

PASSENGERS

by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. INTERSTELLAR SPACE 1

A million suns shine in the dark.

A STARSHIP cuts through the night: a gleaming white cruiser. Galleries of windows. Flying decks and observation domes.

On the hull: *EXCELSIOR* - A *HomeStead Company Starship*.

The ship flashes through a nebula. Space-dust sparkles as it whips over the hull, betraying the ship's dizzying speed.

The nebula boils in the ship's wake. The *Excelsior* streaks on, spotless and beautiful as a daydream.

2 INT. STARSHIP *EXCELSIOR* - GRAND CONCOURSE 2

A wide plaza. Above, an atrium cuts through seven decks, creating tiers of promenades framing a vast skylight.

The promenades are empty. Chairs unoccupied. Beetle-like robots vacuum the carpets and wax the floors.

3 CAFETERIA 3

Super-modern and gleaming. Hundreds of tables, all empty.

4 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK 4

Lounge furniture and star-filled windows. Completely deserted. A robot on spindly legs washes the glass.

5 HIBERNATION BAY 5

Endless corridors lined with vertical glass tubes. Inside each tube stands a PASSENGER. Eyes closed in sleep. If they're breathing you can't tell by looking.

They sleep on their feet, leaning against padded supports. Straps secure them in place; sensors adhere to their skin. They wear shorts and tank tops with HomeStead Company logos.

We survey their faces. No children, no senior citizens. Men and women of every ethnicity in the prime of their lives.

We settle on one man. JIM PRESTON, 38. Sound asleep. A small display on his pod reads:

JAMES PRESTON
Rate 2 Mechanical Engineer
Denver, Colorado

Age: 38
Blood type: A+
Passenger class: silver
Fare: one-way

A deep BOOM. Echoes roll down the corridors.

Lights wink on in Jim's hibernation pod. Machinery hums to life. Instruments beep and chitter.

Medical data fills the pod's screen. Jim's temperature rises. His heart begins to beat. He takes a breath.

Jim opens his eyes.

Groggy, blinking, seeing nothing.

The backrest behind him converts into a recliner, lowering him into a seated position.

The sensors on his skin drop off and snake back into the pod's machinery.

A video screen descends before Jim's eyes.

ONSCREEN - A beautiful stewardess appears, beaming at the camera. She is inhumanly perfect, a computer-generated image.

VIDEO STEWARDESS
Good Morning, *James*!

JIM
(disoriented)
Jim. What the...

VIDEO STEWARDESS
Don't worry, *Jim*. It's normal to feel confused. You've just spent a hundred and twenty years in suspended animation.

She makes it sound sexy. Jim scowls and rubs his eyes.

ONSCREEN - An animation. Happy people go to sleep in glass tubes in a hospital. The tubes are loaded onto a spaceship.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)
You're a passenger on the Starship *Excelsior* - a Homestead Company Starship. We've nearly completed the 120-year flight from Earth to your new home - the colony world of Homestead II. Congratulations!

ONSCREEN - The *Excelsior* leaves a skyscraper-covered Earth and soars through space to a lush green Homestead II.

JIM
(remembering)
Oh, yeah.

VIDEO STEWARDESS
The *Excelsior* is on final approach.
(sensually)
For the next two months, you'll
enjoy luxury space travel. Food.
Fun. New friends.

ONSCREEN - The ship's lavish amenities: fine dining, sports facilities, shops, all swarming with happy passengers.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)
Then you'll start your new life on
Homestead II. A fresh start. Back
to basics. Room for all your
dreams!

ONSCREEN - Publicity shots of Homestead II. Mountains, forests, beaches. Settlements ringed by farmland.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)
Your wake-up capsules and nutrient
juice will help you recover from
hibernation!

Pills rattle into a dish; a glass of pink juice appears. He takes his pills and gulps his juice with a grimace.

Jim's backrest eases him onto his feet. A drawer pops open, revealing a Homestead Company bathrobe and slippers.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)
Make yourself comfortable in your
complimentary robe and slippers.

He puts them on.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)
Your shipcard is your key to the
starship.
(flirtatiously)
Don't lose it!

The pod produces Jim's shipcard: a plastic ID card on a lanyard. He hangs it around his neck.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)
Now you're ready to go to your
cabin. Make yourself at home! Enjoy
the rest of your voyage, *Jim!*

JIM
Right.

Jim steps out of his pod into the corridor.

All the other pods are closed, the people inside asleep. A look of concern crosses Jim's face.

VIDEO STEWARDESS

Jim, your cabin is this way.

The screen flips around to face him. The video stewardess points down the corridor.

VIDEO STEWARDESS (CONT'D)

Take Elevator D to deck seven. Your cabin number is on your shipcard.

JIM

Thanks.

He shuffles down the corridor in his slippers, rubbing his face. Having trouble keeping his eyes open.

Behind him, his pod closes up. Its screen reads PASSENGER DISCHARGED.

6 ELEVATOR FOYER

6

Jim finds a bank of elevators. As he approaches, the indicators blink on. An elevator opens, spilling light.

He steps inside, and muzak begins to play.

7 DECK SEVEN

7

A corridor lined with doors. A CLEANING ROBOT vacuums.

Jim appears. Instantly the corridor lights brighten. The cleaning robot rolls past Jim.

CLEANING ROBOT

Hello, Passenger.

JIM

(startled)

Hello, robot.

Jim follows wall markings to his cabin. Lets himself in.

8 JIM'S CABIN

8

Cozy but small. A bed, a desk, an armchair. No window.

A SCREEN lights up. The HomeStead Company theme music plays. An ANNOUNCER speaks.

ANNOUNCER

Welcome to your cabin, *Jim*! Your home until we make landfall.

Jim doesn't pay attention. Pokes around, opening drawers.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Over the next two months, you'll prepare for your new life on Homestead II.

Jim peers into the tiny bathroom. There's a little video screen, and the presentation's running there too.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Passengers are organized into Learning Groups for orientation. You've been assigned to Learning group...*thirty-eight*! Don't forget!

ONSCREEN: "Learning Group 38."

The DOORBELL rings.

Jim opens the door eagerly - and deflates. No one there.

He looks down. A waist-high CARGO ROBOT peers up at him with goggle eyes. It carries two suitcases and a duffel bag.

CARGO ROBOT

Passenger James Preston?

JIM

Jim. Yeah.

CARGO ROBOT

Your luggage, Passenger Jim. Swipe your shipcard to confirm.

Jim swipes his shipcard through a slot on top of the robot. The robot scoots inside and deposits Jim's bags on the floor.

CARGO ROBOT (CONT'D)

Enjoy your luggage!

JIM

Thanks.

CARGO ROBOT

Thank you, Passenger Jim!

The robot zips out the door.

Jim looks up and down the corridor. The receding robot is the only sign of life. He steps back inside.

ANNOUNCER

Your group's orientation starts in forty-five minutes. Join them in Conference Room Twenty on Deck One.

9 DECK FOUR - SHOPPING DISTRICT

9

A mall with tiled floors and ornate storefronts.

Jim walks along in his robe and slippers. Storefront signs flicker to life as he passes.

A dry fountain gushes water at his approach.

10 GRAND CONCOURSE

10

Jim stops for a minute to take it in. Tiers of balconies rise a hundred feet to a skylight filled with stars.

JIM

Hello?

His voice echoes. There's no one there.

11 DECK ONE - CONFERENCE ROOM TWENTY

11

Forty chairs around a big table. A large screen on the wall.

ONSCREEN: A digital INSTRUCTOR, a handsome woman of middle age, waits with a computer's infinite patience.

Jim walks in. The door slides closed behind him.

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR

Hello, Passengers. Will you all please take a seat.

Jim looks around. He's the only one there. He sits.

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)

Earth is a prosperous planet. The cradle of civilization. A world with a long, proud history. But for many, it's also overpopulated. Overpriced. Overrated. Overrun.

Behind the Instructor, scenes of Earth's urban sprawl.

JIM

(raising his hand)

Can I just...

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR

No questions until the end, please.

JIM
But I need...

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR
The Colonies offer an alternative.
A better way of life. And none is
more beautiful than Homestead II,
the Jewel of the Occupied Worlds.

12 ONE HOUR LATER

12

Jim sits wearily, chin propped on his hand.

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR
...thriving job markets in mining,
farming and manufacturing. An
explosion in the cultural arts.
And, if you long for the life less
civilized, you can apply for a
pioneer permit and seek your
fortune in the wild.
(a pregnant pause)
Any questions?

JIM
(exploding)
Where IS everybody?!

The Instructor pauses. The question seems to confuse her.

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR
We're all on the Starship
Excelsior. Five thousand passengers
and fifty-eight crew members.

JIM
But I'm the only one awake.

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR
No, all the passengers wake up at
the same time.

JIM
Then something's wrong with the
other hibernation pods.

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR
Impossible. Hibernation pods are
fail-safe.

JIM
So why am I the only one here?

VIDEO INSTRUCTOR
 (with a sunny smile)
 I'm sorry. I don't understand your
 question.

13 GRAND CONCOURSE

13

Jim finds an INFOMAT - an information kiosk.

A banner scrolls across the screen: ASK ME A QUESTION!

JIM
 (tapping the screen)
 Hey.

INFOMAT
 (insanely cheerful)
 Hello! What's your question?

JIM
 I need to talk to a person. A real
 live person.

INFOMAT
 What sort of person? Personal
 trainer? Travel planner? Therapist?

JIM
 Someone in charge.

INFOMAT
 The Ship Steward handles passenger
 affairs. You can find him in his
 office on the Service Deck.

ONSCREEN: A dotted line on the map shows how to get there.

JIM
 Thank you.

INFOMAT
 Happy to help!

14 SERVICE DECK - CORRIDOR

14

Jim appears around the corner. The lights brighten, the
 ventilation kicks up a notch.

He finds a door marked SHIP STEWARD.

15 SHIP STEWARD'S OFFICE

15

The lights flash on as Jim enters, revealing...an office in
 mothballs. Empty chairs, barren desks.

JIM
Not good.

16 ELEVATOR LOBBY

16

Another Infomat. Jim arrives at a jog.

INFOMAT
Hello! What's your quest...

JIM
Who's flying the ship?

INFOMAT
The Excelsior bridge crew includes
the Captain, the Pilot, the Chief
Navigator...

JIM
The Captain. I want to talk to the
Captain.

INFOMAT
The Captain rarely handles
passenger queries directly.

JIM
Emergency, okay? Where is he?

INFOMAT
The Captain is usually found on the
Bridge, on the Command Deck.

ONSCREEN: A helpful map shows the way.

17 COMMAND DECK

17

Jim finds the door to the Bridge. He opens it eagerly - only
to find a second door behind it - an armored hatch labeled
FIREWALL and SECURE ACCESS AREA.

A porthole of thick glass gives a narrow view of the Bridge.
It's deserted. Instrument lights gleam in the dark.

JIM
(pounding on the hatch)
Come on! What the hell is
happening?

18 DECK THREE - CAFE COURTYARD

18

Jim RUNS past restaurants, lounges, shops. All deserted.

JIM
 (panic in his voice)
 Hello? Hello!

19 SERVICE DECK - CELESTIAL PROMENADE

19

The highest promenade on the ship: windows on all sides. The huge skylight just overhead. It's almost like being outside.

The atrium plunges seven stories to the Concourse below.

JIM
 (an echoing shout)
 Hello!

A SOUND behind him makes him spin.

But it's just a window-washer: a robot with long spindly limbs. It moves past Jim, polishing windows. Oblivious.

A sign catches Jim's attention: "*OBSERVATORY - Your Place In the Universe.*"

21 OBSERVATORY

21

Jim enters the planetarium of the future: theater seats facing a holographic "stage."

IN HOLOGRAM: An image of the starship hangs in space. Glowing text reads "Look through the eyes of the Starship *Excelsior!*!"

Jim goes to the control podium. Touches the screen.

OBSERVATORY
 (a voice as deep as God's)
 What can I show you?

JIM
 We're supposed to land in a few weeks, but I think the guys who fly the ship are still asleep.

OBSERVATORY
 I don't understand. What can I show you?

JIM
 (impatiently)
 Show me Homestead II.

IN HOLOGRAM: The planet Homestead II, Earth's twin sister.

OBSERVATORY
Homestead II is the fourth planet
in the Bhakti system.

JIM
Right. And how soon are we landing?

OBSERVATORY
Approximately ninety years.

JIM
What?

OBSERVATORY
We will touch down on Homestead II
in ninety years, three weeks, and
one day.

JIM
No. How long ago did we leave
Earth?

OBSERVATORY
Approximately thirty years ago.

Jim stares at the hologram in horrified realization.

JIM
I'm supposed to be sleeping. I woke
up too soon.

OBSERVATORY
I don't understand.

JIM
Neither do I.

Jim sprints down a row of hibernation pods. Heart pounding.
Slides to a stop in front of his empty pod.

Jim fusses with the controls, pressing buttons. But the
screen just reads "PASSENGER DISCHARGED."

Crouching, he pulls at the pod's canopy, trying to open it
with his hands. It doesn't budge.

JIM
I'm supposed to be in there!

23 HIBERNATION BAY - CORRIDOR

23

Jim trudges between rows of sleeping passengers to the aft end of the huge Hibernation Bay.

There he finds a hatch labeled CREW HIBERNATION FACILITY.

Jim opens it eagerly - and finds another armored hatch with a small porthole. Labels reads FIREWALL and SECURE ACCESS AREA.

Jim presses the switch. No result.

He peers through the porthole. Inside, the entire crew of the starship stands sleeping.

24 DECK ONE - SHOPPING DISTRICT

24

Jim trudges listlessly back across the shopping plaza he ran across before.

25 CAFETERIA

25

Machines offer food and drink in dizzying variety. Each machine has a card slot and a screen displaying its menu.

Jim swipes his shipcard at a coffee machine. It offers sixteen kind of coffee, from a simple cup of joe to the "Mocha Cappuccino Extreme." Jim picks the best of the lot.

COFFEE MACHINE

Sorry. The Mocha Cappuccino Extreme
is reserved for gold-class
passengers. Select another item.

Jim presses one button after another, denied each time.

COFFEE MACHINE (CONT'D)

Sorry...sorry...sorry...sorry...
Large coffee.

JIM

Are you serious?

COFFEE MACHINE

Please enjoy.

26 GRAND CONCOURSE - INFOMAT

26

Jim stands at an Infomat with a coffee in one hand and an egg sandwich in the other.

JIM
 (with his mouth full)
 How do I make a phone call?

INFOMAT
 Your cabin telephone...

JIM
 No. Long distance. How do I send a
 message to Earth?

INFOMAT
 Interstellar messages are sent by
 laser array. Speak to the Duty
 Officer in the Comm Center.

ONSCREEN: The Infomat displays a helpful map.

INFOMAT (CONT'D)
 Please note that interstellar
 messaging is an expensive service.

JIM
 (walking away)
 Bite me.

INFOMAT
 Happy to help!

27 COMMAND DECK - COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

27

Two communications booths for passenger use. Jim sits at one
 of these. Swipes his shipcard.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
 Planet and connection?

JIM
 Earth. The HomeStead Company.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
 There are thirty thousand phone
 numbers listed under "HomeStead
 Company." What number?

JIM
 I don't know. I'm emigrating to
 Homestead II. I have an emergency.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
 Division of Colonial Affairs,
 Homestead II Program. I have a
 Customer Help Line.

JIM
Sounds about right.

The booth's camera zooms in on Jim's face. A microphone extends toward his mouth. The red RECORDING light comes on.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
Begin message.

Jim's a deer in the headlights. He collects himself.

JIM
Hi. I'm Jim Preston. I'm a passenger on the *Excelsior*. Something went wrong with my hibernation pod and I woke up too soon. Ninety years too soon. I can't get back to sleep. Nobody else is awake.

(with growing panic)
If I don't figure something out, I'm going to die of old age before we get to Homestead II. So help me out, here.

(takes a deep breath)
I'll keep trying to fix this. Maybe I missed something simple. But I could use a hand. Thanks.

Jim pushes the "SEND" button. Sits back in his chair.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
Message sent.

JIM
Outstanding.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
Message will arrive in nineteen years.

JIM
Say what?

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
Earliest possible reply in fifty-five years.

JIM
No.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
We are nineteen light years from Earth.

(MORE)

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH (CONT'D)

By the time your message arrives,
 we will be thirty-six light-years
 from Earth. We apologize for the
 delay.

JIM
 (devastated)
 Fifty-five years.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH
 That will be six thousand dollars.

28

GRAND CONCOURSE

28

Jim crosses the Concourse like a sleepwalker, shell-shocked.

He comes to the Concourse Bar: the fanciest watering hole on the ship. Black leather stools along a marble bartop.

Jim touches the bartop...and a MAN swings up behind the bar - as if mounted on a hinge. A handsome fellow in a bartender's uniform - his hair and skin eerily perfect. This is ARTHUR.

Jim jumps out of his skin.

ARTHUR
 What can I get you?

JIM
 I thought I was the only one awake!

ARTHUR
 I doubt it. It's the middle of the afternoon. Are you drinking or not?

He produces a cloth and polishes the bartop. In a startling movement, he glides the length of the bar, polishing all the way, and glides back as if on roller skates.

Jim steps up on the footrail and peers behind the bar.

The bartender's body stops at the waist. He's mounted on rails, built into the bar.

JIM
 (deflated)
 You're a robot.

ARTHUR
 Android, technically. Arthur's the name.

Jim settles onto a barstool.

JIM
 I'm Jim.

Arthur shakes his hand.

ARTHUR

Pleased to meet you, Jim. What'll it be?

JIM

Whiskey, neat.

Arthur pours. Jim knocks the drink back. Points into the empty glass while his eyes water. Arthur pours another. Jim takes a big swallow and sets the glass down half-full.

JIM (CONT'D)

Arthur, how much do you know about the ship?

ARTHUR

I don't know. I know some things.

