

LOVE FROM MARS

Written by

JULIE PIFHER

WGA #1920900

Jpifher@msn.com

(414) 807-9368

EXT. OUTER SPACE

Soar past MARS, through a star cluster, and focus on EARTH.

Zoom past clouds and focus on North America. Settle onto an overview of the Man on Mars headquarters.

ZOOM INTO:

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- DAY

JOURNALISTS swarm the lawn of the impressive industrial building. SECURITY GUARDS line the perimeter, checking credentials as only the elite enter.

REPORTER

(to camera)

You're witnessing history in the making.  
In just a few short minutes, the Martian  
Six will finally be revealed.

A run-down Sedan flies into the jammed parking lot past a LOT FULL sign.

INT. SEDAN -- CONTINUOUS

EMMA, (25) with long brown hair wearing smart clothes, searches for a parking space.

EMMA

Come on...

She speeds past a fire hydrant red zone and slams on her brakes. Her worn-out workbag falls off the passenger seat. A blue credential badge spills out and onto the floor.

She cranks the car in reverse and dips into the illegal space.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - PARKING LOT

Emma slams her car door shut and flings her bag over her shoulder. She races toward the building, ignoring the PARKING ATTENDANT calling after her.

PARKING ATTENDANT

Excuse me, you can't park there!

Emma runs toward the building's entrance, pushing past clusters of PEOPLE loitering around the event.

SECURITY GUARD

Badge?

Emma searches her bag.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

No badge, no entry.

EMMA

I have one, I swear.

She desperately scours the large bag.

SECURITY GUARD

Step aside ma'am. Gotta keep moving. They start in five minutes.

EMMA

Please --

SECURITY GUARD

Step aside!

The next reporter in line pushes past Emma. She gets swallowed by the swell of people.

Security pushes back an increasing number of SPECTATORS there to see the show. Some wear alien costumes. Others hold signs. A lucky few give commentary to news cameras.

Emma makes her way out of the chaotic fray and surveys the scene.

She moves toward the rear of the large steel building.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - BACK ENTRANCE

A tall metal fence blocks an unguarded entrance. Emma locks her heeled feet into a chain link and climbs up.

She struggles to pull herself up and over the fence. She loses balance as she climbs down, but catches herself. Her feet touch down on the other side.

RYAN (O.S.)

Can I help you?

Emma whips around. RYAN, mid-twenties, is shrouded in shadows. He wears a suit instead of a security outfit.

EMMA

Can you let me in?

He examines her.

RYAN

Sure.

EMMA

Thanks!

RYAN

What's the magic password?

EMMA

Look, I'm from the Sentinel. I have a badge, but I lost it. I'm usually super organized, but my boss gave me this assignment at the last minute cause the senior reporter called in sick. It's a huge opportunity for me. My first gig as a field reporter. Will you please just let me in?

RYAN

I guess anyone willing to scale a fence in those shoes deserves to be let inside.

Ryan steps out of the shadows, but Emma barely catches a glimpse of his face. He scans his ID card, and the door unlocks. Emma follows him inside.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- CORRIDOR

Sterile steel walls, dark flickering florescent lights.

EMMA

You work here?

RYAN

Didn't you watch the selection show?

EMMA

I hate reality TV. It amazes me that a legitimate mission to Mars would pick their people by filming them sabotaging each other.

RYAN

There were some skill tests involved.

EMMA

Ratings and telephone voting charges  
picked the Martian Six. Skill and  
intelligence had nothing to do with it.

RYAN

(points)

The conference room is that way.

EMMA

Thank you so much!

Ryan studies Emma as she races away without looking back.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE -- CONTINUOUS

Standing room only. Emma elbows her way in.

A red curtain lines the wall behind a long table with  
seven chairs. A microphone rests in front of each empty  
chair.

STEVEN GROSS (40) emerges from behind the curtain.  
Slicked-back hair, a designer suit, and shiny Rolex.

Steven poses as photographers attack him with their  
flashes. He sits at the middle seat of the long table.

STEVEN

(addresses crowd)

Thank you for coming. I'm Steven Gross,  
the Communication Director for the Man on  
Mars project. Thousands of people applied  
to be one of the first six people to  
colonize Mars. These everyday citizens  
have been whittled down with the help of  
people around the world who watched their  
every move and voted every step of the  
journey. Without further ado, I present  
to you, the Martian Six!

Cheesy music plays.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Jack Carter!

JACK (22) muscular with a mohawk runs through the  
curtains. He howls like a wolf and jumps into a  
handstand.

Cameras flash, reporters call his name, and Jack howls  
again as he paces behind the table banging on his chest.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Great. Jack, please take a seat.

Emma rolls her eyes.

STEVEN (CONT'D)  
Up next, Jessica Jewel!

JESSICA (32) a skinny blonde with big boobs popping out of her tight top, jumps up and down suggestively.

MALE REPORTER  
(to Emma)  
That's one way to make sure the colony procreates, but how will she fit those jugs into a space suit?

EMMA  
Pig!

STEVEN  
Introducing Ryan Clarke!

Ryan, the man who let Emma inside, emerges. Emma gasps with realization.

Ryan's handsome features are highlighted for the first time under the flurry of flashing cameras. He takes a seat at the table.

Ryan sees Emma. They lock eyes despite the crowded room.

Emma examines Ryan, really seeing him for the first time. Everything else seems to fade away as if they're the only two in the room.

As the next man is called, Emma snaps out of her tunnel vision.

GREGG, an overly tan man, (40) leaps into a dramatic surfer's stance before taking his seat.

GREGG  
(Australian accent)  
That's Gregg with two G's.

STEVEN  
Dezzy from Amsterdam.

DEZZY, an overweight woman (35), emerges. She cheeses as reporters take her picture.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Last, but definitely not least, Amy from Brooklyn!

AMY, an African-American woman, (30) runs out and gives the rest of the Martian Six exaggerated high-fives.

AMY

(New York accent)

Give me some sugar! Woo hoo!

Amy takes her seat.

STEVEN

Okay, we'll take a few questions now.

Reporters scream out in unison. Steven picks someone from the front row.

REPORTER

How does it feel to be one of the chosen six?

JACK

I knew I would make it, and here I am. Hi mom!

The room laughs except Emma.

RYAN

(quietly)

Well--

STEVEN

Speak up, Ryan.

Ryan moves closer to his microphone.

RYAN

I'm glad the whole process is over. Now the work begins. The next year of training will be intense, but that's all that matters.

Ryan locks eyes with Emma.

EMMA

(calls out)

Ryan! Emma from the local Sentinel. Can you tell us what that training will entail?

STEVEN

That will be revealed in the next installment of media.

EMMA

Does that mean the TV show will continue?

STEVEN

The television series will not continue now that we have our Martian Six. There will be a feature documentary coming soon. That's all I can say for now.

Steven calls on another reporter from the front row.

Emma and Ryan smile at each other.

REPORTER #2

Has the weight of the situation set in? The fact that it's a one-way ticket?

JESSICA

I know, right? I'm totally going to miss Starbucks and spa days.

Laughter from the room.

STEVEN

That's all the questions we have time for. Any outlets with pre-approved exclusive interviews, please join me at the front.

The room erupts with side conversations as the Martian Six stand. Some reporters move to the front to chat with Steven, and others dash toward Amy, Jack, and Jessica.

Emma runs toward the front of the room as Ryan moves toward the curtain. Just as he's about to duck away--

EMMA

Ryan!

Ryan turns to face Emma. She tenses.

RYAN

Hello.

EMMA

Hi! I'm--

RYAN

Emma, from the Sentinel.

EMMA

Right. Hey, I'd love to talk to you more. Get to know you better. Maybe we could get together sometime?

RYAN

Are you asking me out on a date?

EMMA

Oh no, I'm asking you for an exclusive interview. Sorry, this is my first big assignment.

RYAN

You said that. Sure, we can go out on an interview.

EMMA

Great! Here's my card.

She hands it to him.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It hasn't been updated with my new title yet, but never mind. It has my email, office line, and cell.

RYAN

I'll call you.

EMMA

Great! Thanks.

Ryan ducks behind the curtain.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Tiny studio apartment with the kitchen and dining area in the same room as her bed. Small bathroom off to the side.

Emma googles Ryan Clarke. The main facts: he's single with no siblings and his parent's died in a car crash a few years ago.

She clicks the video tab which curates clips of Ryan from the reality TV elimination show. She opens a video called *Man on Mars highlights*.

MAN ON MARS ELIMINATION SERIES MONTAGE

Typical reality TV fights highlighting Jack and a blue haired MAXAMILLION as the main instigators in the house.

The CONTESTANTS compete in Mars themed obstacle courses in between the drama and emotional eliminations.

BACK TO:

Emma clicks on another video titled *Ryan's Reasons Why*.

RYAN

When my parents died, I did a lot of soul searching. I wondered why they died. What's the meaning of it all?

EMMA

(to herself)

I can relate to that...

RYAN

I don't know the answers to these questions yet, but I do know that life is so fragile. We never know when our time will come. I might die on Mars, but if ending my life gives the future of mankind more time to figure out why it exists and what happens next, it'd be worth it. I'd rather give my life to a cause than to a car accident. I have no family here on Earth, and of course there would be things and people I'd miss. But I'd rather sacrifice my future on this planet than see someone with a family go up there.

The camera pans to another applicant, MARK, with a lower-thirds title that says: *Has Two Kids*.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I hope I'm fit enough to endure the harsh tests that we will no doubt face. I hope I'm smart enough to problem solve the inevitable things that will go wrong. I hope I'm free of attachments so I can make any sacrifice necessary to keep the colony alive, and hopefully thrive. I'm ready to put my life on the line, but if there are people more qualified than me, than I fully support them in their journey. I just want what's best for the mission, and for the future of mankind.

Emma wipes away a tear and clicks on another clip.

INT. SENTINEL OFFICE - EMMA'S CUBICLE -- MORNING

Emma sits at her desk eating a jelly donut, devouring yet another article about Ryan Clarke.

Her boss JOHN (52) walks by without stopping.

JOHN

Where's my exclusive, Em?

Startled, she minimizes her internet browser. Jelly from her donut spills onto her blouse.

EMMA

It's coming, I promise.

She cleans up her jelly donut mess.

JOHN

It better be!

Emma looks over her cubicle wall to see John walking into his office.

She checks her phone. No messages.

Emma reopens her browser, showcasing a picture of Ryan. She stares at him longingly.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Emma and her older sister, ASHLEY, (30) eat at her dinner table.

ASHLEY

How's your first feature coming?

Emma slams her head down onto her kitchen table.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

That good, huh?

EMMA

I thought I scored an exclusive with the most thoughtful, interesting man. But it's been five days and he still hasn't called.

ASHLEY

Are you talking about those trashy people they're sending to Mars?

EMMA

They're not all trashy like I thought.  
That was judgmental of me to think.

ASHLEY

Whoa. You're admitting you were wrong? He  
must be really hot.

EMMA

It's not like that. He seems humble,  
intelligent, and noble.

ASHLEY

Sounds like you've got a crush on this  
guy, whoever he is.

EMMA

I do not! I just really want him to call  
me... For the article! So I can get an  
edge on the competition.

ASHLEY

Right.

Emma stuffs salad into her mouth as her cell phone rings.  
She doesn't recognize the number, but answers anyway.

EMMA

(food in mouth)  
Hello?

RYAN (O.S.)

Hello? Is this Emma?

Emma chokes on her salad. She motions for Ashley to hand  
her some water.

RYAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hello? Are you there?

Emma throws back the drink and clears her throat.

EMMA

Yeah, it's me. Who's this?

Emma winks at Ashley.

RYAN (O.S.)

It's Ryan Clarke. From the Martian Six.

EMMA

Ryan! Great to hear from you. How is  
everything?

Emma stands and puts as much distance between herself and Ashley as possible in the tiny apartment.

RYAN (O.S.)

Everything's good. Sorry it took me so long to call. We've been sequestered. They wouldn't let us call anyone until we had been completely debriefed.

EMMA

Debriefed? That sounds so official.

Emma cringes at herself, but Ryan laughs so she relaxes.

RYAN (O.S.)

Yeah, things are getting pretty intense around here.

EMMA

Can we meet up?

RYAN (O.S.)

That'd be great.

EMMA

Name a time and place.

Emma does a little dance as she writes down the details.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Awesome, see you then.

She hangs up the phone and walks back to the table.

ASHLEY

So when are you meeting with this guy, who you clearly don't have a crush on?

Emma tries to hide her smile, but fails miserably.

EMMA

It's not a date. It's for the article.

ASHLEY

I hope so because you've got a terrible track record for picking guys.

EMMA

I'm not stupid enough to date a man who's leaving the planet. Give me some credit.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- MORNING

MONTAGE: Emma tries on nearly everything in her closet. The blue dress is too low cut. The pinstripe blazer is too uptight. The black dress pants hug her curves perfectly so she pairs them with a simple black blouse with a ruby red necklace and shoes to match.

She walks around in the red heels which are clearly uncomfortable. Still, she goes with them.

Emma looks at herself in the mirror.

EMMA

This is just a simple interview. No big deal...

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY -- DAY

Ryan greets Emma.

RYAN

(whispers)

It's actually a really big deal that I was able to get you in here.

EMMA

(whispers)

Oh yeah?

Ryan lays his hand on the small of Emma's back and leads her out a side door.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - ATRIUM - GRASSY KNOLL

Ryan brings Emma to a private strip of land that's surrounded by guard rails.

RYAN

I'm not supposed to be talking to reporters so I put you on my friends and family list. I was worried someone would look you up, but I think they let it slide since you're the only one on my list.

EMMA

I find it hard to believe that you don't have any friends.

