

GIRLFRIEND ON MARS

Screenplay by
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Based on the story "Girlfriend on Mars"
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FIRST DRAFT

FADE IN:

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

A saggy futon, vivid green, in a dank basement apartment. It's such a sad wet scene, you can almost smell it.

A thermometer on the wall reads 86 degrees.

INT. DEN - DAY

A makeshift bedroom with a twin mattress on the ground.

Clothes and papers scatter the floor, along with old crusty plates and half-filled glasses.

Two people clearly share the space. The only orderly corner is a shelf with a series of books on hydroponics and a line of gymnastics trophies and medals.

There's a photo of teenage girl kissing a medal, her arm around a large man.

INT. POT ROOM - DAY

What should be the "master" bedroom is a massive room full of marijuana plants. They thrive under hot, buzzing lights.

This room's orderliness, its efficiency, is palpable. A timer on the wall ticks-ticks-ticks - then clicks.

A set of hoses thrum on and distribute water into the plants.

A latex-gloved hand delicately handles a pot leaf, inspecting it. A surgically-masked face with bright, curious eyes leans in. AMBER KIVINEN. The girl from the photo, now late 20s.

In the glow of the UV light she looks both beautiful and powerful, a queen reigning over a green kingdom.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Amber Kivinen. Drug dealer. Lapsed
Evangelical Christian. Former
gymnast. My girlfriend of twelve
years. The only person I've ever
loved. Is going to Mars.

Amber releases the leaf softly. She looks at us, at our very souls. As the water turns off, the timer begins anew.

Tick-tick-tick...

FLASHBACK:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Tick-tick-tick...the sounds of a classroom wall clock.

There are two pictures on the wall: Bill Clinton and Al Gore. Outside, torrential rain falls. There's a crack of thunder. The CHILDREN ooh and ahh. We hear them but don't see them. We stay on the portraits, and the rain.

TEACHER (O.S.)
Shhh. Children. It's U.S.S.R.,
remember? Uninterrupted, Sustained
Silent Reading.

There's a bulletin board with kids art on it: those turkeys you make with your handprint. Names underneath: Kelsey. Chelsea F. Chelsea B. Kevin. Amber. Amber's is the best.

A papier-mâché solar system is hanging from the ceiling.

We linger on paper Mars, its craters clearly painted by a child. One looks like a tiny human face.

Two KIDS, a boy and a girl, sit cross-legged on the floor with books in their laps. We see only their legs and little shoes, touching soles.

Another crack of thunder.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Amber is going to Mars, and she's
never coming back.

The little boy and girl move closer together. Their hands clasp as the lights flicker. Between light and dark we see -

INT. MARSNOW LIVING POD(TM) - THE NEAR FUTURE

A white room. Lying on a central table with an IV in is a thin, sickly WOMAN. Her back faces us. She twitches. Behind her, green plants flourish in neat rows. Familiar.

INTERCUT: MARSNOW LIVING POD/CLASSROOM

Flicker. Paper Mars again.

Flicker. The woman's hand on table, clawing.

Flicker. The clock goes tick-tick-tick. Then darkness.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

That saggy green futon, now holding the unwashed form of KEVIN WATKINS, late 20s, a guy you went to high school with. Passably cute. Hung out with druggies, but not a bad guy.

He's melted into the futon like it's his job. Remote in one hand, a potato chip in the other. Asleep. The screen flickers on his slack face.

On the coffee table is a baggie of weed, an ashtray from Dollywood, and a bunch of joints in a neat line. There's also a small, yellowish glass pipe.

Kevin's mouth hangs open. A pool of drool threatens to fall, then does. Onto a dirty plate, on the ground.

Kevin turns over, his back to the TV. He folds his arms. Chip and controller crunch together.

AMBER (O.S.)
(distantly)
Hey Kev? Kevin?

He sinks. And sinks, and sinks. The futon swallows him up.

AMBER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Tater-totter?

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

He snorts awake. He's still on the futon, but sitting up. Amber sits beside him, gloves on, mask pulled to her neck.

AMBER
Can we talk?

KEVIN
This is when you told me.

AMBER
What?

KEVIN (V.O.)
Shit. This is when she told me.

Kevin stretches slowly, like a chameleon on a rock.

KEVIN
Sorry, I'm super stoned. What's up?

AMBER
I'm, um. This is gonna sound weird.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I remember wondering what it was going to be.

Kevin looks at Amber, but speaks to "us." Amber is talking to him, carefully. But we don't hear what she says.

KEVIN
That she cheated on me. Like when she gave Jeremy head on this futon, on Voyager. We call it Voyager because we've taken our best trips on it. Or, like, that she was quitting grad school. But I guess you can't do that twice.

AMBER
Just listen okay? I entered this contest. It's a reality show. And if I win, I'm going to Mars.

KEVIN
Okay. (to us) Amber applied to go to Mars, without telling me, one year and three months ago.

AMBER
I made it to round three, so now I have to go train.

KEVIN (V.O.)
She'd already been training. I knew because she stopped getting her period, just like in high school.

INSERT: The under-sink bathroom cupboard, stocked to the brim with sealed tampon boxes, and the garbage can, empty.

KEVIN (V.O.)
...And because of the braid.

Amber's hair is, indeed, in a tight french braid.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM - DAY

TEENAGE AMBER's tight braid from the back, in slow motion. She powders her hands, wraps them tight with tape.

Closeup on her feet as they arch on padded mats, on her arms as they go up in the air.

In slow motion, she tilts forward to run. We watch the braid. We see her mouth. She breathes out, forcefully.

KEVIN (V.O.)
She always had the braid to train.

AMBER (V.O.)
You need to understand this, Kev:
If I win, I'm not coming back.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

Amber and Kevin, back on Voyager. The news sinks in.

KEVIN
Huh.

AMBER
Yeah.

KEVIN
Is Mars a hot one or a cold one?

AMBER
It's really hot. Hot and red. But they've found some water. And they think people can live there. At least, MarsNow thinks people can live there.

KEVIN
And it's going to be a show?

AMBER
Yeah, like a reality show, but a useful one. One that goes on forever, and is about the future of our species. Of us. It makes me tingly.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Like The Truman Show.

KEVIN
Like The Truman Show?

AMBER
I guess so, yeah. (Beat) Look, are you okay? I mean, this is a lot.

KEVIN
Truman dies.

AMBER
What?

KEVIN
In the Truman Show, Truman dies.

AMBER
No, you're remembering it wrong, Kev. He leaves. And meets the woman of his dreams. And anyway, that's because he didn't know he was in a show. Just - we can talk more later. After work.

KEVIN
Okay. Yeah.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Shit. Work.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A DETECTIVE and his team of OFFICERS comb the wet, dense west coast forest floor, looking for something.

DETECTIVE
(to himself, pained)
Goddammit, where are you?

The Detective leans against a tree dramatically, his head on his arm. He punches the tree in frustration. A bit much.

OFFICER #1 (O.S.)
Detective, over here!

The Detective looks up, right where the voice came from, then starts running towards it. Even his run is a bit much.

EXT. FOREST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The Detective's face comes into view, looking down at something. He covers his face. Whatever it is, it's awful.

DETECTIVE
Oh, god. Timmy. Poor Timmy.

The Detective squats down to get a closer look.

We see what he sees: A gross, bloated corpse, splayed out on the ground and half-covered in moss and dirt. On closer inspection, it's Kevin in extensive makeup.

Kevin's face twitches. He can't help it. He sneezes.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Cut! Goddammit it. Back to one.

KEVIN
Sorry. Sorry, everyone.

A flurry of movement as the set comes to life. The CREW works to reset the scene.

DETECTIVE
(the actor, with British
accent)
Twat.

He shakes his head and walks away.

EXT. EXTRAS HOLDING - DAY

Corpse Kevin sits against a trailer. He's still got moss and leaves on him. He eats a sandwich voraciously.

There are other EXTRAS in the distance, but Kevin hangs alone. As before, he speaks to us but not at us.

KEVIN
I'm an extra. The pay's shitty and everyone hates you. But sometimes you get to lie down and the food is good. And you can be stoned. And as Amber says, it gets me out of the house. Plus-

A MAKEUP ARTIST approaches, starts touching Kevin up.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I met Jennifer Love Hewitt once.

MAKEUP ARTIST
That's nice, honey.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Amber, in a high bun and office attire, sits at the front desk of a bland, corporate office. She answers the phone.

AMBER
(perfect phone voice)
Markham and Sanders, this is
Joanne. (Beat) Please hold.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Amber works as a temp for a bunch
of different places. She never uses
her real name.

AMBER
Markham and Sanders, this is Tina.
(Beat) Please hold.

A puffy LAWYER type walks past. Amber flashes a brilliant smile. The lawyer smiles back, winks, then enters his office and closes the door.

She opens her desk drawer and grabs a bundle of pens, dropping them in her purse. Then a stapler.

KEVIN (V.O.)
The thing is, she's really fucking
smart. But there aren't many jobs
for, like, tree scientists.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY

Kevin, still corpse-y but in his own clothes, looks in the mirror. He uses a Q-tip, which comes out of his ear blue. He tries to scrub off the makeup. to us/the mirror:

KEVIN
We make most of our money selling
weed, which was her idea. But Amber
said we need to seem like adults,
with adult jobs. So that if the
cops ever got wise, we'd have an
excuse. She said "got wise"—

INSERT: Amber's face in closeup mouthing "Got wise."

KEVIN (CONT'D)
—like a gangster from the 40s. I
remember it.

Kevin opens the medicine cabinet. On his side, a couple of dude-ish items: shaving cream, nail clippers. Her side: An array of bottles, plus a bunch of vitamins. Neatly arranged.

Kevin picks up a bottle of something and sniffs it.

FLASHBACK:

INT. THE KIVINENS BATHROOM - NIGHT

TEENAGE KEVIN sniffs a similar bottle. TEENAGE AMBER, arm in a sling, opens the door. She holds a red solo cup. The sounds of a party can be heard behind. Teenage Kevin freezes.

TEENAGE AMBER
What are you doing?

TEENAGE KEVIN
Nothing!

TEENAGE AMBER
Kevin...Watkins.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Yeah.

TEENAGE AMBER
You were my pen pal one summer. You never wrote me back.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Sorry.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I was trying to find her smell. She had this smell. Like if someone dumped pepper on the grass. But sweet, too. Like syrup tastes. She didn't even really know who I was. But she knew I was her pen pal. That was something. It was a start.

A beat. Kevin grips the bottle, white-knuckled. He could put it back but he's frozen. They look at each other.

TEENAGE AMBER
(amused)
You're weird.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Sorry.

Teenage Amber laughs and walks away. Teenage Kevin looks in the mirror.

TEENAGE AMBER (O.S.)
That's my mom's, by the way!

Teenage Kevin reaches, shuts and locks the bathroom door. He puts his hand on his face.

KEVIN (V.O.)
For what it's worth, Amber's mom is hot, too. In a mom way. She's the only reason I liked hockey.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOCKEY ARENA - DAY

Loving, slo-mo closeups of AMBER'S MOM, large-boned and large-breasted, cheering from the sparse stands of a small-town hockey arena.

Her severely 90s-mom-cut hair bounces, as do her breasts. A young boy's dream of womanhood.

YOUNG KEVIN stops skating to look up at her longingly. He's hit from behind by another KID and smashes onto the ice.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - DAY

Kevin snorts awake on the futon to the sound of Amber breathing out, forcefully. She's doing push-ups in the space between the coffee table and the TV.

He watches her a moment. By the door is a duffel bag and a backpack, neatly packed.

KEVIN
Can I come? to Mars?

AMBER
It's too late, Kev. You missed the deadline.

KEVIN
Right. (Beat) We could have applied together. They probably want couples.

AMBER

I didn't think you'd be into it.

KEVIN

They probably want people to propagate. Name the animals and stuff.

AMBER

I won't even make it to Mars. I have to compete against, like, thirty other people first.

She continues to do push-ups, then stands. She's powerful, flushed. Ready.

AMBER (CONT'D)

We can talk about this more, if you want.

KEVIN

Um. No, it's okay. (to us) When she says that it means she doesn't.

He picks up the small glass pipe. It's beautiful, an amber color, swirled like the surface of a planet but blackened around the edges from use.

He holds it to his eye and sees Amber through it. He packs it with weed from the ever-present baggie, puts it to his lips.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You want some?

AMBER

No thanks. And remember, some of that is Jeremy's.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Yeah, that Jeremy. Blowjob Jeremy.

KEVIN

Okay.

AMBER

You can handle it? I gotta jog five miles before I leave.

KEVIN

Yeah. Hey Slammer?

Amber sits back down in one swift motion. She does crunches.

AMBER

Yeah.

KEVIN

Do they know you grow pot?

AMBER

(amused)

What do you think?

Kevin shrugs. Amber keeps doing crunches.

AMBER (CONT'D)

I'm a "hydroponics expert," dummy.
You gotta grow food on Mars.

Kevin smiles. He lights the pipe and takes a long drag on it.

KEVIN

I love you.

TEENAGE AMBER (V.O.)

No you don't.

FLASHBACK:

INT. AMBER'S TEENAGE BEDROOM - DAY

Teenage Kevin and Teenage Amber are in bed, post-coital. They look directly in each other's eyes. There's love there, or the teenage version of it.

TEENAGE AMBER

You're just excited you had sex.

Teenage Kevin laughs. He touches her face. He kisses her.

MONTAGE:

The moments before, in bits and pieces:

--They kiss on the edge of the bed;

--He pulls her sports bra over her head, tenderly, its marks still on her back. He touches the marks;

--She takes out her hair elastic and pulls on it, loosening her braid;

TEENAGE KEVIN (V.O.)

What do you like about me?

--His hand on her back, he pulls her down and around to lying down. They entwine with one another, in an awkward teenage way.

TEENAGE AMBER (V.O.)
Um. I guess, you make me feel calm.
Like weed. Like, you don't expect
anything from me. You just want me
around.

--She moves her right shoulder, which is in a sling,
tenderly.

--He kisses the sling. Then her arm, her neck. The beginning.

TEENAGE KEVIN
That's true. I love you for no
reason at all.

END MONTAGE.

Back in bed, post-coital.

TEENAGE AMBER
What does that mean?

TEENAGE KEVIN
I'm not sure.

Suddenly, there's the sound of the front door opening. A
pause. Teenage Kevin's eyes go wide.

AMBER'S DAD (O.S.)
(intense, with accent)
Amber!

TEENAGE AMBER
(whispering)
Shit! Go! He'll actually kill you.

The door closes. Teenage Kevin bolts up. Blankets fly.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

The apartment door closes. Kevin comes to, pipe in hand.
Amber has just left. He almost says something to the empty
room. He looks at the pipe, then puts it down.

He picks it back up again, lights it. Inhales and -

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

- Exhales smoke. It's nighttime. The TV is on something cartoonish and dumb. He's surrounded by snacks.

He passes the pipe to his left, to reveal MARCUS KULAP, 28, his longtime best friend. One of those little, squirrely kind of guys. Burnout. Talks too much.

MARCUS

Wow. Mars.

KEVIN

Yeah.

MARCUS

Martians!

KEVIN

Haha, yeah.

MARCUS

Dude, what are you gonna do? You gonna -

He gestures to the weed in his hand.

KEVIN

I'm okay at growing.

MARCUS

Yeah, but she's great at it. She's got the magic touch.

Marcus mimes a hand job. Kevin bats at him. It's playful.

KEVIN

I'll figure it out.

MARCUS

Are you guys gonna break up?

KEVIN

No, man.

MARCUS

You sure? Remember when Callie went to Vegas?

KEVIN

(to us)

This story always goes one of two ways. It's either -

MARCUS

I'm glad she went, because I don't wanna be married to someone who figures out she's gay at a fucking Cirque du Soleil show.

KEVIN

Or —

MARCUS

If I could have stopped her from going, she never would have gone gay by watching a bunch of French clowns twirl fucking ribbon around.

KEVIN

But it always ends with —

MARCUS

I guess what happens in Vegas fucks up your life forever, right?

KEVIN

(to Marcus)

I guess so, man.

MARCUS

Are there dogs on Mars?

KEVIN

I dunno. I doubt it.

