

"Quazum"

By

Johnny Atkinson

Johnny Atkinson
604 West Palmyra Avenue
Orange, California 92868
714-744-4479
atkinscripts@gmail.com

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

The uniquely shaped SOLAR JET is flying rapidly through space and passing solar systems.

VOICE
"Quazmopolis..."

In the distance, we see an unusual planet, QUAZMOPOLIS. It seems to be glowing in a variety of strange-colors. The planet becomes more visible as the jet moves closer.

INT. SOLAR JET

Four explorers are strapped in and looking through giant windows. They are each operating solar jet controls.

PILOT JENKINS, an experienced explorer, is in the center seat of the jet, and is watching with excitement.

LACY MEAUX, a beautiful young girl in her twenties, is nervously concentrating on computer readings.

CHRIS EVANS, a young engineer also in his twenties, is operating flight equipment and making adjustments.

OLIVER WENDELL, a heavier older explorer, looks skeptical as he watches through the big window.

JENKINS
Moving into Kepler solar system...
Quazmopolis now in sight.

DR. PALMER, leader of SEA (Science Exploration Agency) speaks to crew over speakers in the solar jet.

PALMER (V/O)
"Decrease speed, and chart atmosphere settings."

LACY
Readings now confirming Quazmopolis atmosphere. Twenty-three percent oxygen. Seventy point two percent nitrogen.

CHRIS
Atmosphere will support human life.

OLIVER

But temperatures are hot as hell! A fly can't survive this planet's heat.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM - AFTERNOON

DR. PALMER, in charge of SEA, is hurrying around the control room. Nervous scientists are behind desks operating controls on individual computers.

Big screen monitors on the walls show all angles taken from the solar jet, along with interior shots of crew.

PALMER

Enter satellite map, and lay down landing coordinates.

Palmer spins around and sees BEN THOMAS, a young engineer not listening, but concentrating on the screen.

PALMER (CONT'D)

Thomas! Get landing coordinates laid down! Now!

BEN

Hunh? Yeah. Entering coordinates.

Ben reads data from his computer screen and rapidly enters numbers.

BEN

Landing coordinates laid out. Solar jet now ready for automation.

Dr. Palmer shakes his head and looks annoyed, before turning back to the big screen and continuing.

PALMER

Take jet off manual controls. Coordinates entered.

Ben is watching screen deep in thought as he stares into monitor. We hear his voice thinking out loud.

BEN (V/O)

"I'm just like an offensive guard on a football team. I work harder, make all the blocks, get all the injuries, and get no credit."

INT. PRESS

Groups of news reporters and anchors are speaking into cameras as live video of the mission continues.

ANCHOR #1

We are now breaking in to show live video of the Space Exploration jet entering into the Quazmopolis atmosphere.

REPORTER #1

In the oxygen-based atmosphere, life natural to earth should be able to breathe without regular apparatus.

EXT. SPACE

We see the solar jet Space ship now moving closer to the incredible multi-colored rock-based planet.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Do you see this? I just want to roll down my window and take a sniff of the local air."

INT. SOLAR JET

OLIVER

It probably stinks.

CHRIS

Temperatures on surface now down below one thirty. Still very hot for humans.

LACY

Temperatures get up to the one twenties where I'm from.

JENKINS

Suits will keep us cool, and temps will drop fast in the afternoon.

INT. PRESS

Anchors and reporters continue reporting.

REPORTER #2

Both gravity levels and temperatures on Quazmopolis are much higher than we see on earth.

ANCHOR #2

Water on this planet is a salt base,
and solar engines will be converting
to become digestible for humans.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS SURFACE

Solar jet continues slowly lowering onto the beautiful
colored surface.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Scientists are operating controls as jet lowers, and live
video plays on big screen monitors.

PALMER

Release landing gear, and begin solar
transmission.

LACY (V/O)

(excited)

"Landing gear out! Ready for hydraulic
shock impulse."

OLIVER (V/O)

"We're going down! Get ready!"

PALMER

Maintain balance, and secure brace
attachments...

As the jet lowers, everyone looks on with excitement. Ben
stares at video of Lacy on his monitor and continues thinking
out loud.

BEN (V/O)

"So, I'm in love. I just want to marry
Lacy, settle down, and live happily
ever after. Is that asking too much?"

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS SURFACE

The Quazmopolis surface is multi-colored with beautiful
crystal rocks of shiny colors all around the surface.

BEN (V/O) (CONT'D)

"We could move to a small town and
start a family... Maybe get a dog..."

When solar jet finally touches down, the jet tilts and
bounces on the rock, making a loud scary sound.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Dr. Palmer, scientists, and media are quietly staring at the monitors and waiting nervously, before Jenkins speaks up.

JENKINS (V/O)

"It is official. The earthlings are now on Quazmopolis!"

The crew and scientists cheer with excitement, and media begins reporting the big news.

Ben again looks indifferent.

INT. PRESS

ANCHOR #3

This is a historic moment for all of mankind! Although Quazmopolis does not support natural life, it is the first atmosphere where humans can breathe.

REPORTER #3

Scientists will be more than twice the weight that they feel on earth, so they will be moving very slowly.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Dr. Palmer is pacing around the room checking computers while his middle-aged assistant (ALICE) and a room of scientists are still celebrating.

PALMER

Okay! Let's get solar panels up, and curtail media feed.

ALICE

I got it.

INT. SOLAR JET

Scientists hurry inside the solar jet putting on suits and exploration gear as we hear Palmer's voice over speakers.

PALMER (V/O)

Kepler sun will provide full recharge in next few hours.