RYAN

I have friends from college, but they live on the other side of the country. So you'll have to do.

EMMA

Will I get you in trouble if I write an article about you?

RYAN

I think it'll be okay.

They take a beat to breathe each other in.

EMMA

So, what's it like being in the Martian Six? Is it everything you dreamed it would be and more?

RYAN

We went straight into astronaut boot camp, learning how to use and fix equipment mostly. It's crazy exciting. I'm literally learning rocket science!

Emma smiles, mirroring Ryan's excitement.

EMMA

That is pretty cool.

RYAN

We have a year to train, and it's gonna fly by. But enough about me. What's your story?

EMMA

(blushing)

We're not here to talk about me.

RYAN

That's no fun. How about for every question you answer, I'll answer one?

EMMA

Fine... I'm twenty-five, I studied journalism obviously. I'm left handed. What do you --

RYAN

Hey! I haven't asked a question yet. You just offered up that information.

EMMA

What do you want to know?

RYAN  
What's your family like?

EMMA  
My sister, Ashley, is my best friend. So tell me --

RYAN  
Wait, what about your parents?

EMMA  
I answered your question, now it's your turn.

RYAN  
Not so fast --

EMMA  
Ryan, please!

Her tone startles him. She softens.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
... My father left my mother when I was really young. I barely remember him.

RYAN  
I'm sorry.

Ryan puts his hand on hers. She relaxes.

EMMA  
My mom died last year. Breast cancer.

RYAN  
I'm sorry to hear that, too.

EMMA  
Let's play a new game.

RYAN  
Okay.

EMMA  
Twenty questions, rapid fire style. Answer with the first thing that comes to mind. Ready?

RYAN  
Ready.

EMMA  
Are you an introvert or extrovert?

RYAN

Introvert.

EMMA

Glass half-empty or half-full?

RYAN

Half-full.

EMMA

What do you do when you're alone?

RYAN

Meditate.

EMMA

Come on, really?

RYAN

Yeah, I'm big into meditation. I do it multiple times a day.

EMMA

So you'll be the first hippie on Mars. Are you going to pack a bunch of sage and incense with you when you go?

RYAN

Hey! Don't knock it 'til you try it.

EMMA

Okay... Growing up, did you always want to be an astronaut?

RYAN

No, I wanted to be a doctor. Then I wanted to be a painter. I ended up studying public policy and biology. Go figure.

EMMA

How do you want to be remembered when you're gone?

RYAN

Why would I want to be remembered at all?

EMMA

I find that hard to believe coming from someone who'll wind up in the history books.

RYAN  
I'd never lie to you, Emma. Things like that don't matter to me.

EMMA  
What motivated you to sign up for a one-way ticket to Mars?

Ryan opens his mouth to answer, but stops.

RYAN  
No, it'll sound weird.

EMMA  
You can't do that to me! Come on, now you have to tell me!

Emma hits his arm playfully.

RYAN  
Next question, please.

EMMA  
Okay, we'll get back to that... What's your biggest regret in life?

Ryan leans in.

RYAN  
I wish I had more time on Earth to experience true, reciprocal love.

Emma is drawn into Ryan's orbit. They linger, almost close enough to kiss.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
Do you believe in fate, Emma?

EMMA  
I believe in facts.

RYAN  
Hmmm.  
(beat)  
Come on, I want to show you something.

Ryan takes her hand and leads Emma back into the building.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - BASEMENT

They step out into a large open warehouse space, home to an oversized portion of a rocket ship.

RYAN  
This is the flight simulator.

Emma cranes her neck to see the large-scale model.

Ryan and Emma walk to a metal ladder leading to the cockpit.

They climb into the simulator and sit next to each other, surrounded by countless switches, blinking lights, and buttons.

EMMA  
Wow!

RYAN  
(points)  
Exterior lights.  
(points)  
Pressure stabilizer.  
(pulls lever)  
Landing gear. Got it?

Emma nods. Ryan presses a few buttons.

COMPUTER VOICE  
Commencing landing simulator.

Emma watches his every move. The cockpit shakes.

RYAN  
We're coming in hot. Pull that lever over there.

EMMA  
Which one?

Ryan reaches over and pulls a lever. The cockpit thrusts forward causing Ryan's arm to accidentally brush against Emma. She tries to hide a smile.

COMPUTER VOICE  
Landing successful.

RYAN  
I still need practice, but not bad for my second try. Okay, let's see how much you remember. What does this button do?

EMMA  
Exterior lights.

RYAN  
Very good. And this one?

EMMA  
Pressure stabilizer?

RYAN  
Well done!

She points to a big red button.

EMMA  
What does this do?

RYAN  
Don't touch that!

Emma pulls her hand away quickly. Ryan laughs.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
Just kidding. You can touch it.

EMMA  
No way, I'm not touching anything now.

She hits him in his chest and laughs.

RYAN  
Then the tour continues!

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - RYAN'S BUNKER

They step into a small room with metal walls. In one corner, a shower is sanctioned off with glass walls. There's a bed, a desk covered in books, and a wingback chair.

RYAN  
This is my room. Pretty depressing, huh?

EMMA  
No, it's... charming.

Emma sits on the bed. She checks the backs of her feet to find blisters. She jams her feet back into the red heels.

RYAN  
I never understood why women wear uncomfortable shoes. You look great in them though.

Emma blushes. Ryan pulls out a first aid kit from a desk drawer.

He sits down next to her and cradles her feet in his hands.

She stares at Ryan with excitement as he gently lays a Band-Aid over her cracked skin and smooths it out with his fingers. They hold their gaze longer than most.

RYAN (CONT'D)

So anyway... We've got a pretty strict schedule. We wake up at 5 AM everyday and work out before our first technical training class.

Emma looks over at the glass shower and IMAGINES RYAN INSIDE TAKING A SHOWER. HOT WATER GLISTENS DOWN HIS NAKED BODY AS STEAM RISES AROUND HIM.

She snaps out of her daze.

EMMA

Will you be able to receive any phone calls while you're on Mars?

RYAN

No. We'll be able to communicate with the ground, but they don't want us getting home sick, so we've agreed to cut all ties completely.

EMMA

Is one year of training really enough?

RYAN

I sure hope so.

EMMA

Any chance they'll push the launch date?

RYAN

Highly doubtful.

EMMA

What will you miss most about Earth?

RYAN

The opportunity to talk to a beautiful woman like you.

EMMA

You have three female teammates.

RYAN

Not my type.

Emma tries to hide her smirk.

RYAN (CONT'D)

What about you? What would you miss most about Earth?

EMMA

Nature. And my sister.

RYAN

You don't have a boyfriend you'd miss?

Emma shakes her head as they both slowly inch their bodies closer. Their foreheads rest against one another as they look into each other's eyes. Their lips almost meet.

PA SYSTEM (O.S.)

Martian Six, please report to the flight simulator.

Emma pulls away. They both finally exhale.

RYAN

I guess visiting hours are over. I better walk you out. We've got another training session starting soon.

Emma nods reluctantly.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY

Ryan ushers Emma toward the large glass front doors. She goes in for a handshake.

EMMA

Thank you so much for today.

RYAN

Come here. I'm a hugger.

Ryan opens his arms and hugs Emma. He smells her hair as she sinks into his embrace. She finally pulls away.

EMMA

Good luck with everything.

She turns and walks away. He walks back toward the elevator.

They both turn back to see each other again. They smile and continue to go their separate ways.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- CONTINUOUS

Steven Gross passes Emma as she exits the building. He's on his cell phone and doesn't notice her.

STEVEN

(whispers)

Phase Two sounds volatile. Let's see if they even survive the first cycle before implementing such a controversial component.

Emma spins around to hear more, but the glass door shuts behind him. She marches back into the building as Mr. Gross glides past security.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

(into cell phone)

They'll do whatever I tell them.

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING - JOHN'S OFFICE -- MORNING

Emma paces in front of her boss, John, who sits at a desk covered in papers.

EMMA

We need to shut down their whole operation, John.

JOHN

What have you got?

EMMA

It's a suicide mission. A one-way ticket! Is one year of training really enough?

JOHN

Do you have some new information or are you just spouting steam?

EMMA

I overheard Steven Gross talking about a controversial Phase Two.

JOHN

Tell me more.

EMMA

I don't know much about it, but it sounds like they won't even survive Phase One. I could lead an investigation --

JOHN

Sounds like hearsay, Em. Without more to go on, I can't give you a green light.

Emma paces, searching for something more to say.

EMMA

I'd still like to write a feature. I've been inside the building so I can describe their living conditions and training simulations.

JOHN

That'll work. I know you want to break a major story, but don't worry. You'll get there.

A knock on the door grabs their attention. JASON, a tall, distinguished blonde gentleman (35) stands in the door carrying a briefcase.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ah, Jason. Come on in.

Jason enters.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Emma, this is Jason Starr.

EMMA

Jason Starr of the Boston Globe? THE Jason Starr that broke the government sex trafficking scandal?

JASON

The one and only.

EMMA

It's an honor to meet you, sir.

JASON

The pleasure is all mine.

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

JOURNALISTS file in and sit around a large table. Emma walks in and sees Jason Starr. She pushes past a co-worker to score a seat across from him.

John sits at the head of the table.

JOHN

Exciting news, everyone. Please welcome Jason Starr, our new lead reporter.

The team claps, and Jason soaks up the attention.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Alright, let's get right into it. Jason, feel free to jump in at any time. Who's working on the refugee crisis?

A CO-WORKER raises her hand.

CO-WORKER

Draft coming to you in the next few hours.

JOHN

Good. Brett, I'd like you to cover the president's trip. Suzie take the pope, and Dave's got the UN Summit. What are you working on, Em?

EMMA

My article about Ryan Clarke scored millions of eyeballs so I'd like to write another feature about the Man on Mars project.

JOHN

What's the angle?

EMMA

I'd like to explore the physical and psychological effects the Martian Six will have to endure during their journey through space.

CO-WORKER

Won't that be too science-y?

JASON

The nation does have Mars fever at the moment.

JOHN

True, let's capitalize on that. Give me a thousand words on the long-term effects on humans in space.

JASON

It is a fascinating idea. I'd like to work with Emma on this.

JOHN  
Sounds good. Tyler, what are you working on?

Emma and Jason exchange smiles.

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING - EMMA'S CUBICLE -- EVENING

Emma scrolls through internet pages. Jason enters.

JASON  
How's the research coming?

EMMA  
There's a lot of speculation out there, but not a lot of facts. This is uncharted territory, and the program has been so tight lipped about their plans. I've got calls out to the top astronauts who have spent the most time in space. They seem like the most reliable sources.

JASON  
I scored a phone interview with an engineer at Man on Mars.

EMMA  
How'd you do that? They all signed non-disclosure agreements.

JASON  
You're cute.

Jason moves in closer in the tight space.

JASON (CONT'D)  
With their chosen flight path, it'll take six months to reach Mars. To save on supplies, the astronauts will go into hibernation. In order to monitor themselves, they'll take fourteen day shifts watching over each other. Every two weeks, another teammate will be woken up. Then it's their turn to spend two weeks in isolation watching over the others.

EMMA  
Sounds incredibly lonely.

JASON  
I bet you're a social butterfly.

EMMA

Not exactly, but I would go insane without outside stimulation.

JASON

Without stimulation, people literally do go insane. Long bouts of isolation lead some people to experience mental breaks and extreme psychosis.

EMMA

Hmmmmmm...

JASON

Can you type up my notes from the call? With these, the article should write itself.

Emma grabs Jason's hand-scrawled notes.

EMMA

Should I still talk to the astronauts if they call me back?

JASON

Sure, it'd be nice to include a few quotes.

Jason checks his Rolex.

JASON (CONT'D)

I'm done for the day. Want to grab a drink with me? We can get to know each other better. You can type those notes up later.

EMMA

Sure.

JASON

Cool, I'll be right back.

Jason walks to his corner office. Emma checks her reflection in the computer monitor and combs her hands through her hair.

Her cell phone rings. She immediately recognizes the number and answers.

EMMA

Hi Ryan, how are you?

RYAN (O.S.)

Good. I'm good.

EMMA

Thanks again for meeting with me. My article went viral.

RYAN (O.S.)

I'm so glad.

EMMA

In fact, I'm writing another one about the project. Maybe we could get together again soon? I'd love to ask you more questions about life in outer space.

RYAN (O.S.)

I'd love to, but the project wasn't too happy about your article since you didn't pay for access. They've taken you off my visitor's list.

EMMA

Oh, okay. I'm sorry if I got you in trouble.

RYAN (O.S.)

Listen, I'm going to be sent into an isolation tank for two weeks so I was wondering if you'd like to get together again. I'd really like to have some meaningful conversation before I go. But it can't be for any article.

EMMA

I get it. I'd love to.

RYAN (O.S.)

Awesome. I've got something special planned. Meet me in the headquarters parking lot in thirty minutes. Don't go inside. This will be our little secret.

EMMA

Okay! See you soon.

Jason turns the corner as Emma hangs up.

JASON

Ready?

EMMA

Oh crap. I'm sorry. I need to take a rain check. Something unexpected came up.

Emma stands and grabs her work bag. Jason puts his arm around her as they walk to the elevator.

JASON

Really? You're standing me up? Is it for the story?

EMMA

No.

JASON

Then I won't take no for an answer.

The elevator opens and they step inside. Emma bites her lip as the door closes.

EXT. SENTINEL BUILDING - PARKING LOT -- MOMENTS LATER

Emma and Jason walk toward their cars.

JASON

Let's take my car.

The headlights on a brand new Mercedes flash.

EMMA

I gotta run, but we'll do it soon. I promise.

