

EXTANT

by
Mickey Fisher

"Pilot - Reentry"

DRAFT/011914

TEASER

INT. WATTS HOME - STAIRWELL - DAY

A spaceship floats against the night sky. Seemingly full size. Until it passes the face of the boy who controls it remotely: ETHAN (8).

It's actually a model spaceship floating in front of an oculus window. Ethan hears a WOMAN RETCHING and stops.

INT. WATTS HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - DAY

MOLLY WATTS (late 30's), is on her knees in her pj's, throwing up in the toilet.

After a final violent heave, she drags herself up to the bathroom sink and splashes water over her face.

She studies her puffy, bloodshot eyes.

ETHAN (OS)

Mom?

She turns to see Ethan standing in the doorway, dressed up and holding the spaceship.

This is her son. His presence makes her uncomfortable.

MOLLY

I'm fine.

He stands there for a moment. Watching her.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

It's just my body readjusting. I'm ok, baby. I'll be right down.

He leaves the room. Molly slides a finger over the bathroom mirror and a news broadcast plays in embedded digital display in the mirror. A logo for the company called Verdisign glows in the corner.

The report is about a string of power outages, not in depth, nothing we'd really remember. Molly brushes her teeth.

Through the crack of the door, Ethan watches her.

EXT. WATTS HOME - BACK PORCH - DAY

A celebratory "cookout" spills over from inside the kitchen to the back porch and side yard.

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There are streamers that say "WELCOME HOME", lots of balloons, and a few FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS.

JOHN WATTS (late 30's, academic vibe) mans the glass-top grill and chats away with his GUY FRIENDS.

Ethan plays ball with some KIDS in the side yard.

Molly holds court with her GIRLFRIENDS, including SAM (late 30's) and her next door neighbor, CASS (40's). Cass's bored teenager, BRYNN, sits next to her. Absorbed in her phone.

CASS

I can't imagine. I'm away from Bert and the kids for two days, it's like...

MOLLY

It's tough.

CASS

I don't know how you did it.

MOLLY

A lot of V-chrons.

CASS

And no alcohol?

MOLLY

I haven't had a drink in thirteen months.

CASS

That's like the saddest story I've ever heard! We have to remedy that right now.

MOLLY

Can't.

CASS

No can'ts, we're doing shots.

MOLLY

Take it up with my doctor.

CASS

(to Sam)
Doctor, please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAM
Absolutely not. Not til her tests
come back.

Molly glances over and catches John watching her. He gives her a wink and she smiles at him.

Outside, commotion breaks out. Molly looks through a window and sees Ethan shove a small kid named JOSH.

EXT. WATTS HOME - SIDE YARD - DAY

John and Molly rush to where Ethan stands over Josh - pinning him to the ground. Stronger than he looks. Cass and BERT (her husband) rush to Josh, their son. John grabs Ethan.

JOHN
Ethan! What are you doing?

ETHAN
He wouldn't give me the ball.

JOHN
And, your solution was to push him?

Ethan stares at the ground.

JOHN (CONT'D)
What do you say? Ethan.

Ethan looks at Josh and holds out the ball.

ETHAN
I'm sorry.

Josh takes the ball and the standoff eases.

JOHN
If you do it again, that's it,
that's the end of the party for
you. Understand?

Ethan nods. John walks away with Bert and Cass.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry.

Molly looks back at the kids. Ethan stares at her and Molly forces a small smile for him. He returns the smile and goes back to playing.

INT. WATTS HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

John puts the dishes away in a dishwasher. Molly brings in an armload.

JOHN
You've gotta be exhausted, go on up.

MOLLY
I can take out the trash.

JOHN
Mol...

MOLLY
I gotta get back to the routine.

She's already out the back door with a bag.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Molly rounds the corner with the garbage and is startled to find a MAN standing in the shadows in the distance. On seeing her, he turns casually and walks the other way.

She's unnerved but she holds her ground and tosses the trash into a metal bin. She slides her finger over the bin and an LED readout begins to analyze and process the trash.

The Verdisign logo is seen on the bin.

Molly watches the Man reach the other end of the alley before she turns back to the house.

INT. WATTS HOME - ETHAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

There's a moon lamp on the night table, next to a small, gray box. John tucks a sleepy-eyed Ethan in his bed.

ETHAN
I was angry.

JOHN
Is that what you're supposed to do when you get angry? Hurt someone?

ETHAN
No.

JOHN
How do you think you would have felt if you'd really hurt Josh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ETHAN

Bad.

JOHN

I sure hope so.

ETHAN

Mom's mad at me.

JOHN

She's not mad.

ETHAN

It's different, now. With her.

JOHN

Your mom has to get used to being back home. She was up there a long time, buddy. All by herself. It's going to take awhile for everything to feel normal, again. But, it will. I promise.

ETHAN

Ok.

JOHN

Get a good night's sleep, we have a big day tomorrow.

ETHAN

I think I need a flip.

JOHN

Yeah? Let me see.

Ethan rolls over on his side. John raises Ethan's shirt and reveals a SMALL PANEL on the small of his back.

John slides a finger across the panel. It opens up and John pops out a small cylinder with a blinking orange light.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You're right.

John opens the gray box where there are four similar cylinders, all glowing solid green. He swaps the orange one out for one of the green and snaps it back in the panel.

He slides his finger again and the panel closes.

JOHN (CONT'D)

All set. I love you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ETHAN

I love you, too. Will you leave my
night light on?

JOHN

Sure.

John heads to the door. On the way out, he touches a control panel by the door.

The lights go out and a glowing constellation appears on the ceiling, stars blinking peacefully in the dark.

INT. WATTS HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Molly is in the shower. John enters the bathroom and takes off his clothes. He opens the door and joins her.

She puts her arms around him. For awhile, they cling to each other under the water. John tries to escalate things - Molly stays a beat behind. Tentative, before reciprocating.

INT. WATTS HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

John is fast asleep. Molly stares at the ceiling.