CHRIS

Temperature readings are now in the

upper one thirties.

LACY
I can survive that.

OLIVER
I need my helmet just for shade...

PALMER (V/O)
"I want complete surface analysis. You will pick up samples and lay them down for full examination.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Big screens show scientists moving slowly due to the added weight as they prepare uniforms and exploration gear.

PALMER (CONT'D)
Proper gear will maintain body temperatures, and protect appendages from injury.

INT. SOLAR JET

Lacy lines up at the front of the exit door and smiles as Jenkins walks up looking confused.

LACY
Lady's first?!

JENKINS
I'm sorry, but we go in order of seniority. I'll be first.

Lacy walks towards the end of the line.

OLIVER
I don't mind being last. I think I'm close to five hundred pounds on this planet. Did anyone bring a scale?

CHRIS
You can skip ahead of me, Lacy. You'll still be the first 'woman' on Quazmopolis.

Lacy and Chris laugh as they move around in line.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Ben is staring at Chris and Lacy laughing as they wait to get off the solar jet. Ben looks angry and shakes his head.

BEN (V/O)
 "We're like school kids. I want to go steady, and she's a cheerleader hanging out with the quarterback."

ALICE
 Ben! Lacy's stepping out! Watch!

BEN
 (sarcastically)
 Yeah... I see.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

Solar jet doors open, and scientists walk out slowly without helmets. Jenkins turns to the camera and takes a deep breath.

JENKINS
 One small breath for man, and a giant inhale for mankind."

INT. MEDIA

Media and reporters celebrate again as Lacy and scientists continue out and slowly walk around the surface.

ANCHOR #1
 A human has now breathed natural air from a planet in another solar system.

REPORTER #1
 We are witnessing a true landmark for all of Space exploration.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

The crew walks around looking at the incredible beautiful surroundings. The sun is bright, and the beautiful colored rocks are shining and reflecting around the surface.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Ben is staring at one monitor, just watching Lacy and Chris walk around the beautiful surface with big smiles... when Dr. Palmer looks over.

PALMER

Get readings on solar charge and time
left on overnight temp settings...

Again, Ben doesn't answer.

PALMER (CONT'D)

Thomas! Stop daydreaming, and give me
power charge readings!

BEN

Yes sir.

When Ben turns back to the monitor, he sees Chris hugging
Lacy with the diamond rocks surrounding them. Ben grinds his
teeth in anger as he watches.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

When we cut to planet, we see Chris is innocently lifting
Lacy up after catching her from a fall.

CHRIS

You've got to watch your step. I'd say
you now weigh over two hundred pounds.

LACY

I think it's two fifty.

When Chris pulls Lacy up he begins to fall, and Lacy grabs
him.

CHRIS

Woah! We can't keep our hands off each
other.

LACY

Sorry. I'm taken.

CHRIS

Me too actually.

The two laugh, and hold hands as they get their balance.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Ben looks around the crowded room and sees no one has noticed
what he just saw. Ben is angry.

PALMER

So what's the charge? Ben!

BEN

Oh... We're now at seventy-three point four two percent.

PALMER

Fine. Adjust angle on panels.

Ben makes adjustments, turns off his monitor, stands up, and stretches.

BEN

Well... I've got some work to do. I'll be in my office.

ALICE

But they're just getting started.

BEN

Oh, it's just some Quazmopolis calculations. I'll keep an eye on the explorers. Just call if you need me.

Dr. Palmer notices Ben walking out and is annoyed. He then notices explorers on the big screen and quickly turns back.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

Jenkins is holding up a small ruby colored rock.

JENKINS

You wouldn't believe what this little rock weighs.

OLIVER

What will that be worth back home?

PALMER (V/O)

"Pick up only tiny samples. You will be analyzing them tonight inside the solar jet."

INT. SEA HALLWAY

Ben is walking up the hall deep in thought.

BEN (V/O)

"Lacy is now an international star. What could she possibly want with the office nerd?"

EDDIE (a mechanical engineer) walks up with a big smile.

EDDIE

Ben! She did it. First girl on Quazmopolis! Maybe you guys could go there to get married!

BEN

(sarcastically)
Ha, ha... Yeah...

EDDIE

Hey! Where're you going?

BEN

Uhh... Home. I'm not feeling well.

EDDIE

Oh, okay. Get some sleep!

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - DAY

Explorers are examining the beautiful colorful surface and struggling with their weight. Pilot Jenkins detaches a rock.

JENKINS

Check this out! Looks like a diamond.

CHRIS

Biggest diamond I've ever seen.

OLIVER

Value could be in the nine figures.

Teams of scientists and explorers study the rock and hold it up for cameras.

Lacy looks around at busy scientists before heading out alone. No one notices.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

PALMER

Continue exploration. Individual sample examinations will be performed later.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - LATER

Alone, Lacy struggles to climb and maintain her balance on big rock hillside as she moves out of sight. She speaks directly into personal recording device around the wrist of her suit.

LACY

"Quazmopolis is comprised of jagged rock with unique colors and shapes... Added weight makes it very dangerous to the step."

After noticing smaller rock formations, Lacy examines between cracks. She then suddenly jumps back.

LACY (CONT'D)

"Oh! Possible motion spotted! I think. It may have been dust in the wind, or rolling stones. How about that! It's certainly classic rock!"

Lacy turns and begins to fall. She rolls on sharp rock and struggles bumping her head and scraping her face. She looks injured and confused when regaining her balance.

Lacy continues climbing and exploring before noticing an opening on the side of rock hill. She is curious and looks around. No one is in sight so she continues alone.