Emma beelines for her run-down Sedan. Jason throws his arms up in disbelief.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - PARKING LOT -- NIGHT

Ryan stands beneath a street lamp in the empty parking lot.

Emma exits her car and walks over to him. He wraps her in a big hug.

They walk to a black car parked around the corner.

EMMA

Where are we going?

Ryan opens the car door, and she steps inside.

INT. CAR -- CONTINUOUS

Ryan slides in next to her.

RYAN

Thanks for coming, Emma.

EMMA

My pleasure. I can't imagine being in an isolation tank for two weeks.

RYAN

Me neither.

Ryan grabs her hand, but she pulls away.

EMMA

I'm not going to be your last fling on Earth, okay?

RYAN

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to--

EMMA

No, I know...

They sit in silence as the car drives on.

EXT. AIRPORT HANGAR -- NIGHT

The car parks. Ryan steps out and runs around to the other side. He opens Emma's door.

EMMA

Ryan, what is this?

An airplane is parked behind them marked *Zero G's*.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Zero G's meaning, like, zero gravity?

Ryan smiles.

INT. ZERO G'S AIRPLANE -- CONTINUOUS

Emma and Ryan enter. Most of the seats in the commercial plane have been replaced with white padding. Four rows of seats remain at the back. They sit in the front row and buckle their seat belts.

RYAN

You ready to experience what it's like to be weightless in space?

EMMA

I... I don't know.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT greets them.

## FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Welcome to Zero G's. After take off, we'll be flying to 12,000 feet. In order to simulate zero gravity, the plane will take several dips, known as parabolas. With each dip, you'll become weightless. It takes some getting used to, but please no kicking. When the plane heads back up for another dip, the gravity will be twice as heavy as normal. Any questions?

## EMMA

I have, like, a million questions.

Ryan and Emma laugh.

## FLIGHT ATTENDANT

You're in good hands with Ryan. It's time to prepare for take off.

The flight attendant moves to the back of the plane. Emma grips her arm rest.

## RYAN

Don't be nervous. I've already done it twice this week, and it's amazing. There's nothing else like it. Trust me.

## EXT. AIRPORT -- NIGHT

The plane heads down the runway and takes off.

## INT. AIRPLANE -- CONTINUOUS

As they soar through the clouds, Ryan makes a funny face as he plugs his nose and breathes out, popping his ears. Emma laughs.

## PILOT (O.S.)

(over loudspeaker)

Prepare for the first parabola.

The nose of the plane dips up dramatically, pinning Ryan and Emma to their seats. Their face skin pulls back in the double gravity.

The plane reaches the top of its arch and plunges back downward, relieving the pressure.

Ryan unbuckles his seat belt and floats out of his chair.

EMMA

What are you doing?

Ryan does a somersault through the zero gravity air. He spins around and extends his hand out to Emma.

She nervously unhooks her seat belt and reaches out for his hand. She glides up into the air and slams into Ryan. Their bodies press together suspended in air.

RYAN

May I have this dance?

He twirls her through the atmosphere and holds onto her waist. They lock eyes as he rocks her side to side.

PILOT (O.S.)

On the pull.

The plane dives back up. Ryan and Emma fly to the ground through the sheer force of returned gravity. She lands on her back, and he lands on top of her.

Chest to chest, heart to heart, they gaze into each other's eyes until the plane dips back down.

They drift back up. Emma pirouettes through the air. Ryan claps for her and flies like Superman. They laugh and play like kids in the deep end of the swimming pool.

Emma grabs his hand, and they spin each other around. He grabs her hips, and they sway through the air together.

Emma presses herself into his muscular body.

He caresses her face, and they kiss passionately. Their kiss is so hot, they don't notice the gravity returning.

They fall back down to the ground locked in their fiery embrace.

The kiss continues as zero gravity returns and fades once more.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ahem.

The flight attendant taps Ryan on the shoulder. He finally breaks away from their steamy make out session.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

We've begun our final descent.

Ryan takes Emma's hand, and they head back to their seats, brimming with sexual energy.

Flustered, Emma fumbles with her seat belt. Ryan reaches over and secures the belt close to her waist.

Unable to resist, Emma kisses Ryan again.

EXT. AIRPORT HANGAR -- NIGHT

Ryan walks Emma back to the car.

EMMA

Wow, that was amazing!

RYAN

I'm glad you liked it.

EMMA

Want to go get a drink or something?

RYAN

I'd love to, but unfortunately, I can't.  
I'm not even supposed to be here.

Emma's smile fades.

EMMA

Right, of course.

INT. CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

They drive in silence. The car parks outside the Man on Mars headquarters.

EMMA

Thanks for tonight. I've never experienced anything like that.

RYAN

No, thank you. You have no idea how much this means to me. I'll replay every second of tonight while I'm in the isolation tank.

Emma looks outside the window, avoiding eye contact.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Hey, this meant more than you know.

EMMA

Can I see you again? You'll need extra TLC once you get out of isolation.

RYAN

The good news is, yes. I'd love to see you again. The bad news is... We'll have to wait four weeks. I'll be in isolation for two weeks and hibernation for another two.

EMMA

Aren't you scared?

RYAN

Scared? What do you mean?

EMMA

Scared of isolation, hibernation, leaving the planet. Life on Mars will be dangerous.

RYAN

We'll have all the resources we need. We'll be ready.

EMMA

What's Phase Two?

RYAN

Huh?

EMMA

I overheard Steven Gross talking about Phase Two. I got the impression the whole program was on shaky ground.

RYAN

Don't be ridiculous. They've got it all covered.

EMMA

Don't be so naive. You need to find out what's going on behind the scenes. Question everything every step of the way.

RYAN

I better go so I can be fresh for tomorrow. I'm going to talk to management about getting you back on my visitor's list so I can see you when I get out. I'll miss you.

EMMA  
Be careful, Ryan.

INT. MAN ON MARS HQ -- ISOLATION ROOM -- MORNING

Ryan and Gregg walk into the cramped room which contains a chair, a treadmill, a built-in bunk bed, and cabinets filled with freeze-dried food. A body harness hangs from one wall next to IVs and a breathing machine. A two-way mirror completes the space.

RYAN  
Who goes under first?

The two men bust into a game of rock-paper-scissors. Gregg's rock loses to Ryan's paper.

Ryan helps Gregg into the harness.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
You ready?

GREGG  
No, but here we go.

RYAN  
Just like we practiced.

Gregg puts a breathing mask over his face and nods.

Ryan inserts a needle into Gregg's vein and releases the IV valve.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
See you on the other side.

Gregg's eyes fall. His breathing slows, his heart beat nearly stops. He's still alive, but barely.

INT. ISOLATION ROOM -- MONTAGE

Ryan runs on the treadmill, reads manuals, eats some rations, and maintains his hygiene with baby wipes.

He sleeps, checks on Gregg, and paces restlessly.

He sits cross-legged to meditate. With eyes closed, he slows his breathing.

Gregg's body monitors beep.

Ryan's breathing increases. Sweat drips down his face as his thoughts overtake him.

Emma's voice echoes in his ear.

EMMA (O.S.)  
(whispers)  
Ryan...

Her fingertips graze his neck.

Her lips linger near his ear.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
Ryan...

The hairs on his neck stand up from the warmth of her breath.

His eyes fly open. All traces of Emma disappear.

He exhales deeply and closes his eyes again, refocusing his meditation efforts. His breathing is rhythmic. His body relaxes and his eyes open slightly, revealing the whites of his upward gaze.

RYAN  
(to himself)  
Why has Emma come into my life? Am I supposed to love her? Am I supposed to be with her?

His eyes flutter slightly as he falls deeper into meditation. His breathing ticks on melodically.

RYAN'S HIGHER SELF (V.O.)  
(whispers)  
Yes...

RYAN  
Am I still supposed to go to Mars?

RYAN'S HIGHER SELF (V.O.)  
Yes...

RYAN  
How can I do both? How can I be with Emma and be on Mars?

RYAN'S HIGHER SELF (V.O.)  
Earth and Mars are only far in the realm of illusion...

A BEEPING echoes. Ryan ignores it, but the beeping continues.

Ryan opens his eyes and turns toward the noise. It's coming from Gregg's monitors. He gets up and moves over to his teammate. He pulls out a fresh IV bag and changes it out like a pro. The beeping stops.

Ryan paces around the empty room.

RYAN

Earth and Mars are only far in the realm of illusion...

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING - JASON'S OFFICE -- EVENING

Emma sits across from Jason in his corner office.

JASON

This is a solid draft, Emma.

EMMA

Thanks! There's so much more to explore on this. Next, I'd love to research terraforming. But I think the real story has to do with the inner workings of the program. My instinct tells me there's secrets to expose there.

JASON

Wow, you're really into this stuff. John asked me to organize a team to focus on election coverage coming up. Would you like to join me on that?

EMMA

I'd be honored.

JASON

Great. I'm looking forward to working with you more. Now, how about we get that drink?

EMMA

Yeah, sorry again about the other night.

JASON

I've never been stood up in my life.

EMMA

I bet.

INT. UPSCALE RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

A WAITER pops open a bottle of expensive champagne. Jason sits close to Emma in a dimly lit booth.

EMMA

So how did you crack the trafficking scandal?

JASON

Simple. I don't take no for an answer. Cheers.

He clinks his glass against hers.

EMMA

Cheers. It must feel amazing to be so established at such a young age. How'd you get so far, so fast?

JASON

It probably didn't hurt that my father owns the Globe.

EMMA

Is that right?

Emma tosses back her flute of bubbly. He refills her glass.

JASON

I changed my last name so people wouldn't find out. You'll keep my secret though, won't you?

EMMA

Of course.

JASON

That's why I moved over to the Sentinel. It's a much smaller paper, but it's good to step out of my father's shadow. He's a real son of a bitch. How about you? What's your father like?

EMMA

He died when I was young.

She chases down her lie with another big gulp of champagne. He refills her glass despite it not being empty.

JASON

Do you want a family of your own?

EMMA

Oh, I don't --

JASON

I'm sure you'd make a wonderful mother.

Emma tips back her glass too far, dribbling champagne down her chin.

JASON (CONT'D)

Let me get that for you.

Jason slides closer and wipes her chin with his napkin. He leans in for a kiss, but she lifts her glass between them and takes another swig.

JASON (CONT'D)

You should come up to my lake house sometime.

EMMA

Oh?

Jason raises his glass and clinks it against Emma's.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- ISOLATION ROOM

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Ryan changes Gregg's IV bag, sending a new liquid through his veins that jolts Gregg awake like Frankenstein's monster.

RYAN

Good morning, sunshine.

Gregg looks around disoriented.

RYAN (CONT'D)

You better get ready to watch over my half-baked body soon.

Ryan removes Gregg's IV and sensor nodes. He massages Gregg's muscles.

GREGG

Good to see you, ya bastard.

RYAN

You have no idea how good it is to hear someone else speak. Someone that's actually here.

(to himself)

Only two more weeks, Emma.

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

Emma and Ashley walk toward a yoga studio carrying mats.

EMMA

Is it a bad idea to date a co-worker?

ASHLEY

Depends on the situation. Why?

EMMA

Remember that star reporter I was telling you about?

ASHLEY

The hot one?

EMMA

We went out for drinks, and it seemed more like a date than two co-workers talking shop.

ASHLEY

Do you like him? How old is he? Does he seem like a playboy or do you think he's for real?

EMMA

He was talking about wanting to have a family.

ASHLEY

That's a good sign! Sounds like a keeper.

EMMA

He's from a good family. Already very successful. He's been supportive of my work too, which is nice. He still likes me after I threw up all over his shoes.

ASHLEY

You didn't.

EMMA

There was a lot of champagne involved, okay?

ASHLEY

Oh my god, Em. You've been burned so much in the past. Don't rush into things. Take it slow. Get to know him more and let things develop naturally. If you play your cards right, he might be the one!

EMMA

Yeah, maybe.

INT. ISOLATION ROOM -- TWO WEEKS LATER

RYAN

Emma!

GREGG

Save your strength there, mate.

Ryan tries to get out of the wall harness, but his muscles are like jello.

RYAN

I need to see her.

GREGG

You've been out for two weeks. You need to relax.

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING - EMMA'S CUBICLE -- EVENING

Emma's cell phone rings. It's Ryan.

Jason pops his head into her space.

JASON

Hey babe, want to go see a movie this weekend?

Her phone keeps ringing.

JASON (CONT'D)

Do you need to get that?

EMMA

No, it's just a telemarketer. A movie this weekend sounds great.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Emma paces the perimeter of her studio drinking a glass of wine. She periodically checks her cell phone. No new calls.

She pours herself another glass and continues pacing. Finally, her phone rings. It's Ryan. She races to answer it.

EMMA

Hello?

RYAN

Emma, it's you! It's so good to hear your voice. You're all I could think about in isolation.

Emma cries.

RYAN (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

She tries to muffle her sobs.

RYAN (CONT'D)

These last few weeks must have been hard, but I made it out. I'm back. Can you come over? I'm still trying to get you added to my visitor's list, but I could sneak out and meet you in the parking lot or something.

EMMA

I can't.

RYAN

Tomorrow then. Promise me you'll come tomorrow.

Emma struggles to speak.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Please, Emma.

EMMA

Tomorrow. Noon.

RYAN

Tomorrow at noon. Okay.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - COMMON ROOM -- NIGHT

Ryan hangs up the phone. He sits on a couch, dejected.

Dezzy enters and slams herself down onto another couch.

DEZZY

Leave me alone, Jack.

Jack follows her in.

JACK  
I'm not letting this go, Fatty.

RYAN  
Hey, what's your problem, Jack?

JACK  
My problem is with Dezzy so stay out of it.

RYAN  
There's no need to name call.