MARCUS

I'd wanna have a dog. Like a big fluffy guy.

KEVIN

Yeah.

A beat. Marcus takes another hit.

MARCUS

So, like, if she's on the show, does that mean she's gonna be famous? Like gymnastics famous?

KEVIN

Probably.

MARCUS

I feel like that's a lot, you know? She wasn't great with pressure before. No offense.

KEVIN
That was twelve years ago. Gimme
that.

MARCUS
Yeah, I guess. It's just, I'm not
sure people change. Give you what?

Kevin motions to the pipe still in Marcus's hands.

KEVIN
That.

Marcus looks down.

MARCUS
Hahaha. Oh shit. Cool.

Marcus takes a long drag. Still holds the pipe.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Marcus is not smart. But he's a
good friend. And he's our best
customer.

Marcus pulls a wad of cash out of his pants.

MARCUS
I almost forgot! Here man.

KEVIN
Thanks.

MARCUS
Wanna order Mr. Fatty's?

KEVIN
Definitely.

Marcus gets up. He still doesn't pass the pipe.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin is lying down on Voyager. He holds a drink cup. Marcus
sits on the floor. There are takeout wrappers strewn about.

They are very high.

MARCUS
Man, you know what I just thought?
If you married Amber and took her
name, your name would be Kevin
Kivinen. Kevinkivinen. Wow.

KEVIN
That's so dumb, man.

MARCUS
What's dumber though, me, or
Kivinenenkevinkevin?

KEVIN
I'm not marrying Amber. Or taking
her name.

MARCUS
Yeah I know but it's funny to think
about. Keeping up with the
Kivinenenenenenens.

Despite himself, Kevin laughs. He closes his eyes.

KEVIN (V.O.)
The Kivenens.

FLASHBACK:

INT. HOCKEY ARENA - NIGHT

Little Kevin stares up at Amber's Mom and her bouncing
breasts. Gets hit from behind. His nose hits the ice and
immediately explodes in a spray of blood.

Little Kevin lies on the ice. He watches the blood escape his
face, red on white. The red divides and spreads, crater-like.

Through blood-pounding ears he hears-

AMBER'S DAD
(the scariest accent)
WATKINS!!!

He tries to get it together. But the blood. It pools and
swirls. It almost seems to be making a face.

AMBER'S DAD (CONT'D)
Get your ass up, Watkins!

As he struggles to get up, suddenly he's lifted by something
massive. His little tiny boy body is turned. Held.

He passes out. In the black -

KEVIN (V.O.)
Amber's terrifying dad.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BAR - DAY

Amber's Dad and Mom, a decade older, sit on one side of a high top. Kevin and Amber sit on the other.

Kevin tries, and fails, not to look at Amber's mom's breasts, which are resting on the table top.

Amber is nervously ripping up a napkin.

AMBER

So, uh. If I go to Mars, I can't come back.

Off Amber's Mom, who starts to cry quietly.

AMBER'S DAD

Deanna. Hush.

KEVIN (V.O.)

He hates that his daughter ended up with me. But in this moment, I had hope. He's sensible. Controlling. Finnish. He used to weigh Amber's food.

Amber's Dad takes a big gulp of beer. He looks out the window. His face is stern. Suddenly, he breaks into a huge, unnatural grin. Kevin recoils.

AMBER'S DAD

The Kivenens have always been pioneers. We are Vikings.

KEVIN

(to us, whispering)

Actually, they aren't. Amber did a school project on it once. They're just fishermen. And one was a murderer.

AMBER'S DAD

We will die as Vikings. Yes! You will go to Mars.

Amber's mom wipes her tears. Her dad holds his beer glass aloft, looking directly into Kevin's eyes.

AMBER'S DAD (CONT'D)

To Mars!

Everyone holds their glasses up, smiling. Kevin's is forced.

EVERYONE
To Mars!

AMBER'S DAD
(to Kevin)
And you? Still in the background of
TV shows I don't watch?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marcus sits on Voyager and rolls a joint. He watches TV.

MARCUS
Kev! Get in here man, it's about to
start.

KEVIN (O.S.)
Yeah, okay.

INT. POT ROOM - SAME

Kevin looks over the pot plants. A few of them look a little droopy. He lifts a sad leaf, tenderly.

MARCUS (O.S.)
Hurry up! You're gonna miss it.

KEVIN
Yeah. Coming.
(to the plants)
Sorry, guys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin plops down on Voyager just as we hear the strains of an inspirational, Star Trek-like theme song.

INT. MARSNOW CREDIT SEQUENCE - SAME

A CGI space-scape, with Mars at its center.

HOST (V.O.)
Imagine the future of humankind.
Imagine what might be possible if
we weren't bound by this planet. If
we could leave behind all this
hate, and destruction, and disease.

Images of Neo-Nazis with tiki torches, icebergs breaking away, Syrian children crying in a bomb-blasted street...

Suddenly overtaken by titles reading MARS NOW. It's abrupt.

HOST (V.O.)

We can! We can go to Mars. Now.
These brave citizens are competing
for the chance to make a new world,
a better world. On Mars. Now.

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - SAME

A camera sweeps over PEOPLE in matching white jumpsuits with orange MarsNow insignias, standing like soldiers.

Among them, shining brightly, proudly, is Amber.

MARCUS (O.S.)

Oh shit! Dude! Look!

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

The two friends are dug in on the couch like they're growing roots. It's a stark contrast to the clean white scene on TV.

KEVIN

I'm looking.

MARCUS

She's on TV!

KEVIN

Yeah, I see her.

MARCUS

Wild, dude. This is wild.

Marcus produces and takes a massive hit from a water bong.

On TV the HOST, an Elon Musk-like bro, walks dramatically down a long metal gangway. He speaks to the camera.

INTERCUT: SHOW/LIVING ROOM.

HOST

Welcome to MarsNow. I'm so excited
you're here. I made close to a
billion dollars last year, but it
doesn't matter, because the world
is still bad.

MARCUS

Haha. This guy rules. What a prick.

KEVIN
(playful)
Shut up, man.

HOST
So I decided that I needed to do something. And since I can't solve all the world's problems, I'm doing the next best thing. I'm leaving them behind. To go to Mars. Now.

The Host walks through a hallway and past the line of contestants, including a stoic Amber.

HOST (CONT'D)
Well not me, but two of these people. Brave but ordinary citizens, people just like you who decided they wanted to be the first human beings ever to go to and live on Mars. Let's meet them, okay?

Suddenly, the channel changes to cartoons.

KEVIN
Marcus!

MARCUS
Fuck, sorry. I got bored.

The channel changes back to reveal a handsome dude, ADAM. The lower third reads "Adam, 34, Israel." He's fit and earnest.

ADAM
I got out of the military and knew I needed to keep helping, however I could. So I became a doctor.

INT. CLINIC - DAY

B-roll of Adam in his clinic, helping various PEOPLE. He looks confident, happy, and at ease with himself.

MARCUS (O.S.)
This guy's a prick.

KEVIN (O.S.)
Marcus. Shut up.

Back to Adam's direct-to-camera interview.

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM/SHOW.

ADAM

And the idea of going to Mars. It's just...I mean, I can't imagine it. Being the first man on Mars. Making it habitable. It makes me tingle.

He tears up. He wipes the perfect tears with a perfect thumb.

ADAM (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's just so moving.

MARCUS (O.S.)

PRIIIIIICK.

Suddenly the music changes to something softer, more feminine. Amber appears on screen. She laughs as she walks through a garden. She picks and eats peas in the sun.

The lower third says "AMBER, 28, USA." Marcus smacks Kevin's arm repeatedly. Kevin swats him away.

AMBER (V.O.)

I'm Amber. I'm a hydroponics expert, which basically means I know how to grow plants.

MARCUS

Yeah, sticky icky plants.

Amber does a direct to camera, like Adam. She's fresh faced, pretty. Her hair is in a high ponytail. She looks happy.

Kevin sits forward, focusing on Amber. Everything else falls away. It's just him and her words. He studies her face.

AMBER

And, um, I used to be an athlete. A gymnast. I qualified for the Olympics, but I hurt my shoulder and, um, that was kind of it for me. But growing things, making things live, made me feel whole again.

Amber looks down at her lap, then back up to camera. Her eyes shine. She smiles.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kevin snoozes on Voyager. There's a knock on the door. He sleeps on. Another knock, more insistent. He wakes up.

INT. APARTMENT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Kevin opens the door to reveal BLOWJOB JEREMY. He's one of those handsome hippies you suspect has family money.

KEVIN
(to us)
Oh good, it's Blowjob Jeremy.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
Hey man, what's up?

KEVIN
Hey.

A moment. The thought of Jeremy coming in gives Kevin pause.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Come in.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
Cool.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin and Blowjob Jeremy sit on the couch. It's uneasy. Kevin weighs pot on a scale. Blowjob Jeremy looks poised to speak.

KEVIN (V.O.)
3...2...1...

BLOWJOB JEREMY
How's Amber?

KEVIN
(to us)
I knew it. (to him) Good, I guess.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
It's cool to see her on the show.
I'm psyched for her. It's bananas,
right? Mars?

KEVIN
(to us)
Who says bananas?
(to Blowjob Jeremy)
Yeah, I mean, she seems to like it.
They're not allowed to talk to us
on the phone or whatever.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
 Bummer. Must be kinda lonely
 without her, right?

Kevin quietly finishes measuring pot, dumps it into a baggie,
 ties it off, and hands it to Jeremy.

KEVIN
 That'll be eighty.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
 Eighty! It used to be sixty-five.

KEVIN
 Yeah, it's eighty now. I'm all
 alone here, y'know? Lonely.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
 Alright. Man.

Jeremy digs out his wallet.

EXT. APARTMENT DOORWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin opens the door. Jeremy stops, a little too close.

BLOWJOB JEREMY
 Thanks man. If you do talk to her,
 just tell her I said hi, okay?

FLASHBACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin comes in from outside to see Amber giving Jeremy a a
 blowjob on the sofa. He quickly turns away, backs out of the
 hallway, and out the door. He shuts it softly.

KEVIN (V.O.)
 No, I never told her. I wanted to.
 But when's a good time to say "I
 saw you blowing a dude on Voyager?"
 Before or after you put together an
 Ikea dresser? (Beat) And anyway, it
 never became anything more. Plus,
 she's always happier when she has a
 secret.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. APARTMENT DOORWAY - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

Jeremy waits for Kevin to respond. After a beat -

KEVIN
Like I said, they're not allowed to
talk to us.

JEREMY
Right. Cool. Peace man.

Kevin shuts the door.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

KEVIN
What Blowjob Jeremy didn't know,
would never know, was that Amber
was calling me anyway.

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT KITCHEN - DAY

Kevin makes mac and cheese on the stove. His phone rings. The screen reads "Slammer."

Panicked, he drops his spoon. He turns the stove off and answers.

KEVIN
Amber?

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin slips into the tub.

AMBER (O.S.)
(through the phone)
Hey Kev. Are you in the tub?

KEVIN
Yeah. (to us) The tub's the coolest
place in the house. And the only
place we get service.

AMBER (O.S.)
How are you?

KEVIN
I'm okay. How are you?

AMBER (O.S.)

Good. I'm really good. It's - I'm always tired. And they made me get fake eyelashes. But it feels good, you know? I feel healthy.

KEVIN

Awesome.

A quiet moment passes. Kevin smiles.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Hey, I thought you weren't supposed to call the people at home?

AMBER (O.S.)

We're not, but I missed you so I begged a producer to let me have my phone. I said your mom was sick.

KEVIN

Joke's on them. She's dead.

AMBER (O.S.)

Haha, yeah.

KEVIN

I miss you too. I'm proud of you. Probably not as proud as (imitating Amber's dad) Pekke John Kivinen. (Himself) But proud. Really proud.

AMBER (V.O.)

Thanks, Kev.

KEVIN

I think about you all the time. I- Mostly I wish you were here to... watch you with me. Which is weird.

AMBER (O.S.)

You sound stoned.

KEVIN

Guilty as charged.

AMBER (O.S.)

How are the plants?

KEVIN

The babies are good.

AMBER (O.S.)
Don't forget to test the pH on
Wednesdays, okay?

KEVIN
Actually, I've been doing it on
Thursdays right before the show.
It's a new tradition.

AMBER (O.S.)
You should go back to Wednesdays.
They like structure.

KEVIN
Yeah, totally. I will. Sorry.

AMBER (O.S.)
It's actually not a big deal. I
don't... I'm sorry I didn't say
goodbye properly. I kinda pulled a
runner, huh?

KEVIN
It's okay.

KEVIN (V.O.)
It's not okay. She pulls runners
when she's sad. I should ask her if
she's sad.

A long pause.

AMBER (O.S.)
I gotta go, I promised I'd only be
five minutes. I'm glad you're good.

KEVIN
Yeah, you too. Love you Slammer.
(Beat) I hope you win.

A pause. The line clicks. Kevin holds his breath.

AMBER
Love you too.

Kevin exhales. He hangs up.

KEVIN
She couldn't help but call me. I'm
the Blowjob Jeremy, now. I'm the
secret she's keeping from the
entire planet.

He peels himself out of the tub.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kevin, pipe in hand, slumps on Voyager. An array of snacks litter the table. Marcus sits beside him.

The MarsNow theme song plays in the background.

MARCUS

It's weird how sometimes I forget
she's gone because she's on TV.

Kevin opens his mouth to speak, but instead takes a big hit on the pipe.

A MONTAGE, spinning on the axis of the living room:

-- Marcus and Kevin on the couch, watching episodes of the show and cheering Amber on;

-- Kevin checking out the plants, frowning at wilting and spotty leaves;

-- Kevin picking up call after call from Amber, going to the tub to talk to her;

-- Amber on the show, prevailing through several rounds of eliminations.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Round after round, Amber stayed.
Why? Because she had a story. A
conversion narrative. She was
"depressed and going nowhere," but
Mars gave her a purpose. Her story
wasn't better than anyone else's,
but she'd been raised in her
father's church. She could sell it.
I was lost but now am found.

-- Kevin looking in at the den/bedroom, and closing the door;

-- Kevin tossing and turning on Voyager instead.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kevin kicks blankets aside on Voyager, a cookie in his mouth.

Suddenly, the apartment door opens. It's Amber, with a MarsNow bag. Her shoulder is in a sling.

She drops the bag and blasts in, unsettling everything. Kevin sits bolt upright. He watches her in shock - she's back!

She flops down on Voyager next to him, flapping the sling.

AMBER

They made me come home because of this. I'm so pissed, like what is the point? I could just hang out in my pod.

KEVIN

You're here.

Amber vibrates with intensity. She seems not to hear him.

AMBER

And they made me sign like fifteen NDAs, so again, what's the point? I'm missing so many chances to strategize. It sucks.

KEVIN

Your shoulder.

She finally looks at him.

AMBER

I'm sorry, I'm just kind of in it, you know? (Beat) I forgot how hot it is in here all the time.

Amber stands up and awkwardly strips off a layer. She hesitates, then sits back down.

KEVIN

Are you okay?

AMBER

I'm not allowed to talk about it. It's going to be on this episode.

She leans her head on Kevin's shoulder. He seems to calm her.

AMBER (CONT'D)

This is better. Feel my heart.

She lifts Kevin's hand to her chest. We hear the beat-beat-beat, beat-beat-beat. It gradually slows. Amber sighs.

KEVIN

You wanna smoke?

AMBER

You know what? I do. Screw them.

INT. VOYAGER - LATER

The futon is open to a bed. Kevin and Amber stare up at the ceiling together, passing the pipe back and forth.

AMBER
It's weird to be here. I forgot how
messed up the ceiling is.

KEVIN
Yeah. Messed up and about to fall
on us.

The ceiling is a patchwork of brown spots, cracks, and bumps from weird repairs. A planet's surface.

AMBER
I can't see the face anymore.

KEVIN
It's there.

AMBER
Where?

Kevin passes her the pipe and holds his hands up and apart.

KEVIN
Between my hands.

Amber starts to laugh.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
What?

AMBER
Kev, I can't see between your hands
the same way you can. I told you
this before.

Amber takes a huge drag on the pipe.

KEVIN
Okay, but that's where the face is.

Amber sputters smoke as she laughs.

AMBER
You've got a beautiful mind.