JIM

What do I do if my hibernation pod malfunctions?

ARTHUR

Impossible.

JIM

Yeah, well, I woke up early.

ARTHUR

(reassuringly)

Can't happen.

JIM

(a challenge)

How long until we get to Homestead II?

ARTHUR

Ninety years or so.

JIM

And when are all of us passengers supposed to wake up?

ARTHUR

Not until the last two months.

JIM

So how can I be sitting here with ninety years to go?

Arthur's eyes take on a faraway look. His head twitches.

ARTHUR

It's not possible for you to be here.

He smiles as if he's solved the problem.

JIM

You're a big help.

ARTHUR

Sorry, Jim. My specialty is cocktails and conversation. Take your fancy trick questions to one of those Infomats. They think they know everything.

JIM

Arthur, I'm in trouble. I'm screwed. I am completely, ridiculously screwed.

ARTHUR

Lot of self-pity.

JIM

Self pity? I'm going to die of old age on this ship!

ARTHUR

Jim, we all die. Even androids end up on the scrap heap. It's not dying that matters, it's living. This is your life. Are you going to live it or lie down and die?

Jim shakes his head in surrender.

JIM

What do I owe you?

ARTHUR

Jim, the booze is on the house.

29

INT. JIM'S CABIN - MORNING

29

An alarm clock rings. Jim rolls out of bed. Unzips a suitcase and starts pulling clothing out.

30

ELEVATOR

30

Jim ascends, dressed in his own clothes - jeans, a T-shirt.

The doors open at the Command Deck. A sign reads "Crew Area - No Passengers beyond this point." Jim breezes past the sign.

31 COMMAND DECK

31

Jim prowls the floor, opening doors.

He finds a room marked EMERGENCY GEAR and opens it eagerly. It's full of space suits and oxygen tanks.

He peers into a red HAZARD cabinet: fire extinguishers, an axe, an epoxy foamer for atmosphere leaks - all behind glass.

He opens another door marked EMERGENCY MANUALS - and smiles: shelf after shelf of waterproof, fireproof technical manuals.

Jim pulls a manual labeled HIBERNATION SYSTEMS.

32 INT. SUBDECK B - PASSENGER CARGO STOWAGE - DAY

32

A cavernous cargo hold. Jim drives a forklift down the aisle, scanning container numbers.

He finds a container labeled "PASSENGER #1498, JAMES PRESTON." The forklift pulls it from the rack.

33 THE CARGO CONTAINER

33

Opens to reveal Jim's belongings. Cartons marked "sports" or "clothes" or "kitchen stuff."

Amidst the cartons, a heavy-duty TOOLBOX. Jim hauls it out.

34 HIBERNATION BAY

34

Jim sits in front of his empty hibernation pod. His toolbox beside him. The Hibernation Systems manual lies open.

Jim tinkers with the electronics inside his pod.

The pod hums to life. Its data screen flickers with information. Mysterious WHIRS and THUNKS.

The canopy opens.

Elated, Jim bounces to his feet. Strips off his shirt and scrambles in. The canopy closes over him.

He assumes the position, his back again the backrest, waiting for the pod to put him to sleep.

Nothing happens. He pokes at the ports where the sensors and intravenous lines used to protrude. Shakes the machine.

He gives up. It's not working.

But now he's trapped inside the pod.

He pushes at the canopy, but it's locked shut. He pounds on the glass with no effect. Finally he loses it, shouting and stamping, hammering and raging - all muffled behind glass.

Exhausted, he sinks to the floor of the pod, staring out at his tools and his manual, his discarded shirt.

Then he notices the emergency release handle down by the floor. He pulls it, and the canopy pops open.

35 OUTSIDE THE POD

35

The pod's display screen blinks back to its original message. PASSENGER DISCHARGED.

36 CREW HIBERNATION FACILITY DOOR

36

Jim looks through the porthole at the sleeping crew.

Jim swipes his shipcard through the door switch. ACCESS DENIED. He pokes at the keypad. ACCESS DENIED.

Jim opens his toolbox, selects a tool and starts to remove the keypad's cover plate.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three weeks later

37 INT. CREW HIBERNATION FACILITY DOOR - MORNING

37

Jim POUNDS on a hinge with a sledgehammer and chisel. He's drenched in sweat. Mussed and unshaven.

The door's a mess. Its switch hangs on wires. There are pry marks around the latch. Gouges around the window. Failed drill holes. Dents left by an axe.

But the door stands firm.

Jim lets the hammer and chisel fall. Tools lie all around.

38 HIBERNATION BAY - JIM'S POD

38

Another debris field surrounds Jim's hibernation pod. Tools and cables, electronic instruments, a diagnostic laptop.

Jim stalks by without so much as a sideways glance.

39

CONCOURSE BAR - DAY

39

Arthur stands behind the bar polishing glasses. Jim sits, sweaty and grimy, a whiskey in front of him.

His speech is soft around the edges. He's had a few.

JIM

I thought I'd figure something out.
I thought it would just come to me.

ARTHUR

Stands to reason.

JIM

But I've tried everything.

ARTHUR

Sometimes you can't catch a break.

Jim gives Arthur a thoughtful look.

JIM

I'm your only customer, but you're
always polishing a glass.

ARTHUR

Trick of the trade. Makes people
nervous when a bartender just
stands there.

JIM

Okay. Lay some bartender wisdom on
me. I'm lost in space here.

Arthur polishes the bar while he thinks that one over.

ARTHUR

You're not where you want to be.
You feel like you're supposed to be
somewhere else. Right?

JIM

You said it.

ARTHUR

Well, here's the thing. Say you
could snap your fingers and be
wherever you wanted to be. Back on
Earth, or on Homestead II.

JIM

Okay.

ARTHUR

I'll bet even if you got your wish,
you'd still feel this way. Not in
the right place. Supposed to be
somewhere else. That's not a
crisis, it's the human condition.

Jim takes a moment to consider that.

JIM

That's not me.

ARTHUR

Well, maybe not. The point is, you
can't get so wrapped up in where
you'd rather be that you forget to
make the most of where you are.

JIM

What are you telling me?

ARTHUR

It's a big ship. You're always
running around banging on things
and yelling at the computers. Take
a break. Live a little.

Jim spins on his barstool, surveying the Grand Concourse.

JIM

Live a little.

When he comes back around he gives a shove. He spins faster.

ARTHUR

That's the spirit.

Jim goes for one more shove. Misses. Falls off his stool.

40

GRAND CONCOURSE - INFORMATION KIOSK

40

Jim scans a map of the ship. Second-class cabins. First-class cabins. And the good stuff: palatial suites named for European cities.

His finger stops on one of the biggest. The Berlin Suite.

41

BERLIN SUITE

41

High ceilings, posh furniture, panoramic windows.

The door jumps in its frame with a THUNK. Slides open. Jim enters, a crowbar in hand.

A cargo robot follows him in, carrying his toolbox and suitcases. It deposits them on the floor.

CARGO ROBOT
The Berlin Suite! Enjoy your luggage!

42 BERLIN SUITE - BATH 42

Jim cleans up in the opulent bathtub. A robot arm with a water jet washes his back.

43 BERLIN SUITE - BEDROOM 43

Jim unpacks. Stowing clothes in closets, laying out mementos. He pulls a pair of sneakers out of his luggage.

44 DECK TWO - GYMNASIUM - BASKETBALL COURT 44

Jim shoots baskets in sneakers and gym clothes. He's not bad. He shoots, rebounds, shoots.

46 SPA 46

Jim lies on a massage table wearing a towel. A pair of robot arms emerge from the table and begin to massage him.

47 DECK THREE - MARCELLO'S - DAY 47

The Italian restaurant. Cafe tables, white tablecloths.

Jim sits perusing a menu. A robotic waiter - a machine, not a counterfeit human - rolls up to the table.

JIM
(with relish)
Let me have the rigatoni alla diabla, with the sauteed spinach and a glass of the Montepulciano.

48 DECK TWO - ARCADE - EVENING 48

A state-of-the-art game room. Jim inspects the flagship game: "Z Factor!" Its cockpit looks like something out of a Buck Rogers serial.

Jim swipes his shipcard. The game speaks like an angry giant.

Z FACTOR

Jim Preston! Welcome to the cutting edge of gaming! The greatest challenge you will ever know!

JIM

All right then.

He clammers into the cockpit.

Z FACTOR

(snarling)

Are you ready to play Z Factor?

JIM

Yes!

Z FACTOR

(an echoing roar)

Begin!

The game's display is a huge holographic stage.

IN HOLOGRAM: A fortress shines on a hilltop. War machines crawl over a blasted land. Letters flash: LEVEL ONE.

A WARRIOR appears. Jim's character. Jim works the controls.

IN HOLOGRAM: The Warrior rises off the ground on a beam of light - and is immediately torn to pieces by enemy fire.

Z FACTOR (CONT'D)

You lose! Z Factor reigns supreme!

The game howls with demonic laughter.

50 DECK FOUR - MOVIE THEATER - EVENING 50

A classic theater. Seats for a thousand. A velvet curtain.

Jim enters. Cued by his arrival, the curtain parts. The film begins. Jim settles into a seat.

50A CONCOURSE BAR 50A

Jim sits down at the bar.

JIM

Arthur, I'm trying new things. From now on, every time I sit down, I want a drink I haven't had before.

ARTHUR

Fair enough.

Arthur mixes a bright green drink, sets it in front of Jim. Jim takes a sip and makes a horrible face.

JIM
What's that?

ARTHUR
Something new.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later.

51 DECK TWO - ARCADE - DAY

51

Jim is playing "Z Factor!" and he's on fire.

IN HOLOGRAM: The Warrior battles dragons above a crystalline city. A title announces "Level 40."

Jim moves like a martial artist, dripping sweat.

IN HOLOGRAM: The Warrior challenges the game's Final Enemy - a colossus with a hundred eyes. The Final Enemy falls dead.

Z-FACTOR
You are victorious!

JIM
Yes!

Z-FACTOR
You are the Grand Master of Z
Factor!

JIM
(elated)
I am the Grand Master of Z Factor!

52 GYMNASIUM - BASKETBALL COURT

52

Jim shoots baskets. He's brought dozens of balls onto the court. He no longer rebounds, just grabs the nearest ball.

He shoots from half court. From even farther away. Long shots, bounce shots off the wall.

He launches a full-court shot, bangs it off the rim, and lets himself topple over backward. Lies staring at the ceiling.

53 BELLA CANTINA - AFTERNOON

53

The ship's Mexican restaurant. It has the same robot waiters as the Italian place, but here they wear sombreros.

Jim sits over the wreckage of his lunch. He downs a margarita and puts the empty glass down beside several others.

JIM
Another margarita!

MEXICAN ROBOT WAITER
You have had many, senor.

JIM
(drunkenly)
Margarita otra vez!

MEXICAN ROBOT WAITER
Si, senor.

54 LIBRARY - AFTERNOON

54

A room full of workstations, each with a reading machine. Jim sits at one in a headset, taking a Russian Language course.

RUSSIAN TEACHER (FILTERED)
This is the Gudonov Russian
Language Course. Level One. Let's
begin. Repeat after me.
(in Russian)
[I am beginning to learn.]

JIM
(in Russian)
[I am beginning to learn.]

RUSSIAN TEACHER (FILTERED)
I am beginning to learn.

JIM
I am beginning to learn.

55 CONCOURSE BAR - EVENING

55

Jim sits drinking. He's drunk. Three empty glasses in front of him: a champagne flute, a shot glass, a tumbler.

Arthur sets a new drink in front of him: something brown in a martini glass. Jim eyes it nervously.

JIM
What's this one now?
(tasting cautiously)
Hey! That's a good one. Cheers.

Jim raises a hand in high style and delivers an announcement:

JIM (CONT'D)
 (in bad Russian, subtitled)
[I be study the Russian.]

ARTHUR
 (in perfect Russian, subtitled)
[Good for you! It's a beautiful language.]

JIM
 (indignantly)
 You speak Russian?

ARTHUR
 We have Russian passengers. I speak
 sixty-four languages.

JIM
 Not fair. Takes me months to learn
 this stuff. You, they just push a
 button. Robots cheat.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later.

56 INT. BERLIN SUITE - BEDROOM - MORNING 56

Jim sleeps in his luxurious bed. The covers knotted around him. He hasn't shaven in weeks.

His eyes open. He lies staring at the ceiling.

After a long moment he gets up. Shuffles toward the bathroom in his underwear. He's put on a beer gut.

57 CAFETERIA - MORNING 57

Jim walks past empty tables. Dials up a coffee and a roll. Sits sipping coffee and staring at nothing.

58 ARCADE ENTRANCE - DAY 58

Flashes and blasts of noise. The sounds of *Z Factor!*

Z FACTOR (O.S.)
 You are victorious!

59 AT THE Z-FACTOR MACHINE 59

Jim sits blank-faced in the cockpit.

Z-FACTOR
 New high score!

Bored, Jim punches his name into the High Scores board. JIM. All the other high scores say JIM.

60 CONCOURSE BAR - MORNING

60

Jim walks up to the bar and slides onto a stool.

JIM
 (in fluent Russian,
 subtitled)
[I'm ready for today's new drink]

ARTHUR
 (in Russian, subtitled)
*[I'm afraid I can't help you, my
 friend.]*

Jim thumps his fist on the bar.

JIM
 (in Russian, subtitled)
*[Don't argue with me, robot. Give
 me a new drink.]*

ARTHUR
 (reluctantly)
 There are no new drinks.

JIM
 What do you mean?

ARTHUR
 I can make two thousand, seven
 hundred and thirty-eight cocktails.
 You've had them all.

The news hits Jim like a death in the family.

JIM
 There are no new drinks.

61 NIGHTCLUB - EVENING

61

On the holographic stage, a sexy LOUNGE SINGER in a slinky dress croons a torch song. Jim stands just inches away.

He touches her face. The hologram dissolves into static.

Jim drops his hand, restoring the illusion. Closes his eyes in an agony of loneliness.

63

FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

63

Jim walks in, munching potato chips. He wears a T-shirt, sweatpants and socks, and his tool belt - a bottle of vodka wedged in the belt.

A SWEEPER ROBOT follows him like a dog, cleaning up crumbs.

Jim stares out into the dark. Sighs a terrible sigh.

Suddenly he's wracked by sobs. Tears welling up. He leans his forehead against the glass.

After a moment he sits down blindly.

The whole room begins to slide past him.

Confused, Jim looks around. He's accidentally sat down on the sweeper robot: it carries him across the room.

64

TRAVELING SHOT

64

The robot carries Jim up and down the Celestial Promenade.

Down an elevator.

Past the Concourse Bar. Jim waves. Arthur waves back, speechless.

67

DECK ONE

67

The robot heads into a low hatch. Jim ducks to fit through.

68

ROBOTICS CENTER

68

A mechanical hive. Here the ship's robots are cleaned, repaired, recharged. Robots bustle everywhere - never colliding, never getting lost. A ballet.

Jim's sweeper robot vomits its load of collected dirt into a waste chute. Heads into a recharging niche.

Jim jumps off.

He explores: it's an engineer's fantasia. Jim's eyes show signs of life. But it's a hazardous place, with cranes and platforms, hoses and blowtorches on the move.

He exits through another low hatch to find himself in the...

69

HIBERNATION BAY

69

Thousands of sleepers in their glass tubes. Jim walks among them, looking at their faces.

Suddenly he stops, staring. Inside a pod, a woman stands sleeping. This is AURORA DUNN. A breathtaking beauty.

JIM

Who are you?

(peers at her data screen)

Aurora.

He moves on, browsing people. Stops. Backtracks. He stands in front of Aurora, looking in through the glass.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later

70

INT. BERLIN SUITE - MORNING

70

Jim lies asleep, wearing boxer shorts and a full beard. The suite's a wreck. Laundry and dishes litter the floor.

His eyes open. He looks at the stars outside. Gropes under the pillow and pulls out a remote control. Punches a button.

The window shades come down, hiding the view.

71

CORRIDOR

71

Jim emerges from his room in boxer shorts and slippers. He's dragging a blanket.

A housekeeping robot, its dustpan quivering in anticipation, hovers outside his door.

Jim taps the "Do Not Disturb" button on his door panel and walks away.

The housekeeping robot squeals in frustration as the door closes over the mess inside.

71A

CAFETERIA

71A

Jim pours milk over a bowl of cereal.

71B

ELEVATOR

71B

Jim descends, the blanket draped over his shoulders like a serape. He holds his bowl of cereal in both hands.

71C HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD

71C

Jim stands eating cereal and staring at Aurora. His eyes never stray from her face.

72 OBSERVATORY

72

IN HOLOGRAM: *Excelsior's* progress diagram.

The *Excelsior* hangs between Earth and Homestead II. Between the ship and Earth, a legend reads: "TIME TRAVELED: 30 YEARS." Between the ship and Homestead II: "TIME REMAINING: 90 YEARS."

Jim stands watching in his boxers and blanket. Hugging his empty cereal bowl.

IN HOLOGRAM: The numbers change with a digital *click*. TIME TRAVELED: 31 YEARS. TIME REMAINING: 89 YEARS.

73 CONCOURSE BAR - MORNING

73

Jim sits at the bar in his blanket, nursing a whiskey. His cereal bowl sits on the bar beside him.

Jim mutters into his glass like a lunatic.

JIM

(bitterly)

You get to fly to another world,
but you die on the way. You spend
the rest of your life with nobody
but robots to talk to, but there's
five thousand people you can't
touch right in front of you.

ARTHUR

Jim. I'm here for you.

Jim looks up for the first time.

JIM

Arthur, you're a machine.

Jim walks away, abandoning his cereal bowl on the bar.

73A EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR

73A

The ship forges through space, its lit windows shining.

Jim trudges along a promenade, a tiny figure dwarfed by the mighty ship and the tapestry of stars.

74

DECK TWO - HALL OF FAITH - DAY

74

Jim passes under a sign reading "Hall of Faith," into a circular walk.

