabs the sampler, nothing between him and certain doom, except his line to the roof rack which goes TAUT --

-- causing the roof rack to tumble off, and pulling Grace backwards up to the airlock!

He grabs a hand hold as he undoes his carabiner. He hangs there untethered, looks up at the open airlock door --

**INT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS - (PLANETARY-G)**

The sampler swings up inside! Grace follows right behind.

**INT. COCKPIT - (PLANETARY-G)**

The door swings open -- Grace charges into the cockpit.

ROCKY
Grace?

GRACE
I'm here!

ROCKY
Good good good.

A metallic GROAN screams from somewhere down below --

GRACE
Where is that noise coming from?

ROCKY
Noise is from all around. It's loudest at port side bedroom.

GRACE
The gravity's tearing the ship apart.

ROCKY
We leave now, question?

GRACE
We leave now, statement.

Grace throws the spin-drive controls to full. The ship lurches forward. As Grace struggles --

MARY
*Hull pressure warning.*

ROCKY
Hull bending in big room, below bedroom!

Grace frowns -- what's he talking about? He checks the screens and goes pale --

GRACE
That's the fuel tanks!

ROCKY
Bad bad bad.

GRACE
Well, it's not great.

ROCKY
Bad bad bad.

GRACE
Okay okay, everybody calm down!

MARY
*Hull pressure warning.*

GRACE
Try and keep yourself together, Mary.

ROCKY
Stop engine now?

GRACE
Not yet, we need the engine to get into orbit before we crash!

ROCKY
I have idea.

GRACE
Spit it out!

ROCKY
First no crash. Then not explode. Deal?

GRACE
Deal!

The ship GROANS and SHUDDERS. Grace fights the controls as he watches the screens.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hold on...

ROCKY
Now?

GRACE
Wait...

*C'mon... c'mon...*

ROCKY
Now? Now?

GRACE
.....NOW!

Grace zeros the sliders. The engines stop. Grace collapses in his seat. *Oh thank God...* And for one quiet moment, everything feels like it might be okay.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Did we do it?

*Wait...*

Grace notices his seatbelt falls to the left.

Rocky holds up his quartz seeing device. Lets go of it. It falls to the wall. They look at each other.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Uh oh.

A JOLT -- Grace's chair is pulled back towards the side of the cockpit. Rocky slams into the habitrail wall.

Grace tries to push the chair back to the middle of the cockpit --

ROCKY
Why ship moving, question?

GRACE
*There's a hole in it...*

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (PLANETARY-G)**

And so there is. A chaotic, sputtering explosion vents out from the breach, *propelling the ship forward...*

**INT. COCKPIT - (PLANETARY-G)**

The force in the cockpit is increasing by the second -- ALARMS ring out -- every move for Grace is a struggle --

MARY
*Hull breach. Port fuel tanks.*

GRACE
Mary! Take the chair!

MARY
*Motor malfunction.*

Grace fights against gravity to pull himself forward. His eyes go wide when he reaches the "Structure" display.

GRACE
It's the Astrophage! The fuel is migrating to Adrian!

ROCKY
Eject damaged tanks question?

Grace struggles to reach the screen. Rocky presses up against the xenonite barrier, unable to help.

Grace fights his hand forward... towards the "Jettison" button... *c'mon... c'mon...*

He hits the button.

MARY
*Excessive force warning.*

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (PLANETARY-G)**

The first tank is jettisoned. The resulting explosion LAUNCHES THE HAIL MARY into a spin, whipping into space --

**INT. COCKPIT - (PLANETARY-G)**

Grace and Rocky are JERKED FORWARD under the acceleration --

GRACE

Is slammed against his restraints. He can't breathe. *He's suffocating.*

ROCKY

Smashes into his walls like a pinball -- he's not restrained, but the force is too much for even him. SILVER BLOOD splatters the xenonite everywhere he makes impact.

ONSCREEN: "**EXCESSIVE FORCE WARNING**"

Grace tries to speak, but has no air.

GRACE
*Rocky... Hang on...*

Rocky tries to recover his bearings. Braces himself with ALL FIVE OF HIS ARMS --

ROCKY
Jettison other tank!

Grace can barely move. He glances down AT HIS SEAT and sees the metal beginning to BEND UNDER THE CENTRIFUGAL FORCE --

*Don't think about that, Grace.*

His eyes dart to the jettison button. He fights his arm forward inch by painstaking inch...