KEVIN
See, I always know that means you
think I'm dumb.

AMBER

No! It means you think differently than other people. And that the way you think is pretty stupid.

They laugh. A lot. Stoned laughs, signifying nothing and everything at once.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Can you blame me for thinking this meant something? That since she was getting high, risking a drug test, that she was done with Mars? For thinking she was home?

AMBER

There's a face on Mars, too. It's called Cydonia.

KEVIN

Cool. Creepy.

Finally, Amber props herself up on her good elbow. They continue to pass the pipe between them.

AMBER

You know, this is what the pressure cooker feels like.

KEVIN

The what? What's that?

AMBER

That's what we call the gravity chamber. We all have to go in there for a couple hours a day to get ready for the atmosphere. Mars will crush you to powder otherwise.

KEVIN

And it feels like this?

AMBER

Like a body high, only way better. It's amazing. The Russian guy puked, which is how I knew he'd never done drugs.

Amber passes the pipe over, then plays with Kevin's fingers.

KEVIN

So you like it.

AMBER

It's cool, yeah. It feels
important. Even if I don't win.

She looks at him. There's more there, but not yet.

KEVIN

(to us)

She already knew what was coming. I
wasn't her secret anymore.

She lies on his shoulder, adjusting her sling. She touches
his face. He turns to her. They kiss.

The kissing intensifies, and Amber starts to pull on Kevin's
shirt. He helps her pull it over his head.

He pulls on her shirt, moving it around her sling.

AMBER

(whispering)

Be careful.

KEVIN

(whispering)

Of course. I've done this before.

They kiss again, with practiced tenderness. It's something
close to sad.

KEVIN (V.O.)

I didn't know this was the last
time. I would have... (beat) I'm
not sure what I would have done.

They continue to kiss. Amber's eyes close. Kevin's remain
open. He studies her face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin wakes up alone. From where he lies, he can see into the
kitchen. At the table, the blue light of a computer lights
Amber's face. She types quietly.

He smiles, rolls over, and goes back to sleep.

INT. LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Kevin wakes up in the ass-crack of Voyager in full daylight.
He sits up to see the entire apartment has been cleaned
around him as he slept. Amber.

The kitchen is neat, the computer closed on the table.

INT. POT ROOM - SAME

The sad, spotty plants look a little better, somehow.

A small jar containing some kind of concoction sits on a shelf. A Post-It note on the jar reads, "Use me! I can help! - X, Amber." Kevin smiles.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Kevin makes coffee in a French Press. He takes out two cups. He whistles a jaunty tune.

He looks up and sees a sticky note on the windowsill in Amber's unmistakeable hand. It reads: "At doctor! <3"

Kevin turns and sees the laptop on the kitchen table. He walks over and sits.

He opens the laptop and looks at the browser history. The last page was "MarsNow Member Portal." He clicks on it.

INSERT: A main page with other tabs down the sides like "Training Modules" and "Why Mars, Why Now?"

A window pops up: "Resume previous conversation?" Kevin clicks "Yes."

Another window opens with "HorizonHunter" and "FirstMan34."

Off Kevin's eyes scrolling the page we hear-

AMBER/HORIZONHUNTER (V.O.)
I just can't believe it. What do
you think it smells like?

ADAM/FIRSTMAN34 (V.O.)
Haha, wow. You're thinking about
how Mars smells? You're incredible.
Winky face.

AMBER (V.O.)
It me. Smiley face. Thank you again
for the other day. I guess we had a
bit of a caps lock TV Moment, huh?

ADAM (V.O.)
L-O-L. Something took over my body.
It was primal.

AMBER (V.O.)
Wow, really? I like the sound of
that. Winky face.

ADAM (V.O.)
I thought you might. Winky face
with tongue.

Kevin slams the laptop shut.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

Amber stands, hands on hips on the sun-blasted New Mexico
desert. She's poised, focused. The camera eats her up.

HOST (V.O.)
This is what determination can do.
Amber was the child of immigrants
who became a gymnastics legend.
Then she got hurt. Now look at her.

Amber tilts forward on her toes and begins to run.

HOST (V.O.)
This is an obstacle course. It
makes our contestants have to think
about their next steps, to make
choices and solve problems. These
are skills they will need on Mars.

The word "MUTE" suddenly appears in the bottom right corner.

MARCUS (O.S.)
(imitating host, robotic)
This is a TV show. I'm a massive
prick and I host it. Ironically, my
wiener is very small!

INT. BASEMENT APARTMENT - SAME

Marcus, Kevin and Amber are watching the show on Voyager.
Kevin is smoking from the small, amber-colored pipe.

Kevin sits as far from Amber as possible, his arms folded.

He yanks the remote from Marcus and presses a button. The
word "Mute" disappears and the sound comes back up.

MARCUS
Sorry, Amber.

AMBER

No, you're right. He is a prick.
His eyebrows are drawn on.

Marcus laughs. He looks over at Kevin, who's impassive.

On TV, Amber runs towards a massive log on the ground.

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM/SHOW.

HOST (V.O.)

Each contestant has to lift the
tree trunk out of the way. For
Amber, this might be tough.

Off TV Amber's shoulder as she bends to pick up the tree. She starts to squat-shuffle it forward.

Suddenly, her right shoulder drops dramatically. She screams.

HOST (V.O.)

Oh wow. I did not expect that. It
looks like Amber has re-injured her
bad shoulder. This is not good.

MARCUS

Dude. That must have hurt.

AMBER

Worse than the first time.

Marcus looks at Kevin again. He doesn't react.

HOST (V.O.)

It looks like – yep, it appears
she's dislocated it.

Amber tries to push the log along with her hips. An intense music sting matches the overly-dramatic closeups of her face.

HOST (V.O.)

What's this now?

Suddenly we see Adam. He runs on a diagonal through the other courses towards Amber like a fireman to a fire.

HOST (V.O.)

It looks like – yes, that's Adam
running over from his own course,
abandoning it, to help her.

Adam reaches Amber. He lifts and moves the log with ease.

MARCUS

This pr-

He looks at Amber, then at Kevin, who's still silent. He starts to read the situation.

HOST (V.O.)

Wow. Ladies and gentlemen: It appears as though Adam has thrown this competition to help Amber.

A teary, pained Amber turns to look at Adam.

The world stops.

Adam takes the side of Amber's face with both hands. He says something quietly to her. She nods. He handles her arm gently and pops her shoulder back into place. Amber winces.

They do not break eye contact.

He places his hands back on her face, and they touch foreheads. The camera lingers on their faces. Amber cries.

HOST (V.O.)

Wow. This is...wow. I don't have the words.

A long beat. Marcus, Amber, and Kevin sit, stock-still. Amber gets up and goes into the kitchen.

MARCUS

I'm just gonna -

KEVIN

Yep.

Marcus hastily leaves, gathering up his stuff as he goes. He returns, grabs few joints, and makes an "I'm sorry" face.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin walks into the kitchen. Amber is trying to wash a dish with her arm in the sling. It's not going well.

Kevin goes to her and takes the dish. He puts it down in the sink. She doesn't look at him.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Say something. Say it.

AMBER
I didn't know they'd edit it like that.

KEVIN
Bullshit. You and FirstMan34 knew exactly what you were doing.
(to us)
Did I say that out loud?

AMBER
Wow. Spying on my browser history? Classy, Kev.

KEVIN
(to us)
I did. I said it out loud. (To Amber) You know what's classier? Running away from your problems by moving to another fucking planet.
(To us) Holy shit.

Amber's face goes stony. She leaves. Kevin follows.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amber goes into the bathroom and slams the door. Kevin stands there a moment. Then he sits on Voyager.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin watches TV, the volume low. He looks at the still-closed bathroom door. He stands up and goes to it.

He puts his fist up to knock, but hears sobbing from the other side. He pauses.

FLASHBACK:

INT. KIVINEN'S HOUSE - DAY

Teenage Kevin and Amber's dad stand facing each other outside Amber's bedroom door.

CANNONBALL by The Breeders plays from within.

AMBER'S DAD
She won't let me in. Or her mother.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Okay.

Amber's Dad knocks on her door, heavily.

TEENAGE AMBER (O.S.)
Go away, dad.

Her dad gestures to Kevin, like "Go ahead."

TEENAGE KEVIN
Hey Amber? It's Kevin.

TEENAGE AMBER
Come in.

INT. AMBER'S TEENAGE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Teenage Kevin closes the door, edging out Amber's Dad.

Teenage Amber sits on the floor, her face red from crying. Her arm is in a sling, on which she has written "Doomed" in black sharpie. She's in it.

Teenage Kevin sits beside her on the floor. We see Amber through his eyes: Sad, but beautiful. She talks, cries, and breathes raggedly. Kevin just sits, and stays.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I remember everything she said that day. That she hadn't been able to breathe properly since losing her chance at the Olympics. That she felt sick all the time because now she didn't know what to do with her life. She was only seventeen but already fully heartbroken.

Teenage Amber rests her head on Teenage Kevin's shoulder.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

Kevin enters the bathroom and finds Amber sitting in the tub. She's surrounded by used tissues, and her face is red.

Kevin slides in the tub across from her. He takes her hand. Amber puts her face in her other hand and cries.

AMBER
I don't know what to say to you right now. (Beat) Talk to me.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I tried. I really tried. I tried to
say something mean, like earlier. I
tried to argue. But all I wanted to
say was stay, stay, stay, stay -

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Kevin wakes up in the tub. Amber is gone. Rain lightly falls outside, picking up the stay-stay-stay refrain.

Stuck to the tub where she sat is a sticky note: "Pulled another runner. Sorry. <3"

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Kevin dejectedly rolls his shopping cart down the aisles.

He rolls through the specialty foods aisle and pops several olives in his mouth. He fills his cart with chips and beer.

He loads his groceries onto the checkout belt.

He looks up to see Amber and Adam's forehead moment on the front page of the NY Times. "A Hero's Journey: From Doctors Without Borders to MarsNow's Doctor on Call."

He turns away, but it's also on US Weekly. "The First Man and First Lady of Space?" Kevin stares at it.

CASHIER (O.S.)
That everything?

Kevin comes to. The CASHIER looks at him.

KEVIN
Uh. No. And this.

He throws the magazine on the grocery belt.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin sits quietly alone on the couch, reading the magazine. His phone lights up.

INSERT: Series of texts from Marcus: "U up? JK. Mars time?"

Kevin starts typing a reply.

INSERT: Kevin's reply. "Not feeling it tonight. Next week?"

INSERT: Marcus's reply: "Cool" plus a gif of a guy falling down stairs. Then: "Haha falling is tits."

A moment passes, then Kevin turns on the TV.

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - SAME

The Host walks past the line of remaining contestants. There are eight, including Adam and Amber. Amber looks more put together, her teeth whiter, her skin brighter.

HOST

Starting this week, we're doing something different. From now on, you the audience can vote for who you want to stay and who goes home. Along with our expert panel, your votes will help us decide who goes to Mars.

Off "expert panel", they cut to a panel of stern looking JUDGES sitting behind a white desk.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin is prostrate on Voyager, pipe in hand. On TV, the episode ends and a phone number flashes on screen.

Kevin lifts his phone and dials. The line clicks and plays a tinny version of the show's theme.

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Thank you for calling the MarsNow hotline. *Para Español, oprima dos.* To purchase MarsNow official branded merchandise, press 1. To vote for your favorite MarsNow contestant, press 3.

Kevin presses a button.

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.)

To vote for Adam, press 1. For Amber, press 2. For Mariko-

Kevin presses a button.

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.)

You have voted for Am-burr Kiv-eye-nen. Thank you for your vote. To return to the main menu, press 9.

(MORE)

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
To leave a recorded message for
Amber, press 3, Kevin.

Kevin hurriedly presses 3.

AMBER (V.O.)
Hi! I'm Amber. Thank you for voting
for me. I'd love to go to Mars, and
thanks to you, I can.

KEVIN
Uh. Hey Slammer. I hope you win.
(Beat) Actually, I don't. But I do,
you know? Fuck.

He goes to hang up, but there's a beep on the line.

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Thank you for calling MarsNow. Is
that all you've got?

KEVIN
What?

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.)
Say something meaningful, dumbass.

KEVIN
Jesus. (Beat) You know what,
MarsNow? You guys are so screwed.
Because I know something you don't.
Amber's not going to sit still or
settle. Mars will seem great at
first, and so will FirstMan34. But
eventually Mars will be as stifling
as this place, and he will be just
like me. The guy who's always
around. And he'll probably still
love her too, like a fucking chump.

Kevin waits. The line clicks and plays a canned message.

HOST (V.O.)
Thank you for calling MarsNow. We
can create a better world...on
Mars. Now.

Kevin hangs up. He tosses his phone in anger. He immediately
picks it up. The screen has suffered a circular crack, like a
planet. Or a face.

INT. GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

Kevin buys a case of beer and six pre-packaged cupcakes. He tosses his purchases on the conveyer belt.

The cashier, TANYA, eyes his choices with a smirk.

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

The remaining six contestants are paired off as Amber/Pablo, Adam/Mariko, Roger/Tina.

HOST

This is our supplies challenge.
Each pair will decide what supplies
they need for one year on Mars and
race to the pile to hoard them. And
if you're thinking, "Hey, this is
like the Hunger Games, you're
right." Only better.

The Host winks.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Prick.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin drains the last of several beers. He picks up and licks the frosting off of a cupcake, then puts it back.

There are four other licked-clean cupcakes in the container.

He picks up the pipe, packs it, then stops. He lights it, inhales, and leans back into Voyager, closing his eyes.

He ignores his phone, which has several messages from Marcus on it, lighting the screen.

INTERCUT: Living Room/Show.

HOST (V.O.)

This is an interesting challenge.
It's about protecting your pairing,
and it's about math. How much do
two people need to live?

The pairs huddle and discuss. The camera finds Amber.

A title flashes onscreen: Contestant Up Close: Amber.

On TV, photos of The Kivenens, including the gymnastics photo from their bedroom wipe across, Ken Burns-like.

HOST (V.O.)

Amber Kivinen was born in Delancey, Oregon, on March 20, 1990. Her parents are Finnish immigrants and pillars of their small community. Dad coached hockey and mom was a homemaker.

INT. MARSNOW STUDIO - SAME

Suddenly, Amber's parents are on screen, being interviewed. They're shined up, TV-friendly versions of themselves.

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM/SHOW.

AMBER'S DAD

We are very proud of Amber.

HOST (O.S.)

When she hurt her shoulder, ending her gymnastics career, did you think that she would get this far?

AMBER'S DAD

She can do anything when she applies herself.

Amber's dad seems to say this directly to Kevin. An affront. Kevin gives him the finger from the futon.

AMBER'S MOM

We're just so grateful to God and Jesus for making her so beautiful and talented.

Even now, Kevin can't help but look at Amber's mom's boobs.

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - SAME

Amber shows her parents around the MarsNow Facility, pointing out the equipment and showing them the hydroponics lab.

Amber does a direct to camera interview.

AMBER

I had a few wayward years, after I hurt my shoulder. But my parents always stood by me.

HOST (O.S.)
I'm sure you're going to miss them.
Is there anyone else you will miss?

AMBER
Of course. There are people out
there I really love.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin sits forward in his seat.

AMBER
This is a huge decision. I don't
make it lightly. But you know, my
life - I kind of hit a wall.

HOST (O.S.)
Time for a change, huh?

AMBER
Haha...yeah. A really big one.

Kevin turns the TV off. He sits in silence for a moment.

FLASHBACK:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The rain streams down. Bill Clinton and Al Gore smile
beatifically out from their portraits.

Children sit in a circle on the floor. Little Kevin and
Little Amber sit next to one another.

Little Amber reads a book. Little Kevin looks at Little
Amber's foot. He pushes his foot into hers.

They look at each other and giggle. They push their feet
together harder, giggle more.

Little Kevin tips over dramatically. Little Amber giggles.

TEACHER
Children, shhh.

Little Amber dutifully looks down at her book.

LITTLE KEVIN
(whispers)
What are you reading about?

LITTLE AMBER
(whispers)
The Planets. You?

She looks up at the papier-mâché solar system.

LITTLE KEVIN
Dinosaurs.