There's a small fountain in the middle of the circle. Around the edges, doors labeled: BUDDHISM, JUDAISM, HINDUISM, CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM, OTHER FAITHS.

Jim walks the circle, looking through the doorways: a cross, a Buddha, an abstract sculpture in the "Other Faiths" chapel.

He continues around the circle and out into the ship.

75

DECK FOUR - STARBOARD E.V.A. ROOM

75

Jim opens a door marked "Starboard E.V.A. Room - No Passengers Beyond This Point!"

The E.V.A. (Extra-Vehicular Activity) room is dominated by an airlock. Spacesuits hang in racks. Tools and tethers, shuttle docking rings.

Jim goes straight to the airlock and opens the inner door.

A BUZZER sounds a warning.

Jim steps into the airlock. The inner door closes behind him. He drops his blanket, standing barefoot on the cold steel in his boxer shorts.

He looks through a porthole at the stars. Touches the outer door and yanks his hand back. It's freezing out there.

Jim grabs the lever for the outer door: it's surrounded by caution stripes and warning labels. He tightens his grip.

Jim hesitates. Sinks to the floor of the airlock. Buries his face in his hands. Hyperventilating.

Without looking he reaches up, groping at the controls.

76

EXT. STARSHIP *EXCELSIOR* - STARBOARD AIRLOCK

76

The airlock outer door opens with a blast of air. Jim emerges from the airlock - wearing a SPACE SUIT.

He plants his feet on the hull and walks up the side of the ship on magnetic boots.

77

ATOP THE SHIP

77

Jim walks forward across the giant skylight.

78

AT THE BOW

78

Jim sits, his elbows propped on his knees. The cosmos reflected in his visor.

MATCH CUT TO:

79

INT. HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD

79

Jim sits watching Aurora, his blanket wrapped around him: a bearded pilgrim in a holy place.

FADE TO BLACK.

80

INT. DECK TWO - LIBRARY

80

Jim sits at a workstation in jeans and a T-shirt, still bearded but a little cleaner. Types the name "Aurora Dunn" into a search engine.

It returns a list of *New Yorker* articles. Some titles:

The New Corporate Overlords
Patients and Patents: The Crisis of Genetic Medicine.
Modern Love: Dating the Database.

Jim moves the articles onto a digital slate.

81

CONCOURSE BAR - EVENING

81

Jim sits reading one of Aurora's articles. Arthur keeps busy.

JIM

Did you know ninety percent of the businesses in the world are owned by just eight companies?

ARTHUR

Is that right?

JIM

She's good. She knows her stuff, and she's not afraid of anybody.

ARTHUR

Who's that?

JIM

Aurora.

ARTHUR

The sleeping girl.

JIM
Yeah. She's a journalist.

ARTHUR
From New York City. Graduated Yale.
Drop-dead beautiful. You've
mentioned her a few times.

JIM
I think I'm falling for her.
(amazed at his own words)
I think I'm in trouble.

ARTHUR
Jim, you've never met her.

JIM
That's my point. Arthur. Say you
were trapped on a desert island,
and you had the power to wish
somebody there with you. You
wouldn't be alone anymore, but
you'd be stranding another person
on the island. Would you make the
wish?

ARTHUR
I don't know. I've never been on an
island.

JIM
Okay. Say you figured out how to do
something that would make your life
a hundred times better. But it's
wrong, and there's no taking it
back. How wrong would it have to be
to stop you? I mean, what if it
made your life a thousand times
better? How do you do the math?

ARTHUR
Jim. These are not robot questions.

Jim stares at Arthur in frustration.

JIM
(spelling it out)
I know how to wake up Aurora.

ARTHUR
Sounds like a fine idea. You could
use some company.

JIM
I'd be stranding her on the ship
for the rest of her life!

ARTHUR

Well, you can't do that.

JIM

(sighs heavily)

Thanks for the insight, Arthur.

ARTHUR

Least I can do.

82

INT. BERLIN SUITE - BATH - DAY

82

Jim stands at the sink with a futuristic shaver in his hand. He talks to himself as he takes off his castaway's beard.

JIM

I'm shaving off my beard.

(addressing his
reflection)

It's wrong, man.

The whiskers pile up in the sink, wash down the drain. His face emerges from its mask.

JIM (CONT'D)

Really wrong. You can't do it.

He's finished. Clean-shaven.

JIM (CONT'D)

Don't even think about it.

(astonished at himself)

I'm shaving off my beard.

83

CORRIDOR

83

Jim exits his cabin in his coveralls, carrying his toolbox.

He finds a squadron of housekeeping robots waiting outside. He taps the "PLEASE SERVICE" button beside his door.

The robots zoom inside with squeals of joy.

84

HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD

84

Jim stands in front of Aurora: toolbox in one hand, the technical manual in the other. He's breathing hard.

He sets the toolbox down and opens the manual. Densely annotated in Jim's handwriting. A working document.

He opens the pod's cover panel and goes to work, following the steps in his manual. His hands shake.

He starts to close a final contact.

Stops.

Gets to his feet. Stands looking at Aurora.

Quickly he kneels and completes the circuit. Pulls his hands away as if the metal had burned him.

JIM

Okay.

Aurora's pod hums. Medical data flows across its screen. Her vital signs re-start. Her pale skin flushes with color.

Jim beats a retreat.

85 AURORA'S POD

85

Aurora's perfect lips part. She takes a shallow breath - and then a deep one. Her chest rises and falls.

Her thighs shift as she bends her knees. The sensors on her body drop off and withdraw into the pod.

She opens her eyes. They're beautiful.

Her pod's backrest flexes, scooping up her knees as it becomes a seat. A video screen drops in front of her.

VIDEO STEWARDESS

Good morning, Aurora!

86 BERLIN SUITE

86

The luxury cabin now tidy and immaculate.

Jim bursts in, wild-eyed. Drops his toolbox. Hides the marked-up manual under the bed.

He splashes water on his face. Stares into the mirror.

87 HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD

87

Aurora puts on her Homestead Company bathrobe and slippers. Places her shipcard around her neck on its lanyard.

VIDEO STEWARDESS

You're ready to go to your cabin.
Make yourself at home! Enjoy the
rest of your flight, Aurora!

Woozy, Aurora sees the other passengers still asleep.

AURORA
 Wait! Why are all these people
 still hibernating?

The screen pivots to face her. The Video Stewardess points.

VIDEO STEWARDESS
Aurora, your cabin is this way!

88 DECK SEVEN - CORRIDOR 88

Jim sticks his head out of his cabin, looks up and down the hall. Steps out warily.

89 HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD 89

Jim approaches Aurora's pod, electrified. The pod is empty. The screen reads PASSENGER DISCHARGED.

90 DECK NINE - NUMBER NINE PROMENADE 90

Aurora finds her cabin. It's a first-class cabin, its door overlooking the Grand Concourse atrium.

91 AURORA'S CABIN 91

Posher than Jim's original cabin. A king-sized bed, a panoramic window.

A widescreen video screen lights up. The Homestead Company theme music plays.

ANNOUNCER
 Welcome to your cabin, Aurora! Your
 home until we...

Aurora slaps the display off. Goes to the phone.

A touch of her finger brings up the ship's telephone directory. Aurora selects "Information."

PHONE
 No one is available at that number.

She touches other phone links, faster and faster.

PHONE (CONT'D)
 No one is available...No one
 is...No one...No one...No one is
 available at that number.

AURORA
 What the hell's going on?

92 DECK FOUR - SHOPPING DISTRICT

92

Aurora strides down the lane of quiet shops. Actively searching for other people.

93 ELITE DECK - ELITE PROMENADE

93

Jim paces nervously, glancing around. She could be anywhere.

AURORA (O.S.)
(shouting in the distance)
Hello?

The first human voice he's heard in a year. Jim rushes to the railing.

Below on the Grand Concourse, Aurora is turning in circles, looking up at the balconies.

AURORA (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Hello!

JIM
(a husky whisper)
Hi.
(mustering a shout)
Hello!

Aurora spins. Spots him.

AURORA
(shouting)
Hey! I want to talk to you!

JIM
(shouting)
I'll come down.

Jim runs down six flights of stairs, his heart in his throat.

He reaches the Grand Concourse out of breath. He stops a few paces away, just looking at Aurora, getting his wind back.

AURORA
Passenger or crew?

JIM
Passenger. Jim Preston.

He sticks out a hand. She shakes it firmly. Electric for Jim. First contact.

AURORA
I'm Aurora.

Jim's lips move as she speaks her name, almost saying it with her. Aurora. She doesn't pick up on it.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Do you know what's happening?
Nobody else in my row woke up.

JIM
Yeah, I...same for me.

AURORA
The crew's supposed to wake up a month before we do. But I haven't seen anybody.

Jim swallows hard.

JIM
The crew's still sleeping. They've got a special facility. I can see them in there but I can't get in.

Aurora stares at him.

AURORA
You're saying nobody's awake?

JIM
Just me.

AURORA
Just you?

JIM
Just us.

AURORA
But somebody's got to land the ship in a few weeks.

Jim's finding it unexpectedly hard to deliver the bad news.

JIM
I have to show you something.

Jim and Aurora ride upward. She looks out into the atrium, watching the floors go by.

AURORA

Typical. There's so much incompetence in these big companies. No accountability! They lost my luggage on the flight to the spaceport. I'm leaving the planet and my bags almost didn't make it! Nobody apologizes. Nobody even feels bad.

Jim is only half listening - his eyes drawn to the spill of her hair over her neck, the line of her jaw.

AURORA (CONT'D)

It's the institutional mentality.
(looking at Jim)
Where are we going?

Jim yanks his eyes away from her neck.

JIM

The Observatory.

95

OBSERVATORY

95

Aurora's eyes, wide and staring. Her face a mask of horror.

In front of them hangs the starship's progress indicator - the *Excelsior* hanging between Earth and Homestead II. Thirty-one years elapsed; Eighty-nine years to go.

AURORA

(a shocked whisper)

Eighty-nine years to go.

JIM

The other passengers aren't late waking up. We're early.

Aurora stares at Jim.

AURORA

We've got to get back to sleep.

96

HIBERNATION BAY

96

Jim and Aurora walk down a row of hibernation pods.

AURORA

Nobody strands me on a spaceship for a hundred years. I work for the New Yorker. I'll write an exposé so hot you'll need oven mitts to read it. Trust me.

JIM

It's not that simple. Putting somebody into hibernation takes special equipment. Remember the facility where they put us to sleep?

Jim points at a pod beside them. A middle-aged woman inside.

JIM (CONT'D)

This pod will keep her asleep as long as you want. And it can wake her up. But it can't put her back to sleep.

AURORA

(getting it)

You don't think there's a way back into hibernation.

JIM

Not that I can see.

AURORA

There has to be. There's always a way. Where's the crew?

97

CREW HIBERNATION FACILITY DOOR

97

Jim and Aurora stand staring at the door: scarred by Jim's many assaults.

Aurora looks through the porthole at the crew inside. She runs her hands thoughtfully over the door's dents and gouges.

AURORA

(dreading the answer)

How long have you been awake, Jim?

JIM

A year and three months.

Aurora covers her mouth. Her eyes full of horror.

AURORA

Oh, my God. No.

She turns her back. Suddenly she walks briskly away. And breaks into a run. Jim watches her go, astonished.

After a moment he runs after her.

98

HIBERNATION BAY

98

Aurora runs down a row of hibernation pods, her eyes searching wildly among the glass tubes. She turns a corner. Hesitates. Runs down another row. She's fighting tears.

She puts on speed. Her sash unknots itself and her robe billows behind her.

99

IN ANOTHER ROW

99

Jim jogs along, worried. He's lost her. He pauses, listening. In the distance, slippered feet. He runs that way.

He stops: the sash of Aurora's robe lies on the deck. He picks it up. Runs on.

JIM
Aurora!

He turns another corner and sees her. She's sitting down, her back against a hibernation pod.

AURORA
(laughing, half crying)
I can't even find the one I'm
supposed to be in.

Jim extends a hand. She lets him pull her to her feet. He gives her the sash, and she ties her robe around her.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Thanks.

Jim looks back at her, miserable with guilt.

JIM
I shouldn't have told you like
that, I should have...

AURORA
No, I'm sorry. It just hit me how
serious this is. How did you wake
up?

JIM
I just did. I woke up, my pod
dumped me out, and there I was.

AURORA
Me too. We have to get help.

100

COMMAND DECK - COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

100

Jim and Aurora stand in at a Passenger Communication Station.

Jim swipes his card through the Comm Station's slot. It brings up his account information.

JIM

I've sent...sixteen messages to Earth. A bunch to the Homestead company, one to the Space Administration, one to the United Nations. A couple to Homestead II, just for the hell of it. My phone bill's about eighty grand now.

AURORA

How soon could we hear something?

JIM

With speed-of-light lag, about fifty-six years. That'll be from Earth. Nothing from Homestead II until we're almost there anyway. Eighty years or so.

Aurora's mouth goes dry. She swallows hard.

AURORA

What about the other planets?

JIM

The other occupied worlds are even farther away. We'd die of old age before they could answer.

AURORA

What about other ships?

(off Jim's stare)

Jim?

JIM

(feeling very stupid)

I never thought of other ships.

AURORA

Jim, you've had more than a year! There has to be a flight plan or something...

They search the Comm Center and find a map table showing the Excelsior's position relative to the Occupied Worlds.

Aurora fiddles with the controls. Interstellar flight plans appear: a spiderweb of starship tracks between the worlds.

AURORA (CONT'D)

There!

They inspect the threads of light - an icon on each thread representing a starship. Even Jim is excited now.

AURORA (CONT'D)

How do we tell how far away they are?

JIM

The computer knows. Give me a ship.

AURORA

(peering at the star map)

The starship *Zephyr*.

JIM

Round-trip message lag...ninety-nine years.

AURORA

The starship *Andromeda*.

JIM

One hundred thirty-two years.

AURORA

The *Maximilian*.

JIM

Eighty-one years.

Jim and Aurora deflate visibly.

AURORA

That's the closest one.

101

GRAND CONCOURSE - EVENING

101

The ship's lights turn the cool blue of evening. Jim and Aurora walk across the plaza.

AURORA

I know I should be working the problem right now, but I can barely keep my eyes open.

JIM

You just came out of hibernation. It'll be a couple of days before you're a hundred percent. You should rest.

AURORA
(yawning)
I think I have to.

JIM
I'll walk you to your cabin.

AURORA
No, I'm all right.

JIM
Okay.

AURORA
Jim. Don't look so down. It's going
to be okay. You've got me on the
team now. Chin up, all right?

Jim nods, speechless.

AURORA (CONT'D)
I'm in cabin ninety forty-eight, if
you need me.

Jim watches her walk away.

JIM
I'm in the Berlin Suite if you need
me.

She stops. Turns to look back at him.

AURORA
A year and a half? Must have been
hard.

JIM
It was.

AURORA
Good night, Jim.

102 GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR

102

Jim sits down at the bar.

JIM
Whiskey. Rocks.

ARTHUR
Sure thing. How's your day been?

Jim takes a stiff drink.

JIM
Aurora's awake.

ARTHUR
Congratulations.

JIM
She's scared. She's amazing.
Arthur. Can you keep a secret?

ARTHUR
I'm a bartender.

JIM
Don't tell Aurora I woke her up.
She thinks it was an accident. Let
me tell her. Okay?

103 AURORA'S CABIN - NIGHT

103

Aurora sleeps, her hair a fan of gold on the pillow.

104 BERLIN SUITE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

104

Jim lies awake, fidgeting and staring at the ceiling.

107 GRAND CONCOURSE - INFOMAT - MORNING

107

Aurora talks with a relentlessly cheerful Infomat.

She's wearing her own clothes, and it's a transformation: she
looks hip and urban, beautiful.

AURORA
(exasperated)
How can there be no way to put
someone into hibernation aboard
ship? What if a pod breaks down?

INFOMAT
No pod has malfunctioned in
thousands of interstellar flights.

Jim appears behind Aurora.

JIM
Good morning. Have you eaten?

AURORA
I'm starving. This is the dumbest
machine.

108

CAFETERIA

108

Jim watches in astonishment as Aurora blithely orders the snacks that the machines deny him. The Mocha Cappuccino Extreme. The French Breakfast Puff. The Gourmet Fruit Salad.

They sit. Aurora eyes Jim's tray.

AURORA
You're a man of simple tastes.

JIM
I'm a silver class passenger. The French Breakfast Puff is above my pay grade.

AURORA
Oh, no! All this time? What can I get you?

JIM
No, I'm fine, really...

AURORA
Shut up. I'll be right back.

She gets up. In a minute she's back, setting a tray down in front of Jim: A western omelette with a side of bacon...a cafe latte...half a honeydew melon.

Jim shoves his old breakfast aside.

JIM
Thank you.

They dig in.

AURORA
You think the crew members would know what to do?

JIM
I was hoping so.

AURORA
You think we could wake them up if we got in there?

JIM
(awkwardly)
I'm no expert. But I think so.

AURORA

Maybe there's another way to go to sleep. Did you check out the infirmary?

JIM

I looked around. It's the usual hospital stuff. Scanners, autodocs.

AURORA

Did you look for ways of going to sleep?

JIM

Not really.

AURORA

Well, Jim!

JIM

You think they've got suspended animation pills sitting around?

AURORA

You don't know until you look. What about cargo? Maybe there's a hibernation machine in the hold.

JIM

I looked at the manifests. It's mostly farming stuff, industrial machines. We're not going to find a hibernation facility in mothballs.

AURORA

You don't know that! Jim, we have to think big here. Maybe there's enough parts that we can build our own hibernation machine.

JIM

Say we manage to do that, and I have no idea how; who operates the machine while we go to sleep? Who tucks us back in our pods?

AURORA

We'll figure something out. Jim, you're not even trying.

JIM

I've been awake a year and a half. I've tried everything I can think of.