JACK  
That's the only way Tubby will learn.

DEZZY  
I said I was sorry. I miscalculated.

JACK  
You knew you were eating my rations. I starved the last two days in isolation. If you do that on Mars, I'll kill you and eat your flesh.

RYAN  
We haven't even left Earth yet, and we're already resorting to cannibalism? Don't worry, Dez, I'll protect you.

DEZZY  
He's right. I'm not strong enough to live this way.

RYAN  
You can and you will. I'm here to help every step of the way.

Dezzy smiles. Amy pops her head into the room.

AMY  
Mr. Gross wants us all upstairs. Something about Phase Two.

RYAN  
Phase Two?

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- GROSS' OFFICE

Steven Gross ushers Ryan inside and shuts the door behind them. Ryan sits on a plush velvet chair across from Steven's impressive desk.

STEVEN

Everyone's very proud of you, Ryan. You've proven yourself in every simulation.

RYAN

Thank you, sir.

STEVEN

Tell me, what do you think of your teammates?

RYAN

Well, I'm most impressed with Gregg.

STEVEN

What about your female companions?

RYAN

Amy aced the landing simulation. Dezzy gravitates toward the terraforming research, and Jessica... she'd thrive with a little extra tutoring.

STEVEN

What do you think about them... personally?

RYAN

I don't understand what you mean.

STEVEN

I'm going to level with you, Ryan. The training will prepare you to inhabit Mars, but the program is always working to take the colony even further. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to help the project in that aim?

RYAN

Of course, sir.

STEVEN

With that common goal in mind, we'd like to begin exploring options for Phase Two.

RYAN

Which is?

STEVEN

Once the colony is stable, we'd like to introduce a procreation plan.

RYAN

You're kidding, right?

STEVEN

Think of the future, Ryan. It's only natural a successful colony would breed.

RYAN

Sure, but shouldn't we focus on being successful first?

STEVEN

Of course, there's no rush. We don't want any babies born in the first year, but we do plan to explore this down the line. The org just wants to... plant the seeds. As you continue to get to know your teammates, try to keep an open mind. I'll be talking to everyone about their preferences, and if there are a few matches, then we'll know better how things may unfold in the future. Don't be afraid to create a bond, or two, that could serve a higher purpose.

RYAN

I'll try to keep that in mind.

STEVEN

That's all I ask.

RYAN

I'd like to ask a favor in return, Mr. Gross.

Steven nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Emma Davis was taken off my visitor's list, and I'd like her to be added back on. I've made several requests already.

STEVEN

Miss Davis is a member of the press, and we can't--

RYAN

She's a personal friend of mine.

STEVEN

It's time to leave Earth behind. Focus instead on your team, for the good of humanity.

RYAN

I'd like to have Miss Davis added back to my list, and I would appreciate not having to ask again.

Ryan stands up and opens the office door.

Amy and Dezzy sit outside awaiting their turn to talk to Steven.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - RYAN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Ryan lays on his bed reading a book. Jessica stands in the doorway. Her Man on Mars jumpsuit is rolled down to her waist, exposing a camisole that barely covers her voluptuous body.

JESSICA

Knock, knock. Can I come in?

RYAN

Now's not a good time, Jessica.

JESSICA

I could make it a good time.

RYAN

I'm in the middle of something.

She stomps away. Her voice echoes from the hallway.

JESSICA (O.S.)

(giggles)

Hey Jack, what are you up to?

Ryan rolls his eyes and goes back to his book.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY -- DAY

Emma enters and sees Ryan waiting for her in the atrium. She walks over to join him.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - ATRIUM -- CONTINUOUS

Ryan rushes toward Emma and gives her a big hug. Her stiff body relaxes into his embrace.

RYAN

What can I say? This situation sucks.

She pulls away, crying.

EMMA

I'm sorry, I hate crying in front of people.

She wipes her eyes and nose.

RYAN

I'm the one that's sorry, Emma, for putting you in this difficult position.

EMMA

Ryan, I really like you, but--

RYAN

I love you, Emma Davis.

EMMA

What?

RYAN

I know we've only just met, but this feels right to me. You feel right to me. I spent roughly 20,160 minutes in isolation, and every moment was filled with thoughts of you.

EMMA

I had a lot of time to think, too. I really like you... but, we shouldn't be together.

RYAN

You don't mean that.

EMMA

We're setting ourselves up for failure. Can't you see that?

Ryan grabs Emma's hand.

RYAN

When I was in isolation, I asked for guidance. I asked why you came into my life and if we should be together.

EMMA

Guidance? What do you mean?

RYAN

I have ten more months on Earth for training. We can physically be together for ten months. That's long enough to create a deep and powerful soul connection.

Emma is speechless.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Earth and Mars are only far in the realm of illusion. Emma, you and I are meant to be together. We're meant to learn from each other. We're meant to grow together. Even when we're physically apart, we can still be emotionally and spiritually connected.

EMMA

Spiritually connected? Ryan, you're not making any sense.

RYAN

What about that doesn't make sense to you?

EMMA

I'm worried about you. Isolation can lead to severe mental breaks.

RYAN

You think I've gone crazy?

EMMA

It's a common side effect. Not to mention whatever chemicals they use for the hibernation process.

RYAN

You can't believe that someone honestly loves you. Can you? Well, I do. I love you. And I want to be with you.

EMMA

Until you leave the planet! What am I supposed to do then?

Tears return to Emma's eyes. Ryan wipes her cheeks and gives her an innocent kiss.

RYAN

Don't you trust me?

Emma searches Ryan's face for an answer.

EMMA

It's me I don't trust.

Emma grabs his hand and leads him back into the lobby and out the front door.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Emma and Ryan burst through the door kissing. He peels off her sweater and kisses her neck and breasts.

She unbuttons his Man on Mars jumpsuit revealing a string of meditation mala beads around his neck.

They fumble toward the bed. He throws her onto the mattress and unbuttons her jeans. He kisses her newly exposed skin.

He straddles her, and she runs her fingers over his face, chest, and back.

They gaze deep into each other's eyes as they make love.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

Ryan and Emma lay naked on her bed kissing.

Two hummingbirds flutter outside her window. Ryan points to it.

RYAN

See that? That's a good omen.

EMMA

They're beautiful, but why are they a good sign?

RYAN

Remember I told you I was big into meditation?

EMMA

Yeah.

RYAN

I often receive guidance when I go within.

EMMA

I don't understand.

RYAN

It's like an inner voice. I like to call it my Higher Self. I couldn't hear it until after my parents died.

Emma grabs Ryan's hand.

RYAN (CONT'D)

It was pretty devastating to lose both parents at the same time. After a few weeks of complete depression, my friend gave me a book about finding consolation through meditation. So I tried it, and you know what? It helped relieve my grief. But that piece of me was still missing. So one day in meditation, I asked my Higher Self for a sign that my parents were at peace. I was suddenly flooded with this vivid memory of chasing blue hummingbirds in my mother's garden as a kid. Later that day I was leaving my place for the first time in weeks, and what did I see? Two blue hummingbirds floating right outside my window. I took it as a sign that my parents were at peace, and I realized the true potential of my Higher Self, which seems to have this uncanny sense of knowing.

EMMA

So what does it mean?

RYAN

It means you and I are meant to be.

Ryan kisses her hands and then her lips.

RYAN(CONT'D)

You asked me why I signed up for the mission, and I didn't answer you. I didn't want you to think I was crazy.

EMMA

Too late.

Ryan laughs.

RYAN

One day, my inner guidance told me I would colonize a far-away land. The very next day, the Man on Mars project put out the call for applicants. This is my destiny.

EMMA

Wow, you really are a hippie.

RYAN

It's not for everyone. It's okay if you don't get it.

EMMA

Ryan, I don't know what to say.

Ryan stands up and puts his jumpsuit back on.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I want to believe you, but --

RYAN

Meditation is the most powerful thing a person can do. To go within yourself and cancel out all the outside noise... That's the only way to transcend all the earthly bullshit and tap into the spiritual realms. That's where true power lies.

EMMA

Spiritual realm? I'll believe it when I see it.

RYAN

Okay Miss Skeptical. Come here.

EMMA

No...

Ryan sits on the floor and taps the spot next to him.

RYAN

Come on, give it a try.

Emma puts on a robe and sits next to him cross-legged.

EMMA

Like this?

RYAN

Straighten your spine more.

Ryan tickles her side, and she laughs. She straightens her posture and closes her eyes. They breathe in deeply together.

After a few seconds-

EMMA

I feel stupid.

RYAN

Shhh. Concentrate.

EMMA

On what?

RYAN

On your breath.

She points to the meditation mala beads around his neck.

EMMA

What are those for?

RYAN

For a more advanced technique. I'll show you when you're ready.

EMMA

I don't think this is for me.

RYAN

Fine. I better get back to headquarters anyway.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - COMMON ROOM -- NIGHT

Ryan walks past the rec room where the rest of the Martian Six watch a movie.

JACK

(calls out)

Where have you been?

Ryan enters.

RYAN

Hey guys. Sorry I'm late. What did I miss today?

JACK

We had to delay a group exercise because of you.

Ryan sits down in an arm chair without responding.

JACK (CONT'D)

That's it? You're not gonna tell us where you've been?

RYAN

I was taking care of a personal issue, Jack. It's none of your concern.

JACK

It's my concern if it distracts you from the mission!

RYAN

Until you pass your landing simulation with flying colors, like I have, don't tell me what to do.

Jack runs over and gets in Ryan's face. Ryan stands to protect himself.

JACK

You're such a hypocrite. You went on and on about not having ties on Earth, and then you go and get a girlfriend? Yeah, we know about her.

Ryan ignores Jack and addresses the rest of the group.

RYAN

Does anyone else care if I see Emma?

GREGG

I'm happy for ya, brother. I bet she's one hell of a gal.

AMY

We missed training today cause of you. I don't like that, but as long as you stay focused here, I'm cool with it.

Jack throws Amy a nasty look. She rolls her eyes at him. Jack turns to Jessica. She blows a bubble with her gum.

JESSICA

I'm with Jack.

GREGG

Yeah, we know. While we're on the subject of dating, I don't like how you two bogans are fucking so soon.

Gregg points to Jack and Jessica.

GREGG (CONT'D)

Once we're stable on Mars, fine, but I bet you two'll be fighting like a divorced couple before the year is out.

Ryan looks at Jessica, but she avoids his gaze. Amy nods her head in agreement with Gregg. Jack walks over to Amy and puts his arm around her.

JACK

Don't worry Amy, there's enough of me to go around. I'm a team player.

Amy laughs and pushes Jack away.

AMY  
You're crazy, Jack.

JACK  
(to Gregg and Ryan)  
I'll take these two. There's enough Dezzy  
for you losers to share.

Dezzy sits quiet with her eyes to the floor.

RYAN  
This isn't a dating game. We don't all  
need to pair off.

Dezzy jumps to her feet and marches toward the exit.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
What's wrong, Dez?

She spins around.

DEZZY  
Ryan, forget about Emma. Your team needs  
you.

Dezzy chokes up and storms out.

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING -- MORNING

Emma whistles as she walks. She turns the corner and sees  
Steven Gross talking to Jason just outside her cubicle.

STEVEN  
Miss Davis, how are you? I'm Steven  
Gross.

He holds out his hand, and she politely shakes it.

EMMA  
Yes, I know who you are. To what do we  
owe this honor?

JASON  
It seems our article left an impression  
with the program.

STEVEN  
(to Jason)  
I know you wrote the article together,  
but do you mind if I have a moment alone  
with Miss Davis?

JASON

Not at all. Let's catch that round of golf soon.

Jason walks back to his office. Emma walks into her cubicle and tries to make room. She offers Steven a small chair crammed against her desk. He sits.

STEVEN

I'll get straight to the point, Miss Davis.

EMMA

Please, call me Emma.

STEVEN

We've discovered that you're... how should I say it? *Seeing* Ryan.

Emma nods politely.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

I'm sure you're aware that Ryan has agreed to go to Mars on a one-way ticket. The project thinks it's within his best interest to eliminate any unnecessary ties on Earth before he goes. That way, he'll be more focused and alert on the task at hand. He'll be more motivated to create a successful colony on Mars. One that's built to last.

Emma fakes a smile.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

For example, Ryan missed an important training session because of your little tryst yesterday. We can't have that happening again.

Emma blushes.

EMMA

I understand what you're saying, sir, but-

Steven stands to leave.

STEVEN

We appreciate your cooperation, Miss Davis.

Emma sits shocked as Steven walks away. She stands and follows after him.

EMMA

I'm sorry, but... fuck you, Mr. Gross.

He turns around surprised.

STEVEN

Excuse me?

EMMA

How dare you come here and tell me how to live my life?

She looks over her shoulder to make sure Jason isn't around.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(lowers voice)

I didn't expect to meet Ryan, and I definitely didn't expect to have feelings for him. But I did, and I do, and now there's no going back. We've decided to see each other until he leaves for Mars.

STEVEN

That's all fine and well, but --

EMMA

I'm willing to work with you to create a schedule or something so I don't distract Ryan from his training, but I will not allow you to break us up. You don't own Ryan, and you certainly don't own me.

STEVEN

Okay, Miss Davis. On behalf of the Man on Mars project, I'm willing to offer you a... commission, in exchange for your cooperation.

He pulls out a check book from his breast pocket.

EMMA

Keep your money. You need it to ensure Ryan's safety on Mars.

STEVEN

If you're not careful, Miss Davis, you'll get a reputation for getting the story through immoral acts.

Steven turns and walks away.

Emma goes back to her cubicle and sits. Her hands shake.

JASON

What was that all about?

EMMA

Nothing important.

JASON

Okay, tell me later. Want to grab lunch today?