Quietly, she slips out of bed and out of the room.

INT. WATTS HOME - ETHAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Molly looks in on Ethan, asleep in his starfield. She steps in and stares at the ceiling. The motion triggers an idea.

INT. WATTS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Molly moves through the darkness, to a bookcase.

She scans her eyes over the rows of books until she finds a leather bound, official looking binder. A keepsake.

INT. WATTS HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Molly sits alone at the table and opens the folder. One side is an ornate certificate of completion for the ISEA Emergents Leadership Program.

The other side is a keepsake photograph of the program's graduating scientists. The brightest and best. An early 20's version of Molly stands in the crowd. Beaming.

Molly studies her image. Then, her eyes drift across the group. Past anonymous faces. They come to rest on the face of a handsome, smiling young man named MARCUS RAWLINS.

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He's frozen in time, but if you look closely, you can see and hear the trees in the background sway in the breeze. A photography trend when this was taken. A hypnotic effect.

JOHN (OS)
What brought this on?

Molly seems jolted out of a trance. She whips around to see John standing behind her. He slides into a seat.

MOLLY
I had a dream.

JOHN
Do you dream about him much?

MOLLY
Less as I get older.

JOHN
Me, too.

MOLLY
You didn't know him that well.

JOHN
No, but I still think about him.
Every now and then.

MOLLY
What do you think about?

JOHN
How if he were still alive, there
would be no us. No Ethan. We may
have never even met.

Molly thinks it over for a moment.

MOLLY
I think we always end up where
we're supposed to.

He takes her hands in his and covers them in kisses.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

John and Ethan sit facing each other as the car drives itself. Music plays over the sound system.

Ethan plays a portable video game as John studies a presentation about Ethan on a tablet device. We see a couple of schematics and early sketches.

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John brims with pride.

FEMALE VOICE (VO)
Approaching Matsumo Corp. Which
entrance do you prefer?

JOHN
South entrance, please.

EXT. MATSUMO TOWER - DAY

The car turns into the gated entrance of a modern, high tech corporate campus.

INT. MATSUMO TOWER - DAY

John and Ethan wait in an open, airy lobby. CORPORATE DRONES (people) swirl about, glued to their communication devices.

He bends down to tie Ethan's shoe.

JOHN
Listen, buddy...hey...

He pulls the video game from Ethan to get his attention.

JOHN (CONT'D)
When I talk about you today, I'm
going to talk a bit about how you
were originally created for the
program. It doesn't mean I don't
see you as real.

ETHAN
I'm not.

JOHN
Yes, you are. You exist, just like
me. Just like your...

ETHAN
Jubes!

Ethan breaks into a dead run and plows into the open arms of JULIE GELINEAU (late 20's). Normally, Julie's dressed a bit more bohemian, but today she's in corporate disguise. And, clearly head over heels for the little guy in her arms.

JULIE
Hey!

He holds out his hand and they go through a quick, but complicated handshake.

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JULIE (CONT'D)

Look at you.

JOHN

He's been practicing.

JULIE

Are you nervous?

JOHN

No. Walk in the park.

JULIE

Exactly.

JOHN

No pressure.

JULIE

None whatsoever. Just ten years of work down the drain if you choke.

JOHN

Hey...

JULIE

But, you're not gonna choke.

ETHAN

How could he choke, he's not even eating anything.

JULIE

Figure of speech, rabbit.

ETHAN

I wanna jump.

Ethan grabs John's hand. Then Julie's. They know what this means. As they walk down a nearby hallway...

JULIE

All right, here we go. One-two-three-up...

They swing his body up in the air as they go.

JULIE (CONT'D)

One-two-three-up...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Molly sits on the examining table in Sam's office. She's tense and fidgety. She passes the time by looking at Sam's accreditations on the walls. Diplomas and certifications from the I.S.E.A.

Sam enters in her lab coat, carrying a folder and small plastic case. Inside is a thin, clear, film-like monitoring device (Listerine breath pad thin) called a TETHER that Molly slips into the roof of her mouth.

Sam just sits there for a few moments. Stunned.

SAM

I don't even know where to begin.
You were on the Seraphim Station
for thirteen months.

MOLLY

Yes.

SAM

There was never anyone else on
board?

MOLLY

That's why they call it a solo
mission.

SAM

There was no international crew
that docked for an emergency,
something we may not have heard
about here? Some...

Sam keeps talking, but Molly drifts off and fixates on a tiny dark spot on the wall.

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT

The vast blackness of space, dotted with a seemingly infinite number of shimmering stars.

A silver cylindrical object emerges from the backdrop. A probe, hurtling this way. Rotating. We see how tiny it is when it finally approaches:

THE ISEA SERAPHIM STATION, built for deep space research and scientific study. Weathered and well worn. As the probe approaches, it slows and a robotic arm extends from the Seraphim to pluck it from the void.

INT. SERAPHIM SPACE STATION - ZERO G AIRLOCK - NIGHT

Molly (IN PROTECTIVE GEAR similar to a space Hazmat suit) uses a pair of gloves with sensors attached to control the arm and guide the probe into the Seraph - avatars on a nearby display give her the visual. She floats effortlessly.

The probe slides down a tube into the airlock and Molly gives herself a push to float nearer to it. It opens to reveal a clear cylinder inside, filled with soil. Molly watches through her visor as the cylinder is sprayed with steam.

INT. SERAPHIM SPACE STATION - TERRARIUM - NIGHT

Molly (back in a gravity environment) digs a trowel into the soil inside the cylinder and gently digs up a worm. Dead.

MOLLY

Damn it.

A synthesized voice cuts in. This is BEN, the station's control system.

BEN (VO)

Five dollars for the swear jar.

MOLLY

Put it on my tab. Listen, none of these guys made it back alive. Let's run the probe's data deck to see if there are any irregularities in the samples. Maybe I contaminated them somehow before they left.

BEN (VO)

I find that unlikely.