LITTLE AMBER
(matter of fact)
Dinosaurs were killed by an
asteroid from space, did you know?

Little Kevin processes this. He's distraught.

LITTLE KEVIN
All the dinosaurs?

TEACHER
Children! I won't say it again.

Suddenly, there's a loud CRACK of thunder. The kids gasp. The lights overhead flicker. Little Amber keeps reading. Little Kevin edges closer to her.

The lights go out. Little Amber looks up at the ceiling. Little Kevin looks at Amber. He grabs her hand. She lets him.

KEVIN (V.O.)
What I've always wondered is, why
do we love who we love? And why
does love die?

Little Amber turns to Little Kevin and smiles. The lights buzz back on.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kevin sleeps on Voyager. Marcus shakes Kevin's shoulder.

MARCUS
Hey man. Wake up.

Kevin emerges, as from a dream. On TV, Amber and Adam embrace. A lower third reads: "Previously on MarsNow".

KEVIN
Hey. What's up?

MARCUS

What's up is, I thought I might
come here and find you all bloated
and dead in your own shit.

On TV, Amber stands next to the Host. She's out of breath.

HOST

What made you decide to share
supplies with Adam's team?

AMBER

Well, I thought since he sacrificed
for me, with my shoulder, I should
sacrifice for him.

KEVIN

(to Marcus)

Oh. Yeah.

Marcus grabs the remote and hits Mute.

MARCUS

"Oh, yeah"? Not good enough man. It
definitely smells like ripped ass
in here but you're unharmed.

KEVIN

Yeah. Sorry.

MARCUS

Sorry. Get the fuck up, man. This
ain't no way to live.

Kevin sits up. Marcus throws a towel at him.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Shower, then we're gonna watch this
shit.

KEVIN

What shit?

MARCUS

Mars. Period. Now. We're watching
it. Period. Now. together.

KEVIN

Oh, I dunno. I might not.

MARCUS

Look, I get it. It sucks. But I'm
here, and Mr. Fattys is coming, and
we're doing this.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)
(Beat) She's either going to Mars
or she's not, whether we watch, or
not. So.

Kevin peels himself off Voyager.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin and Marcus eat Mr. Fatty's and watch. Intercut with -

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - SAME

The remaining four contestants' final moments on the show,
seen in a montage:

--Giving unheard direct-to-camera interviews;

--Bouncing in the Pressure Cooker;

--Smiling to camera, laughing, and waving while eating
together, Amber and Adam side-by-side;

--Exploring a facsimile of their MarsNow "home," a pod with
sleeping space, a computer lab, a hydroponics lab, and a
medical room with examination table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Marcus and Kevin smoke.

MARCUS
You okay, man?

KEVIN
Ask me in ten minutes.

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - SAME

Amber, Adam, Mariko, and Pablo, stand in a tense line under
their country's respective flags.

The Host walks out and stops beside a small table with two
MarsNow pins shining on it in perfect, direct lighting.

HOST
These four brave but ordinary
citizens have spent the last few
months preparing and training and
showing you why they are the best
people to go to Mars now.
(MORE)

HOST (CONT'D)
You voted, our experts weighed in,
and now two people from earth are
going to start a new life on Mars.

The camera lingers on Amber and Adam.

HOST (CONT'D)
Contestants, are you ready?

CONTESTANTS
Yes sir.

HOST
Great. Here they are, one by one:
Amber, the hydroponics expert.
Adam, the doctor.

The camera pans to Mariko, then Pablo.

HOST (CONT'D)
Mariko, our chemist. And Pablo, our
computer scientist-slash-poet.

A tense moment.

HOST (CONT'D)
People of Earth. The moment has
arrived. (Beat) Your MarsNow
travelers are...

A too-long pause. TV time stretched to its limits.

HOST (CONT'D)
Adam and —

Amber looks up a beat early, as if on cue.

KEVIN (V.O.)
She was never a good actress. In
high school she was always the
stage manager.

HOST (O.S.)
Amber! Amber and Adam are going to
Mars!

A pause. Then an explosion of cheering from everywhere.

The Host pins the pin on her as the woman pins the other on
Adam. Amber makes a "Who me?" face. The music crescendoes.

She and Adam look at each other, triumphant. They press their
foreheads together, then turn, hold hands, and wave.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin stares at the screen. Marcus's mouth hangs open. He brings the pipe up to his lips and inhales.

MARCUS

Fuck, man.

He exhales.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

That was good TV.

KEVIN

I need to talk to her.

MARCUS

Haha. Okay. That might be kind of hard, dude.

INT. MARSNOW TRAINING FACILITY - DAY

Amber walks in dramatic slow motion down a long gangway. She wears a streamlined jumpsuit with a MarsNow insignia and carries a helmet under her arm. Triumphant music plays.

Adam walks down another long gangway in a similar outfit, though his has an obvious codpiece.

They meet at a Y and smile as they continue together.

Amber and Adam climb into the oval door of a ship-like structure. They close the door and latch it.

The POV shifts to Big Brother-esque series of cameras inside the pod, above and beside Amber and Adam.

HOST (V.O.)

Now that they're inside the pod,
they can't come back out. Over the
next six months, they'll be locked
in and gradually acclimated to
Mars's atmosphere.

As the Host speaks, an animated graphic of Amber and Adam illustrates what he's saying.

HOST (V.O.)

The pod will be air-locked to a
ship, which will in turn deposit
them on Mars. Yes, these are Amber
and Adam's last moments on earth.

(MORE)

HOST (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Their loved ones here at MarsNow HQ
are the last to see them leave.

Back on the gangway, a very staged moment: Amber's parents walk and join up with an older Israeli woman, ADAM'S MOTHER, and a pair of TEENAGE TWINS, younger copies of Adam.

The two families look at the pod, waving in slo-mo.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin sits on Voyager, staring at the TV in the dark.

The TV silently plays late night news, the story obviously about Amber and Adam's victory.

A lower-third scroll reads: "JUST 11 DAYS UNTIL LAUNCH!"

Kevin lays down. He sinks into Voyager like quicksand.

FLASHBACK:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

KIDS sit at desks and swing their legs. The solar system hangs in the corner.

TEACHER
Each of you will have a summer pen
pal. You'll exchange addresses and
write one another letters.

Little Kevin looks at the back of Little Amber's head, a few rows ahead of him.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
I'm passing out different colored
paper right now. You need to find
the person with the same color as
you. That's your pen pal.

The teacher drops an orange paper circle on Little Kevin's desk. He picks it up and looks at it, then puts it down.

Little Amber appears at his desk. She holds an orange circle. She smiles and puts their circles on top of one another.

BLACK OUT.

In the inky black we hear the sound of a heart monitor beep-beeping, beep-beeping. A regular human heartbeat.

KEVIN (V.O.)
About two months after the launch,
I figured out that Amber and I were
still looking at the same sunset.

A white line splits the screen in two, getting redder as the sun travels to it from both directions, crossing space in one half and crossing the Earth's sky in another.

Underneath the heartbeat sound, there's an echo of sorts. A more rapid, fainter beat. But strong.

KEVIN (V.O.)
If you go to Mars too fast your
bones get crushed to powder. That's
if the radiation doesn't get you
first. Or the isolation insanity.

The "suns" disappear into one another. The heartbeats merge, overlap, and are overtaken by canned TV laughter.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I've been spending a lot of time on
the internet, researching Mars.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin sits on Voyager. Amber, in her MarsNow spacesuit, sits next to him, her hands on her knees. She looks skinnier, paler. She opens her mouth wide, as if to scream.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Oh, and this has been happening.
Which is totally fine.

He stares at the TV as the laughter peals louder and louder around him. He does not laugh. He doesn't react at all.

Suddenly a woman, TANYA VARGAS, 28, crosses him and sits down. She's the cashier from the grocery store we saw earlier. She grabs his inner thigh playfully, bites his ear.

Amber isn't there. Never was.

The canned laughter grows louder. Still, Kevin doesn't react.

Marcus crosses the other way and sits, distributing Mr. Fatty's bags. He claps Kevin on the shoulder.

They eat burgers and fries in SLO MO. Tanya laughs. Marcus laughs. Kevin is barely there. He closes his eyes.

INSERT TITLE: 6 MONTHS AFTER LAUNCH.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

The laughter has stopped. The TV plays quietly. Tanya snoozes on Kevin's lap. Marcus reclines, half asleep. He peels himself up.

MARCUS

Alright, I'm out. Goodnight man.

KEVIN

Yeah, us too probably. Night.

Marcus leaves. Kevin looks down at Tanya, who snores softly. He shifts his legs gently, but she doesn't wake up.

Marcus goes into the pot room. The door swings open, revealing that the pot area has been covered over with a tarp. There's a mattress on the floor.

Kevin stares. The heartbeat rises, briefly: beep-beep, beep-beep. Then Marcus uses his foot to kick closed the door.

Kevin moves his legs again, but Tanya just wiggles and settles in deeper. Kevin gently slides out and her head drops with a thud. He winces, but she doesn't wake up.

He picks up the remote to turn the TV off. Then suddenly - Amber's smiling face fills the screen. Kevin turns it up.

INT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - SPACETIME

The familiar shape of the white, egg-like pod.

HOST (V.O.)

Six months ago, two brave yet ordinary citizens took the ultimate leap and went to Mars, Now.

A series of clips from the show:

- Amber and Adam in their suits, in a line.
- The contestants exploring their pod.
- The shoulder fix and forehead touch.
- Adam and Amber's win.
- They smile and wave as they get in the pod.

HOST (V.O.)
Amber and Adam dazzled us with
their candidness and courage and
obvious chemistry. Now, six months
later, they're ready to start the
next phase of their journey.

Back to the pod. It floats through space like a giant egg.

HOST (V.O.)
Now the real adventure begins. On
Mars.

A title card overtakes the screen: MarsNow Season 2: Mars.
Now. Season Premiere Thursday at 7pm.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin breathes in and out raggedly.

Closeup on his face as Tanya's tongue enters his right ear.
He appears not to notice.

He continues to stare, distraught. Tanya kisses and licks his
ear. Widening out, we see that her hand is in his sweatpants,
working vigorously. He's unmoved.

After a beat, he returns to himself. Kevin reaches down and
stops Tanya's hand for a moment, then lets her resume.

INT. CITY BUS - THE NEXT DAY

Kevin rides the bus. He listens to music on headphones. The
bus stops at a stop light.

He looks up to see a billboard for MarsNow. Amber's and
Adam's faces peer out over the city, huge and inspiring.

He closes his eyes. Then he opens them again.

KEVIN
(to us/no one)
I was doing really well. I am doing
really well. I've been reading
about Mars. I started jogging.

An OLD LADY next to him turns to look at him.

OLD LADY
I beg to differ.

KEVIN

No. No. I am doing really well.

OLD LADY

You jogged three times and skimmed the Mars Wikipedia page. And for about ten minutes you read the Mars Volta page instead.

KEVIN

They were a good band!

OLD LADY

They were weird.

KEVIN

I have an idea. A plan. I'm almost ready. I'm going to see Amber. I'm fine.

OLD LADY

Oh yeah? Then why is her creepy non-ghost hanging around?

KEVIN

Because she's - I don't know.

OLD LADY

Uh huh. And how's that working out, honey?

KEVIN

Fine.

OLD LADY

Fine. Everything's fine, says the kid who conjured the ghost of his totally alive ex-girlfriend.

KEVIN

She's not my ex-girlfriend. We never broke up.

OLD LADY

Oh? So then what are you doing with that nice girl that gives you hand jobs on the couch most nights?

KEVIN

Tanya. Her name's Tanya.

OLD LADY

I know her name, dumbass. I'm you.

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
He's fucking her around, that's
what he's doing.

Reveal the BUS DRIVER, looking back through the rear view.

OLD LADY
Literally.

The Bus Driver and the Old Lady laugh, like Kevin and Marcus
would while stoned. Long distance high five, pound, etc.

KEVIN
I'm just figuring things out.

OLD LADY
Stalling, more like.

BUS DRIVER
Yeah, kid. Get your shit together.
She's not coming back. She left you
behind on purpose.
(to the Old Lady)
Can you imagine? Brutal.

OLD LADY
(to Bus Driver)
Absolute brutality!

KEVIN
Shut up. I just need to talk to
her. Just one more time.

OLD LADY
She humiliated you. Forget her.

KEVIN
I'm trying, goddamn it!

The Old Lady gets very close to Kevin's ear.

OLD LADY
You've never tried to do anything.
Except love Amber Kivenen. And look
where that got you.

KEVIN
Fuck off!

The Old Lady's tongue darts out and into his ear, Tanya
Vargas-style. Kevin flinches.

INT. CITY BUS - SAME

Off the flinch, Kevin wakes up. Beside him, the Old Lady sits placidly, reading a bible. The driver...drives.

Kevin rubs his face, lightly touches his ear. He looks around, getting his bearings.

KEVIN

Shit!

The Old Lady tsk-tsks, obviously disapproving of such language.

Kevin rudely scrambles over her and gets off the bus. She shakes her head and goes back to reading.

INT. MORGUE SET - DAY

A body lies on a slab, covered in a sheet. A PATHOLOGIST stands over it.

PATHOLOGIST

Just a warning, Dick, it's worse
than any case I've seen.

Reveal the TV Detective from earlier, looking across at the Pathologist. We're on set.

PATHOLOGIST (CONT'D)

And that's saying something, cuz I
was in 'Nam.

They look up grimly at each other, and nod. The Pathologist lifts the sheet.

It's Kevin, "dead" again in some extremely gnarly makeup.

DETECTIVE

Wow. I never realized syphilis
could get this bad.

INT. MORGUE SET - LATER

Kevin hops up off the slab. He's wearing a nude bodysuit below the sheet line.

DETECTIVE

(actor, with accent)
Say, Kevin.

KEVIN

Yeah.

The Detective gets closer. He whispers.

DETECTIVE

(actor, with accent)

You still have that nice ganja? My girlfriend Svetlana loved it. She's 24, by the way.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Amber didn't let me sell on set. Crossing the streams, she called it. But she's not here. There's just one problem.

KEVIN

Uh, we're out right now. But I can get you some soon.

DETECTIVE

(actor, with accent)

How soon?

KEVIN

Um, soon. I promise.

The Detective winks, then slaps Kevin hard on the back.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin sits on Voyager, watching TV. Tanya comes out of the shower in a towel. She stops, takes the towel off and uses it to dry her hair. Nude.

Kevin watches her. He smiles. She winks at him.

TANYA

I'm going to bed. You coming?

KEVIN

Pretty soon, yeah.

TANYA

Cool. (Beat) Hey Watkins.

She lifts herself off him and heads towards the bedroom. At the doorway, she stops. There's a look of love in her eye.

KEVIN

(cutting it off)

Let's go on a road trip.

TANYA

Yeah?

KEVIN

Yeah. to the desert. I've always wanted to go to the desert.

TANYA

Can I drive?

KEVIN

Definitely.

TANYA

Okay, let's do it.

She flashes him. He pretends to be shocked, fanning himself like a scandalized Southern belle. She goes into the bedroom and closes the door. He breathes out.

Immediately, Amber's "ghost" appears on the futon, sitting and staring out as before. Kevin doesn't look at her.

KEVIN

I'm fine. I'm okay. I'm an asshole.

Kevin reaches down and grabs the pipe. He lights it, inhales, and offers it to Amber's ghost, mindlessly. She turns her head to him and opens her mouth.

AMBER'S GHOST (V.O.)

Thank you for calling the MarsNow hotline. The hotline is now closed. Please hang up.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

Kevin wakes up prostrate on the futon with his phone in his hand. "Amber" is not there.

He looks at his phone: 3:34 AM. He can hear a faint noise coming from it. He lifts it to his ear.

HOTLINE OPERATOR (V.O.)

Thank you for calling the MarsNow hotline. The hotline is now closed. Please hang up. (Beat) Thank you for calling the MarsNow hotline. The hotline is now closed. Please hang up.

Kevin hits the button to hang up. The TV casts silent bluish-white light across him and the dark room.

He looks up at the ceiling, looking for the face. He can't see it. He frames his hands, still nothing. He drops his hands to his chest and closes his eyes.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Like the blink of an eye, it's morning. Kevin snores with his mouth wide open. Closeup on his mouth as the end of a necktie slowly drops into it. Kevin coughs but keeps sleeping.