LACY (CONT'D)

"I think... I see... something..."

EXT. SOLAR JET

Crew members are picking up and examining rock and showing off on the cameras. News continues raving over the unique stones.

JENKINS

How's this for a ruby?!

OLIVER

Worth a lot more than its weight in gold.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS SURFACE

Lacy is climbing the steep hill of sharp rocks farther away and is carefully balancing. She speaks into her mic again.

LACY

"It's an unusual opening in hillside of rock. I am climbing for closer examination."

Lacy adjusts video recording and struggles to climb into the unusual hole.

LACY (CONT'D)

"I am able to get my head in, and my shoulders. Wow, I'm now climbing in."

INT. QUAZMOPOLIS CAVE

Lacy finally gets into cave and stands up. She struggles to shine light and sees she is surrounded by a variety of colored stone. She then reads from computer around her wrist.

LACY (CONT'D)

"Temperatures have now dropped into the 70's inside the cave. Very comfortable. Air remains perfect combination of oxygen/nitrogen. Flat surfaces, easier to walk."

Lacy shines flashlight around and is suddenly surprised when she notices unexplained shadows.

LACY (CONT'D)

"Oh! I believe I saw unexplained motion again. Seemed to disappear quickly."

Lacy is confused as she shines her light around and examines her surroundings, noticing more movement.

LACY (CONT'D)

"Oh! I have witnessed definite motion inside the cave. Must be investigated. And documented. Stand by."

Lacy walks over shining her light when she notices a light shining from a crack in rock. She struggles to peak in. She suddenly drops light and looks on in shock.

LACY (CONT'D)

"Oh my God! I don't believe it."

Through the crack, we see a hi-tech big city with flashing lights and colors, large screens and futuristic equipment. Lacy is motionless looking on, before:

SFX: "Bam!"

Lacy falls to the rock surface after a blow to the head. Invisible shadow figures quickly move around as Lacy lies unconscious.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - LATE AFTERNOON

Sun is setting with unique colors in the sky, and explorers are scattered when Palmer announces over solar jet speaker.

PALMER (V/O)

"Okay. First day time is up! Return to the jet. Temps now close to freezing."

Scientists look tired as they walk back.

JENKINS

Except for temperatures, this is the most perfect place in the galaxy.

CHRIS

With solar powered A/C and heater, humans could survive.

OLIVER

Yeah? What would they eat?

JENKINS

Hmmm... I think we could come up with some "rocky" cereal or something.

OLIVER

And eat with salt water?

JENKINS

Maybe not.

As explorers get up to the door, Chris looks around.

CHRIS

Hey, where's Lacy?

Doors open, and scientists walk in. Everyone looks around.

OLIVER

Where was she exploring?

TERRY

She's not showing up on radar reaching one mile radius.

JENKINS

Dr. Palmer? Scientist Lacy Meaux is not reporting. No sign on radar. No explanation.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

PALMER

What? Where's the last audio recordings taken?

Dr. Palmer spins around to see no one is left in the SEA Control Room, and it is very late.

INT. SOLAR JET

JENKINS

I see last coordinate readings were about two hundred meters from solar jet.

CHRIS

She must have fallen... and been knocked unconscious. Transmission damaged. I'm going back out.

OLIVER

But temperatures are now below freezing.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Dr. Palmer is near panic running around the empty control room.

PALMER

Everyone out! Bring lights! Added protection! Set suits for solar body heat levels. Damn!

Palmer heads over to computers and starts studying surface.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS SURFACE - NIGHT

CHRIS

Lacy!

JENKINS

Use last signal for location readings!

Chris and Jenkins hurry off in different directions. Oliver looks annoyed.

OLIVER

I'll wait in case she comes back.

INT. MEDIA

News anchor is reading news from behind his desk.

ANCHOR #3

"This was an exciting day for America,
and everyone on earth. Another planet
in our galaxy capable of supporting
human life."

Video plays on the screen of Lacy and Chris laughing and holding each other as they celebrate. Cut back to anchor, who is smiling at the video.

ANCHOR #3 (CONT'D)

"We are not getting a feed now as the
explorers are in bed, getting sleep
for another big day on Quazmopolis."

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM

Ben is lying in bed watching the screen and shakes his head. He then looks over to the clock, which reads, "3:45". Ben turns off the television and rolls over.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM - LATER

Dr. Palmer is alone, in a panic studying Lacy's uniform video which is recorded.

Recordings of Lacy's voice and video play on big screen.

LACY (V/O)

"Oh! Possible motion spotted! I think.
It may have been dust in the wind, or
rolling stones. How about that!
Certainly classic rock!"

Video and audio cut out as Lacy slides down the mountainside of colored rock. Palmer nervously studies footage, searching for clues.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - NIGHT

Oliver is struggling to walk in the dark. Chris and Jenkins are walking fast and shining lights. They speak into mics in exploration suits.

OLIVER

Temperatures now hitting twenty below.
I think we are endangering our lives.

PALMER (V/O)
"Damn! Just keep searching!"

CHRIS
Lacy!?
(into mic)
I'm approaching five hundred meters
from solar jet.

JENKINS
The heat in her suit cannot hold up
much longer.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

PALMER
Kepler sun will begin warming surface
back to freezing in one hour.

Palmer looks down from satellite and examines strange images of colored rock. When he notices unexplainable motion, he tries to record but seems confused. Palmer struggles to zoom and focus but can document nothing.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - MORNING

Sun is starting to rise in the distance. Chris and Jenkins are shining lights carefully moving across empty areas, and speaking into voice transmitter when Palmer announces.