MOLLY

Aren't you sweet.

She works in silence, tending to other creepy crawlies in rows of plexiglass bins of varying sizes.

BEN (VO)

Molly.

MOLLY

Go ahead.

BEN (VO)

You have an incoming v-chron. Would you like to view it now?

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MOLLY

Sure. Bay 1, please.

She approaches a holographic computer screen and swipes her fingers over the sensors.

The screen comes to life with an image of John and Ethan. A pre-recorded video missive cast into space for her.

JOHN

There's your mom, say hello.

ETHAN

Hello.

JOHN

You want to tell her? Go ahead.

ETHAN

I got accepted into school.

Molly smiles. One of the best parts of her day.

JOHN

I had my last meeting with the principal this morning. We're going to wait for you to get back for orienta--

The screen blips a couple of times, then goes black.

MOLLY

Ben?

BEN (VO)

I'm detecting interference from a solar flare. Shall I attempt to restart after it passes?

MOLLY

Sure.

She goes back to the trowel.

The lights blink, and the station loses power. A few moments later, emergency lights flicker on.

Molly stops working and looks around.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Ben?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

No answer. She goes to a wall panel of controls and brings up a holographic screen.

She enters a series of commands to reboot the B.E.N. system. Nothing happens. Molly looks around - nothing she can do here. She walks over to a nearby ladder and begins to climb.

INT. SERAPHIM SPACE STATION - VERTICAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Molly climbs the ladder - a task that gets easier the higher she goes - until she starts to float upwards on her own into:

INT. SERAPH SPACE STATIONIM - ZERO G AIRLOCK CONNECT - NIGHT

The corridor that connects the vertical to the airlock. Fully weightless by now, Molly floats towards a control panel near the airlock door. A door with a small portal window.

As she tries to reboot the system, a shadow passes over her - something moved on the other side of the portal. Molly freezes - what the fuck. That didn't just happen.

She turns her head to look - the portal's clear. She takes a beat to ponder, then pushes off gently to float that way. Just as she gets close to the portal - there it is again.

Panicked, she pulls her way back to the control panel and punches in a command for EMERGENCY LOCKDOWN - ALL BAY DOORS.

She hears the satisfying HISS of the airlocks and gets her breath. Steels herself to try it again. She pushes off gently and floats that way. Gets closer. Closer. Condensation covers the portal window from the other side.

She gets a little closer - close enough to look through it.

And a FIGURE appears on the other side - blurry through the condensation. Molly is in shock - there's someone else here, inches away, on the other side of the glass.

He raises his head slowly and she discovers that it is MARCUS RAWLINS, the young man from her keepsake folder.

Molly stares at the portal, stunned.

Marcus, on the other side, puts his fingers up to the glass. Molly studies his fingertips.

She floats a tiny bit to bring her face closer. Her feet inches off the floor.

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He brings his face closer and exhales on the glass, causing a cloud of condensation. He takes a finger and begins to spell out something.

Molly watches the words form on the glass. The message says, "HELP ME".

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Molly snaps back to Sam, who is staring at her.

SAM

Molly. Did you hear what I said?

She shakes her head, yes.

MOLLY

I'm pregnant.

END TEASER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT 1

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Molly looks over the report.

MOLLY

I've been in space for thirteen months. It's not possible.

SAM

I ran every sample from your tether, twice. Are you sure there was no one else?

MOLLY

Yes. And, even if there was, you know my situation.

SAM

Were you still taking the fertility drugs?

MOLLY

I stopped a long time ago, even before Ethan.

SAM

I have to ask every rational question for the report.

MOLLY

You can't put this in.

SAM

Molly, these go straight to the director. I can't...

MOLLY

Just hold onto it, just for...

SAM

It's my job.

MOLLY

And, I'm your friend. Sam, I'm not asking you to lie, I'm just asking for some time.

SAM

We should be running tests on you right now.

(CONTINUED)

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MOLLY

That's exactly what I'm afraid of. If the agency finds out I'll end up in quarantine. Sam, I just got home to my family. Please. All I'm asking you to do is delay it for a day or two. I need some answers before I tell John.

Sam thinks it over.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

John stands on a stage in front of the board of Matsumo Corp, various BUSINESS and ACADEMIC types in the dark.

His powerpoint style presentation appears and disappears in the air around him, images that correspond to his speech.

JOHN

The Humanichs Project is not about creating a more lifelike robot. With all the advances in robotic engineering, artificial intelligence, synthetic tissues and organs, we've been able to create a human looking android for decades. But, we don't. Why not? What gave us pause, just when we were standing on that precipice?

Julie holds Ethan's hand in the wings. Watching.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's because for all their lifelike qualities, we know, deep down, that robots are not really human. A Med-Assist bot has a hundred per cent accuracy when administering a vaccine, but it can't comfort a child who's afraid of the needle. A Q-Serv android can process your bank deposit, but it can't share your joy when it helps you buy your first home. It turns out the true uncanny valley isn't visual at all. It's the valley of genuine connection. Humanichs has sought to bridge that divide with an artificial intelligence designed from the very beginning to seek connection.

(MORE)

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JOHN (CONT'D)

Programmed not by 1's and 0's that we type into interfaces, but by a day to day human experience. Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to my son. Ethan.

JULIE

Get em, Rabbit.

Julie squeezes Ethan's shoulders and sends him from backstage. He hops up on a stool near John and gives a small, shy wave.

There is some chuckling from the board and warm waves back to him. John ruffles his hair, the proud papa.

EXT. THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE EXPLORATION AGENCY - DAY

A state of the art admin building glistens in the sun.

INT. ISEA HALLWAY - DAY

Molly stares at a framed photo of HARMON COULTER (late 30's/early 40's, in a flight suit) hanging on the wall among other similar photos.

Deputy Director STEPHEN KERN approaches. Early 40's, military haircut and countenance. Plain dark suit.

KERN

Doctor Watts. Stephen Kern.

MOLLY

The new Deputy Director.