A snicker can be heard. The tie moves up and out of frame. Marcus's hand enters. He pokes Kevin in the shoulder.

MARCUS (O.S.)

Hey dude.

Kevin snorts awake. Marcus hangs over him, dressed in a burnout's idea of a nice shirt and tie. The bottom of his tie is wet from Kevin's mouth. He flaps it to dry it.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You were out cold. Couching again?

KEVIN

Yeah. Sorry.

MARCUS

So, you're going on a road trip with Tanya, huh?

KEVIN

You heard that? (Beat) How much do you hear?

MARCUS

Everything.

KEVIN

Sorry.

MARCUS

Don't be. I don't need to watch porn anymore.

KEVIN

Aw, man.

MARCUS

Cool about the road trip. It's funny, though, you've never told me you want to visit the desert.

KEVIN

Well, I do.

MARCUS

Lots of cool shit happens in the desert, for sure. Peyote. The Grand Canyon. Space ship launches.

KEVIN

Yeah.

MARCUS

Okay, well. Time for work. (Beat)
Hey man. If I don't say it enough, thanks for letting me move in here.

KEVIN

Of course, dude.

There's a nice quiet moment between them.

Then Marcus squats down like he's a dancer in a 90s hip hop video, his hands on his knees, ass out. He farts. He laughs.

He dips out. Kevin covers his face with his shirt. He looks over at the den/bedroom. The door is ajar.

INT. BEDROOM/DEN - CONTINUOUS

Kevin looks into the bedroom. All traces of Amber are gone. The room has been "Tanya-ized." Scarves drape most surfaces, there are pictures on the wall, and the bed has an actual frame. It's nice. Feminine.

The bed has been neatly made. Tanya is gone for the day.

Kevin looks around and sighs. He closes the door.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kevin walks out into the living room and towards the kitchen. He stops outside the Pot Room, now Marcus's bedroom. He puts his hand on the doorknob and moves to enter.

The sound of a heartbeat monitor: beep-beep, beep-beep. Then through it, the heart itself: thump-thump, thump-thump. And again, the rapid beat: th-thum-thump, th-thum-thump.

Kevin's hand moves to turn the knob, but he can't.

He recoils, then turns towards the kitchen. As he does, the sound dissipates.

KEVIN
(to us)
I'm figuring it out, okay? I've got
it. Don't look at me.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marcus and Tanya are on the futon in sweatpants, sharing a bag of chips and the amber-colored pipe.

MARCUS
Kevin! It's going to start! In like
a minute!

TANYA
Kevin! Get in here!

MARCUS
Kevin! Don't be a turd!

Tanya makes a fart noise with her mouth. Marcus laughs through a smokey exhale.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Kevin stands at the bathroom sink, looking in the mirror. He breathes in, then out. Again.

Kevin closes his eyes.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

Kevin leans over the sink, breathing heavily. He tries to control his breath.

He splashes water on his face.

When he comes back up, Amber's Ghost is behind him. He shuts his eyes. She's gone.

He puts his hand to his heart. It flutters nervously: Beat-beat-beat. Beat-beat-beat. He steels himself.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin enters the living room, stone-faced.

Tanya and Marcus look at him, smiling goofily. Like a pantomime in slo-mo, they move apart and pat the futon between them. Marcus sweeps a wayward chip onto the floor.

Kevin sits, slowly. Marcus claps him on the back. Tanya grabs his hand and claps it between both of hers. She clamps all three hands between her thighs tightly.

The three of them breathe in, then out. They stare at the TV.

On screen, the credit sequence begins. Blackness swirls into planets sailing by, obviously CGI-ed. The screen slowly fills with the orange swirls and bumps of Mars.

HOST (V.O.)
It's been six months. 183 days.
4380 hours. 262,800 minutes. And
now, we're seconds from a miracle.

EXT. MARS - CONTINUOUS

The images become less CGI and more realistic as Mars comes into view. There are mountains and craters, entire continents. It's beautiful and terrifying.

HOST (V.O.)
Since they left us, Amber and Adam
have been in their confinement pod
sailing above earth. There's not
much to do up there except talk.
Apparently, they have been playing
a lot of Uno. Hahaha adorable.

One of the formations rolls by in a swirl of space-dust. It looks like a human face.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They all stare, slack-jawed.

KEVIN
Did you guys see that?

TANYA
See what?

KEVIN
Cydonia. The face on Mars.

TANYA

No?

Marcus puts down the pipe.

MARCUS

I never thought I'd say this, but I don't think I'm going to be able to watch this high.

HOST (V.O.)

You are looking at the first ever live feed of the surface of Mars.

Awed silence, punctuated by Marcus crunching a chip.

INT. MARSNOW CREDITS - CONTINUOUS

A vast swirling orange nothing, just the surface of Mars. Suddenly, a tiny, white orb comes into view.

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM/SHOW.

HOST (V.O.)

Here they come. Let's take a look.

A blurry black and orange adjustment and then the orb, larger and closer, edges into view.

Two wing-like flaps open on either side of it and the frame shakes violently as the orb seems to tilt and wobble.

Kevin, Marcus, and Tanya all lean forward. Tanya chews the nails on her free hand.

TANYA

This is intense.

The entire universe holds its breath. The little orb hovers before disappearing in the atmosphere.

Kevin searches the screen, his eyes wide.

The blurry-closeup view reveals nothing but dust.

HOST (V.O.)

We are awaiting visual confirmation.

The dust thins, and the shaking stops. The white pod is revealed, sitting flat and calm on the surface of Mars.

A massive CHEER goes up.

INT. MARSNOW CONTROL - SAME

Reveal the Houston-like control room for MarsNow, stacked row on row with dozens of overly-attractive ENGINEERS. They are too coordinated in their cheering. All wear grey versions of the white MarsNow jumpsuits.

With them, in a specially lit central throne, is the Host.

HOST

Haha, wonderful. Yes! They landed!
And this is the MarsNow control
room. There are 4,113 cameras
watching and 8,42 microphones
listening from my strategically
placed satellites around Mars, on
Mars Rovers, and inside the MarsNow
Living Space. These 48 engineers
will be following the action live,
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Behind him, on a wall of screens, we see the various cameras that will track Amber and Adam, including Wall-E like Rovers with comical camera arms.

An ENGINEER enters frame, smiling robotically.

ENGINEER

Sir? It's time.

HOST

Perfect. Let's watch.

The Host extends his arm and points, and the camera robotically follows.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

The trio sits, glued to each other. They hold their breath.

Marcus breathes out, releasing a cloud of pot smoke and a few staccato coughs.

EXT. MARS - SAME

The pod sits placidly, as winds whip up and around it.

The camera, clearly a Rover, moves forward awkwardly, then robotically to the right, then left, finding its frame on the pod in that jerky way that robots do.

HOST (V.O.)
Our state-of-the-art RoboCameras
are adjusting to new visual
information, just like us.

Suddenly, a seam appears in the center of the orb.

HOST (V.O.)
This is it. Amber and Adam have
been in confinement for six months,
receiving nutrients and being
monitored by our health team. They
are both in perfect health, and
they are ready to show you just how
ready they are to start a new life
on Mars.

The seam widens, like an opening eye, revealing a transparent
glass window beneath. The camera continues finding focus as
two blurry figures come into view.

As the image resolves, we see Amber and Adam in better focus.
They hold hands.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

Tanya chews her thumbnail. Kevin takes tiny sips of air.
Marcus lifts, lights, and inhales the pipe.

EXT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - SAME

Amber and Adam stand, proudly. They're in white MarsNow
jumpsuits, but Amber's is modified in the middle.

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM/SHOW.

Kevin leans forward, trying to figure out what he's seeing.

As if on cue, Amber and Adam smile and wave to the audience,
then they turn to each other and kiss. Amber backs up a step
and frames her torso with her hands.

She's clearly, visibly pregnant.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

Kevin wrenches his hand from Tanya's thighs. After a beat he
stands, hitting several things off the table and onto the
floor. The Dollywood ashtray breaks.

HOST (O.S.)
Yes, that's right. Now, finally, we
here at the proud MarsNow family
get to share some fun news: Amber
and Adam are expecting.

Kevin stumbles over Marcus, pushing his head back with his hand and kicking him, hard. Marcus is clearly in pain, but says nothing, swallowing it.

Kevin stumbles further and falls to his hands and knees. He makes a strangled sound.

Tanya goes to say something, but Marcus shakes his head firmly at her. Kevin lingers on the floor.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A massive thanks is due to our
MarsNow medical staff for taking
such good care of Amber on the way
here. She and the baby are both
healthy. She is due in 2 months.

Kevin hears all of this with his face towards the bathroom. His head drops as he flops himself in and slams the door.

HOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Yes, as all of you already sensed:
These two have been in love since
this crazy experiment started.
Hahahahahaha!

The Host continues laughing, like he just learned the meaning of the word. It's weird and monotone.

From within the bathroom we hear -

KEVIN (O.S.)
Hahahahahaha!

On TV, Amber and Adam wave and pose from the pod's window, blips on a big orange surface. Inspirational music swells.

Marcus and Tanya sit, stunned.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kevin slides down and into the tub. His breathing is ragged and pained. He shifts uncomfortably, puts his hand to his chest, and tries to control himself.

Then he hears it: The heart monitor. The beep-beep, thump-thump, then the th-thum-thump. A baby. That's what that is. That's what he's been hearing.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kevin snoozes on Voyager. A pregnancy test drops onto his chest, and he wakes up. He picks it up, then realizes what it is, and sits up.

Amber sits beside him and crosses her arms.

AMBER

It's super early. Plus, the women in my family tend to miscarry so don't worry. My mom had like, four of them before I was born.

KEVIN

Okay.

AMBER

And if for some reason I don't, I'll get an abortion. Okay?

KEVIN

Yeah. That's...okay.

AMBER

I do want kids. But not yet.

Kevin looks to Amber for a cue. Her face is impassive.

KEVIN

No?

AMBER

Here? Look around. We're not...Yeah. What a mess.

Amber tears up. She wipes her eyes. Kevin is frozen. He grasps for something to say.

She reaches out to grab Kevin's hand. Kevin puts the test down on the table, wipes his hand on his shirt, then holds her hand back. They laugh a little.

KEVIN

I mean, you did pee on it.

AMBER

It's true, I peed on that so hard.

They laugh harder. Kevin puts his arm around her.

He touches her face with the same hand that held the test. He holds her down. She squirms. They laugh.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

Kevin lies in the dry tub, eyes closed. He opens them and looks at the line of several loud and colorful shampoos and soaps belonging to Tanya.

He picks up a foot callous grater, puzzled. He opens it and dried foot skin falls on him like confetti. He laughs. The laughs turn into to a scream. He muffles it with his hand.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tanya is driving, smiling and singing along to the radio. Kevin watches her.

TANYA

This was a good idea, Watkins.

KEVIN

Yes it was.

(to us)

I'm an asshole.

TANYA

Oh look at this place! We are stopping here.

She pulls over and hops out of the car.

INT./EXT. CAR/ROADSIDE STOP - CONTINUOUS

An alien-themed roadside pit stop, a la Roswell.

TANYA

You coming?

KEVIN

In a minute.

TANYA

Okay. I'm going to buy some
postcards.

She gets out of the car and strides towards an outdoor
postcard stand.

A handpainted sign reads "Send a postcard to space!"

FLASHBACK:

INT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Close on the mail slot in a house. Little Kevin stares at it.

Suddenly, the slot opens and mail pours in. Little Kevin
pounces on it and rifles through it, extracting a letter.

INT. LITTLE KEVIN'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Little Kevin hurriedly closes the door to his bedroom.

He sits down on the floor and puts an envelope down,
smoothing it. In neat, girly handwriting, it reads:

to: Kevin Watkins
1472 Sycamore Street
Eugene, OR
United States of America
The World
The Milky Way
The Universe

And

From: Amber Kivenen
Gymnastics Camp
Colorado
United States of America
The World
The Milky Way
The Universe

Little Kevin opens the letter and reads, his lips moving.

LITTLE AMBER (V.O.)

Dear Kevin. I hope you are having a
nice summer so far. I am at
gymnastics camp. It is hard but
fun. I made a new friend, her name
is Rachel. She is Jewish and lives
in California.

(MORE)

LITTLE AMBER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I am not Jewish and I live in
Eugene with you. Ha Ha. See you
later. Amber.

Kevin looks at the letter. He tapes it to the wall.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CAR - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

Kevin sits in the car, sinking into the seat.

He looks at a sign out the window that says "Los Alamos
Testing Site - 45 miles."

Tanya gets back in the car. She's wearing alien-eyeball
shaped sunglasses and sucking on a green lollipop.

TANYA
I love it here. Eat this.

She takes the lollipop out of her mouth and shoves it in
Kevin's. He absently takes it.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin and Tanya are sitting up in bed. Tanya is flipping
through channels on an old TV.

She comes across the new MarsNow episode. On TV, Amber is
inspecting a fledgling tomato plant.

TANYA
Do you want to watch?

KEVIN
Sure.

TANYA
I'm surprised. If I were you, I
wouldn't want to.

KEVIN
No?

TANYA
I mean, isn't it weird to watch
your ex-girlfriend live an entirely
different life every week? It's
like Instagram on steroids.

KEVIN
I don't mind it.
(to us)
I do mind it.

TANYA
Hm. Well that's probably cuz you've
got me.

Tanya snuggles in to Kevin's armpit just as, on TV, Adam comes up behind Amber and gives her a kiss. He places his hands on her belly and they sway together there for a moment.

KEVIN
(to us)
I'm such an asshole.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER

In the early morning light, Kevin quietly dresses in a cheap white jumpsuit, the kind you buy to paint in. He grabs a shoulder bag and tiptoes out the door. Tanya sleeps.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - DAY

A rental car with Oregon plates turns down an access road that says "Los Alamos Testing Site. Restricted Area."

INT. CAR - SAME

Kevin drives, eating a power bar. He drops the wrapper on the seat beside him, next to a few more. He eyes the shoulder bag in the backseat.

EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT - LATER

The car pulls up to a heavily guarded gate. On the gate next to several warning signs is a newer sign that says "Home to the MarsNow Official Launch Site."

In the distance, behind fencing, there's a series of squat, ugly buildings and a giant, new-looking glass structure.

INT. CAR - SAME

Kevin breathes out, slowly. He's ready. He rolls down the window, and the car is immediately surrounded.

A scary GUARD leans down into his window, gun in view.

GUARD
Sir, this is a government
restricted area.

KEVIN
Hello, officer. How are you today?

The guard doesn't speak.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
I'm not here for the government,
I'm here for MarsNow.

GUARD
As I said, this is a restricted
area. Please turn your car around
or we will take possession of it.

KEVIN
Um, okay. But I need to talk to
MarsNow. They have my girlfriend
and I need to go to Mars to get
her. I'll show you.

Kevin reaches for the shoulder bag in the backseat. As he
does, myriad guards with many guns appear.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

A grey, sterile room. Kevin sits with his hands zip-tied at a
metal table. Across from him, OFFICER SHELBY looks at a bunch
of documents and files from the shoulder bag.

It's a mix of things from pictures of Kevin and Amber
together, notes and letters from her, including a few penpal
letters, and other personal items.

Officer Shelby holds up a boardwalk caricature of Kevin as a
skateboarding potato with "Tater toter!" written under it.

OFFICER SHELBY
This is you? You're Tater toter?

KEVIN
Yes ma'am. (Beat) Can I use the
bathroom?

OFFICER SHELBY
You're not wearing a diaper? Most
of the kooky murderous astronaut
types wear a diaper.

KEVIN

I'm not kooky or murderous or an astronaut. Or wearing a diaper.

Amber's Ghost watches from the corner.

KEVIN (V.O.)

I'm not murderous or an astronaut or wearing a diaper.

OFFICER SHELBY

I getcha. Okay. Hmm.

A beat. Officer Shelby studies a nervous Kevin. As she does, her face goes from stern professionalism to motherly concern.

OFFICER SHELBY (CONT'D)

Let's see: Your girlfriend left you to go to Mars and you thought you'd come here and go to Mars, too. But they thought you were crazy because you drove up in a rental car wearing a jumpsuit you bought at a dollar store with a belly full of energy bars. Is that it?