AURORA

(she gets up angrily)

Well, it looks to me like you
missed some possibilities. And I'm
not ready to give up.

She strides out. Jim watches her go. Reaches over and takes
the Gourmet Fruit Salad off her tray.

109 DECK TWO - LIBRARY - DAY

109

Aurora sits at a library workstation.

WORKSTATION

No plans are available.

AURORA

What about research articles, any
kind of technical documents?

WORKSTATION

Hibernation technology is
proprietary. The following articles
deal with the subject on a
theoretical level.

110 DECK NINE - OBSERVATORY - DAY

110

Jim stands at the Observatory entrance, looking in.

Inside, Aurora stands at the control podium. In front of her
the cosmos spins and zooms as she looks for answers.

111 COMMAND DECK - COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - DAY

111

Aurora sits at the Passenger Communications Booth.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH

Planet and connection, please.

AURORA

Earth. *The New Yorker* magazine,
office of the Editor in Chief.

COMMUNICATIONS BOOTH

Begin message.

AURORA

(into camera)

My name is Aurora Dunn. I'm doing a
long-term piece on the colony
worlds.

(MORE)

AURORA (CONT'D)
 I know you won't get this message
 for a long time...but you should
 know I'm in trouble.

112 SERVICE DECK - INFIRMARY - DAY

112

Aurora inspects the gleaming medical equipment. Rummages through cabinets full of medicines and instruments.

She opens a steel vault. A deep freeze: icy vapor rolls out. Inside: racks of steel capsules at subzero temperatures.

She leans close: each frosted capsule is labeled with a passenger's name and the word SPERM or OVA.

113 CREW HIBERNATION FACILITY DOOR - EVENING

113

Aurora frowns through the window at the sleeping crew.

A litter of tools still surrounds the battered door. Aurora snatches up a crowbar and bashes the porthole. The bar spins from her stinging hands, but the window's not even marked.

114 ELITE DECK - ELITE PROMENADE - EVENING

114

Jim sits at a table, tinkering with a high-tech mechanism.

Aurora drops into a chair across from him. He looks up. Takes in her condition: weary and frustrated.

AURORA
 There's no magic sleeping drugs in
 the infirmary.

JIM
 No.

AURORA
 I did find the gene bank. If
 hibernation's so fail-safe, how
 come everybody has to give a sperm
 or egg sample?

JIM
 I figured it was part of some
 screening program.

AURORA
 I should be glad they did it. By
 the time we get to Homestead II,
 that little capsule in the freezer
 is going to be all that's left of
 me. We really are screwed, aren't
 we?

JIM
Kinda.

115 BELLA CANTINA - EVENING

115

Jim and Aurora sit across a Mexican dinner they've already put a dent in. An electric candle burns between them.

A robot waiter in a sombrero deposits two mojitos in front of them and scoots away.

AURORA
So who are you, Jim? I'm going to be seeing you around. I should know who I'm talking to.

JIM
I'm from Denver. Lived in the Southwest all my life.

AURORA
Doing what?

JIM
Mechanical engineer. On the emigration forms I'm a rate-two engineer. Means I don't have a Ph.D.

AURORA
What's your specialty?

JIM
I don't have one. I'm good with my hands. I do a little of everything.

AURORA
Jack of all trades.

JIM
Handyman.

116 LATER

116

Their meal lies in ruins.

JIM
This is the first real conversation I've had in more than a year.

AURORA
Unbelievable! Nothing but robots to talk to. And they're all idiots!

JIM
Not all of them.

117 GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR - NIGHT

117

Jim leads Aurora up to the Concourse Bar. It appears deserted. Aurora is all curiosity.

Suddenly Arthur appears, doing his swinging-up-on-hinges trick. Aurora gives a squeal of surprise.

ARTHUR
Evening, Jim. Who's the lovely lady?

JIM
Arthur, this is Aurora. Aurora, Arthur.

ARTHUR
Aurora. A pleasure.

He takes her hand formally.

AURORA
Arthur! Lovely to meet you.

She peeks over the bar at Arthur's mechanical mounting, the rails he rolls on.

ARTHUR
What'll it be?

AURORA
Dirty martini!
(to Jim)
Now this is a robot I can talk to.

JIM
Android, technically.
(to Arthur)
Whiskey and soda.

118 LATER

118

Empty glasses show that Jim and Aurora have been doing yeoman's work at the bar. Both are tipsy and laughing.

AURORA
(collecting herself)
My God, I almost forgot my life is in ruins.

That wipes the smile off Jim's face.

JIM
Sorry.

AURORA
What for? It's time to sleep. In
the morning we'll think of
something brilliant.

JIM
All right.

AURORA
Good night, Jim. Good night,
Arthur.

She exits.

ARTHUR
Good night.
(to Jim, *sotto voce*)
She's wonderful, Jim. Excellent
choice.

Jim drops his head into his hands.

119 AURORA'S CABIN - MORNING

119

Aurora stows clothing in drawers and closets.

She hangs pictures on the wall. Smiling faces: Aurora and
family, Aurora and friends.

122 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

122

Aurora sits curled up in an armchair. Around her, a dizzying
view of the cosmos.

There's a cup of coffee on a table beside her. In her lap, an
electronic slate with an attached microphone.

AURORA
New file. My Voyage.

A clean page opens on the slate. The title in the corner: "My
Voyage." As Aurora speaks, the page fills with words.

AURORA (CONT'D)
I boarded the *Excelsior* on a
writing assignment. But things have
taken an unexpected turn. I'm not
writing for *The New Yorker* anymore.
I'm writing for me. To give myself
purpose.

123 ELITE DECK - CORRIDOR - DAY

123

Aurora jogs in sneakers and workout clothes. Cabin doors flash past.

AURORA (V.O.)
I've been awake on this ship for
seven days, awake far too soon...

Dead end. She's reached the aft end of the ship. She crosses a lobby and runs back the other way.

AURORA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and I might spend the rest of my
life here...

Running along a promenade, Aurora reaches the forward end of the ship. Dead end again.

AURORA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...in a little steel world five
hundred meters long.

124 GRAND CONCOURSE

124

Jim sits at a table, a technical manual open in front of him. He looks up. Watches Aurora jog around the atrium and vanish.

AURORA (V.O.)
I'm not alone. Another passenger
shares my fate. A mechanic named
Jim Preston.

125 SWIMMING POOL - DAY

125

The swimming pool is a marvel: one entire wall is a window extending from the ceiling to the bottom of the pool.

Aurora enters in her HomeStead Company bathrobe. Drops the robe to reveal a bathing suit.

AURORA (V.O.)
The other passengers will sleep for
another ninety years.

She dives into the pool.

126 EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR - SWIMMING POOL WINDOW

126

Aurora swims, a slender shape moving on the water's surface. We pull out, the ship dwindling, the blue window receding.

AURORA (V.O.)
 By the time they wake, Jim and I
 will live, grown old and died.

126A INT. FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK

126A

Back on Aurora in her armchair, writing.

AURORA
 Vanished, like a dream, in the
 blink of an eye.

She falters, frightened by her own words.

127 CAFETERIA - DAY

127

Jim sits eating and tinkering with a small robot. The table
 is strewn with dishes and tools.

Aurora sits down across from him.

AURORA
 Why did you do it?

Jim is thunderstruck. The game is up. He swallows hard.

JIM
 Do what?

AURORA
 Emigrate. Leave Earth. I'm
 interviewing you.

JIM
 You're what?

AURORA
 Interviewing you. You're the first
 victim of hibernation failure in
 the history of space travel. That
 makes you news.

JIM
 Who are you going to tell?

AURORA
 Posterity. So why'd you give up
 your life on Earth?

Jim seems stunned by the question. He hadn't thought about it
 in quite those words.

AURORA (CONT'D)

A hundred and twenty years' hibernation means you never see your family and friends again. You sleep your way to another planet and another century. The ultimate geographical suicide.

JIM

I, uh...I never really...

AURORA

Were you running away from something?

JIM

No. Things were okay.

AURORA

So?

JIM

I just wanted more, I guess. You know. More room. A fresh start. Back to basics.

AURORA

(chiding)

That's HomeStead Company propaganda.

JIM

I guess.

AURORA

Jim!

JIM

I'm a mechanic. A rate-two mechanic. We're a dying breed on Earth. But in the colonies, they still have problems to solve. My kind of problems. In the colonies, a handyman is somebody.

Nothing there for Aurora to scoff at. She looks impressed.

JIM (CONT'D)

And there's room! Open country. Woods and fields. I like the outdoors. You know, room to grow.

AURORA

Now you're back to advertising.

JIM
Can't it still be true?

128 HIBERNATION BAY

128

Jim and Aurora walk down an aisle of hibernation pods.

AURORA
You know how much the Homestead Company's made off its first planet, Homestead I? Over eight quadrillion dollars. That's eight million billions. Colony planets are the biggest business there is. Did you pay full price for your ticket?

JIM
No, I'm in a desirable trade.

AURORA
(triumphantly)
So they fill your head with dreams, discount your ticket, and you fly off to populate their planet and pay HomeStead ten percent of everything you do for the rest of your life. You think you're free? You're just part of the business plan.

Jim waves at the rows of sleepers.

JIM
All you see here is five thousand suckers?
(off Aurora's shrug)
They could have five thousand reasons for making the trip. You don't know these people.

Jim walks up to a hibernation pod. Glances at the data screen. He covers the screen with his hand.

JIM (CONT'D)
This guy. Banker, teacher, or gardener?

Aurora studies the sleeper: a barrel-chested man of 50 with gray temples and a jutting jaw.

AURORA
Banker.

JIM
Gardener.

Jim moves down the row, peeks at another screen, covers it.

JIM (CONT'D)
Is this Madison, Donna, or Lola?

Aurora peers: a birdlike young woman with long red hair.

AURORA
She's too silly to be a Donna. I
think she's a Lola.

JIM
Madison. Chef, accountant, or
midwife?

AURORA
She has to be a midwife. There's no
way you made that one up.

JIM
(chuckling, caught)
She's a midwife. I didn't know they
still had midwives.

They move among the sleepers, quizzing each other.

AURORA
(pointing at a man and
woman side by side)
Married, or strangers?

JIM
Married.

AURORA
(impressed)
Yes.

JIM
(indicating a young woman)
Is she sixteen, twenty-six, or
thirty-six?

AURORA
I'd almost say sixteen. But...
twenty-six.

JIM
Right.

AURORA
(about an older woman)
Politician, historian, or artist?

JIM
(brow furrowed)
I don't know. Artist?

AURORA
I don't know either, it doesn't
say. But I'll tell you this: I like
her. We'd be friends.

Jim looks at Aurora seriously.

JIM
You think you can see that?

AURORA
Don't you?

Jim looks at the woman in the pod. Smiles.

JIM
Yeah.

129 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

129

Jim and Aurora sit at opposite ends of a sofa - their feet
almost but not quite touching. They sip cocktails.

AURORA
That was my plan. Travel to
Homestead II. Live there for a year
and see what emigrating's really
like. Then back to Earth. I'm the
only passenger on board with a
round-trip ticket.

JIM
(perplexed)
I left Earth for a new life. But
you end up back where you started.

AURORA
No! I end up in the future. Two
hundred and fifty years in the
future. On Earth, which is still
the center of civilization,
overcrowded or not. And I arrive in
the future with an amazing story. A
perspective no other writer has.
Literary immortality.

JIM
And what's this amazing story?

AURORA
The selling of the colonial dream.

JIM
Hell of a plan.

AURORA
My friends threw me this huge
farewell party. Everyone came. It
was the happiest, saddest night.
And look what it's all come to.

(she sighs)
Jim, I can't think of anything else
to try. To save us, I mean. I don't
even want to think about it
anymore. So. What is there to do
around here?

130 MOVIE THEATER - DAY

130

Jim leads Aurora into the movie theater. The lights come up.
The curtain opens. Aurora looks around in wonder.

A bundle of cables snakes down the aisle.

JIM
Watch your step. I've made a few
changes.

Next to Jim's favorite seat there's a cluster of machines
with power cables and hoses running to them.

Jim and Aurora sit. A screen beside Jim lists movies.

JIM (CONT'D)
I got tired of running up to the
projector room, so I moved the
controls down here. Thirty thousand
movies to choose from. I've only
watched about five hundred of them.

He taps a button on another machine, which produces a bucket
of hot popcorn. He offers Aurora some.

JIM (CONT'D)
Popcorn?

Aurora grins and takes some.

131 GYMNASIUM - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

131

Jim and Aurora play one-on-one. She's not especially good,
but fiercely competitive. They jostle and scramble, laughing.

Aurora snags the ball. For a minute she just stands there,
beaming.

JIM
What are you so happy about?

AURORA
I'm up two points!

She cuts around him toward the basket.

133 DECK TWO - VIRTUAL MUSEUM - EVENING

133

Jim and Aurora walk through the museum's white rooms. The walls display a Jackson Pollock collection.

Aurora goes the control podium. Scrolls through the menu, covers her eyes and chooses blind.

The wall panels fill with Heironymous Bosch paintings - medieval visions of Hell. She winces and chooses again. A somber collection of portraits by Dutch masters. She frowns.

Jim steps to her side and makes a selection.

The walls fill with abstract landscapes - stark plains and oceans, with lonely figures isolated in the vastness.

The images pull Jim and Aurora in: they stand before a dark seascape.

Without thinking she reaches out and tucks her hand in the crook of his elbow.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER

134 SWIMMING POOL - MORNING

134

Aurora swims laps, cutting through the water.

In the balcony above the pool, Jim stands watching her. Aurora, making a turn at the end of a lap, catches a glimpse of him but doesn't let on.

Underwater she smiles.

135 DECK THREE - SHOPPING DISTRICT - MORNING

135

A cleaning robot scurries along the shopping street, looking for spots to polish.

Jim's hands reach into frame, pluck the robot off its wheels.

136 DECK NINE - NUMBER NINE PROMENADE 136

Aurora stands at the railing, watching curiously as Jim crosses the Concourse below with the robot under his arm.

137 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP - DAY 137

Jim stands at a workbench, the robot in front of him. He tinkers with its complex works.

138 GRAND CONCOURSE - DAY 138

Jim sits in an armchair with his industrial laptop. He types a string of commands, hits *EXECUTE*.

Beside him on the floor, his kidnapped cleaning robot does a figure-eight. Jim smiles in satisfaction.

139 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY 139

Aurora sits in her habitual writing position: cross-legged on her favorite sofa, her writing slate in her lap.

AURORA

The starship's designers gave the ship a daily rhythm. The light is warm in the morning, bright during the day, cool at night. We need those changes. But I miss other rhythms. There are no holidays here. Every day is a day of leisure. There are no seasons here. The sky never changes.

A mechanical whir distracts her. She looks down.

Jim's pet robot looks up at her with binocular eyes. It carries a note in a clip on its back. Aurora pulls it free.

A handwritten invitation from Jim. It reads:

Come to dinner with me tonight?

- Jim

Aurora reads the note with a grin.

AURORA (CONT'D)
(to the robot)
Is he asking me on a date?

140 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP 140

Jim sits at his laptop, watching the screen: a robot's-eye-view of Aurora.

He wiggles a little joystick on his laptop, and...

141 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK 141

...the robot nods its little goggle head.

Aurora laughs.

Beside the note-clip, the robot carries a pen in a makeshift holder. Aurora takes the pen, scribbles on the paper. Tucks it back into the robot's note clip.

142 GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR 142

Arthur polishes glasses behind the bar.

The robot crosses the Concourse, note clipped to its back.

Arthur watches it pass.

143 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP 143

Jim plucks the note from the robot's back. Aurora's reply is written in bold letters:

Love to.

-A

144 AURORA'S CABIN - EVENING 144

Aurora gets ready for dinner. A slim gown, a few pieces of jewelry, her hair up. She looks like a goddess.

The doorbell rings. She answers it.

Jim stands on her doorstep in a black jacket, looking dapper. His eyes widen as he takes Aurora in.

JIM

Wow.

AURORA

You clean up all right yourself.
You went shopping.

JIM
I went shoplifting.

In the corridor stands a cargo robot to which Jim has attached an upholstered loveseat. He helps Aurora aboard and takes a seat beside her. She's charmed.

JIM (CONT'D)
Rutherford! To the bar!

CARGO ROBOT
Yes, Passenger Jim!

The robot zooms off to the sound of Aurora's laughter.

145 GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR

145

Jim and Aurora take seats. Arthur puts on his best manners.

ARTHUR
Evening. What can I get for you?

AURORA
A manhattan, please.

JIM
Single malt, rocks.

Arthur pours.

ARTHUR
You two look fine this evening.

AURORA
(confidentially)
We're on a date!

ARTHUR
Very nice.

AURORA
(to Jim)
Took you long enough to ask.

JIM
I was giving you space.

AURORA
Space is one thing I don't need
more of. I've been doing research.
I found a drug that would put us in
a coma indefinitely, and machines
that would keep us alive.

JIM

Really?!

AURORA

But it's not suspended animation.
We'd still be aging.

JIM

Oh.

AURORA

Yeah. If I have to grow old on this
ship, I'd at least like to be awake
for it. So that was a failure.

JIM

A highly ambitious failure.

AURORA

There's the title of my memoir. "A
Highly Ambitious Failure," by
Aurora Dunn.

JIM

I'd read that.

(thinks)

"Voyage to Nowhere," by Jim
Preston.

AURORA

(laughing)

"My Life in a Tin Can."

JIM

"A Spaceship Built For Two."

146

THE STARDOME - XANADU

146

A great glass dome, the highest point on the ship. Outside
the dome, a riot of stars. Inside, a luxury restaurant.

Jim and Aurora emerge into the dome.

AURORA

Incredible.

She turns, looking at the glittering river of the Milky Way,
the blue stars ahead of the ship, the pink stars behind them.They sit at the best table. Robots attend to their every
need. The blue stars frame Jim's head; the pink, Aurora's.