KERN

That would be me.

He notices she was looking at the picture of Coulter.

KERN (CONT'D)

He passed away before I came on board. Were you close?

MOLLY

We were friends, yes.

KERN

Tragic situation.

He fingerprint scans their way through a nearby door.

INT. ISEA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Kern and Molly enter and take seats at a large table. He scans through a file on a tablet type device.

KERN

I have to be honest. I spent the whole weekend preparing to grill you on these logs but your work is incredibly thorough. There's very little left to the imagination.

MOLLY

That's sort of the mixed blessing of a solo mission. The good news is, you have plenty of time for data entry. The bad news is...

BOTH

You have plenty of time for data entry.

KERN

There was one thing...

His phone buzzes. He checks it out.

KERN (CONT'D)

Director Sparks, he'll be down in a moment. There was an incident...

MOLLY

The gap.

KERN

The gap, yes.

MOLLY

Well, it's easily explained...

KERN

If you don't mind, we'll wait for the director for that. He has questions.

Kern flips through the logs while Molly waits.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

SEGERS, a banker type in his fifties, questions John.

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SEGERS

There's something I'm sure everyone in this room is curious about, but we're all either too polite or too embarrassed to ask.

JOHN

The robot uprising. Am I right?

More chuckles.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What's to stop the Humanichs from overthrowing us one day and enslaving their human overlords? Is that the question?

He looks at Ethan.

JOHN (CONT'D)

They're on to you, buddy.

Ethan shrugs. More laughter.

JOHN (CONT'D)

All joking aside, there is a serious answer. And, that answer is...absolutely nothing.

The laughter dies down.

SEGERS

How then would an owner control and manage their behavior?

JOHN

For starters, they wouldn't own them, it's not a master-slave relationship. My partners and I believe...

He looks to Julie, who gives him a wink.

JOHN (CONT'D)

...if we want machines to be more human, we have to give them the human experience. They have to learn like children learn. The Humanichs brain processes actions and consequences. It adapts. It learns right from wrong and good from bad, the same way we all did. For the most part.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SEGRS

What do you mean, for the most part?

AUDIENCE MEMBERS stare at Ethan. Some not so kindly,

JOHN

There are always outside forces that are beyond a parent's control. There's no guarantee with any human child, because in the end, they're free to choose their own path. I want to give Humanichs what I've given Ethan.

SEGRS

You mean...

JOHN

Free will.

MS. DODD, a scholarly type, interjects.

MS. DODD

Doctor Watts, my name is Femi Dodd. I chair a number of programs for Mr. Matsumo. What is the protocol in the event your experiment fails? Is there an emergency plan for their shutdown?

JOHN

To preserve their power? Absolutely. It's called "Interlude Mode."

(to Ethan)

You mind?

Ethan shakes his head "no" and John gives his head a tap. Ethan's eyes open wide and stay open - his body is completely still. He's in a version of "sleep mode", like your laptop.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Interlude can be automatic or manual. And, no, this function is *not* available for human children. Many parents have asked.

A genuine wave of laughter from the parents in the audience.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Ethan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Ethan instantly comes out of Interlude.

MS. DODD

Excuse me, Doctor Watts. I'm sorry. I didn't mean a resting mode. I meant for their termination.

JOHN

To kill them?

MS. DODD

That wording is a bit inelegant, but yes.

JOHN

Do you have a child?

MS. DODD

I have a daughter.

JOHN

Do you have a plan to kill her?

MS. DODD

My daughter's a human being.

JOHN

I don't understand the difference.

MS. DODD

Well, for starters, she has a soul.

JOHN

With all due respect, Ms. Dodd, there's no such thing as a soul.

There's a bit of audible reaction from the dark. Ethan takes it all in, watching his dad at work.

JOHN (CONT'D)

What you call a soul I call the cumulative effect of a lifetime of experience. Simple information, traveling in the neuropathways in your daughter's brain. In that respect, there is no difference.

MS. DODD

I think plenty of people would disagree.

(CONTINUED)

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JOHN

Disagree with what? With science?
With basic human physiology?

MS. DODD

Believe it or not, Doctor Watts,
there are still people in the world
who believe there is more to us
than can be explained by science.

John looks to Julie in the wings. She's telling him, "please don't do this" with her eyes. John can't help himself.

JOHN

Those people are idiots.

SEGERS

Doctor Watts.

MS. DODD

I'm one of those idiots.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

MS. DODD

I accept your apology.

JOHN

No, I mean I'm sorry you're one of
those idiots.

SEGERS

That's enough.

MS. DODD

How dare you?

JOHN

How dare you ask me if I have a
contingency plan to murder my son?

SEGERS

You're asking us for funding that
could unleash thousands, maybe
millions of these Humanichs on the
world. It's a perfectly valid
question. What sort of controls or
restrictions would you put in place
to ensure that they behave
properly?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOHN

And, I gave you my answer, Mr. Segers. Absolutely none.

Chaos erupts.

John grins and bears the awkwardness. He looks to Ethan and tries to manage a smile.

INT. ISEA CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Molly and Kern have been joined by DIRECTOR ALVIN SPARKS, Same look as Kern but a bit older and hardened by life.

MOLLY

The gap was caused by activity from a solar flare. I was watching a v-chron from my family when it hit. The station's power went out completely for a few moments. Then, the emergency backup kicked in. The security and life support systems were back online almost immediately, but the communication system stayed down for approximately thirteen hours. As it says in the log, I spent most of the night trying to get it up and running again, but I was unsuccessful. I fell asleep for three hours, and when I woke up, everything was back to normal.

SPARKS

So, for ten straight hours, you were performing maintenance work on Ben.

MOLLY

That is correct.

SPARKS

During that time, did anything unusual occur?

MOLLY

Unusual.

SPARKS

Yes. Perhaps related to the solar flare. Anything you forgot to put in the logs but have since recalled?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Molly hesitates just a moment.

MOLLY

Nothing. It's all in the logbook.