MARY
*Jettison port fuel tank compartment five. Confirm.*

The metal on his seat begins to SCREAM as it twists free.

Grace slams his hand into the button.

And a whole bunch of things happen at once:

-- The SECOND TANK jettisons -- rocketing the Hail Mary forward --

-- Grace's seat *rips free* under the force. He's slammed around the cockpit --

-- Rocky smashes again into the walls. SILVER BLOOD flies.

And then things get quiet.

HOLD ON GRACE.

He can't breathe. He struggles against the prison that is his seat as it suffocates him. He fights the restraints. He tries to pull the centrifugal lever but can't reach it.

*He's going to die*.

His eyes drift over to Rocky's compartment...

But it's empty.

Grace's eyes dart around. *Where did Rocky go?*

The cockpit seems to be filling up with SMOKE.

As Grace starts to BLACKOUT, he thinks to himself *why is there smoke in the cockpit?*

Rocky climbs up the ladder.

He's on Grace's side of the cockpit, no longer protected from the Earth's atmosphere. THICK SMOKE billows from under his carapace.

*The atmosphere is killing Rocky*.

As the ship separates, Rocky grabs Grace's chair... RIPS THE RESTRAINTS FREE...

He takes Grace in his arms. He pulls the lever Grace couldn't reach.

**INT. CORRIDOR/MED BAY - (PLANETARY-G)**

As ALARMS RING OUT all around, Rocky drags Grace down the corridor as fast as he can --

Rocky pulls Grace to the dormitory -- picks him up and puts him in the med bay --

MARY
*Please remain still when ventilation mask is applied.*

Grace's eyes see the AWFUL DAMAGE the atmosphere is doing to Rocky.

Rocky collapses.

Armando GRABS GRACE -- needles are injected into his arms -- A VENTILATOR is shoved in his face --

And GRACE BLACKS OUT.

CUT TO:

**INT. RUSSIAN LAUNCH CENTER**

Disaster cleanup crews work to manage the wreckage of a massive explosion. Stratt leads the team through the building.

GRACE
(reading his brief)
One nanogram of Astrophage just isn't enough to blow up a building.

DR. LOKKEN
The quartermaster gave him one milligram by mistake.

GRACE
That's a million times the heat-energy they were prepped for.

YAO
A measuring mistake killed my entire science team?

STRATT
It doesn't matter. We have to launch.

The group trades glances. Grace gets the sense they all know something he doesn't.

MOMENTS LATER --

They enter a conference room and gather around a table.

NARENDER
If we miss the orbital window it will set us back months.

GRACE
Yeah but if no one's trained to do the mission it won't matter.

The group trades glances again.

STRATT
Casualty projections go up exponentially if we delay. We launch on schedule with a replacement science offer.

GRACE
Okay, but... who? I mean that...

Stratt has her hand on a brief. He sees HIS OWN NAME. Eyes dart at each other. He realizes what she's suggesting. They all stare at him.

Grace looks at him... looks at <u>everyone</u>... and realizes they've all made this decision without him.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'm not an astronaut.

STRATT
I don't need an astronaut. I need an expert on Astrophage who's mission ready.

GRACE
I'm not ready! I don't have any training.

ILYUKHINA
You'll pick it up.

GRACE
I'm not an astronaut. I put the "not" in astronaut. I've never done anything. I've never done a space walk. I can't even moonwalk! I haven't done the pool thing!

ILYUKHINA
No no no, this is just something we do for picture, for social media.

GRACE
I'm not heroic in any way. I get sick on an elevator!

YAO
Perfect. There is no elevator on the ship.

GRACE
I cannot do this.

STRATT
You're smart. You'll figure it out.

GRACE
This might be very hard for you to understand, but some people are failures. Some people don't rise to the challenge.

STRATT
You've been present for every major scientific or strategic meeting we've had on the mission.

Grace feels the full weight of the room bearing down on him.

GRACE
You're missing out on an important part of the mission, which is the suicide part.

ILYUKHINA
Grace, you'll be in very cool company.

STRATT
If you don't go, you die anyway.

GRACE
Yeah, <u>in thirty years</u>. With the...

He trails off. Catching himself.

STRATT
"With the rest of us?" You have no immediate family. You don't even have a dog.

GRACE
So, just so I'm clear -- you're asking me, right now, to give up my life.

They are. He looks around the table to see empathetic faces. But it's clear -- they're all in agreement.

STRATT
I am. We all are.

GRACE
Can I think about this?

The group looks to Stratt. She checks her watch.