EMMA

I've got to get a lot done today. Maybe tomorrow.

JASON

Are we still on for this weekend?

EMMA

What's going on this weekend?

JASON

Did you forget already?

EMMA

Oh, no. Sorry. But I'm not sure I can make it. Something's come up with my sister.

Jason squints his eyes with a look of distrust.

JASON

Okay, another time then.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- GROSS' OFFICE -- DAY

RYAN

Mr. Gross, we need to talk.

Ryan storms into the well-appointed office to find Steven watching a series of monitors following the Martian Six's every move. Steven hurries to hide the monitors, but it's too late.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Are you spying on us?

STEVEN

I'm observing the mission.

RYAN

What kind of program are you running, Mr. Gross?

STEVEN

Why don't you take a seat?

Ryan stands defiant.

RYAN

How dare you try to bribe Emma. If she's not back on my visitor's list by tomorrow-

STEVEN

You'll what? Quit the program? After all you did to get here? You can, and will, be replaced.

RYAN

You're right, I don't want to quit. But I also don't want to be controlled and manipulated. I thought all this bullshit was over after the elimination show.

STEVEN

We want what's best for you, Ryan. And what is best for the colony.

RYAN

Emma is what's best for me. And this whole Phase Two crap has to stop. It's not helping anything.

STEVEN

I agree. We implemented the program too early, but I don't have the final say in these matters.

Steven walks over to Ryan and puts his hand on his shoulder.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

I'm not the enemy, Ryan. I'm on your side. I want to see you fulfill your destiny.

RYAN

Put Emma back on my list - or I will quit.

Ryan turns and walks away.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - ATRIUM -- DAY

Emma runs over to Ryan, wrapping him in a hug.

EMMA

Did you talk to anyone about us?

Before answering her question, he kisses her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What did they say?

RYAN

They've agreed to let us see each other once a week during my scheduled leisure time.

EMMA

Only once a week?

RYAN

And we're not supposed to leave the building unless it's been pre-approved...

Emma groans.

RYAN (CONT'D)

They don't want me getting into a car accident or anything that would hurt my chances of making the launch date. It's the only way to get you back on my visitor's list.

EMMA

And am I back on your list yet?

RYAN

Not yet, but they promised me you will be by next week.

Emma smiles.

EMMA

Then we'll agree to their terms next week.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

Ryan and Emma run into the water wearing only their underwear. They laugh as they splash each other.

Ryan dives underwater and grabs Emma's waist. She screams playfully.

Emma wraps her legs around him, and he nibbles her ear. Hands over wet skin, they make love as the waves crash around them.

EXT. BEACH -- LATER

Ryan sits on the sand legs crossed, spine erect, eyes closed, meditating. He smiles as the sun bathes him.

Emma lays next to him. She sits up and kisses his shoulder.

EMMA

Maybe we should head back. If you don't miss any training sessions, maybe the project will let us have more of these adventures.

RYAN

Five more minutes.

Ryan picks up sand and lets the grains slide through his fingers.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Did you know there are ten times more stars in the sky than there are grains of sand on Earth?

Emma kisses Ryan, and they roll around in the sand together.

EXT. BEACH -- SUNSET

Ryan and Emma walk back to her car. A TOURIST walks by.

TOURIST

Hey, I know you! You're Ryan from the Martian Six.

Ryan nods politely. The man pulls out a camera and snaps picture after picture.

Emma puts her hand up to hide her face, but the tourist keeps snapping pictures.

Ryan and Emma get in the car and peel away.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- DAY

ASHLEY

What the hell is this?

Ashley slams a tabloid magazine down onto Emma's kitchen table. Emma and Ryan are splashed on the cover with the headline *The Martian's Girlfriend*.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

It really hurts having to find out about my sister's life while I'm in line at the grocery store.

EMMA

I wanted to tell you, but it's complicated.

ASHLEY

Well, it just got even more complicated! What about your career? Have you thought about that? You're supposed to be a journalist with integrity, and now you're no better off than the nanny that sleeps with their celebrity boss.

Tears form in Emma's eyes.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

It's all over the internet, too.

Emma can no longer hold back and cries. Ashley softens.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I'm sure it will all blow over soon, but you've got to stop seeing him. What's your end game here? He has a one-way ticket to Mars!

EMMA

But... he's my soulmate.

ASHLEY

Emma, haven't you learned anything from your past mistakes? Why do you keep doing this to yourself?

EMMA

It's different with Ryan.

ASHLEY

How is this any different? You're going to fall in love, and then he's going to leave you. And then I'll be left to pick up the pieces. Again.

Emma's tears turn to sobs. Ashley comforts her.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Em, break it off. For your own good.

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING -- MORNING

Emma wears sunglasses inside, trying to get to her desk without being noticed.

She enters her cubicle to find Steven Gross sitting in her chair. She greets him in a fake, chipper tone.

EMMA

Good morning. To what do I owe this honor?

STEVEN

Let's not beat around the bush, Miss Davis. Your little rendezvous has made quite a splash. I thought you were more in the business of reporting the stories rather than making them.

Before she can respond --

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Look, it's no secret that our ambitious project is extremely expensive. We've purposely excluded any government funds so we can create a colony that's free from the shortcomings of Earthly politics. With a juicy story like this, the public will be less interested in our upcoming documentary about our training programs. Science doesn't rate well with viewers, you know? Especially when they have a more interesting personal headline. The project has come up with a solution to this whole mess.

EMMA

Okay...

STEVEN

We have a news outlet that's willing to pay two million dollars for an exclusive interview with you and Ryan. It'll only take a few hours.

EMMA

I can't --

STEVEN

If we don't raise enough funds before the launch, Ryan may be sent to Mars without the proper equipment to keep him alive. It's all about the bottom line. I'm sure you understand.

He pushes past Emma, leaving her stunned and speechless.

INT. TV STUDIO -- DAY

A MAKE-UP ARTIST applies thick blush to Emma's cheeks. A PRODUCER with a clipboard walks past.

PRODUCER

ETA one minute people!

EMMA

(to Producer)

Excuse me, there's no way I can start in one minute. I haven't been given the list of questions, and I don't even think Ryan is here yet.

PRODUCER

Ryan's getting dressed. And you look beautiful.

The producer walks away.

EMMA

He's here? I was told I could see him before --

No one's listening.

Emma looks at herself in the mirror. She grabs a tissue and wipes off layers of make up.

MAKE UP ARTIST

What are you doing?

EMMA

I look like a prostitute.

MAKE UP ARTIST

It's my job to make you look beautiful.

EMMA

I want to look like myself.

MAKE UP ARTIST

You'll look washed out on camera.

Emma continues wiping.

MAKE UP ARTIST (CONT'D)

I can't work like this.

PRODUCER

Camera's up. Right this way, Miss Davis.

The Producer escorts Emma onto a well-lit stage with a four camera set-up surrounding two couches.

Ryan enters from the other side of the stage.

EMMA

Ryan!

They run to each other and hug.

CINDY SHERMAN

Wow, I can really tell you two are in love.

Emma turns and notices a camera zoomed in on her.

EMMA

Are we filming already?

CINDY SHERMAN

Yes, we are. Please make yourselves comfortable. Thank you so much for being here today.

CINDY SHERMAN is an aging news anchor with a face full of botox and perfectly white teeth. She motions for Ryan and Emma to sit on the couch across from her. They comply.

CINDY SHERMAN (CONT'D)

So, tell me. How did you two meet?

EMMA

We met at a press conference for the Man on Mars project.

CINDY SHERMAN

That was after you had been chosen to be a part of the Martian Six?

Emma and Ryan both nod, but offer nothing else.

CINDY SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Ryan, you spoke so eloquently during the elimination process about not having any attachments here on Earth. Has your desire to go to Mars shifted now that you've met Emma?

RYAN

I'm still fully committed to colonizing Mars.

CINDY SHERMAN  
(to Emma)  
Ouch. That's got to hurt.

Emma fakes a smile.

CINDY SHERMAN (CONT'D)  
Emma, describe your thought process when  
deciding to date a man with a one-way  
ticket to another planet.

Emma's eyes dart between the cameras and Cindy's face.  
Ryan squeezes her hand, but she still doesn't speak.

CINDY SHERMAN (CONT'D)  
Imagine the day that Ryan leaves for  
Mars. Don't you worry that your  
relationship will distract him from his  
duty?

Emma sweats under the strength of the lights.

CINDY SHERMAN (CONT'D)  
Emma, what do your parents say about your  
relationship with Ryan?

Emma's lower lip quivers.

RYAN  
You can't always choose who you love, but  
if Emma could, I'm sure she would've  
chosen someone bound forever for Earth.  
But I'm so glad she didn't. We'd rather  
have ten months together than none.

Ryan smiles at Emma.

EMMA  
The day Ryan leaves for Mars will be the  
hardest day of my life. I know he will be  
diligent and resourceful when he's up  
there because that's just who he is. He  
gives everything his all, no matter what.

CINDY SHERMAN  
Ryan used the word love specifically.  
Emma, are you in love?

Emma looks at Ryan and then back at Cindy.

EMMA  
Yes, I do love Ryan.

Ryan squeezes her hand, and they kiss.

CINDY SHERMAN

That's so sweet, but you've only known each other for two months. That's really fast!

RYAN

In a traditional sense, maybe. Nothing about our circumstances is traditional.

EMMA

You can say that again.

CINDY SHERMAN

Ryan, you're under lock and key at headquarters. Are you two able to be intimate?

EMMA

That's none of your business!

Cindy smirks.

CINDY SHERMAN

Will you be able to keep in touch once you've left the planet?

RYAN

No. We won't be allowed to communicate once I'm in space.

CINDY SHERMAN

I suppose that's for the sake of the colony. You'll need to focus all of your attention on your camp and fellow teammates.

RYAN

That's correct.

CINDY SHERMAN

Speaking of the team, let's see what the rest of the Martian Six has to say about all this.

Cindy stands as CREW place five tall chairs behind the couch.

EMMA

(whispers to Ryan)

Did you know they were coming?

Ryan shakes his head no as the Martian Six take their seats behind him.

CINDY SHERMAN  
(to Martian Six)  
Tell me, what do you all think about  
their relationship?

GREGG  
I think it's great. We've only got a  
short time left on Earth. Might as well  
make the most of it.

JACK  
We dedicated our lives to going to Mars.  
This is a huge distraction from the  
mission.

Ryan opens his mouth to snap back, but Emma grabs his  
thigh and shoots him a look to zip it.

CINDY SHERMAN  
Emma, what was that all about?

EMMA  
What? Nothing.

CINDY SHERMAN  
You just stopped Ryan from commenting  
back to Jack.

EMMA  
I don't think it's worth fighting about.  
Everyone's entitled to their own opinion.

CINDY SHERMAN  
Are there a lot of fights between the  
Martian Six?

No one answers.

CINDY SHERMAN (CONT'D)  
Are you the cause of the fights, Emma?

DEZZY  
Yes, she is.

Ryan looks back at Dezzy in disbelief.

CINDY SHERMAN  
Emma, your relationship with Ryan is  
clearly creating a rift in the team.  
Could you live with yourself if you are  
the direct cause of the mission's  
failure?

Emma tears up.

EMMA  
It's not like that.

AMY  
You better make good with God, girl.

Jack and Amy high-five.

GREGG  
(to Jack and Amy)  
Shut up, you two.

All the Martian Six start talking at once. Jessica covers her ears.

JESSICA  
La la la la..

Cindy Sherman smiles at the ratings gold she's created.

RYAN  
(screams)  
Everyone be quiet!

The stage settles.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
Stop trying to pin this on Emma. We were dysfunctional before she ever came along. The only reason the mission would fail is if we don't pass training. Everyone needs to take responsibility for their own actions.

JACK  
Including you and Emma.

RYAN  
Everyone has their own cross to bear.

Emma's eyes fall to the floor. Ryan grabs her hand.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

There's a knock on the door.

EMMA  
Go away!

ASHLEY (O.S.)  
It's me.

Emma opens the door a crack to let Ashley in. A gaggle of PAPARAZZI snap photos from outside as Ashley slips in.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Did something die in here?

EMMA

I haven't left the apartment in a few days. Luckily, John let me work from home since the story leaked. I can't go anywhere with all those nut jobs outside like that.

ASHLEY

I saw the interview.

Emma groans.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Em, he's amazing.

EMMA

Really?

ASHLEY

I can tell he really cares for you. He had your back and was willing to tell the world how much he loved you. That's pretty impressive. But Em, it's still not going to be easy.

EMMA

I know. I've got to go back to work soon. Hopefully the tabloids back off.

ASHLEY

I meant... It's not going to be easy to say goodbye.

EMMA

He's worth the price I'll pay as long as I don't have to pay it today.

Her eyes reveal the pain inside.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - RYAN'S BUNKER -- NIGHT

Emma and Ryan lay on his bed laughing. Emma kisses Ryan and caresses his body. She tries to escalate the passion by unbuttoning his jumpsuit. Ryan stops her.

RYAN

Wait... We're being watched.

Ryan nods toward a surveillance camera in the top corner.

EMMA

But we only have a little time left until next week.

Ryan rubs his nose against hers.

RYAN

I know, but not here.

EMMA

Then where?

RYAN

I'll have to figure that out for next time.

Emma pouts.

INT. MAN ON MARS HQ - COMMON ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ryan and Emma walk into the rec room to join the rest of the Martian Six watching a movie.

Ryan offers Emma a chair and sits on the armrest. She crosses her arms in silent protest - this isn't her ideal date night.

JACK

(to Emma)

Excuse you. This room was only made for six people.

GREGG

We can make room for one more.

JACK

No, we can't. There are only six of us going to Mars so only six of us can sit in this room.