KERN

There's one more thing I'm not clear on. The security system records each quadrant of the Seraphim with a bank of surveillance cameras. Presumably, they were up and running again as soon as the emergency power kicked on, but that footage has been deleted from the system's memory.

MOLLY

I'm afraid that's a classic case of H.O.E., sir.

KERN

I'm not familiar with that code.

SPARKS

(smiling)

Human operator error.

MOLLY

There had been a couple of instances of interference in the months prior, but not to this level. Each time before, I'd made a duplicate copy of the record, just in case. I went to do the same thing this time, but instead I accidentally deleted the footage instead of duplicating it. The only record that exists of that time is the manual record I entered in the log. I take full responsibility for that error.

SPARKS

Sounds like we didn't miss much.

MOLLY

Just a lot of me, swearing at inanimate objects.

Sparks smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SPARKS

I'm still waiting on your medical examinations. Once I'm able to review them and you finish a series of psychiatric evaluations, we'll be able to put this one in the books.

MOLLY

Psychiatric evaluations?

SPARKS

There's been a change in agency policy, after what happened to Doctor Coulter last year.

MOLLY

I wasn't aware of that change.

SPARKS

I'm making you aware, now. Do you have any objection?

MOLLY

No. Not at all.

SPARKS

Excellent.

Molly fakes a satisfied smile.

SPARKS (CONT'D)

Well. Now, that the inquisition is over, allow me to say that it's a pleasure to have you back. You were missed.

MOLLY

I appreciate that.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - DAY

A highly sterilized environment. Dark, with lots of shiny surfaces. LED readouts and monitors on the wall, and some holographic floating displays.

A HALF-DOZEN MEDICAL TECHS in scrubs, masks and gloves shuffle about, checking the monitors and adjusting levels.

In the center of the room, on a dark slab of an examining table, is a long, rectangular mass of translucent goo, like a glob of yellow tinted gelatin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suspended in the middle of this goo is a NAKED MAN.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM ABOVE OPERATING THEATER - DAY

A door to the room slides open and Sparks enters. A TECH keeps watch on a nearby display.

SPARKS

Has he had enough time?

TECH

Yes, sir.

Sparks nods to below. The tech calls in the command.

TECH (CONT'D)

Begin extraction of Mr. Matsumo.

INT. OPERATING THEATER - DAY

The Medical Techs surround the mass of goo and begin to dig their hands into it, scooping it away to dig out the body buried underneath. Slowly, they reveal a sleeping Japanese man, in his mid to late 40's.

Sparks watches them clear the goo away, first the big chunks with their hands, then the film with a spray wand.

The goo is collected and put into plastic containers.

A tube is inserted in the man's throat and a brown liquid is extracted. A Med Tech places a small sensor near his heart, and it pulses. The man coughs up a bit of the brown goo and regains consciousness.

He opens his eyes and takes in the room.

This is KINJI MATSUMO.

END ACT 1

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT 2

INT. WATTS HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

John and Ethan sit in the living room, putting together an elaborate model of a spaceship. As each piece clicks into place, a new graphic appears.

Ethan puts in a piece. John watches him, and then snaps in a piece himself.

JOHN

What do you think about what happened today?

ETHAN

I don't understand the question.

JOHN

How did the presentation make you feel?

ETHAN

Sad.

JOHN

In what way?

ETHAN

That they wouldn't listen to you.

JOHN

You understand that it was wrong for me to call them idiots, right? I shouldn't have done that.

ETHAN

It did seem like a strange way to ask them for money.

John laughs, which causes Ethan to laugh.

JOHN

You're right. There's an old saying. It's easier to catch a fly with honey than with vinegar. Does that make sense?

ETHAN

Today was vinegar.

JOHN

Exactly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door opens and Molly enters.

She gives him a kiss.

JOHN (CONT'D)
How'd it go?

MOLLY
Over, thank God. How about you?

JOHN
Well...not good.

MOLLY
What happened?

JOHN
I kind of knew before I left the
room.

MOLLY
That bad?

JOHN
Nobody actually used the words "pry
it from our cold, dead hands", but
that was basically the gist.

MOLLY
I'm so sorry.

JOHN
We're going to circle the wagons
with the team tomorrow and figure
out our next step.

MOLLY
Are you all right?

JOHN
I'm good. I have a lot of faith in
this little guy.

Molly gives Ethan a hug and a kiss on the head.

MOLLY
How was your day?

ETHAN
We got a model ship.

MOLLY
Ooh, can I help?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ETHAN

Sure.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Sparks waits for Matsumo in a small, sterile room with a large spread of fruit on the table.

Matsumo enters in a robe, looking freshly showered. He makes a beeline for the fruit and begins to devour it.

SPARKS

We found something of an anomaly on the Seraphim.

MATSUMO

An anomaly.

SPARKS

Another solar flare knocked out the communications system.

MATSUMO

Just like Coulter.

SPARKS

Yes. But, unlike Coulter, we're missing security camera footage for the thirteen hours that followed.

MATSUMO

That seems like an unlikely coincidence.

SPARKS

Even more so if you know the astronaut involved. Molly Watts. She claims she accidentally deleted it.

MATSUMO

You don't believe her?

SPARKS

No.

MATSUMO

Why not?

SPARKS

Because, she doesn't make those kinds of mistakes. It could be nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATSUMO

But, it could be everything.
You'll stay close?

SPARKS

That's the other thing I wanted to
mention. Her husband John gave a
presentation to your board,
today...

INT. WATTS HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The model ship is nearly complete. Molly and Ethan polish
off a pizza they had delivered. Music plays over the house
audio system. Family night at home.

Molly takes a piece and looks for a place for it. Ethan
watches her, closely.

ETHAN

Your hair looks pretty.

MOLLY

Thank you.

She gives him a kiss on the head.

Ethan looks at the model, but he smiles to himself, pleased
at how this exchange went. Ethan takes a piece and snaps it
into place. Molly takes hers and snaps it into place.