PALMER (V/O)
"I've detected possible motion about
two hundred meters from solar jet.
Coordinates forty-seven, S.W. five
six."

CHRIS
Motion? What kind of motion?

JENKINS
We've searched that area. Is Oliver
around there?

OLIVER
I'm just sitting down taking a break.

CHRIS
I'm now heading for those coordinates.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Dr. Palmer continues studying monitors and notices more unusual motion.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

Chris finally walks up to the area reading from his computer and shines his light around.

CHRIS

I see something! There! Under the rocks! Yeah! It's Lacy!

Jenkins runs up.

JENKINS

Lacy has been found! Dr. Palmer, we've found Lacy's body.

Lacy is partly covered by heavy rock. Her suit is ripped, and her head looks bloody. Oliver walks up and leans down to examine.

CHRIS

She's unconscious!

JENKINS

Looks like Lacy fell and bumped her head.

OLIVER

She is alive.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Dr. Palmer falls back in his chair and is relieved. He is exhausted.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

Chris and Jenkins struggle to carry Lacy to the ship, as Oliver follows behind reading from computers.

OLIVER

Body temperature down, now at 102.

CHRIS

We're here, Lacy. You're safe now.

Lacy struggles to open her eyes and look around.

LACY
I saw something...

JENKINS
What? What did you see?

LACY
I... I saw life.

CHRIS
Life? A plant? Or a bug?

Lacy looks around, then lies unconscious.

OLIVER
Lots of visions appear with brain
concussion. It is not unusual.

Jenkins and Chris continue as Lacy lies motionless.

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE - MORNING

Dr. Palmer is nervously sitting at desk in live phone call
from crew.

JENKINS
"It's a minor brain concussion.
Injuries to head and temporary loss of
conscious."

PALMER
Do we know what caused injury?

OLIVER
"I believe it was added weight, and
she tripped..."

PALMER
Why was she so hard to find?

INT. SOLAR JET

Crew is talking to Palmer on computer screen.

CHRIS
The dark skies, without stars and the
earth's moon, she was hidden.

JENKINS
I believe cortex reparation comes with
rest. If we leave now, she'll get...

PALMER (V/O)

"No. You are to continue exploration.
And no one needs to know about this.
She'll get the same rest on
Quazmopolis."

JENKINS

But maybe we could just...

Dr. Palmer turns off monitor, and the crew is surprised.

OLIVER

So we can't go home?

CHRIS

I'll stay with her. She shouldn't be
left alone.

JENKINS

And I'll continue exploration of
jewelry.

Chris and Jenkins walk off, and Oliver looks confused.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM - MORNING

Ben walks in the the busy control room and over to his seat.

ALICE

Good morning! Are you feeling better?

BEN

Yeah, I'd just been working so hard. I
needed some rest.

ALICE

Yeah, everyone's been working long
hours. I think Dr. Palmer hasn't slept
in days.

Ben turns on monitor and begins looking around for Lacy.
Jenkins and Oliver are out picking up rocks, and Lacy and
Chris are not in sight.

BEN

(annoyed)

So where's Chris and Lacy today?

ALICE

They've just been working inside...
Staying out of the heat I think.

Ben pushes buttons and interior video is "BLOCKED".

ALICE (CONT'D)

Oh, all monitors are off inside. I think they just want privacy.

BEN

Hmmm... That's interesting.

ALICE

But they'll be coming home soon.

Ben switches between monitors and seems annoyed.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - SUNSET

Pilot Jenkins and Oliver are carrying multi-colored rocks into storage panels of solar jet.

JENKINS

Say good-bye to Quazmopolis.

OLIVER

Good-bye, and good riddance...

JENKINS

What? I think this place is beautiful. Most perfect planet I've even seen.

OLIVER

It's like being on a deserted island. It's beautiful until you get hot... and thirsty.

Chris walks out, and Jenkins whispers to him off camera.

JENKINS

How's she doing?

CHRIS

(whispering)

She's healing up nice... Going in and out of consciousness. But I think she's going to be fine...

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Ben is watching on his computer screen and is curious. He notices the private conversation and zooms in trying to read lips to no avail.

Ben then switches to news broadcasts.

INT. MEDIA

News Anchors and reporters are speaking into the camera.

ANCHOR #1

Quazmopolis crew is preparing for exit. Everyone at Space Exploration is happy with successful discoveries, and they've got some beautiful jewelry to prove it.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

Chris finally turns to the camera and awkwardly announces with a wink.

CHRIS

Well, I have to go back in the solar jet. Lacy and I have a lot of work to do.

Jenkins and Oliver laugh and awkwardly respond.

JENKINS

Yes. Go help Lacy, and get away from this once in a lifetime exploration.

OLIVER

Of course I'm always happy to handle all the physical labor.

INT. SEA CONTROL ROOM

Ben is angry and looks over unanswered messages he's sent and blocked video on his computer screen. He finally gets up and walks out again.

INT. SEA - PALMER'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Palmer looks like a wreck, working at his desk when there is a knock at the door. Palmer does not look up.

Door opens, and Ben pokes his head in. Palmer is surprised.

BEN

Dr. Palmer? I just have a few questions.

PALMER
I'm busy, and I'm not answering
questions.

BEN
I just wanted to know if, I mean...
Can you tell me what Lacy is doing?

PALMER
She's fine. She's working inside.
Scientists will go through mandatory
quarantine and tests when they return,
and you'll see her then.

BEN
Well, why are communications turned
off? I need...

PALMER
That's something you'll have to
discuss with her. Anything else?