Beautiful dishes arrive: new wines with every course.

147 NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

147

A holographic 12-piece band plays on stage: a jazz standard. Jim walks onto the dance floor. Holds out his hand to Aurora.

She comes to him, and they dance. They're pretty good. Smiles grow on their faces.

Jim spins her out, spins her back - close enough to kiss. They almost do - but they don't.

148 DECK THREE - SHOPPING DISTRICT - NIGHT

148

Jim and Aurora ride along on the cargo robot. Her head rests on his shoulder. Suddenly she sits up.

AURORA
Rutherford, stop!

The robot stops. She pulls Jim off.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Come on, we have to do this!

She pulls him to the photo booth. They tumble inside. As the strobe flashes, she kisses him hard.

Outside, the photo strip drops into the tray: four color pictures. In the first they laugh; in the second they clown; in the third, they kiss. In the last image, Aurora smiles at the camera; Jim looks at Aurora.

Aurora taps the pictures with a fingertip, and they start to move: each is a one-second movie clip. The pictures laugh, and clown, and kiss.

149 DECK NINE - CORRIDOR - OUTSIDE AURORA'S CABIN

149

The cargo robot pulls up to Aurora's cabin door. Jim helps her down.

Aurora opens the door. Turns back to him.

AURORA
Thank you. I had an amazing time. A great night.

JIM
Yeah, me too. Well, good night.

He turns to go.

AURORA
Jim.

He turns back. Aurora grabs him by the lapels and drags him into her cabin.

150 AURORA'S CABIN

150

They stagger across the room together. He backs her up against a wall, kisses his way down her throat.

She hauls his jacket off his shoulders. Pulls at his shirt. He slips the straps from her shoulders. Her dress slides to the floor. They roll onto the bed.

151 CAFETERIA - MORNING

151

Breakfast. Jim watches Aurora eat.

AURORA

This is so good. I'm starving.

(she smiles at him)

Last night was just what I needed.

JIM

Aurora, you are the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. You're so beautiful it hurts me.

She stares at him, shocked - then leans across the table and kisses him. The kiss gains steam. Soon they're making love right on top of breakfast.

152 SERIES OF SHOTS

152

1. Jim and Aurora make out fiercely in the movie theater while a movie plays onscreen.

2. Aurora straddles Jim in a jacuzzi in the ship's Spa. She moves against him: she's close. She climaxes gorgeously.

3. Spontaneous sex on a high promenade: Jim in work clothes, Aurora in her jogging gear and sneakers.

153 BERLIN SUITE

153

Jim and Aurora lie in Jim's imperial bed, glistening with sweat and breathing hard. She lays her head on his shoulder, her eyes far away. She looks almost sad.

JIM

You okay?

AURORA

Yes, I fine. It's just...

She waves her had in the air as if to signify, all of this.

JIM
I know.

She snuggles in tighter, and he holds her close.

153A EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR - BERLIN SUITE WINDOW 153A

Through the window, Jim and Aurora lie together in the luxurious bed.

We pull out, the window dwindling, as the *Excelsior* soars away from us into the stars.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later

154 ELITE DECK - CORRIDOR - MORNING 154

A luxury cabin door: the doorplate reads "Vienna Suite."

155 VIENNA SUITE - BEDROOM 155

The best suite on the ship. One one side of the bedroom, Aurora's mementos and possessions. On the other side, Jim's.

They wake together. She kisses him on the cheek with the ease of long habit and heads for the shower. He watches her go.

156 SWIMMING POOL - MORNING 156

Swimming, Aurora reaches the end of a lap. A hand reaches down and catches her before she can turn.

Jim kneels at the edge of the pool, in coveralls and work boots, a tool belt slung over his shoulder.

Aurora pulls herself up and kisses him.

JIM
I'm going to finish my survey of
the cargo hold. See what there is
to play with.

AURORA
Be careful.

JIM
Back by happy hour.

157

FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

157

Aurora writes on her sofa, surrounded by electronic slates, each displaying a reference book or research paper. On one, a map of the Polynesian archipelago.

AURORA

The Polynesians set out into the Pacific Ocean with no destination. Searching for islands. They sailed into the endless sea on faith.

158

SUBDECK A - NUMBER EIGHT CARGO HOLD - DAY

158

Jim walks among the towering cargo racks. His flashlight illuminates machines stacked from floor to ceiling: tractors and combines, helicopters and seaplanes.

AURORA (V.O.)

Some never returned, but others found land, and prospered. What drove them out onto the sea? Curiosity? Tradition? The wish for something better?

Jim opens cargo containers. He finds ingots of metal, computer components, spools of superconducting wire. Raw materials for a young world.

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

The urge to move is as primal as hunger or thirst. We run, we drive, we sail, we fly.

Jim finds a stash of utility golf carts and his eyes light up. He unpacks one, starts it up. Drives off into the dark.

159

GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR - DAY

159

Aurora sits at the bar with her slate, sipping a drink.

AURORA

Is it movement that we need? Or the possibility of something new?

ARTHUR

What's that?

AURORA

I'm writing, Arthur. Hush.

Aurora's slate has recorded this exchange: she erases the extra words with her fingertip.

160

SUBDECK A - NUMBER SEVEN CARGO BAY

160

Jim drives his cart into a new bay - and stares in wonder.

In oversized hibernation pods: cattle, horses, sheep, oxen. All asleep. Chickens, ducks and geese in individual cells.

AURORA (V.O.)

Like seeds, we carry what we need.
The wind drives us - whether the
trade winds, the solar winds, or
the winds of chance.

The next aisle holds plants in stasis: saplings in tubes, seedlings in individual vials.

Jim stops in front of a glass case. Rosy light bathes his face. He smiles. We don't see why.

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

We take root where we fall. And
helplessly we grow.

161

VIENNA SUITE - BEDROOM - EVENING

161

Aurora sits in an armchair with her slate, eyeing Jim's side of the room.

Rising, she begins to explore Jim's possessions: poking into the drawers of his nightstand and dresser.

She opens his closet. Shifting things, she reveals - but does not yet notice - a dog-eared manual on hibernation pods.

She moves closer to the hibernation manual, snooping...

CLEANING ROBOT (O.S.)

Hello, Passenger.

JIM (O.S.)

Hello, robot.

Hastily she closes the closet. Moves to her side of the room. Jim appears in the doorway.

JIM (CONT'D)

How was your day?

AURORA

I wrote a few pages. I'm not sure what I'm doing anymore. I was writing a book, and I was keeping a diary.

(MORE)

AURORA (CONT'D)

But the book and the diary are
running together. I think I'm
writing about us.

JIM

Makes sense to me.

AURORA

I'm not sure I want to write about
this life. I don't even know how to
think about it. I live in a palace.
But it's also a prison. I'm moving
at half the speed of light and I
can't go anywhere!

Jim smiles. Begins to rub her shoulders.

JIM

The cargo hold is full of pioneer
gear. There's a submarine down
there, can you believe it? Ships
and airplanes and bulldozers.
That's what I wanted, a world still
being built. But I'll never see it.

They sit for a moment in glum contemplation.

AURORA

Did you find anything that could
help us?

JIM

Yes. I found these.

Jim reveals a bouquet of long-stemmed roses. Aurora gasps.

AURORA

Are they real?

JIM

I cut them myself.

Aurora leaps into action. She finds scissors, a pitcher. At
the sink she trims the stems, arranges the flowers.

AURORA

Thank you.

JIM

You're welcome.

She looks into his eyes.

AURORA
 For very unlucky people, we got
 pretty lucky.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later

161A INT. ELITE DECK - CORRIDOR - DAY

161A

Jim and Aurora sprint down the hall, cabin doors flashing by. Jim's practically dragging her along.

There's a deep background RUMBLE.

JIM
 It's coming! Run!

162 CELESTIAL PROMENADE

162

Jim and Aurora run up the stairs onto the highest promenade on the ship: glass all around, skylight above.

The deep RUMBLE is louder. A bloody light fills the sky.

A STAR looms ahead of the ship: a RED GIANT. The *Excelsior* rockets toward the star.

The passage takes less than a minute. The Red Giant swells in the windows. The ship shudders. The engines howl. Aurora falls into Jim's arms. The ship bathed in red light.

The star fills the skylight, fills the sky itself. Its fiery surface turbulent with sunspots and mysterious currents. The engine noise is deafening.

And then they're past. The star recedes, dwindling as quickly as it grew. The engines quiet. The ship's calm restored.

AURORA
 (breathlessly)
 That was incredible.

JIM
 Closest we'll get to a star on the
 whole trip. Happy birthday.

She throws her arms around him.

163 VIENNA SUITE - BEDROOM - EVENING

163

Aurora stands in her bathroom, getting pretty for dinner.

164

SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP

164

Jim puts the finishing touches on a beautiful RING woven from gold and silver wire. It's crowned with a flower of gold.

He removes the ring from its clamp: inspects it thoroughly. Satisfied, he wraps it in a cloth and tucks it in his pocket.

165

STARDOME - XANADU - EVENING

165

Jim and Aurora dine. They laugh and flirt with easy intimacy.

Their plates emptied, they sit back, sipping wine. Jim lifts the table's candle and waves it in the air. A robot rolls up with a birthday cake, candles alight.

JIM
(singing)
Happy birthday to you...
Happy birthday to you...
Happy birthday, dear Aurora...
Happy Birthday to you.

Aurora sits bathed in candlelight, and for this moment she is truly and fundamentally happy. She blows the candles out.

166

GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR - NIGHT

166

Jim and Aurora sit at the bar, tipsy. Arthur pours.

ARTHUR
Birthday cocktail for the birthday
girl.

AURORA
Aren't you going to check my I.D.?
I might not be old enough to drink.

ARTHUR
I'd never ask your age in front of
a gentleman.

AURORA
Jim's not a gentleman. Anyway
there's no secrets between me and
Jim.

ARTHUR
(looking at Jim)
Is that so?

JIM
You heard the lady. Be right back.

He walks away.

AURORA
Do you know what I like about you,
Arthur? You have a sense of
occasion. I'll bet ladies fall for
you on every trip.

ARTHUR
I'd say you were pulling my leg,
but I haven't got any.

AURORA
(laughing)
Exactly! There you go.

ARTHUR
I remember your last birthday, a
year ago. Jim was really looking
forward to meeting you.

Aurora frowns, processing this sentence - her smile fading.

AURORA
What?

167 MEN'S WASHROOM

167

Jim stands at the mirror, straightening his lapels, touching up his hair.

He unwraps the ring. Looks it over. Smiles at his reflection.

168 CONCOURSE BAR

168

Aurora scowls at Arthur, trying to get her bearings.

AURORA
What do you mean, he was looking
forward to it? How could he...

ARTHUR
He couldn't stop talking about you,
let me tell you. He spent months
deciding whether to wake you up.

Aurora covers her mouth with her hands.

AURORA
Jim woke me up.

ARTHUR

Oh, yes. Said it was the hardest decision of his life, but I see it worked out just fine.

Aurora stops breathing. She stares at the bartop.

Jim strolls up to the bar. His hand slides into the jacket pocket where the ring lies hidden.

But Aurora's body language is all wrong. He stops, perplexed.

JIM

What?

She looks up, her face rigid. Her voice a whisper.

AURORA

Did you wake me up, Jim?

Jim's hand slides out of his jacket pocket. He shoots a look at Arthur, who smiles back, oblivious.

Aurora's eyes bore into him. Finally Jim finds his voice.

JIM

Yes. I woke you up.

AURORA

(in agony)

How could you do it?

JIM

I tried not to.

AURORA

You pulled me out of hibernation and destroyed the rest of my life! You murdered me.

JIM

That's a little strong...

AURORA

You murdered me. I think I'm going to be sick. Oh, my God. I...I can't see.

She gets up to leave.

JIM

Aurora.

He goes after her.

AURORA
Get away from me!

She slaps at him blindly, almost hysterical. Stumbles away.

169 SERVICE DECK - CELESTIAL PROMENADE

169

Aurora stares out at the stars. Jim appears behind her.

She speaks without turning.

AURORA
(bitterly)
How did you decide? Did you just go shopping? A couple thousand women in their underwear, and you get to pick your favorite.

JIM
It wasn't like that.

AURORA
What was it like? And you had it all planned out! Dinner and movies and our big date...Oh, my God! And I just ate it up. Fake! All fake!

JIM
This was real. I didn't plan this.
It...happened.

AURORA
(mocking)
"Find true love on the Starship *Excelsior*! Romance between the Stars! The woman of your dreams!"
Was it everything you thought it would be?

JIM
You think I chose this? I wanted to be a colonist! I'm supposed to be asleep!

AURORA
This is sick.

JIM
Aurora. I love you.

She turns on him, fire in her eyes.

AURORA
Show me how you did it.

170 HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD

170

Aurora walks up to her old hibernation pod. Jim trails her, looking destroyed.

AURORA

So?

Jim stares at her, unbelieving. But she means it. He opens the cover panel, points out the key components.

JIM

I found out what went wrong with my own pod. A couple different processors burned out at the same time. I figured out how to trigger the same failure in another pod. Short circuit across these two contacts, and then these two. And cut these wires.

AURORA

Just like that.

JIM

Just like that.

AURORA

(shattered)

I'm so stupid. I fell for all of it. I fell for you. I thought you saved me. But you didn't save me, Jim. You did this to me. And now I'm stuck with you. I can't believe it. I can't believe it.

She walks away. Jim hasn't the heart to follow.

171 VIENNA SUITE - DAY

171

Aurora walks in, barely under control, and breaks down. Sinks to her knees, racked by sobs.

172 HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD - DAY

172

Jim sits at the foot of Aurora's hibernation pod, staring into the empty tube.

173 VIENNA SUITE - EVENING

173

Jim walks in. All of Aurora's things are gone. Her half of the bed has been made. She's moved out.

174 DECK THREE - CAFETERIA - MORNING 174

Aurora sits finishing her breakfast. Jim enters and approaches her table.

JIM
Can we talk?

AURORA
I don't want to talk anymore. I
don't want to look at you anymore.
If you see me coming, get out of my
way. If you see me sitting, find
somewhere else to be. There's
plenty of choices. It's a big boat.

175 DECK FOUR - SHOPPING DISTRICT - DAY 175

Jim walks alone, hands in his pockets, in a deep funk.

A little cleaning robot crosses his path: he KICKS it away
down the shopping street.

176 SWIMMING POOL 176

Aurora swims. Reaches the end of a lap and rests.

She looks up abruptly as if she senses someone watching her -
but the balcony above the pool is deserted.

177 ELITE DECK - FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY 177

Aurora sits reading. Digital slates surround her. A whir
distracts her.

She looks down to find Jim's pet robot sitting beside her. A
note on its back.

She picks up the note. It's the photo strip from her first
date with Jim: their first kiss captured on film. Clipped to
the photo strip is a handwritten note: "This was real."

Aurora leans down toward the robot's binocular eyes.

178 ROBOT'S POV 178

Aurora looms close. She holds the "This was real" note up to
the robot's camera eyes and crumples it up.

AURORA
Watching me through a robot is
creepy, Jim. Cut it out.

179 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP

179

Jim sits in front of his laptop: Aurora's accusing eyes stare out of the screen. He closes the laptop.

180 COMMAND DECK - COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - DAY

180

Jim sits at the security console, disheveled and bearded. Twenty screens give different views of the ship.

One screen shows a view of the Elite Promenade. As he watches, Aurora jogs by in sneakers and shorts.

Jim has her route mapped: as she vanishes from one screen she appears on the next. He follows her from screen to screen.

He picks up a microphone.

183 ELITE DECK

183

Aurora circles the atrium.

OVER THE P.A. SYSTEM: Jim clears his throat.

JIM (VIA INTERCOM)
Aurora.

She runs down the stairs toward Deck Nine.

JIM (VIA INTERCOM) (CONT'D)
Please, just hear me.

Aurora reaches Deck Nine and starts a lap of the Promenade.

184 COMMAND DECK - COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

184

Jim watches Aurora move from screen to screen: approaching, passing, receding. Far away and close.

He holds the microphone in both hands. His voice reverberates through the ship.

JIM
The day I first saw you, my life
changed. I couldn't forget your
face. I kept coming back to see
you. Trying to know you through the
glass. I read every word you ever
wrote, trying to hear you. The day
you woke up...

185

DECK NINE - NUMBER NINE PROMENADE

185

Aurora doesn't break stride. But she's listening.

JIM (VIA INTERCOM)

When you woke up I had no idea what to do next. You were a tiger. A hurricane. Totally unpredictable. I hoped...but I had no reason to believe you would see anything in me. When you did, when we found each other, this ship I'm trapped in suddenly felt like a limitless place. My pointless life suddenly had meaning.

Aurora skids to a stop beside a Deck Steward's station.

She leans over the counter, finds an intercom terminal and grabs the microphone. A whine of feedback. She looks into the lens of the nearest security camera.

AURORA

That's great, Jim. Just great. I'm glad that ruining my life somehow improved yours. But I have a run to finish, so...

185A

GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR

185A

Arthur looks up, listening, as voices echo through the ship.

JIM (VIA INTERCOM)

Wait. Don't go. I don't want to lose you.

AURORA

Jim. You lost me.

185B

DECK NINE - NUMBER NINE PROMENADE

185B

Back on Aurora:

JIM (VIA INTERCOM)

Don't cut me off. We're everybody. We're the whole world.

AURORA

You may be the only game in town, Jim, but that doesn't mean I have to play. Just pretend I'm not here. Because as far as you're concerned, I'm not.

She drops the microphone and walks out of frame. Jim slumps over the console in defeat.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later

187 ELITE DECK - VIENNA SUITE - BEDROOM (DAY) 187

Jim lies asleep on his bed in dirty clothes and shoes. He has a shaggy beard.

There are half-finished dishes in the bed. The suite is squalid, laundry and dishes everywhere.