John reenters with some drinks. Ethan holds out the piece.

JOHN

This is the last one. Are you
sure?

MOLLY

It's all yours.

John puts it into place and the ship comes to life. It
lights up and the sounds of liftoff are heard. The model
floats up off the table and hovers in the air.

JOHN

That is too cool.

An automated female voice cuts through the music. This
belongs to GINA, the voice of the home's Verdisign system.

(*A word about The Verdisign System: this is the operating
system and bits of hardware that nearly every family in the
world uses to run their daily lives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It is vertically integrated into their homes, their cars, their phones and to a small extent, their bodies.)

GINA (VO)

John you have an incoming call from
Matsumo Corp.

The family freezes. John looks to Molly, curious. Something's up.

INT. MATSUMO TOWER - TOP FLOOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

John steps out into an office as zen as any corporate office could possibly be. Minimal furniture. Wall screens run stock tickers and digital art of Japanese gardens.

Matsumo appears, dressed for his business day.

MATSUMO

Doctor Watts, Kinji Matsumo. Thank
you for coming.

JOHN

Please, it's an honor.

MATSUMO

The honor is all mine.

He offers his hand and a warm smile that puts John at ease as they shake.

INT. WATTS HOME - ETHAN'S ROOM - DAY

Molly rounds a corner to find Ethan in his room facing a mirror. Practicing different expressions of emotion with his face, in a calm, measured way. Molly watches for a moment before she knocks on the door.

MOLLY

I have an important mission to
complete, and I think you're just
the guy to help me.

ETHAN

What kind of mission?

MOLLY

It's a search.

ETHAN

A search for what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOLLY

Ice cream.

INT. MATSUMO TOWER - EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

John and Matsumo have tea at a table near a floor to ceiling window. The view of the city is spectacular.

Floating way back in the distance is a weather blimp.

JOHN

I realized early on that if we wanted to give him the human experience, he needed to be part of a family unit. To be raised in a home. So, I brought him into ours. That's when I saw the true potential of Humanichs.

MATSUMO

What did you envision?

JOHN

My wife and I struggled for years with infertility. Eventually we were told we would never be able to have a child. And, not to get too personal with you, but that can have a profound effect on a person. And a marriage. As happy as we were, there was a void. When Ethan arrived, he filled that void.

MATSUMO

So, you see Humanichs as a cure for childless couples.

JOHN

I think that's just the beginning. It starts with giving each Humanich child a guardian family.

MATSUMO

As the guardians age, what happens to the Humanichs?

JOHN

Ideally, every year, their physical body would be upgraded to a slightly more mature model, until they're a fully grown adult.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATSUMO

And, their brain, for lack of a better term is...

JOHN

Transplanted into the new body. All of the information exists on a series of backups on the parent's Verdesign servers. All of their memories, their personality, all of that will continue to evolve in the same way.

MATSUMO

I'm sure you understand that the future you're proposing is fraught with great moral complications.

JOHN

Yes, but it's also a future fraught with great possibilities.

MATSUMO

I agree. Unfortunately, the long term prospects of your vision are a bit too murky for Matsumo Corp to invest in at this time.

JOHN

Oh.

MATSUMO

I'm afraid the board's decision will have to stand.

John is heartbroken, but keeps his professional composure.

MATSUMO (CONT'D)

As a corporation, we have certain responsibilities to our shareholders.

JOHN

Of course, I fully understand. I just appreciate your time.

MATSUMO

However, as a private citizen...say, as a silent partner...I would not be bound by those same responsibilities.

Matsumo smiles. John puts it together.

EXT. PARK - NEAR ICE CREAM STAND - DAY

Molly and Ethan sit on the bench near a small ice cream stand. Both with oversized cones.

Ethan eats his while Molly punches in Sam's name on her phone. She waits. Then hangs up when there's no answer.

MOLLY

How is it?

ETHAN

Good. Do you want to try it?

MOLLY

Sure.

She does.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

That is good. Do you want to try mine?

He nods. She gives him a taste.

ETHAN

I like yours better.

MOLLY

That's called food envy. Do you want to switch?

ETHAN

Ok.

They do. He takes a bite and ends up with a bit of an ice cream mustache.

Molly watches him eat his ice cream for a moment.

A BALLOON VENDOR approaches with two balloons.

MOLLY

No thank you.

BALLOON VENDOR

They were already paid for.

He hands one to Ethan.

BALLOON VENDOR (CONT'D)

This one is for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOLLY
Paid for by who?

BALLOON VENDOR
The man right...

He turns and looks behind him, but there's no one there.

BALLOON VENDOR (CONT'D)
He's gone. Sorry.

Molly sees a card attached to the bottom of her balloon. She opens it. The message reads:

"I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU. CONTACT SOON."

Molly grabs Ethan's arm and pulls him off the bench.

MOLLY
We have to go.

ETHAN
Mom...

He drops his ice cream cone.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
You made me drop my ice cream.

MOLLY
Here. You can have this one back.

She tries to give him the one he had before.

ETHAN
I don't want that one. I want another one like this.

MOLLY
But, this is the one you picked.

ETHAN
I don't want it, anymore.

MOLLY
Ethan, we have to go. Now.

ETHAN
I want another ice cream.

MOLLY
I said let's go!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ETHAN

No!

She yanks his arm and drags him away. He shrugs her off and takes off running through the park.

MOLLY

Ethan!

She chases after him.

EXT. PARK TRAILS - DAY

Ethan runs into a wooded area, along a trail.

Molly runs after him.

MOLLY

Ethan!

He disappears in the trees.

EXT. PARK TRAILS - DAY

Molly searches for him in another section of the trail, exhausted and panicked.

She looks into a patch of weeds and sees his form, standing a few dozen yards away, facing away from her.

MOLLY

Hey! Answer me.

He doesn't. She trudges through the weeds and finds him looking down at something on the ground.

It's a dead pigeon, laying at his feet.