STRATT
You have three hours.

This hangs in the air.

CUT TO:

**INT. MED BAY - (CENT-G)**

THE ROBOTIC ARM tends to Grace in the med bay. As it works, Grace's eyes flutter open.

MARY
*Eye movement detected.*

Some time has passed -- the life support systems have done their job. Grace is bruised and bandaged, but alive.

He groans as he pulls the tubes out of his mouth. Coughs.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Good morning, Dr. Grace.*

There's no response.

Grace climbs out of the bed.

He notices A TRAIL on the floor. Ash-like flakes... and mucus... as though something was injured and dragged itself through the ship.

Grace follows the trail.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

The room is a mess. Grace stops in his tracks when he sees --

ROCKY

He looks terrible. His carapace is scorched and ashy. It's unclear if he's even alive.

He's back inside of his area. It looks like he's brought the sampler inside and built a translucent containment box. *He was working even as he collapsed.*

Grace gets as close to him as he can.

Rocky shudders ever-so-slightly. He seems to "see" Grace. Faint wisps of black smoke emit from his carapace. His pained whale song comes out as barely a whisper.

He gestures towards the workstation. And collapses.

GRACE
I'll watch you sleep. But you gotta wake up. Deal?

Grace taps on the wall of Rocky's habitrail.

But there's no response.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (CENT-G)**

The Hail Mary seems small and lonely against the starscape.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Rocky remains unmoving behind his barrier. It's unclear how much time has passed. Grace sits by his friend's side.

GRACE (V.O.)
I'm not sure what to do.

**INT. HAIL MARY - (CENT-G)**

Grace records a video log. He's lost.

GRACE
I've done everything I can think of.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace opens the cupola window shields, bringing in more light.

He points a directional thermometer at Rocky. 191 degrees Celsius. He shakes his head. *That's too cold.*

GRACE (V.O.)
I made him a heat lamp.

**LATER.** Grace finishes attaching the back panel of an ad-hoc heating device. It's a metal box with LED lights on the front, and a wire running out the back to a dial.

He smears some Astrophage onto a glass microscope slide and inserts it into a small slot on the box's side.

He checks Rocky's temperature with the directional thermometer again. It's 194 degrees Celsius... and climbing.

*It's working.* Grace nods. He's done all he can.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

More time has passed. Grace tries to clean up some of the wreckage from the Adrian mission. His eyes drift to Rocky while he works. Faint wisps of smoke continue to rise from Rocky's carapace.

ON ONE OF THE SCREENS: the final translation text from Rocky's conversation earlier is still there, glitching in and out. Grace catches a glimpse of it:

*Save Erid. Save Earth.*

Grace looks at his friend. Looks at THE WORKSTATION.

GRACE (V.O.)
And he left me one last message.

He sees the PLUNGER and TEXTURE PAD that he used to control the sampler.

CUT TO:

Grace works at the containment box.

He pushes the button on the plunger and THE SAMPLER opens. He grabs a cotton swab, takes a sample.

He smears it on the waiting glass. Then he inserts the slide into the microscope.

THROUGH THE LENS: he adjusts the focus and notices ANOTHER ORGANISM...

The amoeba-like organism.

He adds a drop of Astrophage to the sample.

Checks again. An amoeba lurches towards the Astrophage and ENVELOPS IT.

It happens fast. Grace gasps. Can't believe his eyes.

It's the PREDATOR.

The Astrophage wiggles a sort of death rattle, and then becomes cell-like in appearance. The black disappears, leaving only organelles and membranes.

*The Astrophage is dead.*

Grace's eyes dart over at Rocky. He's overcome with emotion.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Later. Grace has cleaned himself up a bit, activated by the science at hand.

He bounces a ball to himself while he paces by Rocky's bedside. His eyes betray concern for his friend as he works the problem, as though talking to a patient in a coma --

GRACE
We have our predator. Right now I'm calling it Taumoeba. And I'm sure that when you wake up you'll have a lot to say about why that's a bad name, because it's an amoeba from Tau Ceti, and we're just putting Tau in front of amoeba, but I would argue there's an elegance to that. A simplicity. Let's not fight about that now. We'll table it.

A LITTLE LATER

Grace talks to Rocky from a beach chair.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I did a test at different atmospheric variables and, fun fact, every time I introduced nitrogen, it died. And I know what you're thinking, well that's terrible because that's a problem because we need it to survive in the conditions of Venus.