188 ELITE DECK - CAFE MAXINE 188

The ship's posh French cafe.

Aurora eats a fancy lunch, reading a novel on a digital slate. She's groomed and put together.

189 DECK THREE - CAFETERIA 189

Jim sits in front of a bowl of breakfast cereal, a dry slice of toast. He stares into space. He has milk in his beard.

190 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK 190

Aurora sits in her writing chair, dictating to her slate.

AURORA

It's the modern way of life. We surround ourselves with people. A constant din of conversation. As if we need the mirror of other faces to see ourselves. Do we need that? Can we live without it?

191 VIENNA SUITE - DAY 191

The TV blares. Jim lies asleep in an armchair, covered with snack chips.

AURORA (V.O.)

I think the secret to survival is productive activity.

192 SHOPPING DISTRICT - CRAFT SHOP - DAY 192
Aurora investigates the craft shop's shelves. Collects an electronic book on painting. Paints and canvasses. An easel.

AURORA (V.O.)
We need to be good for something.

193 VIENNA SUITE - BATHROOM - DAY 193
Jim lies asleep in the bathtub, fully dressed, a vodka bottle in his limp hands.

AURORA (V.O.)
A challenge equal to our character.

He shifts in his sleep: vodka begins to spill. A wet stain spreads on his shirt, but he doesn't wake.

194 SERVICE DECK - CELESTIAL PROMENADE 194
Aurora stands in front of her easel on the promenade. She looks out the window and begins to paint.

AURORA (V.O.)
Something worth doing.

195 SHOPPING DISTRICT - AVENUE 195
Jim plays kick-the-can with an empty vodka bottle. Drunk. The bottle clatters against the PHOTO BOOTH.
Muttering in Russian, Jim attacks the photo booth, punching and kicking it - until he hurts his foot with a cry of pain. Inside, the flashbulb begins to fire.
Jim limps away. Behind him, a photo strip drops into the tray: four blank frames.

196 SHOPPING DISTRICT - LATER 196
Jim drives his golf cart unsteadily across the deck.
A HORRIBLE NOISE: he's dragging the photo booth across the floor by its power cord.

197 STARBOARD E.V.A. ROOM 197
Jim looks into the airlock through the small porthole in the inner door. Red lights flash.

The photo booth is crammed into the airlock.

198 EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR - AIRLOCK

198

The airlock door shoots open. The photo booth tumbles out into space.

199 GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR - EVENING

199

Arthur does make-work behind the bar.

Jim and Aurora approach simultaneously. They meet awkwardly: they haven't spoken in a long time.

AURORA

What are you doing here?

JIM

(drunk)

You! Tuesday's my day with Arthur.
You're trespassing.

ARTHUR

Actually, today's Wednesday.

JIM

I slept through Tuesday?

AURORA

Forget it. The bar's all yours. But I'd say a drink is the last thing you need. You're pathetic.

Aurora leaves. Jim takes a seat.

ARTHUR

What'll it be?

JIM

I'm going to kill myself.

ARTHUR

Why's that?

JIM

I'm a murderer.

ARTHUR

Who'd you murder?

JIM

Aurora.

ARTHUR
 (baffled)
 But she's alive. She was just here.

JIM
 She won't talk to me. She won't let
 me tell her what happened. How I
 fell in love with her. How I want
 to be with her. And I'm not sorry I
 woke her up. I'm not. I love her.
 And you know what? She loves me.

Around the corner, just out of sight, Aurora stands
 listening. Troubled, a hand over her mouth.

JIM (CONT'D)
 And it's not because I'm the only
 game in town. I saw her and I knew
 we were meant to be together. It
 was now or never, and I chose now.
 I chose now. And I was right. But I
 woke her up, Arthur. I woke her up,
 and she says I killed her. What was
 I supposed to do? I couldn't live
 without her. And now she's gone.

(angrily)
 Gimme another bottle.

ARTHUR
 (gently)
 I think you've had enough.

Jim looks at Arthur as if he's said something profound.

JIM
 You know what? You're right. I've
 had enough.

202 SUBDECK A - CARGO HOLD - DAY

202

Jim drives his cart up to a rack of large batteries: they're identical to the battery that powers the golf cart itself.

Jim starts loading his cart with extra batteries.

204 SERVICE DECK - CELESTIAL PROMENADE

204

Paintings leans against the windows: Aurora's starscapes. The first few are rudimentary, the later ones quite good.

She works on a new one: a red nebula. She looks out the window - and her focus changes. She sees her own reflection.

Her brush moves across the canvas. She adds the suggestion of a cheekbone...a slender neck...an eye. A face made of stars.

205 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP

205

Jim finishes connecting a bank of batteries to his cart's motor: quadrupling the power.

He rolls a huge tractor tire up to the cart and starts bolting it on.

207 DECK FOUR - SHOPPING DISTRICT

207

Aurora jogs.

A rumble and wail of rubber behind her. Jim's monster golf cart comes ROARING toward her.

Aurora leaps for safety as the cart passes. Jim blasts past her with a war whoop and a wave. He wears welding goggles.

Aurora looks after Jim in astonishment.

207A DECK FOUR - SERVICE CORRIDOR

207A

Jim races down a long straightaway. Squeals around a corner. Puts the cart on two wheels as he dodges a cleaning robot.

He steers down a stairway: The cart bounces crazily down to the deck below. At the bottom Jim takes the corner too hard.

The cart tumbles and SLAMS into the bulkhead. Debris rains down. Jim lies crumpled in the wreckage, his goggles askew.

208 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK

208

Aurora sits in her writing chair, a slate in front of her. But the slate is blank, and her face is tense.

AURORA

I haven't written in days. I don't know why. It's the old problem, I guess. Who's my reader? Who am I talking to? What's it for?

(she sighs)

I used to love it.

211 SERVICE DECK - INFIRMARY

211

Jim sits beside an autodoc in his underwear - his ribcage and right arm encased in bandages.

AUTODOC

Two separated ribs. Fracture of the right arm, radius and ulna. One fractured finger. Dislocated thumb.

JIM

(wiggling his fingers)
That's not so bad.

AUTODOC

Leave the bandages on for one week.
Take one of these pills each day
until they are gone.

A small bottle of pills rattles into a tray in front of Jim.

JIM

Thanks, doc.

AUTODOC

And take better care of yourself.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Three months later

212 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

212

Aurora paints, wild-eyed and fragile.

Her brushstrokes are fierce. She slashes at the canvas. As she paints she begins to cry, silently. She doesn't stop painting. The easel shakes as she works.

213 GRAND CONCOURSE

213

Jim paces the Concourse. He wears his tool belt. As he walks, he consults an electronic slate: a deck plan of the ship.

He picks a spot. Pulls his power-driver and starts unscrewing a deck plate.

216 AURORA'S CABIN

216

Aurora paces in her bathrobe, hair wrapped in a towel.

She looks at her gallery of snapshots. The photo strip of her first date with Jim is posted among them.

She touches her snapshots one by one. The faces begin to move and speak. A cacophony of good wishes. Laughter and cheers.

The clips play out and fall silent, until only one still plays...Aurora's mother.

AURORA'S MOTHER

I promise you we'll think of you every day. When you wake up, I know we'll be gone...but you just know that we lived our lives remembering you every day, and holding you in our hearts.

(She starts to cry.)
I don't understand, baby. I'm trying, but I can't believe I'm losing you.

(She tries to soldier.)
I hope you find what you're looking for. I hope it makes you happy.

Aurora watches, devastated.

217 GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR - DAY

217

Jim, in work clothes and tool belt, drops by the bar. He's as dirty as a coal miner but he looks happy.

ARTHUR
Hello, Jim. Whiskey?

JIM
Iced tea.

ARTHUR
Coming up. Are you getting my barstool dirty?

JIM
You have to get dirty to get things done, Arthur. If your hands are too clean, it means you're not making anything.

ARTHUR
And what are you making?

JIM
Improvements.

217A ELITE DECK - FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK - EVENING

217A

Aurora's informal art gallery has grown.

She has abandoned starscapes in favor of self-portraiture. The painted faces ever more clearly Aurora's...their expressions ever more tragic.

The last one is a field of white. Aurora fading away.

218 ELITE DECK - ELITE PROMENADE - EVENING

218

Aurora strolls listlessly, looking out the windows - and stops in astonishment: sitting in front of her on the promenade is a flower garden in a claw-foot bathtub.

Aurora smells a flower. Touches the petals in wonder.

She rushes to the railing and looks down through the atrium. There are other bathtubs on other decks...

Then she sees the Concourse below, and runs for the elevator.

219 GRAND CONCOURSE

219

Aurora walks wonderingly up to Jim's biggest improvement: a garden planted on the Concourse, with flowers, grass, and, in the middle, a ten-foot oak sapling.

221 INFIRMARY - GENETIC BANK - DAY

221

Wisps of cold mist roll off the metal capsules. Aurora browses the rotating racks, reading names.

With a start she comes across her own name. AURORA DUNN, FEMALE, BORN 4/27/2819.

She punches buttons. The racks rotate, shedding flakes of frost. She finds what she's looking for. JAMES PRESTON, MALE, BORN 9/9/2810.

She looks at the metal cartridge for a long moment. Then she slaps a switch, and the genetic bank closes up on itself.

222 GRAND CONCOURSE - LOUNGE

222

Jim sits reading an electronic slate. A footstep. He looks up to find Aurora standing over him.

JIM

Hi.

AURORA

I need you.

The last thing Jim expected to hear.

AURORA (CONT'D)

I mean, I need a repairman. My cabin's going crazy.

Jim's face falls.

222A DECK NINE - AURORA'S CABIN

222A

Jim opens the door. Inside is chaos: the lights oscillate randomly. Video screens filled with static. Speakers blare noise and fragments of speech.

Jim pops open an instrument panel on the wall. Shines a flashlight inside. Reaches in and pulls out a chunky computer chip. The room goes dark and quiet.

Jim inspects the chip in his flashlight beam. It's visibly scorched.

222B AURORA'S CABIN - LATER

222B

Jim shows Aurora to her cabin door.

JIM

The chip burned out in your cabin computer. I swapped one out from another room.

He opens the door. The cabin inside is restored to its normal state. Aurora steps silently past him into the cabin.

JIM (CONT'D)

Aurora.

She turns to look back at him.

JIM (CONT'D)

Are you all right? I saw your paintings. They look...

AURORA

(brittle)

I'm fine, Jim. And my paintings are none of your business. Thanks for your work.

She closes the door in his face.

FADE TO BLACK.

222C GRAND CONCOURSE

222C

Jim passes a cleaning robot stuck in a corner. He frees the robot: it plows right back into the corner.

Another robot zooms in - and gets stuck right beside the first one.

Jim studies the robots thoughtfully.

225 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP - DAY

225

Jim tinkers with a malfunctioning robot.

A squawk of static comes over the P.A. system.

Jim looks up, listening.

226 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK

226

Aurora sits with her digital slate in her lap. She too is looking up, listening.

VOICE (VIA INTERCOM)
Hello! Anybody there?

Aurora bolts to her feet, wide-eyed.

227 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP

227

Jim has vanished - the robot still rocking on the workbench.

228 DECK ONE - HIBERNATION BAY

228

Jim sprints down the hallway, eyes searching left and right.

VOICE (VIA INTERCOM)
This is Deck Chief Gus Mancuso.

Jim skids to a stop, astonished: the door to the Crew Hibernation Facility stands open.

VOICE (VIA INTERCOM) (CONT'D)
Who the hell planted a tree on my ship?

The Grand Concourse! Jim spins and runs back the other way.

229 GRAND CONCOURSE

229

GUS MANCUSO stands at a deck steward's station, intercom mic in hand. A stocky man of 55, with a bristling mustache, wearing a crewman's coverall. Haggard and weary. He stares in consternation at the garden in the middle of the Concourse.

Running footsteps.

Jim and Aurora race into the Concourse from opposite directions. They see Gus and stop, astonished

GUS
(pointing at the tree)
Who did that?

Jim raises a hand sheepishly. Gus shakes his head.

GUS (CONT'D)
I can't even talk about that now.
Who are you?

JIM
Jim Preston. Rate-two mechanic.

GUS
Mechanic, huh?

AURORA
I'm Aurora. Aurora Dunn.

GUS
Gus Mancuso, Senior Deck Chief.
How...
(looks at the tree again)
How long have you been awake?

AURORA
A year.

JIM
Two years.

GUS
This is not good. I mean, it's nice
to meet you and all, but this is
not good.

230

CAFETERIA

230

Jim, Aurora, and Gus sit around a table. Gus leans heavily on his elbows, sipping from a mug.

GUS
I always get a hibernation hangover
but this is the worst ever.
(he drinks)
So it's just the two of you?

JIM
Yeah.

GUS
Two years. Ouch.
(looks them in the eye)
You know what it means, right?
(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)
 There's no way back into
 hibernation.

AURORA
 I was hoping you'd know something
 we didn't.

GUS
 No. We're awake for the duration.
 How far along are we? You know?

JIM
 Thirty-two years. Eighty-eight
 years to go.

Gus blows air.

GUS
 That's tough.
 (he shakes his head)
 Hibernation failure! They said it
 couldn't happen. And now three on
 one trip.

Aurora shoots Jim a look. Gus doesn't notice.

GUS (CONT'D)
 Well, let's see what we can do.

231 COMMAND DECK

231

Gus leads Jim and Aurora to the Bridge's armored hatch. He swipes his crew card and the door opens.

JIM
 You have no idea how long I've been
 trying to get in here.

GUS
 Well, now you're in. Don't touch
 anything.

232 BRIDGE

232

The computer consoles of the Bridge brighten as they enter. Gus walks from station to station, studying the screens.

GUS
 We're on course....Whatever's wrong
 with the ship, NavComp's still
 minding the store.

JIM
 Something's wrong with the ship?

GUS

Three pod failures? Something's wrong. Question is what.

He turns to leave.

AURORA

Wait. What about diverting the ship? Can we go back to Earth?

Gus almost laughs.

GUS

We're going forty percent of lightspeed away from Earth. To go home we'd have to come to a stop, accelerate back towards Earth, and then come to a stop again. It'd take as long as going on to Homestead II. Anyway, navigation's not for amateurs. Space is a big place, and a planet's just a little thing.

Gus has a coughing fit. Wipes his mouth with his fist.

GUS (CONT'D)

Let's go next door. See how the old girl's doing.

233

DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

233

Gus opens a secure compartment beside the bridge. Inside, the Diagnostic Computer stands dark and dead.

GUS

I thought we'd see a lot of red lights here. That would mean trouble.

AURORA

So everything's okay?

GUS

No, if everything was okay we'd see a lot of green lights here.

AURORA

What does no lights mean?

GUS

No lights means big trouble. Diagnostic Computer's down. We've got some work to do.

JIM
What do you need?

GUS
Right now? Cheeseburger.

234 ELITE DECK - STARDUST DINER

234

Gus eats a cheeseburger. Jim and Aurora sit across from him.

GUS
(with his mouth full)
Never been so hungry. Worst
hibernation hangover ever.

Jim can't take his eyes off Gus. A new person.

JIM
So where you from, Gus?

GUS
Grew up in Chicago. But I've lived
on this ship a long time. The
Excelsior's made five inter-
planetary runs, and I've been on
all of them. I live aboard. When
she makes port, I live where she
lands until she lifts again.

JIM
(doing the math)
How old are you?

GUS
Fifty-six.

JIM
But how long ago were you born?

GUS
Oh. Hang on...
(he does mental math)
About six hundred years ago. Most
of that I lost to hibernation or
relativity. Doesn't really count.
(he coughs again)
I tell you, I feel about six
hundred years old right now. I woke
up hard.

AURORA
You should rest.

GUS
I think I will.
(he climbs to his feet)
Tomorrow morning, eight bells, you
meet me beside that tree of yours.
Until I figure out what's wrong
with the old girl, you work for me.

Jim and Aurora smile.

JIM
Yes, sir.

AURORA
Good night, Gus.

Gus waves and walks off. That leaves Jim and Aurora sitting awkwardly on the same side of a diner booth.

After a moment Aurora moves over to the other side. Looks at Jim across the table.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Six hundred years old!

JIM
I've missed you.

Aurora stares, caught off guard. She gets up.

AURORA
See you in the morning, Jim.

235 COMMAND DECK - DIAGNOSTIC CENTER - MORNING

235

Gus and Jim examine the Diagnostic Computer. Jim holds a flashlight while Gus pokes around with a voltmeter inside.

Behind them, Aurora stands watching with a digital slate.

GUS
The CPU's burned out, can you
believe it? Why should that happen?
It's rated for five hundred years.

AURORA
Can you fix it?

GUS
You don't fix it, you replace it.
There are spares for everything in
storage. Make a note. Diagnostic
Computer CPU. And a new cooling
fan, this one looks shot.

AURORA

Got it.

236 GRAND CONCOURSE

236

Gus and Aurora stand waiting as if for a bus.

AURORA

Don't take this the wrong way - I
wish for your sake you were still
asleep - but I'm glad you're here.

GUS

Thank you, sweetheart.

A GROWL of gears. Jim drives up in his souped-up golf cart.

GUS (CONT'D)

What's this?

JIM

The golf cart.

Gus takes in the bank of batteries, the giant tractor wheels.

GUS

This I like.

237 SUBDECK A - NUMBER TEN CARGO BAY

237

Jim pilots the cart through the stacks. Aurora rides shotgun. Gus, in the back seat, plays a flashlight over the stacks.

GUS

Next bay should be the ship's
stores.

(to Jim, grinning)
So how fast can she go?

Jim puts the pedal down. The cart lays rubber on the deck
plates and shoots down the aisle while Aurora and Gus yell.

238 SHIP'S STORES

238

Up on a hydraulic lift, Gus digs components out of storage.
Hands them to Aurora, who hands them to Jim, who loads them
into the cart.

239 DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

239

Gus works on the Diagnostic Computer while Jim looks on.
Nearby, Aurora thumbs through Gus's technical manuals.