JESSICA

Be quiet, Jack. I got a headache.

JACK

My problem is with the intruder, not you, Jess.

EMMA

Let's go, Ryan.

GREGG

Don't let this punk push you around.

Emma looks to Ryan for guidance.

JACK

If she's not coming to Mars, then she means nothing to me.

RYAN

Have you passed the flight simulator yet, Jack?

Jack glares at Ryan, seething.

AMY

(to Jack)

Come on, boo. Let's go practice.

Jack stomps out with Amy.

JESSICA

Can I come too?

Jessica follows them out despite not getting an answer.

RYAN

Don't take it personally, Em. He's just projecting his own insecurities on to you. He's the runt of the litter that thinks he's the alpha dog.

With the room cleared out, Ryan lays on a couch and motions for Emma to join him.

GREGG

You two sure know how to clear a room.

Dezzy gets up to leave.

DEZZY

Jack's right, Ryan. Emma doesn't fit into Phase Two.

Dezzy leaves the room.

EMMA

What's Phase Two?

RYAN

It doesn't matter.

EMMA

It does to me. I told you I overheard Steven talking about it, and you said you didn't know what it was.

RYAN

I didn't at the time.

EMMA

But you do now?

GREGG

I'll leave you two alone.

Gregg hurries out.

EMMA

Just tell me.

Ryan touches Emma's arm to calm her, but she pulls away.

RYAN

Fine, but do you promise not to get mad?

EMMA

No!

RYAN

Come on --

EMMA

The longer it takes for you to tell me, the more mad I become!

RYAN

Alright. Just relax. Phase Two involves procreation on Mars. It isn't --

EMMA

You've agreed to have a baby with one of your teammates?

RYAN

No. I haven't agreed to participate yet.

EMMA

Yet? How long have you known about this?

RYAN

Emma --

EMMA

This is all too much. I can't do this anymore.

Emma storms out. Ryan races after her.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- BASEMENT -- CONTINUOUS

Emma charges toward the elevator. Ryan grabs her arm to stop her.

EMMA

I'm sorry, Ryan. I'm not strong enough for this.

The elevator door opens, and Emma gets inside.

RYAN

Em, please.

Emma looks at Ryan with tears in her eyes. The door closes.

EXT. RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

A throng of paparazzi call out Emma's name.

Emma pushes through them to get into the upscale restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT -- CONTINUOUS

Emma approaches the hostess stand as camera flashes pour through the windows.

EMMA

I'm here to meet Jason Starr.

The HOSTESS escorts Emma to Jason's corner booth. He stands to greet her with a hug.

JASON

You're popular.

EMMA

I seriously don't understand why anyone would care about me.

JASON

Don't be so modest.

Jason pours Emma a glass of wine from a bottle.

JASON (CONT'D)

God you look gorgeous tonight.

A female FAN (20's) approaches their table.

FAN

Excuse me, can I have your autograph?

Emma looks at Jason before realizing --

EMMA

Me?

The fan nods. Emma signs her napkin.

FAN

You and Ryan seem so in love. Do you have any advice for me? I don't want to be single forever.

EMMA

My love life has been... interesting, but not one to emulate.

She hands over the napkin, and the fan walks away.

JASON

Got any love advice for me?

Emma blushes and shrugs her shoulders.

JASON (CONT'D)

Your relationship with Ryan is going that well, huh?

EMMA

You don't want to hear about my relationship with Ryan.

JASON

Au contraire.

EMMA

Jason, I'm sorry how everything went down.

JASON

What does Ryan have that I don't? Other than a one-way ticket to Mars?

Emma shrugs again. Jason reaches over the table and grabs her hand.

JASON (CONT'D)

In a few months, Ryan will be gone. If you want, we can leave the door of opportunity open between us.

Emma pulls her hand away.

JASON (CONT'D)

Give me a chance. Ryan's leaving for Mars, and then what?

EMMA

I don't know.

JASON

You can't even tell me what's so great about him.

EMMA

Ryan's kind and caring. He's soulful, and he excites me. He thinks about the world in a different way than I do. It doesn't make logical sense, but maybe that's what I crave. I'm sorry, Jason, I shouldn't have agreed to meet you. I wanted to make things right between us, but I'm afraid it's only getting worse.

JASON

Maybe you also like the attention I give you? Maybe you like having a back-up plan for when your boyfriend gets shot into space?

EMMA

Maybe... I'm sorry. I should go.

Emma slides out of the booth, and Jason does, too. He grabs her and pulls her close.

JASON

(whispers)

We can keep the door open. You don't have to choose.

Emma pulls away.

EMMA

Yes, I do.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - RYAN'S BUNKER -- DAY

Ryan sees a tabloid magazine lying on his cot. The cover features Emma and Jason hugging in the restaurant with the headline *Mars Love Triangle*.

## INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - FLIGHT SIMULATOR

RYAN  
(over radio)  
I've got your back.

He types commands into a computer and surveys several screens covered with logistical information.

RYAN (CONT'D)  
Okay team, final cross check. We can do this. Step by step, slow and steady. Zone One, you're up.

JACK (O.S.)  
Zone One is locked and loaded.

RYAN  
Copy that. Power zone linked. Well done, Jack. Gregg, you're up.

GREGG (O.S.)  
Alright buddy boy, you've got the green light from the greenhouse.

RYAN  
We've got power. Video is up. Data looks good. The telemetry cable is live. Way to go, Zone Two. How are you doing, Dezzy?

DEZZY (O.S.)  
Life support functions are online.

JACK (O.S.)  
Don't drink all our water, Tubby.

RYAN  
No cross talk, Jack. We've been at this for six hours, and no one's died yet. Let's finish this. Ladies?

## INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - HABITAT MODULE

Amy and Jessica, in spacesuits, stand on opposite sides of a mock-up living space with built-in bunk beds.

Amy examines metal threading around a large door frame.

AMY  
(over radio)  
Transfer compartment A is secure.

RYAN (O.S.)  
 Looking good on my end too, Amy. Jessica,  
 B transfer doesn't appear ready for  
 airlock.

Jessica looks at the door frame on her side of the room.

JESSICA  
 (over radio)  
 It looks ready to me. I don't know what  
 else it needs.

RYAN (O.S.)  
 Let's go through the checklist from the  
 top.

Amy walks over to Jessica's hatch.

AMY  
 I'll do it with you.

Jessica puts her arm out to keep Amy from her station.

JESSICA  
 I don't need your help, Amy. I've got  
 this.

AMY  
 Clearly you don't.

Amy pushes Jessica aside.

RYAN (O.S.)  
 Stay calm over there. We'll do it  
 together.

Jessica pushes Amy back.

JESSICA  
 I followed all the steps, I swear. I can  
 do this. Look, I'll show you.

Jessica reaches past Amy and presses a button marked  
 AIRLOCK. The hatch door opens revealing a thin corridor  
 leading to a second habitat module. A red light flashes.

COMPUTER VOICE (O.S.)  
 Transfer compartment depressurized.  
 Transfer compartment depressurized.  
 Evacuate module.

AMY  
 You stupid bitch! You killed us and  
 destroyed the habitat!

Amy rips off her helmet and gets in Jessica's face.  
Jessica pulls off her helmet to stand her ground.

Ryan runs in and pulls them apart.

RYAN

Relax. It's just a simulation. We're  
going to run this a dozen more times  
before we go. We'll get there.

AMY

Not with this idiot.

Amy storms off.

JESSICA

I'm sorry, Ryan. I thought I had it.

RYAN

That's what the control room is for,  
Jess. If you don't get the all clear from  
me, it's not ready. Okay?

JESSICA

I know. I panicked when Amy bullied her  
way into my zone. I don't need her  
breathing down my neck.

RYAN

It's okay, you'll get it next time.

JESSICA

I doubt it.

RYAN

You will. Trust me. Come on, let's go.  
It's been a long week.

He puts his arm over her shoulder and walks her out of  
the module.

JESSICA

Got anything fun planned for free time?

RYAN

Not this week. Emma's not returning my  
calls.

JESSICA

We could hang out together. Just you and  
me.

Amy's laughter echoes in the corridor. Ryan and Jessica  
turn to see Jack and Amy flirting down the hall.

RYAN

Sure, I'll hang out with you, Jess.

INT. GROCERY STORE -- DAY

Emma waits in line with a cart full of food. She looks over and sees a tabloid magazine with her and Ryan on the cover. The headline reads *Trouble in Paradise?* A lower caption describes *Emma hasn't visited Ryan in months.*

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - COMMON ROOM -- DAY

The Martian Six sit on the couches. Steven Gross addresses them standing.

STEVEN

It's not enough to land on Mars. It's not enough to survive the first year. The only way this mission will be deemed a true success is if we're able to establish a permanent colony that thrives and grows. Phase One has been drilled into your heads over the last nine months. We've got three more months to nail it. You'll land, set up base camp, grow your own food, build the rig to drill for water, and perform your various research projects. So what happens next?

JESSICA

You'll send more supplies?

STEVEN

Yes, there are additional shipments scheduled, of course.

JACK

I hope you send more people so I don't have to deal with these freaks for the rest of my life.

Amy pushes Jack playfully.

STEVEN

Yes, Jack. More people. That is the way to build a thriving colony. Assuming we reach our target points, we will send more colonists. But did you know it's cheaper to birth people than to ship them? We've run the numbers.

RYAN

Phase Two...

STEVEN

That's right. I've discussed this with you all at several points, but now I'd like to open up the conversation so we can chat about it together. I'm sure you all have a lot of questions.

DEZZY

I didn't sign up for this mission to be a birthing farm.

JACK

Don't worry, Dez, no one --

RYAN

You've got to get some new jokes, man. That one was never funny.

Dezzy smiles at Ryan.

STEVEN

Dezzy, you are not required to participate in the program. None of you are. The project would like to get a sense of how everyone feels about their involvement so we can continue to plan for the future. We've put together a simple questionnaire to help.

Steven grabs paperwork out of a file folder and gives one to each crew member.

Ryan scans the top page; questions about sexual history and how he feels about his female teammates.

RYAN

Count me out.

JACK

Are you still stuck on that stupid Emma chick? She dumped you dude. Get over it.

GREGG

(to Ryan)

I'd rather your offspring or mine running around rather than Jack's. We can't have a colony full of assholes like him.

JACK

(to Gregg)

Shut your face!

STEVEN  
 Okay, that's enough.  
 (to Ryan)  
 All we ask is that you consider it  
 further.

DEZZY  
 (to Ryan)  
 I'll sign up if you do.

JESSICA  
 (to Ryan)  
 Me too.

STEVEN  
 (to Ryan)  
 Your team needs you.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Emma checks her voicemail.

RYAN (O.S.)  
 Hey Em, it's me again. I really miss you,  
 and I'd love to talk. I know you can't  
 call me back so I'll call you again soon  
 just in case you're not trying to ignore  
 me like I think you are. Okay, love you.  
 Bye.

Emma checks her texts. She has two from Jason: WANT TO GO  
 OUT TONIGHT? The second one reads: STOP IGNORING ME

She replays Ryan's message.

RYAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Hey Em, it's me again. I really miss you,  
 and I'd love to talk.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - RYAN'S BUNKER -- EVENING

Emma walks into Ryan's room and finds him sitting cross-  
 legged on the floor meditating. His meditation mala beads  
 are in his right hand.

EMMA  
 Hey, didn't you hear the front desk  
 paging you?

Ryan doesn't stir. He's not even breathing.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Hello? Can you hear me?

Emma touches his shoulder. Ryan's eyes fly open and he inhales deeply.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Ryan, are you okay?

RYAN

I'm fine. When did you get here?

EMMA

Just now. You weren't answering the page so Frank let me inside. What's going on with you?

RYAN

I went really deep into my meditation. I was... somewhere else for a while.

EMMA

That was really weird.

RYAN

Sorry to freak you out. That's not the impression I wanted to make our first time seeing each other again.

EMMA

So what did you want to tell me?

Ryan hugs Emma. She's the first to pull away.

RYAN

It's really good to see you. I've missed you so much.

EMMA

Please don't.

RYAN

I've agreed to consider participation in Phase Two.

EMMA

Good for you.

RYAN

But I'm not actually going to participate. I needed to agree in order to show team leadership, but I have no intention of going through with it. I'll serve a much different purpose up there.

EMMA

Why are you telling me this?

RYAN

Do you believe in our soul connection?

Emma tries to fight back tears.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I still have two months left on Earth.  
I'd really like to spend that time with  
you.

EMMA

You're trying to torture me, aren't you?  
These last few months have been so hard  
trying to get over you. Now you want to  
lure me back in so we can say goodbye all  
over again?

RYAN

I'll always be apart of you, even when  
I'm on Mars. That won't change even when  
we're millions of miles away. Our spirits  
will always be intertwined, no matter  
what.

When Emma doesn't respond --

RYAN (CONT'D)

Earth and Mars are only far in the realm  
of illusion. I love you, Emma Davis.

Emma contemplates.

EMMA

I wish I didn't... but I love you, too.

Ryan rests his forehead on hers and kisses Emma. She  
kisses him back.

Their passion quickly grows into a heated make-out  
session.

Ryan leads Emma out of the room.

RYAN

There aren't any cameras over here...

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - CORRIDOR

Ryan pushes Emma against the wall behind an industrial  
water heater.

She jumps up and straddles his waist with her legs. Her moans are quiet as they make love just past a security camera's vantage point.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- MEDITATION MONTAGE

Emma comes home from her tryst.

RYAN (V.O.)

Earth and Mars are only far in the realm of illusion. Will you try to stay connected after I'm gone?

EMMA (V.O.)

How?

She sits on the floor to meditate. She wriggles around trying to get comfortable.