LATER

Grace continues to pace.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Obviously I just had to figure out how to breed a strain of nitrogen-resistant Taumoeba, and guess what I used? The breeder tanks we made with your xenonite. And you know what? Now we're just a couple of very cool dudes with their very own strain of nitrogen resistant Taumoeba. Really all we have to do now is breed enough to survive the trip. And you gotta wake up because I don't know how to get half the Taumoeba to Erid. So...
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
no pressure. But we did make a deal.

LATER STILL

Grace tapes children's letters from Earth to Rocky's habitrail.

GRACE (CONT'D)
This is from Papa Adley, wishing us good luck to save the world...
This is from Sun, age seven...

LATER AGAIN

Grace has nodded off on the floor, close to Rocky. Rocky's carapace has stopped smoking. *Does that mean Rocky's dead?*

And then.

Rocky's finger moves.

*Tap... tap-tap --*

Grace sleeps as we hear SOMETHING moving around. Grace waves off the noise.

A ball rolls up in the foreground REFLECTING LIGHT ON GRACE.

ROCKY
Grace?

GRACE
(still asleep)
Rock... could you just give me a chance to sleep a little...

Wait... Grace's eyes flutter open as he sees... Rocky! *You're alive*! Grace gasps. Races forward. <u>Hugs Rocky's ball as tight as he possibly can</u> --

GRACE (CONT'D)
I was so not worried about you.

ROCKY
Did we find predator?

Grace shakes his head, then nods.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
No? Is yes?

They walk over to the TAUMOEBA FARM. Standing together again. Back where they started.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
Amaze amaze amaze. Grace Rocky breeder tank design.

GRACE
Good job, Rock.

ROCKY
We can go home, statement.

GRACE
We can go home.

ROCKY
Fist my bump.

GRACE
Nope, that's still not right. But I'll do it.

ROCKY
So what we do now, question?

GRACE
Party.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ACC-G)**

The Hail Mary is back on the move.

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (ACC-G)**

Grace enters and discovers Rocky wearing a NEW OUTFIT. It's quite showy.

Rocky swells with pride when he sees Grace.

GRACE
Whoa, hey now.

ROCKY
Is special clothing for celebration!

Grace puts on a party hat.

GRACE
Actually, you're making me think I gotta up my game.

ROCKY
What is this?

He puts a party hat on Rocky's ball too.

GRACE
If you don't mind.

ROCKY
Rocky get one! Is good.

Grace pulls out a wrapped PRESENT.

GRACE
It's not much, just a little something. It's, um...

He unwraps it. It's one of his LAPTOPS.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Your very own laptop.

Rocky starts jumping up and down.

ROCKY
Portable Earth thinking machine!

GRACE
With all human knowledge.

Grace pulls out the first canister Rocky sent.

GRACE (CONT'D)
And just one more thing...

ROCKY
What is this?

He opens it up to reveal the EARTH BEANBAG.

GRACE
It's Earth. So you can remember me.

Rocky reaches out and takes it.

ROCKY
Rocky can't forget...
(then)
I didn't get you anything.

GRACE
You've given me a lot, Rock.

ROCKY
But if I were to give you something.

Grace shakes his head -- *I'm fine, really.* But something occurs to him --

GRACE
I mean there is one thing, but...

ROCKY
Grace, tell tell tell.

GRACE
I don't think it's possible.

ROCKY
Nothing's impossible.

GRACE
It'd be pretty cool to see your ship.

ROCKY
Ooooh.

CUT TO:

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ACC-G/CENT-G)**

The HAIL MARY decelerates as it approaches ROCKY'S SHIP. It rotates into position, aligning itself with the tunnel...

**INT. TUNNEL/ROCKY'S SHIP - (CENT-G)**

Grace walks through the darkness. He's wearing a massive PROTECTION SUIT -- some cross between Rocky's tech and a bathysphere. He lumbers out of the darkness -- it's slow going. Step... step... step...

Rocky leads him -- c'mon! -- and they enter ROCKY'S SHIP.

We're WITH GRACE as he takes in his friend's world. His FLASHLIGHT BEAM finds the alien technology.

There's no sound between them -- the atmosphere makes it impossible. But we can tell Rocky is excited to show Grace his world. *And Grace is delighted to see it.*

HOLD ON GRACE -- as he takes in the wonders all around him...

GRACE (PRE-LAP)
I understand why you think I'm the right person for this mission...