Gus clamps a final component in place and nods at Jim.

GUS
Start 'er up.

Jim closes a circuit breaker and powers up the computer. A deep electrical HUM as the machine boots up.

The screen flashes a message: RUNNING VESSEL DIAGNOSTIC. A progress bar shows that the diagnostic is 0.0% complete.

The lights on the indicator panel remain dark. The first light begins to flicker as the diagnostic runs.

JIM
How long will it take?

GUS
Full diagnostic from a cold start?
Days. But it'll tell us everything.

241 GRAND CONCOURSE

241

Gus strolls through the ship, looking around nostalgically. He passes Jim's garden and shakes his head.

242 CONCOURSE BAR

242

Gus walks up to the bar.

ARTHUR
Chief Mancuso! Good to see you.

GUS
Good to see you too, Arthur.

ARTHUR
What can I get you?

GUS
Just an ice water with a little lemon. I feel hot as hell.

Gus mops sweat from his brow and sips his water. His hand trembles hard enough to make the ice cubes rattle.

243 GUS'S CABIN

243

A homey space, filled with Gus's possessions: pictures of fellow spacers and vacation spots on half a dozen planets. Books, keepsakes and mementos.

Gus sits on his bed, on a handmade quilt. Coughs violently into a handkerchief, leaving the cloth spotted with blood.

244

GRAND CONCOURSE - GARDEN - MORNING

244

Aurora stands waiting by the oak tree. Jim arrives with two cups of coffee, and hands her one. Aurora smiles, touched.

AURORA

Thank you.

Gus arrives in a fresh coverall, a steaming mug in hand. No signs of frailty. He hands each of them a digital slate.

GUS

All right. Last night I checked ten atmosphere stations and two of them were burned out. Twenty percent failure rate. Unheard of. So we're going to see how far the rot runs.

(to Aurora)

You. You're going to walk Decks Two, Three, and Four, and check every atmosphere station. Green light good, red light bad, no light really bad. Write down what you find, I want a complete census.

AURORA

Yes, sir.

GUS

(to Jim)

You. Go down to the Ship's Stores. Find atmosphere station CPUs and take an inventory of the spares. I know what the manifest says, but lists ain't facts.

JIM

Got it.

GUS

I'm going down to the Hibernation Bay to look at our pods. Maybe I can spot what went wrong.

Jim and Aurora exchange glances.

AURORA

That should be interesting.

245

HIBERNATION BAY - AURORA'S POD - DAY

245

Gus kneels in front of the pod, working inside the mechanism. Alone, he doesn't hide his difficulty: he's sweating heavily, breathing hard.

But something he finds inside the machine makes him forget his symptoms. He stares, astonished.

GUS
Son of a gun.

A sound behind him. Gus turns to find Jim watching. He looks from Jim to the pod mechanism and back again.

GUS (CONT'D)
You're supposed to be doing
inventory.

JIM
I finished.

GUS
I looked at your pod. Very simple.
Both of the clock chips burned out.
Not supposed to happen, but it's
simple.

Jim fidgets. Starts to speak. Gus cuts him off.

GUS (CONT'D)
My pod was complicated. A bunch of
different failures at once, the
whole thing went haywire. I think
that's why I feel so bad.
(points at Aurora's pod)
But this pod...

JIM
Gus...

GUS
You did this.

JIM
Yeah.

GUS
I was thinking what a lucky son of
a bitch you were, stuck with a
beauty like Aurora. But it wasn't
luck.

JIM
No.

Gus sits down heavily, looking at Jim.

GUS
She knows?

JIM
She knows.

Gus thinks that over, shaking his head at the idea.

GUS
I could see there was some trouble
between you.

Gus looks back at Aurora's pod and starts putting his tools away. Jim lays the electronic slate down beside him.

JIM
Here's your inventory. I'll be in
the machine shop if you need me.

247 COMMAND DECK - DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

247

Gus sits working. Behind him the Diagnostic Computer displays its progress bar: the diagnostic is 9% complete.

Aurora enters with a digital slate.

AURORA
I finished the census.
(she hesitates)
You saw the hibernation pods?

GUS
Yeah.

AURORA
So you know. What Jim did.

Aurora's chin begins to tremble.

GUS
Yeah, he told me.

AURORA
He told you? Just like that? And?

She waits, trembling with righteous indignation. Gus doesn't want to get into this: he looks away uncomfortably.

AURORA (CONT'D)
It's not forgivable, Gus. It's not.
Don't tell me it is.

GUS
No, it's a bad thing. But...
(he shrugs helplessly)
Look. When a drowning man drags
somebody down with him, you don't
call it right. But he's drowning.
(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)

A starving man steals a loaf of bread, what can you say? You should have starved?

AURORA

I would have starved.

GUS

Really?

Aurora looks hard at Gus, thinking, and says nothing.

251

ELITE DECK - ARGENTINA STEAKHOUSE - EVENING

251

A rustic restaurant. Gus, Jim, and Aurora sit around a table. Gus reads an electronic slate.

GUS

By Aurora's count, about thirty percent of the atmosphere station CPUs are burned out.

JIM

We can replace them.

GUS

We will. But they'll just burn out again if we don't figure out why it's happening.

JIM

Where do we start?

GUS

We wait for the diagnostic report. You've been knocking around this ship for two years. A few days more won't kill you.

Robot waiters lay dishes on the table. Gus sets his slate aside.

GUS (CONT'D)

This is the best food on the ship.

Gus coughs. For a moment his weakness is plain to see...but Jim and Aurora are distracted - stealing looks at each other.

252

GRAND CONCOURSE - CONCOURSE BAR

252

Jim, Aurora, and Gus sit at the bar. Arthur stands by.

AURORA

So how did you end up in space?

GUS

When I was sixteen I lied about my age and got onto a lunar shuttle crew. A few years later I moved on to planetary ships. Made the Venus run a hundred times, then Jupiter and Saturn. Then the gravity drive came along. Real spaceflight. I did everything I could to get onto an interstellar ship. I was thirty-six years old the first time I saw an alien sun. No going back after that. I've walked on seventeen planets in five solar systems.

JIM

That's incredible.

AURORA

Don't you feel homeless?

GUS

I'm a spacer. My home is where I am. You can't take much with you, so you don't get hung up on things. You have yourself. The things you do. The company you keep.

Gus pushes himself off his stool. Momentarily shaky, he pulls himself together.

He takes a seat at the grand piano and plays - a fine beerhall pianist. Gus touches a switch and lifts his hands: the piano keeps playing.

Gus stands and extends a hand to Aurora. She takes it, and Gus sweeps her across the floor.

Jim watches from the bar.

ARTHUR

(aside, to Jim)

Gus always dances with the ladies.

Aurora follows Gus's lead - but steals looks at Jim. Her eyes unreadable. They watch each other as the dance goes on.

Jim and Aurora wait beside the garden. They've been waiting for a while. Both look around for Gus.

JIM

You haven't seen him at all?

254 GUS'S CABIN DOOR

254

A doorbell chimes. Jim and Aurora wait in the hall, listening. Jim rings again.

AURORA
I don't think he's up.

255 GUS'S CABIN

255

Gus lies feverish and semi-conscious in his bed.

A THUNK! The door slides open. Jim and Aurora rush in.

JIM
Gus! Are you all right?

GUS
No. No, I'm not.

256 INFIRMARY

256

Gus lies in the medical scanner. Jim and Aurora watch anxiously as the machine bathes Gus in eerie light, sensors floating over his body.

GUS
Couldn't get up. Weak as a baby.
What does it say is wrong with me?

The scanner's display screen lists not one diagnosis, but hundreds: disorders, diseases, dysfunctions.

JIM
(hiding his horror)
It's a few things.

MEDICAL SCANNER
Diagnosis complete.

Gus hauls himself out of the scanner. Pulls a bathrobe on and comes around to look at the screen. He sees it and blanches.

MEDICAL SCANNER (CONT'D)
Six hundred twelve disorders found.

GUS
What's the summary?

MEDICAL SCANNER
Pan-systemic necrosis. Progressive organ failure. Cause unknown.

GUS
(losing his temper)
I'll tell you the cause. My goofy
hibernation pod is the cause.
What's the treatment?

MEDICAL SCANNER
No treatment known.

Gus pivots the monitor so that only he can see it.

GUS
Prognosis.

A series of images flickers over the screen, casting shadows on his face. Gus swallows hard and looks away.

GUS (CONT'D)
How long have I got?

MEDICAL SCANNER
Between two and three days.

A long moment of silence. Gus turns and exits.

MEDICAL SCANNER (CONT'D)
These sedatives will alleviate
suffering in the final hours...

Pill bottles clatter into a metal bin. Aurora scoops them up. Jim goes after Gus.

257 CORRIDOR

257

Gus settles himself behind the wheel of Jim's cart.

JIM
Gus!

GUS
Sorry, Jim.

Gus puts his foot down and the cart squeals away.

Aurora stumbles into the hall, her hands full of pill bottles. She and Jim watch the cart recede.

259 COMMAND DECK - COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

259

Aurora sits at the security console, watching the monitors for signs of Gus.

Jim enters.

JIM
He's not in his room.

Aurora flips on the intercom, speaks into the mic. Her voice resonates through the ship.

AURORA
Where are you? Gus, please answer.
We'll be at the Concourse Bar every
hour. I'm really worried.

JIM
I wish I knew what he was doing.

GUS (O.S.)
I wish I knew what you were doing.

They spin. Gus stands in the doorway behind them.

GUS (CONT'D)
Guy's got a couple of days to live
and he can't get any peace.

AURORA
Where have you been?

GUS
Making arrangements. You kids have
dinner plans?

JIM
No.

GUS
Xanadu at eight.
(exiting)
Now stop shouting at me.

259A GUS'S CABIN - EVENING

259A

Gus makes a tour of the room, touching his photographs and mementos in farewell.

He puts on his dress uniform: chest crowded with medals and decorations for the planets he's seen, the voyages he's made.

In the mirror he studies his haggard face.

Suddenly he shouts, a wordless cry of anger. Pounds on the dresser with his fists. Teeth clenched in pain and fury.

Then he straightens. Stands at attention. Takes a deep breath. Pivots on his heel and leaves the room.

260

STARDOME - XANADU - NIGHT

260

Jim and Aurora enter the Stardome. They find Gus waiting for them in his dress uniform. He's shaky, but sits proud at the head of the table.

He waves them toward chairs. They sit on each side of him, and he pours wine with a trembling hand.

AURORA

You look magnificent.

GUS

(to Jim)

Ladies love the dress blues.

(to both of them)

Thanks for coming. Sorry to run out today, but I didn't have a lot of time, and there was a lot to do.

JIM

How you feeling?

GUS

Fine, fine.

He signals for champagne.

AURORA

Gus, just because some stupid machine says there's no cure...

GUS

State-of-the-art machine, Aurora. Anyway, I can feel it happening. I'm going fast.

AURORA

But you just got here. It's barely been a week.

He takes her hand.

GUS

No point counting the days.

261

XANADU - LATER

261

Their dinners are nearly done. Gus pours more wine. He's in the middle of a tale of adventure.

GUS

A pure oxygen environment is about as dangerous a place as you can be.
(MORE)

GUS (CONT'D)

A steel pipe will burn in pure O2.
 And there I am with a hammer,
 trying to close this valve and stop
 the oxygen flow, when one spark
 will kill us all. But the thing is,
 O2 makes you punchy. So I can't
 stop laughing. And then the guys
 behind me start in, and soon
 everybody's going. Captain's
 giggling like a girl. The Navigator
 pissed his pants laughing.

Jim and Aurora laugh. But pain contorts Gus's face. He grips the table with white knuckles. When it passes nobody's laughing anymore.

GUS (CONT'D)

This is happening fast. I got some things for you. Come with me.

262 DECK FOUR - STARBOARD E.V.A. ROOM

262

On a table at the edge of the plaza, a small pile of objects waits. Gus stops beside them. Turns to Jim and Aurora.

GUS

I went through the ship's manuals and made notes wherever there was something special you should know. These should keep you straight. In a few days the Diagnostic Computer will show you what needs fixing.

He takes his shipcard from around his neck. Hands it to Jim.

GUS (CONT'D)

This'll get you anywhere you need to go. Questions?

JIM

Why are we standing beside the airlock?

AURORA

Oh, God! Gus, no!

GUS

Got no choice about going. But I can decide how to go, and I'm going out on my own two feet.

JIM

(shocked)

Are you sure about this?

GUS

If you knew how this feels, Jimbo,
you wouldn't ask me to stay.

Gus extends a hand to Aurora. She throws her arms around him.

AURORA

Gus. I can't stand it.

GUS

It's all right, Aurora.

Gus turns to Jim. They clasp hands. Slap each other's shoulders in a rough embrace.

GUS (CONT'D)

Jim. Fix the ship.

JIM

Yes, sir.

GUS

Take care of each other.

Gus turns and opens the airlock. He straightens, squares his shoulders, and steps inside. Turns to face them.

GUS (CONT'D)

All right.

Aurora covers her mouth. Jim raises a hand in farewell. Gus punches a button and the door closes. Red lights flash.

Through the porthole they see Gus look out into space.

Then the outer door slams open and a blast of air shoots Gus out among the stars. His body lost in the infinite night.

Aurora steps into Jim's arms. Lays her head on his chest. For a moment he holds her. Then she pushes him gently away. Meets his eyes sadly. Jim watches her walk away.

263 INT. GRAND CONCOURSE - DAY

263

Arthur polishes glasses, chipper as ever. A SWEEPER ROBOT passes on its daily errands.

264 FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK

264

Aurora slouches in her writing chair, staring into space - her face a mask of sorrow.

265 SUBDECK C - MACHINE SHOP 265
Jim sits motionless at his workbench, lost in thought.

266 DECK TWO - PROMENADE 266
A sweeper robot rolls through a hatch into the ROBOTICS CENTER.

267 ROBOTICS CENTER 267
A file of sweeper robots rolls down an aisle. They tuck themselves, one by one, into recharging niches - but the last one finds its niche already occupied.
The thwarted robot bumbles around in the aisle - tripping up a procession of gangly window washers.
Chaos spreads. Robots bunch and stumble, their ballet broken.

268 CAFETERIA - MORNING 268
Jim draws a glass of orange juice and gets green sludge. Dials for toast and gets two slices of charcoal.

270 COMMAND DECK - DIAGNOSTIC CENTER - DAY 270
Aurora enters. The Diagnostic Computer's console is no longer dark: it's a sea of green and red lights. A lot of red.
The computer's screen reads "Diagnostic Complete." It displays a long list of error messages.
Aurora stares in horror at the red lights.

AURORA
Jim!

271 DIAGNOSTIC CENTER - LATER 271
Jim stands at the worktable: its surface displays the diagnostic report. Thousands of faults and failures.
Aurora studies the indicator lights. Takes notes on an electronic slate.

AURORA
There's trouble everywhere.
Atmosphere systems, water systems,
waste systems, robot control.
(MORE)

AURORA (CONT'D)
 This is when it started. May twelfth, two years ago.

JIM
 That's the day I woke up!

AURORA
 Thirty perfect years, and then forty-seven failures in a single day. Hell of a day.

Jim comes around the table. He touches controls.

JIM
 Whatever happened two years ago was the beginning of something terrible. Look.

He pulls up a graph of failures over time: A small spike two years ago. Then nothing for a while. Then a trickle of breakdowns that swells into a torrent. Still accelerating.

AURORA
 What do we do?

Jim brings up a map of the ship on the display. Red markers blink on the map.

JIM
 We start at the beginning. The breakdowns from the day I woke up.

AURORA
 They're all on Deck One.

272 DECK FOUR - AFT FIREWALL

272

An armored hatch leads to the Engine Room.

Jim wears his tool belt and carries his toolbox. Aurora carries a flashlight and an electronic slate.

Jim swipes Gus's crew card and the hatch opens. They go in.

273 ENGINE COMPARTMENT - UPPER LEVEL

273

A huge space spanning multiple decks at the rear of the ship. Here the real heart of the *Excelsior* throbs in the dark.

Jim and Aurora emerge into a humming electrical station. Jim peers at gauges.

JIM
 Power Converter seems okay.

AURORA
The failures are all below us.

274 ENGINE COMPARTMENT - MIDDLE LEVEL

274

A huge sphere 120 feet across dominates the compartment.
Signs read: CAUTION - FUSION REACTOR. A deep RUMBLE.

Jim and Aurora descend beside the reactor on a spiral stair.
They emerge onto a catwalk at the reactor's equator and walk
around the sphere.

275 REACTOR CONTROL ROOM

275

Jim cards open a door labeled "REACTOR CONTROL ROOM." Red
light pours out. They enter.

JIM & AURORA
(simultaneously)
Don't touch anything.

Banks of control panels - but Jim and Aurora have eyes only
for the windows into the reactor's heart.

Inside the reactor is a caged sun: an orb of fire hanging in
space. Loops and tongues of flame leap from its surface.

It roars like a forest fire.

AURORA
It's beautiful.

JIM
It scares the hell out of me.

AURORA
What keeps it in?

JIM
Gravity. The gravity plant holds
the whole ship together. It gives
us weight. Propels the ship. And it
contains the fusion reaction. All
one system. Really elegant design.

Jim walks among the consoles, studying the instruments.

JIM (CONT'D)
Not much trouble here. A couple of
computers running hot.

AURORA

The cluster of failures is still
one level down.

276 ENGINE COMPARTMENT - LOWER LEVEL

276

Jim and Aurora emerge from another spiral staircase.

They come to a door marked CENTRAL COMPUTING. Jim cards the door with Gus's shipcard.

The door's lock flashes a red light and stays closed.

JIM

Gus's card should open any door.

AURORA

Let me try an override code.

JIM

Where'd you get an override code?

AURORA

I read Gus's manuals. Did you?

She squeezes past Jim. Taps at the door's keypad.