BEN
No, I guess that's all.

Ben walks out, and Dr. Palmer thinks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SOLAR JET - LATER

Jet is flying through Space passing stars and solar systems.
We see earth in the distance.

INT. SOLAR JET

Pilot Jenkins is steering, and explorers are in seats. Lacy
is lying down.

JENKINS
We now see earth as we enter the Milky
Way solar system.

CHRIS
We'll be honored in all the history
books...

OLIVER
I want to be honored now.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Upon return, scientists will be in isolation for medical tests and psychological exams. So be ready."

Lacy is overhearing coming into full consciousness watching video on monitor.

EXT. SEA MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Solar Jet is slowly landing. Families and media are gathered in media room and watching through window.

Ben stands at window watching and nervously holding flowers.

INT. SOLAR JET

Jet doors open. Lacy unbuckles belt and struggles to get up. She begins limping, and Chris tries to help.

CHRIS

Are you okay? I feel like I just lost a hundred pounds.

LACY

I think I can make it.

CHRIS

Just hold my arm. We'll go out calmly. No one needs to know about the injury.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Scientists exit jet. Chris walks out holding Lacy's arm, and they both smile, laugh and wave. Ben looks on in disgust.

REPORTER #1

"Team of explorers will be kept in isolation as tests are performed."

REPORTER #2

"More than five hundred hours of video recordings will be examined."

Ben walks out and throws flowers into the trash.

INT. SEA - MEDICAL FACILITIES - DAY (LATER)

Lacy is lying in hi-tech medical room. DR. KJELL and NURSE examine wiring, tubes and conductors, stretched around Lacy's brain, as she wakes up.

LACY

I need to talk to someone. I think I saw life on Quazmopolis.

KJELL

I'm sorry, but neurological examinations are being conducted.

NURSE

And as long as you claim to see "martians", tests will continue.

Doctor Kjell increases sleep medication causing Lacy to close her eyes and lay back.

NURSE

I think this girl has lost it.

KJELL

Continue monitoring temporal lobe, and record brain waves from anterior cortex.

INT. SEA - BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Office is messy, and Ben is searching for information about Quazmopolis on computer. News clips run.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Some explorers took samples, while some unexplainably remained inside the solar jet."

Ben types questions, and computer flashes "CLASSIFIED". Alice yells from her desk.

ALICE

Ben! I've got your Mom on the line again. Will you take her call?

BEN

No. Just tell her I'm busy.

Ben continues reading information on screen.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Requested information not available. Access denied."

ALICE

Ben, she wants inside information on

the Quazmopolis mission, and Lacy?

Ben looks annoyed before picking up the phone.

BEN

Hi Mom. Everything we know is on the news. (BEAT) No. That's over. Lacy is just a friend.

Ben sees video of Chris and Lacy exiting the plane. Chris has his arm wrapped around Lacy, and they both wave.

BEN

I'm sorry Mom. I gotta go.

INT. SEA - MEDICAL HALLWAY

Dr. Palmer walks up to Lacy's medical room. Door is locked. He tries to enter fingerprints on lock, but door does not open. Dr. Palmer knocks on the door and is impatient.

Dr Kjell finally removes quarantine mask and walks out.

KJELL

Yes, Dr. Palmer?

PALMER

I need to know this patient's condition.

KJELL

Recovering from brain cortex injury. Lacy needs more time and more detailed examination.

PARKER

So, what do tests show?

KJELL

I'm afraid it's personal, and I...

PALMER

(interrupting & angry)
I'm in charge! What do tests show?

Dr. Kjell thinks for a beat and looks around at Lacy. He then turns back to Dr. Palmer.

KJELL

She's pregnant.

Dr. Palmer is in shock and thinks about what he just heard.

PALMER

That's not possible. You tested her...
The entire crew. She signed papers...

KJELL

It could have happened days before
takeoff or on the mission. I'm going
to test the crew, and...

Palmer is angry as he turns and walks out.

EXT. OLD BAR - NIGHT

Dr. Palmer drives up and climbs out of his car.

INT. BAR

Dr. Palmer walks in and sits on corner bar stool. He orders a drink, then recognizes Ben sitting alone at the opposite end. Palmer walks over.

PALMER

Hello, Mr. Thomas. How do you feel?

BEN

Oh... I feel like a complete loser
whose dreams have been destroyed. The
usual!

PALMER

It was a profound exploration. You
should be proud.

BEN

I guess it was profound for you... But
I had personal plans. I wanted to
marry Lacy. Can you believe it?

Palmer looks confused.

BEN (CONT'D)

Now I'm just the tagalong 'ex'...

The two sit quietly drinking before Palmer speaks up.

PALMER

You know, I'm going to give you top
secret information. I want your word
that it will not be repeated.

BEN

What is it?

PALMER

Lacy broke major Space Exploration rules on the mission.

BEN

What? What did she do?

PALMER

She's pregnant.

BEN

I don't believe it. That's not even possible.

PALMER

Well, doctors believe conception occurred before takeoff, breaking all rules.

BEN

It's not me. I can't be the father! We just never... So it could be one of the explorers?

PALMER

I don't know...

Ben gets up and starts walking to the door leaving Dr. Palmer thinking. Ben then turns and walks back and slams his working ID on the bar.

BEN

I quit! I'm done with SEA! Good-bye.

Dr. Palmer seems confused and takes another drink.

INT. SEA HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY (MORNING)

Lacy is lying in bed fully conscious and seems excited. Dr. Kjell is removing attachments around her head with tubes and wires. Readings are popping up on the computer.