KEVIN

Yeah, that's it.

OFFICER SHELBY

It's an admirable grand gesture. I get it. My ex-husband once caught the fly ball at a Diamondbacks game and gave it to me. Those kinds of things matter. But, and I say this with love, you seem a little kooky.

KEVIN

My heart is broken.

It slips out. Kevin is surprised.

OFFICER SHELBY

Oh, sweetie. I can see that. But it's not going to get fixed here. It has to get fixed here.

She pokes him in the chest, a little too hard.

OFFICER SHELBY (CONT'D)

Now, let's get you back to Oregon, shall we? Ms. Vargas already picked up the car, she said to tell you -

She looks down at her notes.

OFFICER SHELBY (CONT'D)
Uh, "Fuck off." So I'll be taking
you to the airport. K hun?

Kevin nods, weakly.

OFFICER SHELBY (CONT'D)
You need a whizz, right? Let's get
you that whizz.

They both stand. Officer Shelby opens the door.

OFFICER SHELBY (CONT'D)
You're lucky Darrell was in a good
mood today. Normally he just shoots
on site. He's allowed to do that.

She gestures brightly for Kevin to leave the room. He does.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kevin enters in his white jumpsuit. Marcus is watching TV.

MARCUS
Hey dude. How was the vacation?
(Beat) Where's Tanya?

Kevin looks through Marcus. After a beat, he looks up at
Marcus's/the pot room.

In one move, he runs at the door with full force and swats it
open. It cracks against the opposite wall.

Marcus stands up sharply.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Uh, dude, maybe.

But it's too late. Smash, crash. Off Marcus's wince we see
Kevin, through the crack in the door. He's knocked two dead,
crusted plants down and onto Marcus's stuff.

INT. MARCUS'S ROOM/POT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marcus stands in the doorway as Kevin tosses plants around
the room. He tries to protest, weakly.

Kevin keeps tossing things: Plants, dirt, pieces of hose,
fertilizer, vials of various things are tossed and smashed.

With every smash, shards of an image:

INT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - SAME

Amber, mask on, tending to her Mars plants with loving ease. Spraying, trimming, picking, and eating abundant greens. She is smiling, radiant, an Earth Mother, a magician. She smiles.

INT. MARCUS'S ROOM/POT ROOM - SAME

Kevin slumps down, as though to sit in his destruction.

After a moment, Marcus moves cautiously towards him. Kevin pops up with a pot plant in his arms and rushes the door.

He thrusts the plant at Marcus, who takes it.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

Kevin, covered in dirt, desperately scrapes a hole in the hard yard with a small gardening trowel. Marcus watches. On the ground nearby is a clump of moldy, dry, dead pot plant.

Marcus edges away and around the side of the house, emerging with a big, flat snow shovel. He awkwardly tries to help.

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

A modest, odd hole has been carved out of the lawn. Kevin stomps the dead plants into it, but the heap is larger than the hole. He jumps over and over, grunting with effort.

Marcus sits on the grass and watches his friend flail.

MARCUS

Kev.

Kevin jumps and grunts.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Kevin, stop. Stop!

Marcus stands up.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Stop fucking doing this!

Kevin stops. He tries to step off the pile and stumbles, falling sideways. Marcus tries to catch him and they both fall together, embracing.

After a moment, Kevin calms and lies still. Marcus holds him, big spoon to little spoon.

The pile of plant and hole is a dark smear in a darker yard.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I have an idea.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin and Marcus stand over the pile of dead plants. Marcus lifts a joint to his lips and lights it with a match.

He throws the match on the pile of leaves dramatically. It fizzles out.

EXT. BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Marcus takes a swig of bad, though high-proof, booze. He shakes his head and passes it to Kevin, who chugs it.

Marcus steals it back, then pours the remainder on the plant pile. He lights a match and tosses it again. This time, though slowly, it takes.

The two friends stand, staring at the blaze. Marcus throws his arm around Kevin.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

In the soft morning light, Marcus snores on Voyager shirtless. His hand is down his pants. He has black soot smeared under either eye like football eyeblack.

Kevin is curled on the floor beside him, sleeping in the fetal position, twitching and clutching the bottle of booze.

They are surrounded by dirt and fragments of dead plant.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin wakes up and Marcus is gone.

He unfurls stiffly and smacks his dry, white-rimmed lips. He looks down at the bottle and pushes it under the futon.

After a beat, he half rises and pulls himself up onto Voyager with considerable effort.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

A door slams and Kevin startles, opening an eye.

The door to his and Tanya's room is shut. He half-heartedly lifts his head and peels open the other eye, then collapses back down.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

A shuffle as the bedroom door opens, and Tanya heaves herself out with several items under both arms.

She uses one leg to push the coffee table towards the futon, which stirs Kevin. He peers at her through one eye.

She heaves and stumbles her way across the living room, dropping her stuff with a thud at the front door.

She comes back and stares at Kevin, arms folded. He limply looks up at her. Her eyes fill with tears.

TANYA

I know you don't love me. But you
could at least try to like me,
Watkins.

Kevin peers at her. His dry, white lips open and close. He curls around himself and sinks into Voyager.

Suddenly, Tanya pulls a blanket up over Kevin's shoulders, tucking him in tenderly. She kisses his head, a bit too hard.

She leaves, then returns, smacking Kevin across the head a few times. He recoils slightly, but mostly takes it.

After a few awkward, noisy moments, Tanya leaves.

KEVIN

(to us/Voyager)
I'm the biggest asshole alive.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin sleeps under the blanket. Pots and pans are banging in the kitchen. Kevin sniffs the air, which fills with smoke.

MARCUS (O.S.)

Fuck!

Kevin sits up, rubbing his eyes. The smoke alarm beeps. A shirtless Marcus runs in the room with a tea towel. He waves at the smoke alarm until it stops.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Morning sunshine!

KEVIN
Hey.

Kevin sits up, rubbing his face.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
What are you cooking?

MARCUS
Well, I was afraid the leftover weed would go bad, so I made cookies. But I burned them.

KEVIN
Okay.

MARCUS
But there was still some shake left, so I made a cake. Want a piece?

Marcus holds up a little cube of green cake.

KEVIN (V.O.)
I know better than anyone not to eat this cake. This cake is made with the weed we didn't get right. The shake, the cuttings off of plants we grew a long time ago. Growing weed is delicate.

FLASHBACK:

INT. POT ROOM - DAY

Amber, in her mask, stands over the plants cutting them carefully. She places them in a sieve tray and gently shakes them back and forth. The smallest bits fall through to a bucket below.

KEVIN (V.O.)
When we started we were constantly getting it wrong. Pick too fast and the high doesn't stick.
(MORE)

KEVIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Leave the plant too long, you get a
dark, depressing high. The kind
that obliterates you.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY (BACK TO SCENE)

Kevin reaches for the green cube. He looks at it.

KEVIN (V.O.)
This shake was that kind, I
thought. Or at least, I hoped.

Kevin pops it in his mouth in one bite.

MARCUS
Uh, dude, I was going to suggest we
share that.

MONTAGE:

A woozy, fuzzy series of images and events from Kevin's POV:

--Marcus is running around and babbling, unheard, his feet
ripping up the carpet like dirt;

--The carpet starts to sprout plant life, and the walls grow
long vines with threatening, tentacle-like tips;

--Marcus is encircled by vines and disappears;

--Kevin lies down on Voyager, wrapping his arms around
himself, and is swallowed by its mossiness;

--He is thrown, upright, into a beautiful garden.

INT. GARDEN - DAY

Kevin looks down and realizes he's naked. All around him are
plants. As he looks closer he realizes they're pot plants.

He touches a leaf, and as he does, he gags. He opens his
mouth and pulls out a long human rib bone.

A hand reaches out and grabs it. It's Amber. She's also
naked. She swallows the rib in one bite. She grabs the sides
of Kevin's face, too hard.

Kevin's eyes roll back until the sockets are black holes,
through which we can see the starry night sky.

AMBER

Go down on me.

Kevin nods and kneels down. He looks at Amber's pubic hair. It's mossy green, a miniature of the basement suite's jungle.

Kevin opens his mouth to approach the "jungle." And -

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Kevin, half under a sheet, playing a corpse, masturbates. He's on set. He's laughing, and his eyes are closed.

The Detective and an actor playing a CORONER stand over him.

CORONER

He's really going for it.

DETECTIVE

I've never wanked high, is it good?

CORONER

Oh yeah. Like sitting on your hand.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

I'm not even coming over there. Can someone call security?

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Marcus sits on Voyager. He stares at the TV. Kevin comes in and flops down beside him.

KEVIN

I got fired.

MARCUS

Me too. (Beat) What'd you do?

KEVIN

I masturbated on set.

MARCUS

Damn. I'm surprised you didn't get arrested.

KEVIN

Oh, I did.

Kevin pulls up his sleeve, revealing a county bracelet.

MARCUS

Damn. (Beat) I dropped hot oil on my foot.

KEVIN

Ouch.

MARCUS

It's cool, I got cream for it.

A beat.

KEVIN

It's Thursday, isn't it?

MARCUS

Yeah.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Thursday. Must See TV.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Kevin and Marcus are grocery shopping. Marcus is babbling about something excitedly, but Kevin isn't listening.

KEVIN (V.O.)

I'd started hating Thursdays like Garfield hates Mondays. Which is stupid, now that I think of it. Like, he's a cat. He doesn't have a day job. Why does a cat hate Mondays? Cats don't even know what days are.

Marcus stops his inaudible babbling.

MARCUS

But he's, like, a talking cat. That means all bets are off.

Marcus starts babbling inaudibly again.

KEVIN

Which also doesn't mean anything.
(Beat) Thursdays. MarsNow days.
Long days, then 7pm and everyone is watching. And I do mean everyone.

Kevin stops in front of rows of cereal: "Mars-Os! Real pumpkin spice flavor!" On the box, Amber and Adam's faces over an orange circle. Like if Cheerios were neon.

Kevin looks away. But everywhere he looks is MarsNow: branded orange juice, headbands with the insignia, protein shakes. Amber's face, assaulting him from all angles.

He shakes his head. Marcus throws a cereal box in the cart. Kevin looks at him.

MARCUS

What?

INT. GROCERY STORE CHECK OUT - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin loads items from the cart onto the checkout. He eyes a magazine on the stand with Amber and Adam on the cover. The sub-headline reads "Amber's Earth friends speak out!"

Kevin considers this. He puts the magazine on the belt.

CASHIER

Oh my god. Aren't they amazing? You know, she used to shop here.

KEVIN

Yeah, I know.

CASHIER

She was with a different guy then.

Marcus looks at both Kevin and the Cashier. He grins.

MARCUS

What did you think about the other guy?

The Cashier really considers this. She stares off into space, sort of through Kevin.

CASHIER

Y'know, I don't remember him. Kind of a nothing face.

Marcus snickers. Kevin's shoulders drop.

CASHIER (V.O.)

Sixty-four seventeen, please.

The Cashier smiles. Marcus hands over a stack of ones.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Kevin unloads groceries. He fishes in his pocket for some change and drops it in a coffee can labelled "Weed \$\$\$".

He looks in the can. It's pretty empty.

The magazine he bought is flipped open on the counter. He reads it while he unpacks.

KEVIN (V.O.)

(reading)

...Amber's life on earth was very different, according to friends back home. She was a temp, and she lived in a basement apartment with a long term boyfriend. A friend, who asked to remain anonymous, said Amber "had some hobbies that might surprise people." When pressed, the source said he couldn't say, but that Amber's ability to grow plants hydroponically was "interesting, right?" That same friend said he was happy for Amber, because she "always seemed sad, and she likes being important." The source, who has known Amber since high school, asked if there were dogs on Mars.

Kevin flips the magazine shut.

MARCUS (O.S.)

We should get a big TV. Then I can put the smaller TV in my room.

Marcus enters the kitchen. Kevin doesn't turn to look at him.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You making mac and cheese?

Kevin holds up the magazine. Marcus looks at it.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Oh shit.

KEVIN

What the fuck, man?

MARCUS

They said I could be anonymous. And they paid me \$800.

KEVIN

What were you thinking? Why did you think you had the right?

Kevin grabs Marcus and pushes him up against the kitchen counter. He gets in his face.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

To talk about her. To talk about us, at all? to mention me. To fuck with me in public, to flirt with Tanya like I don't exist? To treat all of this shit like a game, Marcus. It's not a game. She's the love of my fucking life.

Kevin lets him go. Marcus recovers.

MARCUS

Yeah, I know man. Twelve years is a long time to watch your best friend be with the wrong woman.

KEVIN

What?

MARCUS

You know what. You put her on such a high pedestal she had to go to fucking space to get away from you. Why'd you stay with her, man?

Kevin pushes Marcus against the counter again, with more force this time. Marcus pushes back, and Kevin slams him back, bashing Marcus's head against the cupboard.

Marcus swings and hits Kevin in the mouth. His lip splits. Marcus stares at him, wild eyed and breathing heavily.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Tanya was cool, by the way, and she liked you, and you really fucked with her. Prick.

Marcus turns and leaves the kitchen, going into his room. We hear the door SLAM.

Kevin lingers a moment, looking down at the magazine, his lip dripping blood. He picks the magazine up and tears at it.

After a beat, he grabs the can of money and leaves.

INT. MR FATTYS - NIGHT

Kevin and his can of money eat several burgers, alone. A LITTLE GIRL sitting nearby plays with a Barbie-like doll in a MarsNow uniform with a tight braid.

The Little Girl makes space noises and makes the doll do flips. Kevin stares at her.

The Little Girl sees him staring and looks back at him, quizzically. The girl's MOM notices and looks over at Kevin.

GIRL'S MOM
(overly showy)
Okay, well we'd better get going,
don't want to miss the show.

LITTLE GIRL
Yay! Amber show!

The Mom rushes the Little Girl towards the door.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
(to Kevin)
Bye!

GIRL'S MOM
Don't talk to him, honey. He's a
stranger.

They leave. The Little Girl rubs the Amber doll against the window directly past Kevin as she goes.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Kevin trudges down the street with his only friend, the can of money. They pass a dive bar. Kevin enters.

INT. DIVE BAR - CONTINUOUS

Kevin enters the bar, and it matches his mood: Downbeat, dark, quiet. There are TVs on the walls but they are off.

Kevin sits at the bar with his can. A BARTENDER approaches.

BARTENDER
What can I getcha?

KEVIN
A beer.

The bartender walks off. Kevin looks in the can.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Uh, and a shot of whiskey. One for
you, too.

The Bartender gives Kevin the "hang ten" hands. In a moment, she returns with a beer and a shot for each of them. They cheers, then drink.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Thanks. I needed that.

BARTENDER
Yeah?

KEVIN
I, uh - I'm having a bad day.

BARTENDER
Looks like.

She gestures to his split lip, and hands him a napkin.

PATRON (O.S.)
Hey, Linds, it's almost seven!

The Bartender checks her watch.

BARTENDER
Shit! You're right.

She picks up a remote and turns all of the TVs on in quick succession. As she does, the MarsNow credits start on all of them. The scattered PATRONS cheer and whoop, perking up.

Kevin lowers his head, ruefully. The Bartender returns.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)
Sorry, what were you saying?

KEVIN
Nothing, I'm cool. Can I get another shot, though?

BARTENDER
For sure.

The Bartender distractedly pours while watching the credits.

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

Kevin drinks another shot. He's drunk. The rest of the bar, fuller now, is watching the show. Kevin tries not to.

INTERCUT: Bar/Show.

On TV, Amber is picking and eating tomatoes. She looks a little drawn and tired. She shakes her head at the taste.

AMBER
Mars tomatoes. Not great. I think I need to adjust the pH of the soil.

She picks up a little jar of something, and opens it to sniff. Suddenly, she doubles over in pain.

As she does, she turns her back to the camera nearest her, and we can see a spot of red spreading across the seat of her suit. Kevin sits upright.

The Bartender puts her hand over her mouth.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Adam!

The camera flips to Adam. When he hears Amber, he leaps up and runs, just like when she dislocated her shoulder.

The bar is silent as a tomb. Kevin stands. He grips his beer.