She notices her fridge's HUM for the first time. She itches her arm. Her phone beeps. She screams out in frustration and gives up.

Day after day, she sits in meditation. She goes from restless to still after several attempts.

Deep in meditation for the first time, Emma smiles.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - ROOFTOP -- NIGHT

COUNTDOWN TITLE: 1 MONTH FROM LAUNCH

Ryan leads Emma onto the roof of HQ, his hands covering her eyes.

RYAN

Ta-da!

He removes his hands, and she sees his surprise - a candlelit picnic for two, complete with a telescope.

They sit on a Man on Mars fleece blanket, for sale in the gift shop for \$15.99.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I hope you like freeze-dried astronaut food.

Emma looks inside the picnic basket and finds wine, cheese, meats, and fruits.

EMMA

Where did you get all of this?

RYAN

Now that we're only a month away from launch, there are a few perks. They want us to enjoy our last few weeks on Earth. I guess they're not sadists after all.

EMMA

Only one month away already?

Ryan feeds Emma a strawberry and kisses her lips.

RYAN

Tonight, let's make time stand still. Let me show you something.

Ryan moves over to the telescope and offers it to Emma. She puts her eye to the glass and sees Mars as a speck of orange glow.

EMMA

Wow, it's beautiful.

RYAN

Promise me you'll never stop looking up.

Emma takes her eye away from the telescope and focuses on Ryan.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Promise me you'll never stop looking within. Your meditation practice will help us feel connected when I'm gone.

EMMA

I promise.

Emma kisses Ryan and jumps on top of him, taking advantage of their physical closeness while she still can.

INT. PHARMACY -- DAY

Emma looks over her shoulder to see if anyone is watching her. With the coast clear, she grabs a pregnancy test off the shelf and hurries to the front counter. She grabs a bunch of other stuff near the front to disguise her purchase.

The cashier doesn't recognize her.

EXT. PHARMACY -- MOMENTS LATER

Emma is photographed outside the pharmacy by a PAPARAZZI.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM -- DAY

Pan up from a POSITIVE PREGNANCY TEST. Emma looks at herself in the mirror.

EMMA

Hey Ryan, exciting news!

She shakes her head and starts over.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Ryan, I'm pregnant! Oh my god, I'm pregnant.

Tears form in her eyes.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I don't want this to affect your decision to go... Would it affect his decision to go?

Her reflection looks just as conflicted as she is.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT

A mob of paparazzi swarms Emma as she exits her car. She pushes past them to get to the front door.

PAPARAZZI

How are you coping? Are the Martian Six fully prepared? Do you think Ryan will die up there?

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - COMMON ROOM -- NIGHT

COUNTDOWN TITLE: Two weeks, four days, seventeen hours, eight minutes, and nineteen seconds.

Emma paces the room, shaking.

RYAN

Is everything okay?

EMMA

It's just the press. They're relentless.

RYAN

Don't let them get to you.

Ryan lights a cigarette and takes a puff. She throws him a look.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, I'm stressed. Besides, I figure it's one of those things I can experience for the last time ever.

Emma steps away from him, not wanting to be near the smoke.

EMMA

Ryan, there's something I need to tell you.

Gregg flies in.

GREGG

Fuck!

RYAN

What's wrong?

GREGG

Same damn error code.

EMMA

What error code?

RYAN

No big deal, Em.

GREGG

No big deal when we're on another planet. Just a matter of life or death that's all.

EMMA

(to Ryan)

You should go help him troubleshoot.

GREGG

Could ya, mate?

RYAN

(to Emma)

Are you sure? We only have two dates left.

EMMA

Go.

Ryan kisses her forehead.

RYAN

I'll be back in twenty minutes.

Ryan and Gregg run out. Emma sits on the couch and turns on the TV.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - COMMON ROOM -- MUCH LATER

Ryan wakes Emma up.

RYAN

I'm so sorry.

EMMA

It's okay.

INT. MAN ON MARS HQ - RYAN'S ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Ryan and Emma sneak into his room and lay on the bed.

EMMA

(whispers)

Ryan, I need to tell you something.

Too late, he's already asleep.

INT. MAN ON MARS HQ - RYAN'S ROOM -- MORNING

Emma wakes up to an empty bed. There's a note on the pillow from Ryan: SORRY, DUTY CALLS. LOVE YOU! RYAN

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - FLIGHT SIMULATOR

Emma tiptoes past the large rocket on her way out. The Martian Six stand around with a team of ENGINEERS. Jack and Amy argue, but Emma can't hear the details.

Ryan wipes his face in frustration. Feeling Emma's presence, he looks up and sees her leaving. She blows him a kiss, and he smiles.

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

COUNTDOWN TITLE: One week, five days, twenty hours, twenty-nine minutes, and fifty-seven seconds.

Emma races out of the bathroom wearing nothing but a towel. Her phone rings, but she can't find it.

She finally finds it in her workbag and sees it's Ryan calling, but it goes to voicemail before she can intercept.

He calls right back.

EMMA

Hey, what's going on?

RYAN (O.S.)

Please don't hate me, but I have to cancel our date tonight.

EMMA

Is everything okay?

RYAN (O.S.)

I'm trying to be the best leader I can be, but--

EMMA

You're amazing. But if this isn't feeling right, you still have time to walk away. Do you want to walk away, Ryan?

RYAN (O.S.)

No, I can't. It's my destiny.

EMMA

Are you sure? Things change. Maybe you should do a little more soul-searching.

RYAN (O.S.)

I meditate all the time, and the answer is still the same.

EMMA

I understand. Ryan?

RYAN (O.S.)

Yeah?

She pauses before --

EMMA

Can you try to get me in another time during the week?

RYAN (O.S.)

I'll definitely try.

EMMA

I'll come anytime, even if I have to  
leave work. John will understand.

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- NIGHT

COUNTDOWN TITLE: Five days, sixteen hours, forty-two  
minutes, and ten-seconds.

Emma fights past photographers to get inside.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

Ryan's there to greet her with a big hug. Photographers  
flash through the glass windows.

When they finally separate, Emma sees black circles under  
Ryan's eyes.

EMMA

How's everything going?

Ryan takes her hand and leads her to the elevator.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - ELEVATOR -- MOMENTS LATER

As the elevator doors close, Ryan swoops Emma into her  
arms. They make out, not realizing the doors open on the  
next floor.

Steven Gross steps into the elevator. He coughs, and they  
realize his presence.

STEVEN

Big day coming up. You ready, champ?

Ryan nods, and they all stand in silence. The door opens  
to the basement.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

See you at the launch.

Steven exits one way, and Ryan and Emma the other.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - CORRIDOR

EMMA

Are you guys going to be ready on launch  
day?

RYAN

We don't have a choice.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - RYAN'S ROOM -- NIGHT

Emma and Ryan peel off each other's clothes. They ignore the security camera in the corner.

They enjoy the last night of soft caresses, the last night of endless kisses.

LATER:

Ryan and Emma lay naked in each other's arms. Emma plays with the meditation mala beads around his neck.

EMMA

Ryan--

RYAN

You're an amazing lover.

EMMA

You're not so bad yourself.

RYAN

But you're so much more than that. You're also my best friend. You're the bravest person I know.

EMMA

What? I'm not brave. You are! You're the one that's not afraid to blast off into space.

RYAN

No, you're so much braver than I am. You leapt into this crazy relationship with me despite everything. So many women would have tried to convince me to stay, but not you. That means so much to me.

Emma's smile hides all that she wants to say.

EXT. LAUNCH SITE -- DAY

COUNTDOWN TITLE: One hour, forty-one minutes and two seconds.

The Martian Six rocket stands erect in a field miles away from the SPECTATORS; people wearing homemade spacesuits and holding signs *Take me with you!* and *Can I go next?*

A fence holds the NEWS CREWS and crowds back. Emma pushes her way to the fence to get a better look.

A mile away is a control tower with a red digital clock counting down the moments until launch.

Emma pushes her way back through the crowd and spots Steven Gross on a golf cart. She runs after him.

EMMA

Mr. Gross.

He looks back and stops the golf cart for her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Please, can you take me to the launch pad? I have this pass.

She flashes a VIP badge.

STEVEN

I can't take you to the launch pad, but I can take you to the control tower. Ryan will be making his way there shortly.

She sits next to him in the golf cart, and he drives toward the tower.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

It's been quite the journey for you, hasn't it, Miss Davis?

Emma doesn't respond.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

I'm not a big believer in love. At least, I never used to be. But what you and Ryan have endured is... truly remarkable. I'm blown away by your devotion and I'm sorry for anything I might have done to stand in the way of that. I was just doing what was best for the mission.

Emma looks at him, and he smiles.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Let me know if there's anything I can do for you after the launch.

The golf cart pulls up to the control tower. Steven waves a security badge over a lock, and the steel door opens.

INT. CONTROL TOWER -- CONTINUOUS

Steven and Emma walk up a flight of stairs in silence.

They enter a large circular room with windows on all sides. Rows of ENGINEERS man computers. There's a countdown clock inside as well.

The Man on Mars rocket stands in the distance. Emma cranes her neck to take it all in.

She sees a white van driving to the fence line. The Martian Six pile out and wave to their adoring fans. Emma watches Ryan from afar.

He gets back into the van with his teammates, and they head over to the control tower.

Emma steadies herself.

Moments later, the Martian Six enter. Ryan walks right over to Emma while the others greet the engineers.

Ryan puts his forehead to Emma's.

RYAN

This isn't goodbye. I'll see you in your dreams. There will always be a piece of me with you.

EMMA

More than you know.

Emma puts her hand to her stomach.

STEVEN

Alright, time for the Martian Six to suit up and strap in.

Ryan and Emma both burst into tears. They melt into their last embrace. Their last kiss. Their last moment together.

EMMA

I love you so much.

RYAN

I love you, too.

Gregg puts his hand on Ryan's shoulder. The rest of the Martian Six leave the control room.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Never stop looking up. Never stop looking within.

Ryan steps back toward the door, but his hands linger, intertwined with Emma's.

In SLOW MOTION, their hands disconnect.

Ryan walks backward toward the door. Emma puts her hand back on her belly.

Ryan exits. The metal door of the control room slowly shuts.

Tears flow down Emma's cheeks. She opens her hand to see the meditation mala beads that Ryan left behind.

EXT. CONTROL TOWER -- CONTINUOUS

Ryan walks to the van where his teammates await. He looks back up to the control tower, but doesn't see Emma.

He gets into the van, and they drive off toward the rocket.

The IMAGE of Emma holding her stomach FLASHES through his mind, zooming in on the placement of her hand.

INT. ROCKET PLATFORM -- MOMENTS LATER

The Martian Six enter the rocket and prepare for take off.

The LAST GOODBYE FLASHES through Ryan's mind, again emphasizing the placement of Emma's hand on her stomach.

RYAN

There will always be a piece of me with you.

EMMA

More than you know.

BACK TO:

The rocket door closes.

Ryan sits in his launch seat and buckles his safety belt.

GREGG  
(to Ryan)  
You okay, mate?

RYAN  
(whispers)  
She's pregnant.

GREGG  
What's that?

RYAN  
She's pregnant. I can't go, I have to  
stay with them!

Ryan unbuckles his belt and flies out of his seat.

JACK  
What the hell are you doing? Sit down.

Ryan runs to the closed door of the craft and tries to open the hatch. It's locked. His teammates watch, confused.

Ryan falls to his knees and bangs on the door for help.

RYAN  
Please! Let me out! She's pregnant!

INT. CONTROL TOWER -- CONTINUOUS

Ryan's cries echo through the control room over the speakers. Engineers fly into chaos, discussing the situation in groups.

The countdown clock continues to tick.

EMMA  
He wants to stay.

One engineer turns off the volume of the speakers. The rest of them go back to their stations.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
What are you doing? Let him out! He wants  
to be let out!

She races over to a row of computers, searching for a magic button to open the door to free Ryan.

ENGINEER  
Someone get her out of here.

Steven grabs Emma by the arm, but she pulls away. He grabs her around the waist and tries to pull her outside.

EMMA

What are you doing? You just said you would help me. You said you believed in our love. Let me back in and let him out!

Two SECURITY GUARDS walk toward them.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(screams)

Ryan!

INT. ROCKET -- CONTINUOUS

Ryan pounds on the exit hatch.

GREGG

Please brother, don't do this. It's time to go, and there's no way out.

Ryan sobs as the countdown to launch comes to a head.

RYAN

She's pregnant...

EXT. CONTROL TOWER -- CONTINUOUS

The two security guards push Emma outside just as the rocket's booster ignites.

EMMA

Stop! He wants to stay!

Everything moves in SLOW MOTION:

Emma falls to her knees and sobs. Her cries are drowned out by the sheer force of the rocket. Five, four, three, two, one... liftoff.

The rocket launches into outer space, never to return again. Cheers explode from the fence line and from the control room.

Her hair blows in the wake of the launch. She clutches Ryan's mala beads to her chest.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM -- MORNING

Ashley opens the curtains, bringing light into the dark room. She brings Emma breakfast in bed.

EMMA

I'm not hungry.

ASHLEY

You're eating for two now, Em. You've got to take care of yourself.

EMMA

I knew this day would come, but Ashley, you should have heard him. He was crying out to stay. The anguish in his voice... He decided at the last second to stay, and they refused to listen. They refused to let him out.

ASHLEY

How did he take the news when you told him?

EMMA

That's the weirdest part of all. I didn't tell him.

ASHLEY

Emma, how could you keep that from him?

EMMA

Don't make me explain, okay? There just wasn't a good time, but Ashley... he knew. At the last second, he just... knew. If I was stronger, if I would have told him, he would have stayed. And now I have to live with that knowledge for the rest of my life. It's all my fault.