Molly stops. Ethan turns and looks up at her.

ETHAN

It was like this when I found it.

Molly looks at the crow. It doesn't look like it's been there long. She looks back to Ethan.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Your hair looks really pretty.

END ACT 2

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT 3

INT. JOHN'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

In another time, this might have been a charming, quiet spot to do some woodworking.

But, instead of various bits of wood and carpentry tools laying about, there are synthetic body parts stacked up on shelves and hanging from racks on the walls. Mostly child-sized, which makes it more than a bit creepy.

There are also tools of this new trade, including computer monitors and magnifying glasses, and storage containers of glowing filaments. 3-D synthetic flesh printers.

Molly and John are in mid-discussion.

JOHN

You have to give it time. He's just not used to you being home.

MOLLY

I don't know what's going on, but he's not the same as when I left.

JOHN

He's not. He's a year older.

MOLLY

I don't mean that. I mean he's changed.

JOHN

And, so have you. That's called life. That's the consequence of our family being apart for so long. It takes time to reconnect.

MOLLY

You should have seen the way he looked at me. It was almost like...like he hated me.

JOHN

He doesn't hate you, he loves you.

MOLLY

But, he doesn't love me, John. That's exactly what I'm saying. He executes a series of commands that you've programmed into him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOLLY (CONT'D)

He approximates a behavior that resembles love. But, it isn't love.

This strikes a blow and she knows it.

JOHN

I don't know what happened that caused you to pull away from him...or from us...but I've felt it, and he's felt it, ever since you got back. Whatever it is, I hope you figure it out.

MOLLY

I'm trying.

JOHN

Good. Because, that kid is the closest we're ever gonna get to being parents.

John heads to the door. Just before he goes...

JOHN (CONT'D)

I got the funding from Matsumo. We start immediately.

This should have been a joyous moment - it isn't.

He closes the door behind him, leaving Molly alone. She catches a glimpse of her reflection in a window, leading to:

INT. SERAPHIM - ZERO G AIRLOCK CONNECTOR - NIGHT

Molly's reflection as she enters commands on a small tablet device and a red blinking light appears. She speaks into it.

MOLLY

Seraph mission 0038, log addendum. There's something on the other side of this door. Something that appears to be a human male, someone that I knew very well, once. I know it's not this person because...for one, this person has been dead for a long time. But, whatever it is, it's asking for help. To prove I'm not hallucinating or having some sort of lucid dream...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Molly kneels next to an emergency light. She reaches her forearm closer to it. Closer. She presses her forearm against the light and there's a slight SIZZ sound. She pulls back, in pain. She looks to the reflection in the portal.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

I have to know what's on the other side. I'm going to open the door.

She sticks the tablet to the wall and makes sure it's still recording.

Then floats herself to the door. Another moment to gather her courage. She turns the wheel and unlocks the door. Pulls it gently and the door HISSES open.

Quickly, she pushes off and floats backwards. She grabs strap hanging behind her and holds herself in place, waiting.

It's just the open door for a moment. Then, Marcus appears inside it. But...not floating in zero G. He's standing.

He takes a tentative step through the airlock door, and Molly finds herself only yards away from him. Their eyes locked on each other. The door no longer a barrier between them.

They both stay completely still, taking the other in.

MOLLY (CONT'D)

Hello.

Marcus takes a moment.

MARCUS

Hello.

MOLLY

You need help.

MARCUS

Help.

Molly studies him. Unsure if he understands or is just mimicking her speech. She decides to test it again.

MOLLY

What can I do?

A pause.

MARCUS

Do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Marcus takes a step forward and slowly raises his hand, extending his fingers towards her. He's walking.

Molly's mind races, trying to figure out how this is possible. It unnerves her and she pulls herself back with the strap, floating toward the end of the connector.

He keeps moving towards her. Cautiously.

Molly finds herself backed up to the wall - nowhere else to go, and Marcus closing the space between them. Fingers outstretched.

Molly breathes heavily. She makes a decision - and extends her fingers as well, bringing their fingertips nearly together.

It's an eerie tableau, the opposite of any sort of paranormal encounter we've ever seen: the entity stands grounded, while the haunted hangs in midair. And, then:

Their fingers connect. Contact. Molly relaxes a little bit as Marcus closes the rest of the distance between them, until their bodies are in close proximity.

He studies her hands and her face. Holds a finger up near her cheek. She seems to understand what he's asking for.

MOLLY

It's ok.

Marcus traces his finger over her face and down her neck. He studies her reaction, her breathing. His finger traces down the center of her body and comes to a stop at her stomach.

He looks back up to her eyes with a warm smile. Takes her hand in his and puts it on his cheek.

MARCUS

It's ok.

Molly caresses his cheek. Her expression is awash in alternating waves of wonder and joy.

Marcus puts his hand on her stomach and studies it. The smile disappears, evolves into something cold and detached.

Something about this starts to unnerve Molly and she tries to back away. But, there's nowhere to go.

Marcus closes in on her and presses a hand to her face. She struggles against him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It's ok.

He puts his thumbs to her temples and she begins to go unconscious. As he repeats...

MARCUS (CONT'D)

It's ok. It's ok.

Off Molly. Floating. Fading out of consciousness.

END ACT 3

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ACT 4

INT. WATTS HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - DAY

Molly throws up in the toilet.

INT. WATTS HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Molly enters the kitchen, dressed for work. She's in a hurry, but stops when she runs into John.

The tension of their last conversation lingers until...

JOHN

I'm sorry. About yesterday.

MOLLY

You didn't say anything that wasn't true.

JOHN

You know, for the past year, you got to do the work that you're passionate about. You got to go back to space. And, I didn't resent that for a second, I never have. It's just what we do for each other. But if I'm honest...I've been a little jealous. I've been waiting for my turn.

MOLLY

I know.

JOHN

This opportunity with Matsumo. It may not be the ideal time because of where you are in your process, coming back and readjusting to life here, but if we can make it work...