LACY

I'm going to be released? Right?

KJELL

More tests need to be performed, and we need...

LACY
But my incubation time is over!

Lacy gets up and begins putting on her uniform.

KJELL
I can release you, but Dr. Palmer
needs to speak with you, and we have
more tests...

LACY
I'll report to his office in thirty
minutes. Not a problem.

KJELL
I think we need...

Lacy pulls on her jacket and rushes out. Kjell looks
confused.

INT. SEA HALLWAY

Excited Lacy runs down SEA hall to Ben's office. Door is
locked, and lights are off as she looks in the window.

Alice is at the desk and notice Lacy.

ALICE
Lacy! Welcome back! How do you feel?

LACY
I'm fine. Where's Ben?

ALICE
Oh, he's been out the last few days. I
don't know what...

Lacy hurries out.

INT. SEA RECEPTION

BLANCHE, the receptionist, is talking on the phone when Lacy
runs through the lobby.

BLANCHE
Hi Lacy! Are you done with incubation?

LACY
Gotta go!

Lacy nods and continues holding phone to her ear.

BEN'S (V/O)
 (answering machine)
 "Hello. This is Ben, and I'm not
 taking calls."

Lacy pushes buttons on her phone as she runs. Other employees are happy to see her, but Lacy passes quickly and waves.

WORKERS
 "Lacy, welcome home!"
 "How was Quazmopolis?"
 "You're a hero!"

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Lacy runs into the parking lot and climbs into her unique small car. She waves to security as she drives out.

INT. CAR

CAR computer speaks out.

CAR (V/O)
 "Welcome home, Miss Lacy. Where would
 you like to go?"

LACY
 Drive me to Ben's house!

CAR (V/O)
 "That's seven point six miles on the
 fifty-five freeway. The fifty-seven is
 shorter, but has more traffic..."

LACY
 Just go!

Lacy is excited and tries to put on makeup. The car speeds through traffic.

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT

When car pulls into driveway, Lacy jumps out, runs up to Ben's front door, and knocks.

LACY
 Ben? Ben, I'm back!

Lacy rings doorbell and tries to peak through window.

LACY (CONT'D)

My quarantine's over, and I have ten minutes...

Older woman in nightgown finally opens Ben's door looking like she just woke up.

WOMAN

What do you want?

Lacy looks surprised and steps back to check the address.

LACY

I'm sorry. I was just coming to see Ben. Do you know where...

Looking hungover, Ben steps out from behind the half-dressed woman. He is wearing underwear and no shirt.

BEN

What do you want?

LACY

(confused)

Ben? I just wanted to... let you know I was back...

BEN

Yeah, I heard. I heard a lot. Congratulations.

Ben slams the door leaving Lacy in shock. She turns and walks back to her car very confused and climbs in.

CAR (V/O)

"Would you now like to stop for a quick snack? Drive thru is located..."

LACY

Go back to SEA. Go...

CAR (V/O)

"Space Exploration, also known as SEA was originally a small science company working on medicines..."

LACY

Just drive.

Lacy turns off car computer and looks into the rearview mirror and begins crying.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Car parks, and Lacy slowly gets out wiping her face.

INT. SEA OFFICE

Lacy walks in looking worn out. Blanche, the receptionist, pushes buttons to open door and looks surprised.

BLANCHE

Welcome back. Dr. Palmer is waiting,
and...

Lacy ignores everyone staring and quietly walks up the hall.

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE

Lacy knocks politely on the side of Palmer's open door.

PALMER

Come in.

LACY

You wanted to see me, Dr. Palmer?

PALMER

We have strict regulations that must
be abided to under penalty of job
termination. You know that?

LACY

Yes sir?

Lacy sits down as Dr. Palmer opens file and reads.

PALMER

A tiny embryo was discovered since
your return showing fetal conception.

LACY

Conception? Conception of what?

PALMER

You're pregnant, Miss Lacy.

LACY

Pregnant? That's not even possible.

Lacy leans back shaking her head, and Palmer continues.

PALMER

Space Exploration doctors have performed deoxyribonucleic acid tests on male explorers. No match. As you know, leaving on this mission while pregnant results in termination.

LACY

But Dr. Palmer, I haven't had unprotected sex... Never!

PALMER

(ignoring Lacy)

I am now giving you a simple option. You allow for pregnancy termination, and continue your career.

LACY

Abortion?

PALMER

Or you can quietly retire agreeing to complete non-disclosure. It's in your contract.

LACY

I won't give up my baby because...

PALMER

Then I guess you've made your decision.

LACY

Dr. Palmer. I don't think...

PALMER

Your office needs to be cleared, and you will not speak to anyone about this. You're excused.

Dr. Palmer turns back to computer as Lacy slowly gets up.

INT. SEA HALLWAY

SEA employees stare as Lacy walks down the hall.

ALICE

Lacy, I'm really sorry. You know? My uncle sells cars. I could give him a call.

Lacy looks up at Alice with a confused look. She then walks by her office thinking, then heads out the door as everyone looks on.

EXT. SEA BUILDING

Lacy runs out of building and back to her dirty car.

INT. LACY'S CAR

Lacy looks around confused before she breaks down crying.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK BAYOU - OLD ROADS - HOT SUMMER DAY

Thunder crashes as the dirty car slowly drives in the small Louisiana town. Old signs read "Back Bayou City Limits".

INT. LACY'S CAR

Lacy looks like she hasn't slept, showered or eaten in a week and is driving slowly and looking around nervously.