CUT TO:

**INT. RUSSIAN OFFICE**

CLOSE ON GRACE. He seems to have the weight of the world on his shoulders. He chooses his words carefully.

GRACE
But I can't do it. I can't do it.

WIDEN TO REVEAL we're in Stratt's office. ARMED RUSSIAN SECURITY GUARDS flank the doorway, including two Russian soldiers and Carl.

Stratt sits at her desk across from Grace. She levels her stoic gaze at him. Grace shifts uncomfortably.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You'll find a solution.

STRATT
You are my solution. You always were.

She keeps her gaze locked on him.

GRACE
My place is in the classroom.

STRATT
Stop pretending this is about your students. It's so insulting.

She looks at the guards who leave, we imagine, to give her the privacy for the dressing down she's about to give Grace.

She points to one of the many files on her desk.

STRATT (CONT'D)
Grace, we will lose a quarter of the world's population in the next thirty years. And that assumes that the nations of the world will work together to ration food. Which they won't. So I'd double the estimate. If you truly cared about the children, or anyone else for that matter, you'd get on that ship.

Grace wilts under her glare. It takes him a moment to recover. She means it.

GRACE
I understand the stakes. I do. But I don't have it in me.
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
My mind is made up. I'm sorry, but you just can't talk me into it.

STRATT
I'm not trying to talk you into anything. I am trying to make you understand what I'm about to do next.

Grace frowns. *I'm sorry?*

STRATT (CONT'D)
Please, stay calm.
(into comm)
Come in.

Stratt gestures to the guards outside the door. A RUSSIAN DOCTOR enters, preps an injection.

STRATT (CONT'D)
This is Piotr.

GRACE
What is this --

STRATT
The mission plan will state that we induced your coma early to maximize your safety. You'll be remembered as a hero.

GRACE
Come on -- this is crazy -- you can't -- what are you doing?

STRATT
This may seem like me betraying you, Dr. Grace. But this is me actually believing in you.

GRACE
It sure feels like you're betraying me.

The Russian guards enter, they try and hold Grace still. Grace tries to avoid the guards.

STRATT
Don't make this harder, please.

GRACE
C'mon, let's keep talking...

STRATT
Sit down and we can do this differently!

Grace makes a break for it, knocking over the doctor as he scrambles out of the room.

STRATT (CONT'D)
(into phone, calm)
Yeah, he's running.

**OUTSIDE HER OFFICE:** Grace races away. A Russian officer TACKLES Grace. Carl walks up and stands over him.

GRACE
No, Carl! I can't do it! Don't do it! Don't do it!

The doctor plunges the needle into his arm.

CARL
You know who you are. You're gonna do great.

CUT TO:

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

HOLD ON GRACE. Alone under the cupola window. As we hear his PLEAS to Stratt echoing in his head...

**INT. AIRLOCK/TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace walks down the tunnel one last time. In an EVA suit, holding his helmet. *Why?*

He approaches the barrier. Rocky's already there waiting for him on the other side. Right where they started.

GRACE
Well, my friend...

ROCKY
Yes, friend?

Rocky's low-tone sounds sad as well. Neither of them wants to leave.

GRACE
I'm not sure what to say... so I'm just gonna...

Grace goes to leave --

ROCKY
Grace?

He turns back.

ROCKY (CONT'D)
No one to watch you sleep.

GRACE
Yeah.

They both shift uncomfortably.

ROCKY
You are very brave.

Grace flinches at the word "brave."

GRACE
I don't know about that.

Rocky does his closest gesture to a shrug.

ROCKY
You are bravest human I have ever met.

The joke brings a smile to Grace's face.

GRACE
Hey!

ROCKY
Is joke.

GRACE
I know.

ROCKY
I only meet one human, and is you!

GRACE
I get it! It's a good joke.

*Thank you, Rocky.* Grace tries to not betray his emotions. Rocky can tell.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Alright... well... goodbye.

ROCKY
No understand word.

GRACE
It means... see you later...

ROCKY
But I won't see you later.

GRACE
I know.
(then)
How do you say goodbye back home?

ROCKY
We do this.

Rocky rubs his ridged inner arm like a washboard, creating a percussive arm song.

Grace mimics him. Then turns and heads to his ship.

As he walks back, they mimic each other doing different poses. Like they did at the very beginning.

IN THE AIRLOCK: Grace puts his helmet and gloves on. He pushes a button to close the EVA room hatch, and another button to depressurize.

He pulls up the ladder-ramp. He starts using an Eridian tool to cut the tunnel off the airlock exterior.