MOLLY

We will.

JOHN

If it's too soon...

MOLLY

It's not too soon. It's your turn.

JOHN

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOLLY
Have I said congratulations?

JOHN
No.

MOLLY
Congratulations.

Molly reaches out and pulls him close.

INT. JOHN'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Ethan stands in his father's workshop, looking over the walls of body parts that are not unlike his own.

He glances to a nearby monitor and sees a screen that lists a series of software patches.

He gets closer to it and reads down the list. There are languages, personality traits, banks of specialized knowledge in areas like science and music.

The door opens and John enters. Ethan freezes.

JOHN
What are you doing in here?

ETHAN
I was looking for you.

JOHN
You know you're not allowed to be in here.

ETHAN
I'm sorry.

JOHN
Let's go. Out.

ETHAN
What are these?

JOHN
Patches for service androids.
Upgrades, to give them specialized knowledge or abilities.

ETHAN
Can I have some?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN
No.

ETHAN
Why?

JOHN
Because, you don't learn anything
that way. Your brain doesn't
develop.

ETHAN
What if I want to learn piano?

JOHN
Then, we'll get a teacher.

Ethan just stares at the screen.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Hey. This is off-limits, do you
understand?

ETHAN
Yes.

JOHN
It's cheating. What's the rule?

ETHAN
We don't cheat.

JOHN
Good. Come on.

John ushers him out.

INT. ISEA HALLWAY - DAY

Molly walks down a cavernous hallway.

LAURIE (VO)
Reentry can be a challenge after
this kind of extended mission,
especially if there are spouses and
children involved.

She passes a few STAFF MEMBERS and glances over just in time
to catch them give her a look.

LAURIE (VO) (CONT'D)
The agency would like us to meet
for a few sessions...

INT. LAURIE'S OFFICE - DAY

A minimalist therapist's office.

Molly sits across from LAURIE VINSON (40's).

LAURIE

...just to make sure that you have all the tools you need for this transition back to real life. We didn't have this resource in place for your colleague, Mr. Coulter. The agency believes that a lack of attention to his mental health may have been a factor in his suicide.

Molly hears this and begins to look around at the various objects in the room. The items on the desk. The lamps.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

I want this office to be a sanctuary for you...a place where you're free to talk about anything and everything...

INT. SURVEILLANCE BAY - DAY

Sparks watches the scene in Laurie's office on his monitor, courtesy of an overhead surveillance camera.

He flips through her medical reports as he listens.

LAURIE (ON SCREEN)

Do you understand?

MOLLY (ON SCREEN)

Yes.

LAURIE (ON SCREEN)

Wonderful.

INT. MATSUMO TOWER - EXECUTIVE OFFICE - DAY

Matsumo sits by the window and watches the same feed on the monitor on his desk.

LAURIE (ON SCREEN)

Why don't we begin with your own assessment about where you are in your transition. How are you feeling?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOLLY (ON SCREEN)
Physically?

INT. LAURIE'S OFFICE - DAY

LAURIE
Whatever you'd like to share.
Physically. Emotionally.
Mentally.

Molly's hung up on that last option - "mentally".

INT. SERAPHIM SPACE STATION - TERRARIUM - NIGHT

Molly opens her eyes.

She's lying on the floor of the terrarium. When she comes to, she bolts up in a panic.

She scrambles to her feet and looks around the room, terrified. There's no one there.

She does a more thorough check to make sure.

She rushes to the pod door and punches in the commands to close and lock it again.

It HISSES shut and the sound startles her.

JUMP CUT TO:

Molly plays back her earlier recording. She sees herself onscreen, opening the door. She sees herself back up. And, then...nothing. She scrolls forward in the footage.

She stops at a moment where her onscreen version has her hands extended. The moment where she had been touching Marcus's face. Only there's no Marcus.

She's confused and starting to lose it.

JUMP CUT TO:

Molly pulls up footage from the Seraphim's security system on the computer. She cycles through different camera angles...herself in the terrarium, looking through the door...to the empty corridor on the other side.

She's in tears at this point. She looks around, unsure of what to do. Takes a moment and pulls herself together.

She enters a series of commands on the computer. A prompt appears, asking: "DELETE?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dinner continues in a comfortable quiet, like any normal family. Norman Rockwell circa 2045.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Molly takes out the trash. She approaches the Verdisign bin with the bag when a figure steps out of the shadows and startles her.

It's **HARMON COULTER**, the astronaut from the photo before. The man everyone thought committed suicide is standing in front of her in the darkness. In flesh and blood.

Molly drops the bag and freezes. Locks eyes with him. There's a long moment between them. Molly is in shock. They hear JOHN'S VOICE, calling from the house.

JOHN (O.S.)

Mol, what flavor do you want?

Coulter looks in the direction of John's voice, then back to Molly. He starts to back away into the darkness, paranoid.

MOLLY

Harmon, wait...

JOHN (O.S.)

Mol?

MOLLY

(calling back)

Back in a second.

COULTER

You're not crazy.

MOLLY

They told me you were dead.

COULTER

That's what I want them to think.

MOLLY

You said you know what happened to me. Did something happen to you, too?

A small automated garbage drone WHIRRS around the corner, another thing that amps up Coulter's paranoia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COULTER

It's not safe right now. I'll find you. Until I do, you have to be careful. Don't trust them.

MOLLY

Who?

COULTER

Anybody.

He disappears into the night.

INT. WATTS HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Molly reenters, still processing what just happened.

She sits down at the table where John and Ethan are already digging into their ice cream. Ethan shoves a spoon full into his mouth.

JOHN

Sorry, I didn't know which one you wanted.

MOLLY

It's all right.

Molly opens a container. Spoons some out, still lost in thought. John beams at them both.

JOHN

This is perfect.

ETHAN

What is?

Molly meets his eyes.

JOHN

Just this.

She forces a smile for him. John digs into his ice cream. And, the three of them eat in silence.

END ACT 4

THE END