CAR (V/O)

"Temperature now one hundred seven degrees, 95 percent humidity, and 93 percent chance of afternoon showers in the Back Bayou."

Big old trees with moss hang down over the road, and Lacy continues.

CAR (V/O)

"Meaux property is registered but not filed with Department of Tax and License."

Lacy turns down muddy driveway. She drives slowly over bumps, before old dirty cabin is in sight.

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Lacy swats at bugs as she walks up to front door and knocks.

LACY

Dad?

Lacy looks around. A snake crawls from under the cabin and into marshland. All is quiet before the door opens.

GABRIEL, a dirty and unshaven older man, peaks out holding a shotgun. Lacy smiles and walks up giving her father an unreturned hug.

LACY

Hey Dad. I'm so glad to be home. It's really beautiful here in Back Bayou. Let's let some fresh air in. Yeah.

Lacy opens windows.

GABRIEL

What do you want?

LACY

Well, I've been so busy with work, I just haven't had time to visit...

Lacy walks around the messy cabin cleaning and moving items while Gabriel stands in the doorway holding his shotgun.

GABRIEL

So why'd you come back?

LACY

I've been busy exploring space. Our last mission was to Quazmopolis.

GABRIEL

Never heard of it.

LACY

We brought back mineralized emerald rock in lots of colors...

GABRIEL

Sounds like a waste of time and money.

LACY

We also discovered new formations of elements that are being tested...

Gabriel walks over confused.

GABRIEL

So go back home to your space ship.

LACY

Dad... I wanna move back here for a while to help... And just spend some time at home... here in Back Bayou.

GABRIEL

Don't need no help. I'm fine on my own.

LACY

I'll cook some of Mom's cajun recipes, and just help clean things...

GABRIEL

No thanks...

Gabriel shakes his head ignoring Lacy... before Lacy finally breaks down.

LACY (CONT'D)

Dad, I'm pregnant.

Lacy falls to the ground crying, and Gabriel looks confused.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND - COLD WINTER DAY

Gabriel is in the cold freezing swamp paddling an old pirogue boat, wearing camouflaged hat and coat. Gabriel blows into duck whistle, and two green-head mallard ducks fly in.

SFX: POW! POW!

Gabriel fires two shots, and both ducks fall. Gabriel paddles pirogue towards ducks, grabs one duck by the head and spins him around, to break its neck.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

House is clean and nicely decorated. Lacy holds her big pregnant stomach as she staggers over to couch and sits down.

LACY

Oh! Ah!

Gabriel walks in carrying ducks and drops them into sink.

GABRIEL

Got two mallards.

Gabriel walks across room leaving mud tracks.

LACY

I only heard two shots all morning. I guess you were shooting one hundred

percent -- right on target.

Gabriel gives no reaction as he sits down and begins removing muddy boots. Lacy grips her stomach again.

GABRIEL

When you gonna be having this baby?

LACY

Could be any time now. He's just kicking to get out. Ugh!

GABRIEL

Remember what you promised. I don't want no babies 'round my house.

LACY

Not a problem. I got an apartment I'm looking at, and online sales job.

GABRIEL

College and space exploring? And now you wanna sell... "on-lines"?

LACY

Oh! It's good-pay, Dad. Oooh!

Lacy holds her stomach and finally goes into the bedroom.

GABRIEL

What do I do? I ain't no doctor.

LACY

Nothing, Dad. I can handle it.

Lacy closes bedroom door, and Gabriel paces around nervously. He hears Lacy's voice crying out from the bedroom.

LACY

"Oh! Hmph! Ow!"

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - DAY (LATER)

Lacy is lying in bed in the dark bedroom when sounds of a crying baby start. Gabriel opens the door and walks in.

GABRIEL

You got that baby out? You okay?

Lacy, with a confused look, holds up the small baby as Gabriel walks over.

We see the baby is a strange shape. He is partially covered with Lacy's blood, and appears invisible.

Gabriel stares with a confused look as Lacy holds up the unusual infant.

LACY

He's a boy... (BEAT) I think.

Gabriel is speechless as Lacy hugs the alien baby.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND - DAY

Gabriel looks older and is walking by mossy old trees, and nervously aiming his rifle. He is wearing a camouflaged hat and heavy boots. Gabriel hears sounds coming from the swamp, stares down the barrel and shoots.

SFX: Bam! Bam! Bam!

A small squirrel jumps from behind leaves and runs up a tree. Gabriel reloads and looks angry.

GABRIEL

Where you hiding, boy? It's getting dark.

A scary, fast-moving invisible creature (QUAZUM), shakes branches and leaves as he finally climbs down a tree and runs over.

QUAZUM

(young boy's voice)
Here I am, Grandpa!

GABRIEL

Where you been hiding?

Quazum runs alongside Gabriel leaving footprints. He grabs from a small bag and puts on his red baseball cap.

QUAZUM

I knew you couldn't find me way up behind those tree leaves!

GABRIEL

How did you get up there?

QUAZUM

My hands and feet can grip the bark.
I'm just extra light and extra strong.

GABRIEL

Now I gotta start lookin' up in the
trees? I ain't never gonna find ya up
there.

QUAZUM

I got lots of places I can hide!

Gabriel laughs and puts his arm around invisible Quazum as
they walk into a beautiful bayou sunset.

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

The exterior of the cabin is clean and painted with a
beautiful landscape. Gabriel and Quazum walk onto the porch.

GABRIEL

What's your mom cooking up tonight?

QUAZUM

Don't know. Smells like crawfish.

GABRIEL

Oh boy! That's my favorite!