Rocky returns to the wall.

Grace gives Rocky a thumbs down.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ACC-G)**

The two ships part ways. The vibrant light of Tau Ceti bids farewell as Rocky's ship heads in one direction...

...and the Hail Mary heads in the other.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ACC-G)**

Grace is in the pilot's chair, having set a course.

MARY
*Journey to Earth will take 4 years, 2 months, and 11 days.*

**INT. ATTIC - (ACC-G)**

Grace turns off the lights and exits.

**INT. DORMITORY - (ACC-G)**

Grace is in bed. He closes his eyes.

MARY
*Sweet dreams, Dr. Grace.*

As he falls asleep...

**FLASHES OF MEMORIES:** *His classroom full of students. The beach. His Earth beanbag. The explosion that killed DuBois and Shapiro. Carl standing over him as a needle is plunged into his arm...*

CUT TO:

**EXT. RUSSIAN LAUNCH CENTER**

Grace is loaded onto a truck headed for the launch pad.

CLOSE ON GRACE as he is driven away, unconscious, in a ventilator mask.

A RED LIGHT FLASHES on his face. A KLAXON SOUNDS.

CUT TO:

**INT. DORMITORY - (ACC-G)**

Grace's eyes flutter open to red blaring lights. He tries to shake away the darkness. *Was that a dream?*

The ALARM keeps blaring. *Rrrooo -- rrrooo -- rrrooo --*

Grace realizes it's the ship. He races out of the dormitory.

**INT. LAB - (ACC-G)**

As Grace hops into his chair, we may notice some time has passed since he said goodbye to Rocky. The chair has been strapped back into place. The habitrail remains.

He takes stock of the FLASHING SCREENS. Notes INTERNAL ATMOSPHERE.

MARY
*Foreign presence detected.*

Grace scrolls to the location.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Contaminant detected.*

Grace looks at the composition readout. Sees something that makes him go pale. He flips to the cameras in the lab.

And sees THOSE XENONITE BOXES.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Contaminant concentrated in laboratory clean room.*

And it may not be clear to us what's wrong, but it's definitely clear to Grace.

He turns off the heating breakers. NEW ALARMS start to sound. Grace silences them.

He springs to action. He shuts down the engines.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Engine cutoff.*

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ACC-G/ZERO-G)**

The ship decelerates as the engines go dark.

**INT. AIRLOCK - (ZERO-G)**

Grace is in the EVA suit. Moving FAST. He's attached a xenonite CHAIN to the inner door, leaving it open a crack, and is strapping himself to the wall, wedged into the corner of the room.

He presses the button and overrides warnings to remotely open the outer door.

The air inside the ship HISSES out into space.

**INT. LAB - (ZERO-G/CENT-G)**

ONSCREEN: the INTERNAL ATMOSPHERE readings show the numbers plummeting as the air is sucked out of the ship.

Grace, still in his EVA suit, floats into the lab.

He's heading towards THOSE XENONITE BOXES.

He swabs the outside of one.

CENTRIFUGAL GRAVITY ON:

He puts the sample under a microscope. Sees Taumoeba. Puts it together.

GRACE (V.O.)
*There's a leak...*

He PUNCHES out a monitor in frustration.

GRACE (V.O.)
*The problem is xenonite. The Taumoeba can get through it.*

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Grace wraps the containers in heavy plastic.

GRACE (V.O.)
*Probably because we bred it in the xenonite breeder tanks... it evolved to escape them.*

Later. He addresses a camera from inside the clean room.

GRACE
I think I was able to stop it before it ate all the Astrophage on the ship.

Behind him -- the lab is once again in disarray. Grace has been busy experimenting on those containers.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Rocky's ship is built of xenonite.
(thinks)
Taumoeba will already be in his fuel lines.

Grace's face darkens. As he realizes...

GRACE (CONT'D)
He won't be able to find the leak because the leak is the ship itself... eventually his life-support systems will fail... he'll be without any fuel, stranded.

Grace almost forgets he's talking to the camera.

GRACE (CONT'D)
He's looking at a long, slow, painful death.
(then)
Alone.

Grace sits in the silence. At a loss.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

He stands up, finds the "WHO AM I?" WHITEBOARD. Stares at it. Erases it. Starts doing math.

GRACE (V.O.)
I can't do both. I can go home...
or I can save Rocky.

**INT. DON'T GO CRAZY ROOM - (CENT-G)**

Grace sits below the giant jellyfish. Deep in thought.