Adam reaches Amber and sees her on her knees. He gently picks her up and helps her through the hallway. She pauses in pain again. He guides her through to the medical room.

He helps her onto the table, then closes the curtain, blocking the camera's view for a moment.

We can hear Amber moaning and crying in pain.

The bar is still silent.

PATRON

I don't feel like we should be watching this.

PATRON #2

Shh. Shut up.

The first Patron grabs their coat and leaves the bar. Kevin watches them go.

Adam opens the curtain, revealing Amber in a gown and under a sheet, her feet in stirrups. She's breathing hard and crying.

Adam looks up under the sheet.

AMBER

Adam, Adam. Help!

ADAM

Shhh, shh. It's okay, love.

Adam goes to her for a moment, kisses her head. The camera zooms in to catch it.

ADAM (CONT'D)

You're in labor, Amber.

AMBER
It's too early.

ADAM
No, it's okay. You're going to be
okay. The baby's going to be okay.

She groans. Adam runs to her, looking under the sheet.

ADAM (CONT'D)
This baby is coming. Now.

AMBER
What? How?

ADAM
I don't know, but focus, love.
Breathe.

Suddenly, a picture-in-picture appears in the bottom right corner of the screen. In it is Amber's parents. We're watching them watch her give birth.

PATRON #2
Who is that?

KEVIN
Her parents.

BARTENDER
Her family.

PATRON #2
Whoa, really? Damn.

Amber's mother and father watch. The picture flips for a moment and we see them full-screen. Amber's scary dad looks very afraid. Kevin's never seen that before.

KEVIN
He's scared.

The picture flips back as Amber screams, one long primal sound. Amniotic fluid splashes the floor and Adam's feet as he lifts a tiny infant out from behind the sheet and onto Amber's chest. He joins her.

The baby is quiet.

ADAM
(quietly)
It's a girl.

AMBER
She's amazing. Wake up, baby girl.

Amber strokes the baby's face.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Adam?

Adam looks worried. Suddenly, the baby stirs and emits a little cough, then a long, loud wail.

Amber and Adam react, joyful. Her parents leap up in joy.

The bar cheers. The Bartender bursts into tears. Kevin can't help it, he's cheering too. People are hugging.

KEVIN

Drinks on me!

Another cheer. Kevin reaches for his can, but it's not there.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Fuck!

BARTENDER (O.S.)

Looking for this?

She holds up the can of money, shaking it.

KEVIN

I almost had a heart attack.

BARTENDER

People have slippery fingers around here. Watch yourself. Also, it's called a wallet. (Beat) And anyway, I've got this round.

She pours out a line of shots. People raise them in unison.

On screen, Adam is cutting the cord.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

To Amber and Adam's baby!

They all cheers. Kevin smiles, but the moment is fading for him. He takes the shot, then goes to leave.

Suddenly, outside a crack of thunder and flash of lightning as it starts to rain.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Guess you'll have to stick around.

She slides him another shot.

FLASHBACK:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Rain falls outside. Kids sit at desks and swing their legs. The solar system, Bill Clinton, and Al Gore, watch over them.

TEACHER

Each of you will have a summer pen pal. You'll exchange addresses and write one another letters.

A few drips of water land on Little Kevin's desk. He looks up at the ceiling and sees a water-stain face.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

I'm passing out different colored paper right now. You need to find the person with the same color as you. That's your pen pal.

The teacher drops an orange paper circle on Kevin's now-dry desk. He picks it up and looks at it, then puts it down.

Amber appears. She holds an orange circle. She smiles.

The light of the scene flickers, glitches. Suddenly, "Ghost Amber," thin and pale, appears behind Little Amber. She puts a skeletal hand on Little Amber's shoulder.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Kevin jerks awake on Voyager. He's in his underwear. He touches his aching head.

The door to Marcus's room is still closed.

The Bartender from the previous night tiptoes out of the bathroom in last night's clothes. She sees Kevin and smiles.

BARTENDER

Thanks for a fun night.

KEVIN

You too.

BARTENDER

See you sometime?

KEVIN

Yeah.

BARTENDER
Cool, you know where to find me.

KEVIN
Thanks.

She slides her shoes halfway on and leaves.

MARCUS (O.S.)
And just like that, the boy becomes
a man.

Kevin looks up. Marcus is standing in his bedroom doorway.

KEVIN
Hey.

MARCUS
Congratulations on your third ever
sexual partner. Slow down, ya slut!

Kevin laughs and touches his sore lip.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Sorry I hit you. But not sorry cuz
you were being a prick.

KEVIN
I know. Sorry, man.

MARCUS
I'm not over it yet.

Kevin nods. They exist in silence for a moment.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Amber had her baby.

KEVIN
I know, I saw it.

MARCUS
Pretty cool, right?

KEVIN
Yeah, it was.

MARCUS
You know what else is cool?

Marcus leaps up and goes into his bedroom, then drags a giant
box out of it. It's a big TV.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Ta-da!

KEVIN

Oh, man. Marcus. I kind of spent all our money last night.

MARCUS

I know. Luckily your friend Marcus has a credit card.

KEVIN

You do?

MARCUS

I do. Joke's on them, I'm never paying it off. Capitalism, baby!

Kevin laughs and lays back down. He coughs.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Oh no! The man is fading! We need Pedialyte and Sprite, stat!

KEVIN

Oh yeah, would you?

MARCUS

Nope! Still mad at you.

Marcus goes into his room and shuts the door. After a moment, loud punk rock music starts. Kevin rolls over into the futon.

FLASHBACK:

INT. LITTLE KEVIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Little Kevin looks at a new envelope, addressed as before. He opens the letter. His lips move as Little Amber says:

LITTLE AMBER (V.O.)

Dear Kevin. I landed a backflip yesterday which is a big deal.
(Beat) Dear Kevin. The food here is pretty good. I eat pancakes every day. (Beat) Dear Kevin. I learned how to ride a horse. (Beat) I can't wait for school to start again. I miss home. (Beat) How is your summer? PS: Rachel is my best friend now. PPS: You never write back. Are you dead? Ha ha.

Little Kevin tapes the letters on his wall, all in a row.

INT. KEVIN'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

KEVIN'S MOM tucks him in to bed. She looks up at all of the letters on the wall. A look of concern crosses her face.

KEVIN'S MOM
That's a lot of letters, Tater.

LITTLE KEVIN
Yeah, Amber wrote them to me.

KEVIN'S MOM
That's nice. Did you write to her?

LITTLE KEVIN
Um. No. Not yet.

KEVIN'S MOM
Summer's almost over. You have to do something, Tater.

A momentary glitch. The lights in the room flicker. Behind Kevin's mom's head is the papier-mâché solar system.

KEVIN'S MOM (CONT'D)
Pretty soon it'll be too late.

Kevin's mom flickers. She turns into "Ghost Amber." She bends over to kiss Little Kevin goodnight, her mouth a black hole.

Little Kevin flinches and tries to get away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kevin snaps to, on the couch. Marcus is assembling the new giant TV, sitting on the floor.

MARCUS
There he is!

KEVIN
I need to talk to Amber.

MARCUS
You already tried, dude. Remember?

KEVIN
Yeah, I know.

They sit for a minute. Marcus suddenly leaps up.

MARCUS

Oh shit!

KEVIN

What? Yeah?

MARCUS

Yeah, the writer I talked to.
Sorry. But like, she was saying she
was going to visit the place where
the prick guy is. The command
center or whatever. The place you
tried to go to.

KEVIN

Really?

MARCUS

Yeah. Those guys can talk to her,
right? Maybe you could go, too?

KEVIN

Marcus. You're brilliant.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Marcus isn't dumb at all. He's my
best and smartest friend.

Marcus goes to lift the old TV off its stand and hits himself
in the dick, then drops the TV on his foot. He yelps.

INT. SUV - DAY

Kevin, Marcus, PENNY (the Journalist), and two serious
HANDLERS sit quietly in the spacious backseats of a luxury
SUV. There's a divider between them and the front.

It's unusually dark; the windows are blacked out. Marcus
tries to press the button to roll a window down.

HANDLER #1

You can't do that, sir.

MARCUS

Okay. But advanced warning I get
car sick sometimes. Why are the
windows black?

HANDLER #2

Because the location of the command
center is top secret.

MARCUS

Cool. But my friend found it already.

HANDLER #1

No, he found the launch site. The command center is top secret.

Marcus tries the window again.

HANDLER #1 (CONT'D)

Sir.

MARCUS

What if I need to barf?

Handler #2 produces a small white airsick bag. Marcus takes it. It's branded with the "MarsNow" insignia.

Penny studies Kevin and intermittently takes notes in a notebook. Kevin eyes her warily.

PENNY

You nervous?

KEVIN

Um. Yeah. Yes.

Penny looks at him, her pen poised.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Yes, I am nervous.

She doesn't write it down. A moment passes.

PENNY

When's the last time you saw Amber?
Like, in person.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Amber in her sling laughs and smokes weed in slo-mo, from Kevin's POV. They kiss, he pulls her shirt off.

She slides under him and smiles at him from below, then closes her eyes. Through his eyes we see her face, moving up and down - they're having sex.

KEVIN

It was when she hurt her shoulder.
She came home for a couple of days.

PENNY

And that's when you broke up?

Her face is calm and beautiful, but distant.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. SUV - SAME (BACK TO SCENE)

Marcus snorts. Kevin shoots him a look. Penny takes it in.

PENNY

Oh my god. You never broke up.

Penny smiles at her scoop. She scribbles furiously. Kevin shoots Marcus a look. Marcus shrugs. The SUV hits a bump. Marcus throws up into the MarsNow barf bag.

INT. MARSNOW CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The control room is bustling. The Handlers lead Kevin, Marcus, and Penny in. The Host is leaning over a female EMPLOYEE, his hands on her shoulders. She smiles tightly.

MARCUS

(whispering)

Prick Alert, one o'clock.

Handler #1 taps the Host on the shoulder. He shoots the Handler a look, then sees his guests. He switches modes.

HOST

Hello. You must be the journalist,
and you two must be the Ex and the
Friend. (Beat, to Kevin) If only
I'd known you were trying to get to
us before. Would have made a great
B-story on those first few episodes
this season. Follow me.

They all nod assent and follow, Penny in the rear.

As she passes the female employee, she hands the woman her business card.

INT. MARSNOW CONTROL ROOM - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The Host is finishing a tour. Kevin's watching but not watching. He can't help but glance over at the giant central screen, where Amber and Adam are sleeping in a darkened room.

Beside them is a smaller bassinet-like bed for their baby.

HOST

And here's the nerve center. The Captain's chair. This is a direct line to Amber and Adam. I don't use it much. We want them to feel authentic. We want the audience to watch them without thinking about me watching them. Even though I am a pretty interesting person.

The Host waits for them to laugh as his dutiful employees would. They don't, because they don't have to. He turns away.

MARCUS

(fake coughing)

Prick.

The Host gives Marcus a sidelong glance. Marcus smiles.

Penny takes notes. On a far screen, there are three line graphs, formerly plateaued but high, now all on a steady decline. Penny gestures to it.

PENNY

What's that?

HOST

It's nothing. Some simple calculations.

The Host leans over to a nearby Engineer and whispers.

Suddenly, that monitor goes black. The Host smiles at Penny. She smiles back. When he turns his back, she frowns.

Marcus looks at her notes. She's written: Host = Prick. Marcus snorts. Penny hides her notebook from him.

HOST (CONT'D)

Try it out, Keith.

KEVIN

Kevin.

HOST

Yes. Hop in.

Kevin gets in the Captain's chair and swivels around. An Engineer approaches the Host, who turns away. There's a set of headphones to one side. Kevin puts the headphones on.

He turns a dial and hears three distinct, irregular heartbeats. It's like what he used to hear, only fainter, less rhythmic.

He looks up, concerned, but Penny watches the Engineer pit and takes notes. Marcus pops up beside him.

MARCUS
(Bad Scottish accent)
What's that Captain? Fire the
photon torpedoes? Aye!

Marcus reaches for a dial, and the Host grabs his wrist and yanks it away. Kevin scoops the headphones off.

HOST
(under his breath)
I am a prick. I'm a rich prick.
Stop horsing around or I will
remove you.

Penny turns. The Host smiles at her. Marcus rubs his wrist.

Suddenly, there's a series of soft, musical tones.

ENGINEER (O.S.)
(over the P.A.)
Morning sequence commencing.

HOST
Yes. Here we are. Time to wake up.

Amber stirs, turning slowly in her bed. She sits up. She coughs a few times, then looks at her palm. Something's not right.

KEVIN
Is she sick?

He's ignored. Amber looks at the baby. She picks her up, and the baby cries. She rocks the baby and hums softly.

AMBER
We're too far, aren't we little
one? Too far from home.

Kevin watches Amber rock the baby. She kisses the baby on the head. She hums.

HOST
The audience loves this. When we're
editing the show, we focus on the
human stuff. This stuff.

Adam stirs, too, and gets up. He's also a bit shaky, though not as much. He kisses Amber on the head. She folds into him.

AMBER
(to the baby)
I'm sorry you were born up here.

HOST
This we would put music over. Some thoughts are private. Right?

He looks to Penny. She smiles tightly, again. She scribbles.

HOST (CONT'D)
How about lunch?

The three look at each other. Hesitant.

HOST (CONT'D)
It will take them a few hours to get going. Don't worry.

They walk towards an exit, flanked by the handlers. The Host leans down to an Engineer and whispers something.

Kevin takes up the rear. He slows a half-step. As the doors to the room close behind him, he sees Amber coughing again.

She sits down on the bed, shakily. He tries to stay, but the doors close heavy behind him.

INT. MARSNOW CAFETERIA - LATER

Kevin, Marcus, and Penny sit with lunch trays. Marcus eats a giant piece of meatloaf voraciously, chugging milk between.

Kevin broods, arms crossed, in front of uneaten sandwich. Penny sips soup and watches Kevin.

MARCUS
This reminds me of high school.

Marcus surveys the room full of engineers.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
But with more nerds.

PENNY
(to Kevin)
What are you thinking about?

KEVIN
Nothing.

PENNY

Help me out. I got you here. You're going to talk to her. Give me something.

Kevin tries, but he just shakes his head.

PENNY (CONT'D)

Okay. Pretend I'm you. If I am, this is what I'm thinking, okay? I'm thinking that my ex – not even ex – girlfriend is on Mars and she's not coming back. I have maybe five minutes to say something to her. What am I going to say? I could say, "I miss you." I could say "Fuck you." I could say, "What's it like up there?" I say?

KEVIN

"Are you okay?"

PENNY

Yeah. Why?

KEVIN

Because I think she's not.

PENNY

Yes. Why?

KEVIN

Because...I've never seen her need someone like she seems to need him. Except once. In high school. When she needed me.

Marcus and Penny shoot each other a glance.

Suddenly, the handlers appear, as if out of nowhere. Penny and Kevin get up. Marcus shovels a last mouthful and follows.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

They follow the Handlers down a long corridor. Suddenly, the hallway lights flash red, and a long alarm tone sounds.

The Handlers start to run. They burst into the control room. Kevin, Marcus, and Penny run after them.

INT. MARSNOW CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is in chaos.

PENNY

Chaos is good for us. Stay with me.

MARCUS

Whoa. This is like Star Wars.

Marcus makes a Chewbacca-like noise. Penny and Kevin run down the side of the room. Marcus shoots a fake blaster, making sounds with his mouth. He follows.

They stop behind a crowd of engineers. Kevin looks up.

On screen, Adam is standing near a door labelled "Airlock Passage." He's looking into it.

HOST (O.S.)

(over the PA, loudly)

I want a closeup. On her!

Kevin turns to a nearby Engineer.

KEVIN

What's going on?

ENGINEER

She locked herself in the airlock
with his medical bag. And the kid.

The angle changes several times, looking for a good shot.

INT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - CONTINUOUS

POV of a Wall-E like Rover camera as it comes up beside Amber. She's inside the airlock passage with her baby in a bassinet and a black bag. She's holding gardening scissors.

Amber notices the camera and starts hitting and stabbing it, violently. The angle changes to a CCTV-like overhead camera as Amber destroys the Rover.

INT. MARSNOW CONTROL ROOM - SAME

KEVIN

(whispers)

Get it, Slammer. Fuck it up.