JIM

Wait a sec, maybe there's a reason
the door...

The light flashes green.

The door begins to slide open.

A HOWLING WIND sucks Aurora against the crack in the door.

She screams. Jim drops his toolbox and grabs at her arm. No use. A hurricane drags Aurora inside.

277 CENTRAL COMPUTER FACILITY

277

A high-tech facility, the starship's brain. A RAGGED HOLE is punched in the hull here. Outside the hole, stars burn in the vacuum of space.

Aurora tumbles into the room and smashes into a column. She clings in the gale-force wind, grimacing in pain.

Red lights flash. Claxons sound, barely audible over the wind. The door begins to close on its own.

Jim dives through the closing door. Skids to a stop beside Aurora. He tears her loose from the column and shoves her toward the closing door.

She scrambles across the floor, fighting the gale. Reaches the door frame. Scrambles through the narrowing opening. Jim pushes at her feet, and she gets through.

Jim tries to follow her through. Too late. No room.

AURORA
Jim! Jim!

The door closes. The last of the atmosphere flashes away through the hole in the hull. Jim is in vacuum.

Aurora screams and hammers on the other side of the door. But Jim hears only his own pounding heart.

He spins. Searches the room. There's an emergency cabinet on the wall. He tears it open. Pulls out an epoxy foamer - a pressurized canister like a fire extinguisher.

Gripping the foamer, Jim throws his weight against a heavy cabinet. Slides it across the deck. His feet skid on the deck plates. He falls, scrambles up, keeps pushing.

The cabinet rams up against the hole in the bulkhead. Jim aims the foamer and pulls the trigger. Orange foam shoots out and hardens into a rigid plastic. He sprays until the foamer is empty, the cabinet and the hull puncture buried in foam.

Jim turns, half fainting. Staggers to the wall, hits the emergency purge button, and falls unconscious.

White jets of air blast into the room. The pressure comes up. The door slides open.

Aurora dashes into the room, falls to her knees beside Jim. Takes his pulse. Listens for breath: he's not breathing. She starts mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

After a moment Jim coughs and starts breathing. She props his head on her knee. He opens bloodshot eyes.

AURORA (CONT'D)
(shaking with relief)
Jim. Are you okay?

JIM
I feel like hell.

AURORA
Let's get you to the infirmary.

JIM
(his eyes going wide)
Look.

In the center of the room a round column houses the CORE COMPUTER. There's a CRATER blasted in the machine.

JIM (CONT'D)
That's the core computer.

Jim hauls himself to his feet, leaning on Aurora. He approaches the blasted computer. Reaches into the hole. Strains. A CREAK...and Jim pulls a melon-sized METEOR from the crater. An orb of pitted metal.

278 COMMAND DECK - DIAGNOSTIC CENTER

278

Jim and Aurora sit at the worktable. The meteor sits between them on the table.

Jim washes a handful of pills down with a slug of coffee.

JIM
A meteor.

AURORA
A rock.

They never take their eyes off the rock: the cause of it all.

JIM
(a bolt of insight)
I think I know what happened.

He leaps to his feet, scanning the room's data displays.

JIM (CONT'D)
All the ship's computers are networked. If one computer breaks down, the others pick up the load.

Jim lays his hand on the meteor.

JIM (CONT'D)
Two years ago, this meteor hit the ship - and the most powerful computer on board got blown away. Since then, all the other computers have been carrying the load. Running at full capacity around the clock. After a while they started burning out. And every computer that burns out increases the load on the others. The breakdown accelerates. If we don't stop it, the whole ship will go down.

Aurora tears through Gus's marked-up manuals.

AURORA

Gus said there's spares for everything. If we replace the core computer...

JIM

It'll pick up the load. The burnouts will stop. Let's go.

AURORA

Are you up to this?

JIM

It's got to be done.

282 SUBDECK A - SHIP'S STORES

282

Driving a cargo loader, Jim lifts a crate containing the spare core computer down from a high rack.

Aurora backs Jim's golf cart into position, and they load the core computer aboard.

283 ENGINE COMPARTMENT - CORE COMPUTER ROOM

283

Jim wrestles the heavy crate out of the cart while Aurora buries the hull breach in another layer of epoxy foam.

Jim wearily uncrates the replacement computer. Dog tired.

Aurora looks at the ruined core computer, mounted three feet above the floor.

AURORA

Gus's manual doesn't say how you get the old computer out of there. Or the new one in.

JIM

I don't know. Must be some kind of hoist around.

He turns to look, and STAGGERS. Catches himself. Aurora lays her hand on Jim's shoulder.

AURORA

You need to rest. We've been going non-stop. We can't make mistakes. You need a clear head.

JIM

(groggily)

Go to do this.

AURORA

Jim, you just got sucked into outer space. Take a break.

JIM

(surrendering)

Okay.

284 ELITE DECK - BERLIN SUITE - NIGHT 284

Jim lies asleep in trousers and T-shirt, dead to the world.

285 DECK NINE - AURORA'S CABIN - DAWN 285

Aurora wakes. Rolls out of bed.

286 COMMAND DECK - DIAGNOSTIC CENTER - DAY 286

Aurora sips coffee and surveys the Diagnostic Computer's warning lights. Consults an electronic slate.

Satisfied, she leaves the room.

The console flickers. A green light turns red. And another. The pattern of red lights spreads like a bloodstain.

287 ELITE DECK - BERLIN SUITE 287

Jim still lies sleeping. He hasn't moved a muscle. Aurora looks in on him, and slips quietly away.

288 DECK TWO - SWIMMING POOL 288

In a bathing suit, Aurora dives into the pool, cleaving the water cleanly and striking out in a crawl stroke.

She reaches the end of the lane. Kick-turns and swims back...

...and the gravity cuts out.

The water heaves itself into weird humps and tentacles. Aurora flounders in the weightless water.

289 BERLIN SUITE (ZERO GRAVITY) 289

Sound asleep, Jim floats weightless from his bed, his blanket billowing. He touches the ceiling.

His eyes open. He shouts in astonishment.

Gus' crew card floats in front of him. He grabs it. His blanket snarls around him: he struggles to free himself.

290 SWIMMING POOL (ZERO GRAVITY) 290

Rippling masses of water float everywhere, dividing and merging. There is no surface. There is no up.

In the middle of this chaos, Aurora is trying not to drown.

A truck-sized blob of water swallows her up.

Inside the jiggling mass she struggles, running out of air. She gathers herself. Lunges through the water. Shoots out of the blob, gasping for breath.

She drifts within reach of a railing and grabs hold.

291 BERLIN SUITE (ZERO GRAVITY) 291

Jim braces himself in a corner of the ceiling. Spots his tool belt floating in mid-air.

He dives through the air, snags his tool belt on the way, and opens the door.

JIM
Aurora!

292 ELITE DECK - ELITE PROMENADE (ZERO GRAVITY) 292

Jim emerges from a corridor onto the promenade: airborne, propelling himself from one handhold to the next.

He's barefoot in trousers and undershirt, his toolbelt around his waist. Gus's shipcard around his neck.

AURORA (O.S.)
Jim!

In the middle of the atrium, Aurora drifts mid-air, far from any handhold. She wears a damp shirt over her bathing suit.

JIM
What are you doing?

AURORA
Drifting, Einstein. Help me.

JIM
We've gotta get you down. The gravity might come back on.

Aurora hadn't thought of that. She looks down fearfully.

Jim swings over the railing. Braces his feet. Takes aim.

AURORA
Whoa. Hey. Let's talk about this.

JIM
Hang on.

AURORA
To what?!

Jim dives at her like Superman. Wraps his arms around her. They tumble through space until Jim grabs a railing.

JIM
You okay?

AURORA
Jim, there's no gravity.

JIM
The gravity regulator's failing.
The internal field goes first.
After that the engines die...and
then the fusion reactor goes nova.
We've got to get the core computer
back online.

AURORA
(wide-eyed)
Let's go.

293 ENGINE COMPARTMENT - FUSION REACTOR (ZERO GRAVITY) 293

A roar of THUNDER. The caged sun shudders. Tongues of fire lick from its surface.

294 DECK FIVE - CORRIDOR (ZERO GRAVITY) 294

Jim and Aurora, getting the hang of it, shoot down a hallway - dodging a robot that spins its wheels in the air.

295 ENGINE COMPARTMENT - CORE COMPUTER ROOM (ZERO GRAVITY) 295

Jim and Aurora float into the room and stare: Jim's golf cart and the replacement Core Computer hang tumbling in the air.

Aurora extends her hand to Jim. He takes her hand, and with his other hand grabs a wall anchor. Aurora floats up and grabs the replacement core computer by a cable. A human chain, they haul it down to the deck.

Aurora holds the new computer down. Jim floats up to the ruined old computer. Disconnects cables. Opens latches. Eases the machine out of the column into the air.

The room shakes violently. A deep note in the background noise falls silent.

JIM
The engines just shut down.

296 FUSION REACTOR CONTROL ROOM (ZERO GRAVITY) 296

Consoles alive with warning lights. The room is bathed with a hellish glow: the orb of fire swells and roars.

A computer burns out with a sputter of flame. The room fills with a haze of smoke.

297 FUSION REACTOR 297

The caged sun boils and swells. Tentacles of flame graze the reactor walls, leaving charred trails.

298 CORE COMPUTER ROOM (ZERO GRAVITY) 298

Jim and Aurora strain at the replacement computer: it's nearly in place. Each shoves with one hand, gripping a handhold with the other. Their feet kick in the empty air.

Red lights flash. A warning klaxon sounds.

ANNOUNCER
Reactor failure. Reactor failure.
Passengers please remain calm.

The message repeats.

Jim and Aurora exchange grim glances and redouble their efforts. The computer seats in its bracket.

JIM
That's it! Hold it!

Aurora wraps her arms around the computer, gripping two handholds, and plants her shoulder against the machine.

Jim dives over the top, reaching for the connecting cables.

The ship shudders violently, throwing them from side to side. Jim forces one cable after another into their sockets.

Aurora tires: the computer slides out of place.

JIM (CONT'D)
Hold it! Hold it!

AURORA
Trying!

She strains. The computer tips back into place.

Jim closes the last connection. Slips out of the niche and lowers the clamps that hold the computer in place.

He throws the heavy power lever. The lights go out.

299 EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR

299

A wave of darkness engulfs the ship.

300 INT. SUBDECK A - CORE COMPUTER ROOM

300

Floating, Jim and Aurora stare at each other in the dark.

AURORA
What's happening?

JIM
Don't know.

The core computer flashes to life. The lights come back on.

So does the gravity. Jim and Aurora slam to the floor. Right beside them, the old computer plunges down and embeds itself the deck. Across the room the golf cart bounces on its tires.

301 INT. FUSION REACTOR

301

The orb of fire withdraws its blazing tentacles and dwindle to its proper size.

302 CORE COMPUTER ROOM

302

Jim and Aurora lie on the deck, breathing hard. Aurora starts to laugh.

JIM
What's so funny?

AURORA
We're alive!

The engines roar back to life.

A distant, rhythmic sound begins: *BOOM-CHAK...BOOM-CHAK...*

303 DECK TWO - PROMENADE

303

Jim and Aurora walk wearily.

JIM

We have to replace the other burned-out computers. But we have time.

Aurora slides her arm around his waist.

BOOM-CHAK...BOOM-CHAK...

JIM (CONT'D)

What is that sound?

Aurora stiffens, looking over his shoulder. Outside the window, a hibernation pod spins into view. A sleeping woman inside.

AURORA

(finding her voice)

Jim!

He turns. Stares in shock as more pods drift past the window.

304 HIBERNATION BAY

304

Jim and Aurora sprint into the facility. The sound is loud here: *BOOM-CHAK...BOOM-CHAK...*

It's the sound of hibernation pods being ejected. The wave of ejections marches down an aisle: one pod after another disappearing into the ceiling.

Jim rushes to a console. Scans the display.

JIM

The hibernation system rebooted. It thinks the ship's in port. It's ejecting the empty pods.

AURORA

(horrified)

They're not empty.

305 EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR

305

The ship leaves a trail of glowing hibernation pods.

306 INT. HIBERNATION BAY

306

Jim slides to a halt in front of a hibernation pod. Yanks off the pod's cover panel and begins working at the machinery.

Aurora opens the panel of the next pod. Jim hands her a tool.

JIM
You remember what I showed you?

AURORA
I remember.

They work furiously.

An ominous sound approaches. *BOOM-CHAK...BOOM-CHAK...* The wave of ejections advances down their row.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Hurry!

JIM
I see it.

They're not fast enough. The pods in front of them slide up and out of sight.

307 EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR

307

The pods they were working on tumble out into space.

308 INT. CREW HIBERNATION FACILITY

308

Jim slams into the facility at a dead run. Scans the crew hibernation pods. Picks one and goes to work.

Aurora runs in behind him. She looks at the man inside the hibernation pod: a stern fellow with a bristling gray beard.

AURORA
Who's that?

JIM
The Captain.

The sounds of the ejection wave come closer. *Boom-chak.*

AURORA
You don't have much time.

JIM
I know.

BOOM-CHAK! A crewman's pod vanishes into the ceiling on the opposite side. The ejections march down the row.

AURORA
Go go go!

The wave of ejections reaches the end of the facility and marches back on Jim's side.

JIM

Got it!

The hibernation pod hums to life. The awakening begins.

Inside the pod, the Captain opens his eyes. He stares in astonishment at the first thing he sees: Aurora, in her bathing suit and shirt, a disheveled angel.

BOOM-CHAK!

The pod beside the Captain's shoots up and out of sight. He sees it: looks at Aurora in alarm. He reaches out, his hand spread flat on the glass.

She reaches back, her hand matching his.

The Captain's pod rises through the ceiling and vanishes. Jim roars in frustration. Aurora leaps back with a cry of horror.

309 DECK NINE - AFT OBSERVATION DECK

309

Jim and Aurora stare out the windows. In the ship's wake, five thousand pods glitter like diamonds. The cloud of pods dispersing as they watch.

Stricken, Aurora walks away.

Jim watches her go, then turns back to the window, looking out at the tumbling sparks.

310 INT. COMMAND DECK - DIAGNOSTIC CENTER - DAY

310

Jim stands at the Diagnostic Computer.

The computer's indicator light panel is a sea of green. Only a few red lights remain in the top corner. Jim studies the lights and consults an electronic slate.

Aurora quietly enters the room behind him.

JIM

That's the last of the burned out CPUs. When it reboots we should be all green.

AURORA

Can we talk?

311

FORWARD OBSERVATION DECK

311

Aurora's writing couch. Jim and Aurora sit facing each other. Aurora gathers her thoughts. Takes a deep breath.

AURORA

Jim.

He waits, braced for the worst.

AURORA (CONT'D)

No matter what you've done, the fact is that I love you. No matter how we got here, the fact is that we're here.

Jim looks at her, astonished.

AURORA (CONT'D)

When I found out you woke me up, I hated you. But I can't know what you went through. I can't judge you. I don't want to spend the rest of my life hating you. I can't. I don't. The man I've come to know, I love. I want him back.

JIM

The first day I saw you, you saved my life. All I want is to make you happy. I've missed you.

AURORA

I've missed you too.

She climbs into his lap, and they kiss. A kiss with a year's frustration behind it. A kiss that matters.

312

EXT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR - STARBOARD AIRLOCK - DAY

312

The airlock opens with a gust of air. Jim emerges in a space suit - followed by Aurora.

313

ATOP THE SHIP

313

They walk toward the bow side by side, stars reflected in their visors.

314

AT THE BOW

314

They sit side by side. Aurora takes Jim's hand.

They lean together, helmets touching, and look together into the blue stars of their future.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: Eighty-eight years later

315 EXT. HOMESTEAD II - CAPITAL LANDING FIELD - DAWN 315

An orange sun rises over green hills. In the foreground the roofs of Homestead II's capital city shine in the dawn.

At the city's edge, timeworn spacecraft sit on their landing gear around a grassy landing field.

Colonists gather. They watch the sky expectantly...

A new star shines on the horizon.

The star grows into a white starship gleaming in the sun. The *Excelsior* sweeps down over the field with rumble of engines.

The ship's hull is scorched and abraded from its cosmic crossing. But the lights shine, the engines throb, the landing gear receive the weight of the ship.

The starship's gangway lowers. The doors open.

CHILDREN run down the gangway. Children of all ages, of all races. Twenty of them, thirty. They point at the sun, at the clouds, laughing, wide-eyed in wonder.

We move up the gangway, through the disembarking passengers.

Behind the children: Teenagers. Adults in smaller number as they grow older. Finally a handful of gray-haired elders.

316 INT. STARSHIP EXCELSIOR - GRAND CONCOURSE 316

Transformed by the wear and tear of a century's habitation. Paths worn into floors, furniture repaired or re-purposed.

We move past vegetable gardens. Battered sweeper robots water the plantings. Window-washers till the soil.

An oak tree towers in the center of the Concourse. Its branches brush the skylight a hundred feet above.

We move past walls decorated with murals and carvings.

At the Concourse Bar, Arthur is slicing vegetables. His timeworn uniform mended by hand.

At the aft end of the Concourse, a high wall. Here a long list of dates is inscribed.

The last date is the ship's landfall on Homestead II; the first, Jim's awakening. In between: an accelerating tally of births, deaths, marriages, catastrophes and achievements...a century of shipboard life.

At the base of the wall we find a table like an altar, where a collection of artifacts is displayed:

The meteor pried from the *Excelsior's* heart.

Gus's worn shipcard, his picture still visible.

A beautiful hand-bound book. *In the Blink of an Eye: Our Lives Between the Stars*, by Aurora Dunn. Beneath these printed words, a handwritten dedication: *For Jim*.

In the center of it all, in the place of honor: the photo strip of Jim and Aurora from their first date.

They laugh. They clown. She kisses him.

Aurora looks into the camera's eye.

Jim looks at Aurora.

FADE OUT.

THE END.