He turns off the screen. Stands up in the darkness.

**INT. SYSTEMS TUNNEL - (CENT-G)**

Grace works on THE BEETLES: four unmanned probes, each housing a Taumoeba minifarm.

GRACE (V.O.)
I've left you detailed logs with all our findings, and enough Taumoeba for you to start your very own Taumoeba farm.

Each probe looks like a small spaceship.

GRACE (V.O.)
Oh and I threw in a little something extra -- just for fun.

Grace takes the hard drive from the camera. Affixes the label. Writes in block letters:

**"STRATT"**

And then he writes something else.

He places the card in the last beetle.

Closes it up. Starts welding.

**INT. LAB - (CENT-G)**

Later. His lab is clean and organized. He seems calm.

Resolved.

GRACE
At least I never have to hear you say, "I told you so." Even though you were right.

**EXT. HAIL MARY - (ZERO-G)**

The FOUR BEETLES are all launched from the Hail Mary.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ACC-G)**

Grace climbs into his chair. Looks over at the burnt co-pilot seat and remains of where Rocky's habitrail once was.

He sticks THE XENONITE FIGURE of Rocky on his dash.

He opens up the Navigation Menu.

He inputs a new destination.

**EXT. SPACE**

The Hail Mary turns around. The tiny ship soars through a huge, glittering starfield.

**INT. LAB - (ACC-G)**

Grace crosses off another day on his whiteboard: DAYS TO ROCKY ESTIMATED LOCATION. ~~19~~ ~~18~~ ~~17~~ 16...

Grace, wrapped in a blanket, drinks a cup of coffee on the sideways chair and nods off to sleep.

**INT. COCKPIT - (ZERO-G)**

Strapped in the pilot seat, Grace presses THRUST and then looks through the Petrovascope. Nothing.

Turns the ship 10 degrees. Presses THRUST, looks through the Petrovascope. Nothing.

Turns the ship 10 degrees. Presses THRUST, looks through the Petrovascope. Noth --

Something! A tiny flash in the distance.

**EXT. ROCKY'S SHIP - (ZERO-G)**

We're angling around Rocky's ship to reveal...

The Hail Mary.

And *there's Grace*. He's standing in the open airlock in his EVA suit. Tethered by a daisy chain of every possible strap, bungee and cable on the ship. Just as we angle in on him...

Grace jumps out of the airlock.

He floats across the black expanse, tethered to the Hail Mary. He looks *so small* against the universe beyond as he makes his way towards Rocky's ship. Closer... closer...

WHAM! Grace SLAMS into Rocky's ship with considerable force.

He catches his breath. Then he begins to crawl towards the AIRLOCK PORTAL Rocky built when they first met. He pulls himself inside the alcove.

The translucent xenonite portal is still in place, allowing Grace to see just inside. But it's DARK. No signs of life.

Grace removes the big ol' wrench from his belt. Begins banging on the hull. *Wham... wham... wham...*

There's no response. Grace angles his headlamps towards the portal. Desperate for any signs of life.

*There.*

A flash of movement.

Rocky races towards the portal like a dog seeing its owner for the first time in weeks.

He looks *rough*... his clothes are a mess, covered in the familiar Taumoeba residue... there are burn marks all over his arms... but he's alive.

And his body language is SHEER JOY.

Tears spring to Grace's eyes as he sees his friend.

Rocky gestures wildly with happiness --

ROCKY
You came back for me, question?

Grace nods.

GRACE
I'm here buddy.

Rocky places his hand on the window. Grace places his, too.

CUT TO BLACK.

*And we stay in darkness for a moment. Exhale.*

*Then...*

**INT. CAPTAIN'S DECK - SECRET ICEBREAKER**

FROM BLACK... pinpricks of lights begin to resolve themselves. The pixels dance like stars in the sky.

GRACE (V.O.)
Earth, Rocky. Rocky, Earth.

The image resolves itself... we're looking at a video of Grace and Rocky.

ROCKY
Hello Earth! I am Rocky. Rocky from Erid. Not Rocky from movie.

GRACE
I'm pretty sure they know that.

Reveal STRATT. Watching them.

It brings a smile to her face.

Time has passed. Her eyes bear the lines and weight of these last few years.

The laptop video changes to Grace's last message.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I left you detailed logs of all of our findings, and I threw in a little something else, just for fun.

Stratt lifts up the Xenonite model of Grace. Looks it over.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hopefully it all makes sense. If not... you're smart. You'll figure it out.