INTERCUT: CONTROL ROOM/LIVING SPACE.

Amber grunts and screams as she destroys the Rover. Adam's face is visible through the airlock window.

ADAM

Amber, be reasonable. We can figure this out together.

AMBER

There isn't enough! They did this on purpose. There's only a big enough dose for me and Deanne.

MARCUS

Deanne?

KEVIN

It's her mom's name.

MARCUS

Oh yeah, her mom.

Marcus makes a "big boob" gesture.

Amber looks up at the camera. Her face is crazed. She sticks her hand in her mouth and pulls out a tooth. She shows her black and bloody gums, and spits blood on the camera lens.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Whoa. Gnarly.

KEVIN

Isolation insanity.

Penny writes furiously.

ADAM (O.S.)

Amber, please. I can help you both. We can all take the medication.

AMBER

You're not sick yet! You're fine. Stay away. I trusted you. You made us sick.

ADAM (O.S.)

It's not me, darling. It's the radiation.

AMBER

Don't call me darling. You don't know me, at all.

AMBER (CONT'D)

I hate the word "darling."

KEVIN

She hates the word darling.

Adam tries to open the airlock. Amber stabs at the window with her gardening scissors. She starts crying. She sinks down and pulls the bassinet closer.

HOST (O.S.)
(over the PA)
Follow them. Stay with them.

Penny looks up from her scribbling for a moment. Marcus is watching, rapt. Kevin's nowhere to be found.

KEVIN (O.S.)
Hey, Slammer?

INT. MARSNOW CONTROL ROOM - SAME

Heads turn towards the Captain's chair, which the Host has ceded to Kevin. The look on the Host's face says he's smelling ratings. He makes a "Go on," gesture to Kevin.

Kevin wears headphones and leans forward to talk into a console microphone.

Penny and Marcus watch from across the room.

KEVIN
Uh, hi. I just, um, I just wanted to talk to you again. To tell you that I'm, uh, that I've always loved you. And I always will.

Amber looks up, as if to God. She smiles.

INTERCUT: CONTROL ROOM/LIVING SPACE.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
And I guess also that I understand. Why you left. That it must have been hard. Or maybe it wasn't, and that's okay, too. (Beat) This sucks. Even my goodbye sucks. I'm - I suck. I'm like a bacteria or something, growing on you. Or like, a mushroom. I'm a fucking shit-growing mushroom. You deserve happiness. You deserve Adam. You should let him help you. I want you to get better. That's it, I guess.

The Host tries to take the mic away from Kevin. He's disappointed with how this went.

HOST
Okay. You did it.

Kevin wrestles it back.

KEVIN
Actually, no. That's not it. The timing sucks but what I really want to say is: I'm breaking up with you. I'm - we're breaking up. We're broken up.

The Host grabs for the mic again.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Sorry Slammer I Love You Get Better Goodbye.

Adam looks around him, taking everything in.

ADAM
Who is talking? What's going on?

Kevin goes to say something, but the Host grabs the mic away.

HOST
Cut the mic feed.

KEVIN
No, someone should tell him.
Someone should explain.

ADAM
Hello? Who's there?

The camera flips to Amber, who still looks up, smiling as if she's been blessed. Her face is enormous, shiny, bloody.

Kevin stands looking up at the screen, a small black dwarf star orbiting her giant, bloody face like its the sun.

He looks at her, searching for a sign she heard. Her eyes flick open.

AMBER
We're all alone. There are stars on the ceiling. This is our chance.

Amber takes her baby in her arms and rocks.

The Host gestures to the Handlers, who surround Kevin and escort him towards the door. Penny and Marcus follow.

Kevin fights to stay as much as he can. He looks back at Amber on the screen. The orbit is broken. The doors close.

INT. SUV - LATER

Kevin, Marcus, and Penny ride in silence.

PENNY

I'm not going to write about your speech. If it makes you feel better.

KEVIN

Okay. (Beat) Why not?

PENNY

I think there's a lot of great stuff without it.

MARCUS

She's trying to tell you it sucked.

Penny shoots Marcus a look. He shrugs.

KEVIN

It did suck, didn't it?

PENNY

No. I mean, kind of. Did you think about what you were going to say ahead of time? At all?

KEVIN

Yeah. I did. But I chickened out.

PENNY

What were you going to say?

KEVIN

I was going to talk about our first kiss. I should have but all those people were there.

MARCUS

This is a good story. I'm in it.

PENNY

Tell me.

Kevin looks at Penny, then at Marcus.

FLASHBACK:

INT. THE KIVINENS HOUSE - NIGHT

Teenage Kevin walks down the hallway alone. He looks at family photos of Amber through the ages, including her at gymnastics camp with her arm around two other little girls.

We've seen these pictures. They were all used on the show.

Loud music blares from the other room. Teenage Kevin comes around the corner to a full-on high school party.

KEVIN (V.O.)

We grew up in Minnesota. The winter after Amber hurt herself it was minus-20 every day. We partied inside a lot.

A bunch of TEENS are hanging out in the living room, listening to music, drinking, and smoking weed. No Amber.

Teenage Kevin winds through them, ignored, and into -

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The tidy kitchen, with many Jesuses on display. Teenage Marcus is giggling with a TEENAGE GIRL, trying to heat hash on a knife over the hot stove element.

TEENAGE MARCUS

Hey man, is this how you do a hot knife?

Teenage Kevin shrugs. Teenage Marcus yelps and drops the hot knife. The girl giggles and jumps out of the way.

A sliding screen door opens from the freezing outside. Teenage Amber leans in, steam around her red, beautiful face.

Teenage Kevin just stares, his mouth open. Teenage Amber's head turns, she looks right at him.

TEENAGE AMBER

Hey. Kevin. Kevin Who Smells My Mom's Lotion.

TEENAGE MARCUS

Dude. Haha. What?

Teenage Marcus and the girl watch them like an audience. Teenage Kevin tries to ignore them.

TEENAGE KEVIN

Uh, yeah.

TEENAGE AMBER
Can you pass me that?

She points at a boiling kettle. It begins to whistle.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Oh, yeah. Sure.

Teenage Kevin grabs the kettle. Teenage Marcus is giving him goofy, thumbs up, "Get it" type gestures.

EXT. DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Teenage Kevin opens the deck door and comes outside. He closes the door and the winter swallows them. It's so quiet.

Teenage Amber, alone, is smoking a joint. She coughs. She's underdressed, and shivers as she puts the joint out.

She hugs herself tighter. Her arm is in a sling.

Teenage Kevin hands her the kettle, then takes his hoodie off to give it to her.

TEENAGE AMBER
Thanks. You're a gentleman.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Ha. Yeah. I try.

There's an awkward moment while they negotiate kettle and hoodie. She puts the oversized hoodie on over her bad shoulder and takes the kettle from him.

TEENAGE AMBER
Wanna see something cool?

She swings her arm back, smiling, and tosses boiling water into the frigid air. It instantly turns to steam.

Teenage Kevin is genuinely amazed.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Holy shit.

TEENAGE AMBER
Right? My dad showed me. It's my favorite thing about winter. They do it in Finland cuz there's nothing else to do but fish. And murder people.

TEENAGE KEVIN
That's magic.

TEENAGE AMBER
It's science, but yeah. Pretty
magic. *Tres magique*. (Beat) Sorry,
I'm really stoned.

TEENAGE KEVIN
Yeah. Me too.

KEVIN (V.O.)
This was it. Our first kiss.

Teenage Amber shivers for a moment in the cold. Teenage Kevin
leans in and envelops her in a tender bear hug. It works.

Their breaths rise. He kisses her, his eyes closed. It's
brief but sweet.

They look at each other, still wrapped in a bear hug.

TEENAGE KEVIN
You wanna go inside?

TEENAGE AMBER
Not yet.

Teenage Kevin kisses her again, a little better this time.
They breathe hot steam in each other's faces.

KEVIN (V.O.)
Not yet. Steam in winter. Magic.

A sudden THUD breaks the tension. It's Teenage Marcus,
pressing his mouth against the glass from inside.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. SUV - NIGHT (BACK TO SCENE)

A moment passes. Penny looks at Kevin. Tears shine in her
eyes. Kevin smiles and looks down. Marcus is asleep.

PENNY
It is a good story. (Beat) Is that
why you love her, that story?

KEVIN
I don't know why I love her. I just
do. Then, before, after. Because
she stayed outside with me? Maybe
that's all I needed.

PENNY

And her? Why did she love you?

KEVIN

Maybe she didn't. Maybe she just got used to me. I don't care.

PENNY

Well that is beautiful. And noble. And the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

Penny smiles. She doesn't mean it. Kevin smiles, too.

PENNY (CONT'D)

(re: Marcus)

Poor guy's tuckered out, huh?

They laugh again, quietly.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - LATER

Kevin and Marcus sit on the futon, eating mac and cheese. The MarsNow theme starts. Kevin sits back and exhales.

KEVIN

(to us)

I'll save us some time.

The scene fast forwards around Kevin, with Marcus speeding up. On TV, too. Finally, we see Amber barricaded.

The fast forwarding stops as Amber crouches in the airlock. The show has cut around her crazier moments.

MARCUS

Here it is, your primetime debut.

INT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - SAME

There's a cut to Adam on the other side of the door.

ADAM

Amber. I love you. I know we only met recently, but I feel like I've always loved you. And I always will. And I guess also that I understand. Why you're sad. That it must have been hard to leave earth. But you deserve happiness.

INTERCUT: LIVING ROOM/SHOW.

MARCUS
I've heard this before.

KEVIN
That's because I said all of this.
Only I said it worse.

MARCUS
Well you know, all reality shows
are really scripted. And editing is
it's own form of storytelling.

KEVIN
Shhh.

ADAM
We deserve each other. You should
let me help you. I want you to get
better. That's it.

After a moment, Amber opens the airlock passage door and Adam goes inside, picking her and the baby up.

He carries them into the bedroom and puts them into bed. He kisses Amber's head. Her face has been cleaned up, and she has clearly been calmed down. Maybe drugged.

AMBER
(weakly)
Thanks, Tater totter.

ADAM
What's that, darling?

AMBER
It's a nickname.

A heart-tugging score rises as the sanitized little family snuggles together, on Mars.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

Back on damp, dank Voyager, Kevin cries. Big, messy sobs. All the crying he ever needed to do, all at once.

Marcus, shocked, shifts closer. He puts his arm around him.

MARCUS
I can't believe that prick stole
your speech. Billionaires, man. I
wish we had some weed.

KEVIN

I'm just going to go to bed.

Kevin gets up. Marcus hugs his lower torso. There's a pinging sound. Marcus picks up his phone.

MARCUS

It's Penny. The writer. She says
"They're all pricks. I am crafting
an epic takedown."

KEVIN

You got her number?

Marcus leans back on the futon, a smug look on his face. Kevin smiles, in spite of himself. He starts away.

MARCUS

I love you, man. You okay?

KEVIN

Nah.

INT. DEN/BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Kevin wakes up in his bedroom, in bed. He lies there for a moment, staring at the ceiling.

KEVIN

(to us)

I haven't gotten up in 3 days
except for, you know, biological
reasons. But today I'm going to.

He sits up and yanks the blinds string. Sunlight floods in.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kevin walks out into the living room. The sun shines in on the futon, lighting it up.

Kevin goes to the thermometer. He turns it from 86 to 70.

There's a scraping sound at the door. Someone is shoving a package through the mail slot. It falls.

Kevin picks it up. It reads "To: Kevin Watkins." It has a MarsNow logo on it. Kevin opens the door and looks out.

EXT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kevin looks up and down the street. He sees a black-windowed car pull away. He runs after it briefly, then stops.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin settles in on Voyager and opens the package. It contains a bubble-wrapped thumb drive and a note.

FEMALE EMPLOYEE (V.O.)

Kevin. Amber wanted you to have this. I'm not supposed to send it to you, but fuck it. This place sucks so bad. They don't even give us health insurance. I hope this gives you some peace.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Kevin sits down at the laptop. He opens it up and inserts the thumb drive. He clicks the drive, which contains only one file. Kevin hovers the mouse over it, then clicks.

A video starts. It's the MarsNow pod bedroom. The shot is pointing at the bed. The frame adjusts, then Amber walks over and sits down. She's still pregnant. Healthy.

She sits there for a moment, gathering herself. Kevin waits.

INT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - SAME

Amber adjusts, so she's sitting comfortably. She sighs.

AMBER

Hi Kev. Tater totter. If you're getting this, that means things up here have gone south. The thing they told us, that we're not supposed to tell anyone, is that it's way more likely we'll die up here than live. This whole thing is just...never trust a prick, right? You know they're up here to extract minerals? It's so gross. It's not what I expected. But it's beautiful, too. I thought it would make me feel small, but it doesn't. I feel enormous. I feel huge. Haha, present state aside.

(MORE)

AMBER (CONT'D)

I keep dreaming that I fill up the entire sky. I get sad when I wake up.

As she continues, we see moments from her and Kevin's life together – their entire lives – in reverse:

-- She comes back in the house, backwards, and gets back into the tub with Kevin;

-- She and Kevin have sex on the couch, backwards, redressing and lying together smoking;

-- They cheers with her parents;

-- She sits with him, telling him she's going to Mars;

-- Back, back, back, faster and faster. They're teenagers in bed together, redressing and sitting awkwardly on the bed.

-- They kiss in the cold, the mist returning to the kettle;

-- Teenage Kevin watches as Amber un-hurts herself;

-- Kevin's a kid, taking her letters off the wall.

AMBER (CONT'D)

But what kind of person leaves someone to go to Mars forever and never come back? I guess I do. I just wanted to. The possibility of it. To think how much further I could go. I kept meaning to ask you what you thought, but I already knew. And I knew you'd never stop loving me unless I made you. Just like my dad wouldn't let me stop gymnastics unless I hurt myself. I think I kind of willed it to happen.

So Tater, I say this sincerely, and with my whole heart: Stop it. Hate me as much as you used to love me, and I hope that hatred makes you change everything. But I know you, and I know it won't. Because I don't hate you either. I love you right down in the deepest, warmest pit of myself. I think I was bad at showing you. But I did. Please, please: Go. Goodbye, Kev.

With this, an emotional Amber unzips the top of her MarsNow suit and pulls something from her interior pocket. She unfolds it. It's a ragged and faded orange paper circle.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

An orange paper circle on a desk. Another one is placed on top of it by a small child's hand.

INT. MARSNOW LIVING SPACE - DAY

Amber kisses the paper circle. She folds it back up and places it in her interior suit pocket. She zips up.

She takes a moment to sit and cry, looking into the camera.

AMBER

I practiced my speech. Could you tell?

She smiles, sadly. Wipes her nose, which comes away bloody.

AMBER (CONT'D)

Huh.

The feed cuts to black.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Kevin wipes tears from his eyes. He closes the laptop.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kevin thumbs across books on the bookshelf, finally pulling out his senior class yearbook. He turns it upside down.

From within, a well-preserved orange paper circle floats out. Kevin picks it up.

He tears the circle in half. Then again, and again, until it's in tiny pieces. He throws it up like confetti and lets it fall over his face. As soon as it all lands -

KEVIN

Shit.

He picks it up, piece by piece. He looks under Voyager.

INT. BASEMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

He returns from the kitchen with gloves and a garbage bag.

EXT. APARTMENT - SAME

Kevin tosses a pair of trash bags into the waiting cans.

He stands, silent for a moment in the sunlight, then looks up at the sky, shielding his eyes.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Kevin Watkins. Okay drug dealer,
terrible hockey player, dead guy in
the worst shows you barely watch. I
don't mean to shit on myself. I'm
okay. I loved Amber Kivinen.

He turns, walks around the house and out of sight.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Yeah, that Amber Kivinen, the one
who went to Mars. On that show,
that time. I stopped watching it.

A momentary glitch as -

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Two little feet touch. Thunder. Two little hands join. The
lights flicker out, then back on.

A papier-mâché solar system hangs from the ceiling. On Mars,
a tiny human face.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Reveal the scooped out half-hole where Kevin and Marcus
buried the dead plant.

In scorched soil a tiny, fledgling pot bud spouts with
conviction.

FADE OUT.