Emma cries fresh tears.

ASHLEY

Now you have to focus on the baby. That's your life now. Ryan would be proud to see you handling all of this with grace, taking good care of yourself.

INT. ROCKET -- OUTER SPACE

The Martian Six meet as the rocket hurtles through space.

DEZZY

(to Ryan)

Based on your nervous breakdown, I don't think you should be the first to face isolation.

JACK

Agreed. I don't want this nutcase watching over my practically dead body.

RYAN

I'll never meet my unborn child that I didn't know existed until now. Cut me some slack. The isolation will be good for me. I need time to think. I need to grieve.

JACK

Raise your hand if you think we should adjust the sleep schedule.

JESSICA

Why can't we have a second person stay awake with him? I'd prefer not to do my bouts of isolation alone either.

AMY

We don't have enough rations for that, Jessica. Stop acting new.

JACK

I'll go through isolation first. Raise your hand if you're with me.

Amy and Dezzy raise their hands. Jessica crosses her arms, and Gregg stays still.

RYAN

Three against three. Without a majority vote, the sleep schedule stays intact. Don't worry about me. I got this.

They move to the hibernation quarter; a tiny room with five body harnesses together in the tight pentagon-shaped space.

JACK

(to Ryan)

Don't fuck with me.

Jack straps himself into a harness. Everyone except Ryan inserts needles into their own arms.

RYAN  
(to Amy)  
I'll wake you up in two weeks.

They put breathing masks over their faces and drift off to sleep. Ryan checks the monitors and vitals.

INT. ROCKET - OUTER SPACE -- LATER

With his teammates asleep, Ryan paces the craft. He screams, he curses, he breaks down and cries.

He collects himself and sits down to meditate.

EXT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE -- SIX MONTHS LATER

Emma pulls groceries out of her car trunk. She is full-on pregnant and surrounded by paparazzi.

PAPARAZZI  
What's the due date of the Martian's  
Baby?

Emma ignores the question and pushes past them.

INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Emma puts the grocery bags onto the counter.

ASHLEY  
Why don't you let me do that? You don't  
have to face them.

EMMA  
I can't stay cooped up inside all the  
time. It's bad enough I have to work from  
home now.

Ashley pulls a handful of tabloid magazines from the grocery bag, all of them with Emma's picture adorning the cover.

ASHLEY  
What the hell is this?

EMMA  
Some of them are actually kind of funny.

Emma points out one of the magazines with the headline *Boy? Girl? Or Alien?*

ASHLEY

You're handling this so well, Em.

Emma looks at another magazine with the headline *Martian Six Lands Safely on Mars*.

INT. MARS COLONY - HABITAT MODULE

Ryan sits in meditation. His closed eyes move quickly back and forth as if scanning for something.

He opens his eyes and gasps for air.

RYAN

(to himself)

Come on, Emma. Stay connected. Look within.

He closes his eyes and goes back into meditation.

Jessica enters through a de-pressurized hatch.

JESSICA

Ryan, I need you.

She finds him meditating. Her bleach blonde hair is now totally brown. Her spacesuit hides her voluptuous body and her face is weather-beaten.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

Oh, sorry.

Ryan opens his eyes.

RYAN

What can I help with?

JESSICA

I know you're running the greenhouse mission with Gregg, but Jack and I are really struggling with this ditch. I cannot deal with his pigheadedness for one more second.

RYAN

I've already agreed to help Amy and Dezzy with the terraforming research.

JESSICA

If we don't finish this ditch soon we won't have the radiation protection that Mr. Gross keeps going on about.

RYAN

I'll help as long as I still have time  
for my meditations.

He closes his eyes again.

INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - GUEST BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Emma pulls back the curtain and opens the window. She  
looks out into the starry night sky.

EMMA

Are you still with me, Ryan? I miss you  
so much.

Emma grabs Ryan's meditation mala beads and sits down to  
try meditation again. She closes her eyes, and her entire  
body finally relaxes fully.

A cool breeze breaks through the parted curtains and  
brushes her hair back.

Emma opens her eyes and looks around the dimly lit room.

Like a ghost, Ryan materializes on the floor in front of  
her. He sits with legs crossed and eyes closed, in quiet  
meditation.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Ryan?

Ryan opens his eyes and greets her with a smile.

EMMA (CONT'D)

How can this be?

RYAN

Earth and Mars are only far in the realm  
of illusion.

They embrace. He feels so real.

He puts his hand on her belly.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I tried to stay, but --

EMMA

I wanted to tell you, but every time I  
tried... I don't... I know there's no  
excuse...

RYAN

I understand why you didn't.

He bends down and kisses her pregnant stomach.

EMMA

It's a boy.

Ryan smiles.

RYAN

I feel so much better now that I'm with you again, even only in spirit.

EMMA

You feel so real...

RYAN

I'll connect as often as I can. Just keep looking within and you'll find me.

They share a sweet kiss. A cool breeze blows.

When Emma opens her eyes, Ryan is gone. She smiles and looks out of the window at the stars. A single tear falls down her cheek.

INT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

A DOCTOR pushes Emma in a wheelchair down the hallway. Emma breathes rhythmically, holding her very pregnant belly with one hand and gripping Ashley's hand with the other.

ASHLEY

That's right, Em. Keep breathing...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- LATER

Emma lays in bed holding her NEWBORN son. A gust of air blows through the room from the open window.

RYAN

He looks like me.

Emma looks up to see Ryan standing beside her, ghostly at first but then more and more real. He looks thinner than usual.

EMMA

You're right, he does look like you.  
How's everything going? You look like  
you've lost a lot of weight.

RYAN

I'll be fine.

EMMA

Is there --

Ashley walks into the room with snacks.

ASHLEY

Who are you talking to?

Emma looks at her sister and then back at Ryan. He's gone.

EMMA

Just talking to little Ryan Jr.

INT. MARS COLONY - MONTAGE

Ryan digs a ditch outside the habitat module.

He meditates.

He scouts a terraforming site with Amy.

He meditates.

He works in the greenhouse, he digs the ditch, he fixes a satellite.

On his way back to the habit module, he falls to his knees from exhaustion. His breath fogs his helmet.

He sits down to meditate. He's thin and pale.

RYAN

(whispers)

Emma...

INT. SENTINEL BUILDING - JOHN'S OFFICE -- DAY

JOHN

It's great to see you, Em.

EMMA

It's nice to be back in the office.

JOHN

Are the paparazzi still trying to get a picture of Junior?

EMMA

Relentlessly. Poor kid never gets to go outside. Maybe I should sell some photos to you and get it over with.

JOHN

You know we'd handle it with care.

EMMA

I know. Hey, I have some other Mars news for you.

JOHN

What have you got?

EMMA

The Martian Six have successfully pulled water from underneath the surface of Mars.

JOHN

Wow, that's huge! Let's definitely get this written up. Are we the first to have it? What's your source?

EMMA

This is going to sound crazy, but... Ryan told me... in a dream.

JOHN

Em, I have always trusted your instincts, but we can't run with a dream. Have you been sleeping enough?

EMMA

It sounds crazy, but he also told me about their first vegetable sprout two weeks before it was published.

JOHN

Let's say you're right. Then the Man on Mars project doesn't get their fees for giving away the exclusive. I know they need the money.

EMMA

Good point.

JOHN

The Man on Mars project is having a press conference in two weeks. Want to go?

EXT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- DAY

Emma flashes her pass and enters the press conference with ease.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS - PRESS CONFERENCE

Emma enters the crowded room and walks up to the front row. A seat has been reserved for her.

JASON

Emma?

Emma turns around. Jason has a seat a few rows behind her.

EMMA

Jason, how are you?

She gives him a cordial handshake.

JASON

My father finally retired so I've taken over the Globe.

EMMA

I heard. Congratulations.

JASON

Thanks. You look great. Want to grab a drink after this? It'd be great to catch up. Start over.

EMMA

I don't think so. Sorry.

JASON

(annoyed)  
Yeah, okay. Got it.

EMMA

Best of luck to you, Jason.

JASON

Ditto.

Emma turns back around. Steven Gross takes his place at a podium.

STEVEN

Thank you all for coming. The Man on Mars project is so pleased with the many successful milestones we've reached thus far. Just today we've heard that the crew has successfully extracted water from the Martian ground.

Emma smiles at the confirmation.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

We hope to hear good news soon about our terraforming project as well. As we look fondly on our thriving little colony, we must continue to look toward the future. It is my pleasure to announce to the world that we will be accepting new applicants to join the Martian Six on Mars. We'll be choosing six more citizens to depart next year. Applications will now be accepted through our website. Deadline to apply is one month from today. Thank you.

Reporters stand and converse with each other.

Steven greets Emma.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

Nice to see you again. Might you consider applying? Having you on the show would gain tons of eyeballs. You'd have a real chance of being chosen.

EMMA

If there was any chance I could take my son, I'd be the first one to sign up.

STEVEN

Sending a baby up there isn't within our abilities.

EMMA

No, I suppose not. How's Phase Two going?

STEVEN

Uh... it's still early days. Nice to see you, Miss Davis.

Steven turns to leave, but --

EMMA

Mr. Gross!

He turns back around.

EMMA (CONT'D)

How's Ryan doing really? He's looking skinny and overworked in my opinion.

STEVEN

How would you have seen him?

EMMA

Take good care of him, will you?

Emma walks away leaving Steven speechless.

INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - EMMA'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

TITLE: Two years later

RYAN JR. (2) walks into Emma's room and wakes her up.

RYAN JR.

Mommy?

EMMA

Hey honey, what are you doing up so early?

RYAN JR.

Daddy came. He gives you kiss.

Ryan Jr. kisses Emma's cheek. She hugs him tightly.

EMMA

Thanks baby. Now let's sleep a little longer.

Emma closes her eyes and quickly drifts off to sleep.

INT. MARS COLONY - HABITAT POD -- MOMENTS LATER

Emma stands in her pajamas realizing where she is. All of the Martian Six except Ryan sit at a table in the middle of the pod. Some of them are crying. All of them look sad.

EMMA

Where's Ryan?

They don't hear her.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP. Emma turns toward the noise. A waft of air encircles her.

Ryan lays in a lower bunk bed attached to a heart monitor.

Emma is instantaneously transported to his bedside.

Ryan wears a breathing mask. He is thin and sickly.

Emma hears him speaking, but his lips don't move.

RYAN

What took you so long to come? It's only thirty-four million miles.

EMMA

I got stuck in traffic.

RYAN

You're worth the wait.

Tears stream down Emma's face.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Don't cry, Em. My death is not a tragedy. I fulfilled my destiny, and I was even lucky enough to fall in love with the most incredible person along the way.

EMMA

I'm the lucky one. What happened to you, my dearest love?

RYAN

It's time.

The BEEP, BEEP, BEEP of the heart monitor flat lines. His breathing mask fogs with his last exhale.

EMMA

No!

BACK TO:

INT. ASHLEY'S HOUSE - EMMA'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

Emma sits upright in bed and screams. BEEP, BEEP, BEEP from her alarm clock. She slams her hand down to silence the crushing sound.

RYAN JR.

Mama?

EMMA

Sorry, honey. Mommy just had a bad dream.

RYAN JR.

It's okay. Daddy said don't be scared.

Emma grabs her son in her arms and cries.

INT. MAN ON MARS HEADQUARTERS -- GROSS' OFFICE -- MORNING

Emma marches into Steven's office unannounced. She still wears her pajamas.

EMMA

He's dead, isn't he?

STEVEN

Emma, it's--

EMMA

He's dead, isn't he?

STEVEN

As far as I know, he's still alive...

EMMA

Tell me the truth. All of it!

STEVEN

We do know that he has cancer.

EMMA

From what? How long have you known?

STEVEN

From the radiation. He wasn't supposed to spend so much time outside, but he felt the need to help with extra tasks. We've known for a while.

Tears stream down Emma's face.

STEVEN (CONT'D)

He wasn't supposed to be on the manual labor crew.

EMMA

You're sending more people up there knowing this?

STEVEN

Ryan helped build a tunnel that will help protect future astronauts from extreme exposure. He wasn't supposed to be out there that long, that often.

(MORE)

STEVEN (CONT'D)

But the irony is, because of him, the entire colony will be more protected. We know he's sick, but not dead. Ryan's a fighter. He's strong. He could survive this.

EMMA

Trust me. He's dead.

STEVEN

How do you know?

Emma walks away without answering.

EXT. BEACH -- DAY

A gaggle of reporters line the beach, along with thousands of PEOPLE dressed in athletic gear. A podium is erected on the sand, surrounded by flowers and balloons. Emma walks to the podium to address the audience.

Ashley holds RYAN JR. proudly behind Emma.

EMMA

Thank you all so much for coming out today. I am so happy to report that the Ryan Clarke Beach Run and Walk has already raised over a million dollars for the colony on Mars.

The crowd cheers.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Thank you so much to everyone who donated and to everyone who is here today to run or walk! For those of you at home watching this, please visit us online to join a local walk in your area. Alright, let's get this party started!

People run and walk down the beach.

Emma joins Ashley and Ryan Jr. They walk down the beach together.

A reporter approaches Emma.

REPORTER

Isn't this the same beach you were first photographed with Ryan?

EMMA

Yes, that's right.

Emma looks out into the ocean. In a stream of sunlight, she sees herself and Ryan embracing in the water.

Emma smiles and continues walking. The wind blows with a whisper from the cosmos.

RYAN  
(whispers)  
I love you.

EMMA  
(whispers)  
I love you too.

Ryan's GHOSTLY FIGURE walks next to Emma and Ryan Jr. His spirit grabs Emma's hand and they walk off into the sunshine together.

THE END