*The video keeps playing past what we saw earlier.*

Grace looks at the camera with warm eyes. Waves goodbye.

GRACE (CONT'D)
This is Dr. Captain Ryland Grace reporting from the Hail Mary. As the Eridians say...

He does the arm rub Rocky taught him.

She pauses the video. Steps to the window. It's cold and blustery outside. She looks below at the container ship.

She picks up the captain's phone on the bankhead.

STRATT
Let's begin.

As a NAVIGATOR sets a course for Guyana...

She holds up the xenonite figurine of Grace that he sent her.

**INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY**

A Taumoeba farm is rolled into the warehouse.

CUT TO BLACK.

**INT. HABITATION - BEDROOM**

CLOSE ON A MAN'S EYES as they flutter towards consciousness.

GRACE awakens. But he's not on the Hail Mary. He's in a cozy bedroom. *Is he back on Earth? Is that San Francisco outside those windows?*

GRACE
I'm up!

He gets out of bed, starts to get himself dressed. The view out the window resets. He's not in San Francisco.

**INT. HABITATION - LIVING ROOM**

We get a better look at the place. The architecture and furnishings feel earth-like, but something's unusual about them. As though some foreign creatures did their best to approximate humanity despite their limited resources.

As he walks down the steps to the living room, ARMANDO gives him a nod.

GRACE
Good morning Armando.

He walks past a big window with a view of the beach. Another screen? Armando hands him a coffee.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You shouldn't have.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

He gives Armando a noogie.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's a noogie.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Grace walks to the front door.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(calling)
I'm coming!

**EXT. HABITATION - ERID**

Grace opens his front door to reveal HIS HABITAT, and now we know for sure we're on ERID:

It's a breathtaking space: a large park with a beach and rocks and scattered artificial trees. A DOME protects the area from the Erid atmosphere. Artificial lights high above simulate sunlight.

ROCKY waits on the front step, impatient.

ROCKY
Why you take so long?

[NOTE: We SUBTITLE Rocky's dialogue -- Grace himself no longer needs translation.]

GRACE
Why you always gotta be so early?

Rocky's wearing a sleeker version of his CONTAINMENT SUIT. It allows him to move freely in Grace's environment.

ROCKY
I knock and I knock.

GRACE
I know, and I ignored you.

Grace steps outside.

ROCKY
Grace, the door. Close the door.

GRACE
Why, I thought this was a safe neighborhood?

ROCKY
I make door, you close door.

GRACE
(shutting the door)
Okay, it's just that Armando likes the fresh air.

They stroll through a beautiful rocky beach.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Can we talk about the water temperature a little bit?

ROCKY
Yes.

GRACE
It’s amazing, just that you’ve done it at all. But it’s very cold. And before it was boiling. Is there an in between?

ROCKY
I ask Adrian and team to work on this.

GRACE
Please tell the biodome illumination team that it’s perfect now.

ROCKY
You no want it sunnier than this?

GRACE
Oh no, you know I’m a sucker for the fog.

Grace stops to enjoy the view of the “sun” reflecting over the water, the walls of the dome faint in the sky in the distance. It’s gorgeous.

He sits down to watch at the waves for a moment. Rocky sits beside him.

ROCKY
Grace, Eridian scientists ready to prepare Hail Mary for journey home.

Grace absorbs what that means. Nods.

GRACE
Can I think about it?

ROCKY
Yes, think about it long time.

CLOSE: Grace walks along the beach, about as satisfied as we’ve ever seen him. A man at peace, but not at rest...

He’s headed towards a huge geodesic dome. He looks out onto the waves one last time. The enclosure no longer perceptible to us, just waves and space.

**INT. CLASSROOM**

We're WITH GRACE as he enters the dome and steps to a standing desk-like podium. He seems happy. In his element.

AROUND HIM: we hear a restless cacophony of overlapping whale-like sounds...

GRACE
Good morning class. Everyone take their seats...

And we reveal THE CLASSROOM:

THIRTY ADORABLE ERIDIAN CHILDREN all scramble about in little learning cubicles partitioned off from Grace's atmosphere.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Let's wake up.

They scamper to their desks and quiet down. Ready for the lesson to begin. Grace uses the desk as an organ-like instrument that allows him to communicate with the group.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Who can tell me the speed of light?

Twelve kids raise their claws.

CLOSE ON GRACE as he studies his students.

He smiles.

CUT TO BLACK.

**The End**