Gabriel takes off his muddy boots, and washes up. Quazum puts
on special shaped shirt, pants and shoes becoming partially
visible.

QUAZUM

How much longer will crawfish be in
season?

GABRIEL

Maybe another month. Then it's back
fishing and duck hunting.

QUAZUM

And a gator could feed us through the
winter. Right?

When clean, Gabriel and Quazum politely walk inside.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Lacy is cooking in the kitchen. She also looks older, wearing
plain clothes, with short hair and no makeup. And the cabin

looks nicely decorated with flowers and pictures hanging.

GABRIEL

Smells good! Quazum could smell them
crawfish from out in the swamp.

QUAZUM

I need some salt water, Mom!

LACY

I just made some. There's a pitcher
next to the oven. And we got a new
batch of fresh roaches.

QUAZUM

That can be my dessert.

GABRIEL

Quazum's now climbing up them trees
and layin' down in the mud. No way I
can spot him 'round that swamp.

LACY

I don't like it. I heard the gun
shots. Someone could get hurt!

GABRIEL

I ain't using real bullets. And these
rubber balls can't penetrate that
boy's skin. No way.

QUAZUM

It's okay, Mom. It doesn't even hurt.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN - NIGHT

Lacy, Gabriel and Quazum are sitting around the table eating.
We see Quazum's shirt and hat. And food remains visible in
Quazum's throat as he swallows.

GABRIEL

Hoo boy! Your mom's étouffée is better
than your Grandma's used to be.

QUAZUM

I love it!

LACY

She taught me how to make it when I
was little. And it's a recipe I'm
gonna teach you.

QUAZUM

Grandpa taught me how to catch
crawfish. I just need to learn how to
cook 'em!

GABRIEL

Quazum's just an average cajun boy
growing up in the swampland.

Quazum smiles and continues eating. Gabriel and Lacy exchange
awkward looks.

INT. NEW USED CARS - DAY

Ben looks older and messy, dressed in a dirty suit and
unshaven. He is pouring black coffee in a large cup at the
employee section of the car dealership.

Another SALESMAN walks up.

SALESMAN

Looks like you had a busy night again.

Ben puts a few aspirin pills in his mouth as he takes his
first sip of black coffee.

BEN

Just the usual.

SALESMAN

If I went out like that for just one
night, my wife would kill me.

BEN

Well, that's why I ain't married.

Ben carries coffee cup over to a couch in the waiting room,
sits down, and picks up the remote control.

PAUL, the dealership owner, walks over and is angry.

PAUL

Ben! You show up late and sit down in
the waiting room drinking coffee?

BEN

I'm fine. I just got a headache.

OLD MAN and OLD WOMAN walk in looking for help. Ben ignores
them as baseball game continues.

Paul angrily turns off TV.

PAUL
Get up now, and help those two
customers.

BEN
They ain't buying nothing. They come
in every week just to ask questions.

PAUL
Can you at least 'try' to sell. I want
these old cars off the lot!

Ben reluctantly gets up, walks over and puts on a fake smile
as he greets customers.

BEN
Hi! Welcome back to 'New Used Cars'!

OLD WOMAN
We just had some questions.

BEN
I see you've got your eyes on a
vintage 'gas guzzler', a real classic!

OLD MAN
How many miles to the gallon?

BEN
Uhh... All information can be found in
the window sticker.

Ben sees Paul is out of sight, walks back to couch, sits down
and turns TV back on. Older couple looks confused.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN - DAY

Quazum is playing a computer game. Loud sounds and lights
flash. Quazum is wearing clothes and cap.

Lacy is cleaning in kitchen.

COMPUTER (V/O)
"You win again! You now have advanced
to 'Expert' Level."

QUAZUM
Mom, I'm now considered an expert!

LACY
 Good for you! Keep it up!

Gabriel walks in and hears Quazum and the computer noise.

GABRIEL
 Why's he wasting time on that?

LACY
 It's good for hand-eye coordination.

GABRIEL
 Ain't nothing he can get from playing those games?

QUAZUM
 I did it! I just set a personal record on the "R Bomb" program!

LACY
 He has natural computer coordination.

GABRIEL
 So what?

Quazum walks into kitchen and grabs a roach from the aquarium and puts it in his mouth.

QUAZUM
 The highest record in "R Bomb" history is now held by Quazum Meaux!

LACY
 Congratulations! I'm proud!

Lacy smiles, and Gabriel looks annoyed.

INT. CALIFORNIA BAR - NIGHT

Big screen TV is playing news, and music is playing over speakers. An intoxicated Ben walks over to two women, MARY and BRENDA.

BEN
 You girls from around here?

MARY
 We're from nearby, not too far.

Ben turns to QUINCY, the bartender.

BEN

Quincy, get these beautiful young girls a couple of beers. Your best stuff!

QUINCY

Whatever's left on tap.

BEN

This is truly the best beer, west of the Mississippi.

MARY

We don't say 'no' too often.

News on the big screen monitor suddenly cuts to a story about SEA (Science Exploration). Ben notices graphics and video and walks over to the bar.

BEN

Hey! Turn that up. I wanna hear this!

Quincy turns up volume on TV speakers and stops music.

ANCHOR #1

"SEA is planning another trip to Quazmopolis. The planet has an oxygen based atmosphere, but due to temperatures, the planet is unable to support life."

Video on screen shows rocks of different colors with scientists studying temperature gauges, and shots of Chris and Lacy.

ANCHOR #1 (CONT'D)

"Dr. William Palmer, director of Space Exploration, has selected the new crew and is preparing for take-off next week."

PALMER

(speaking on camera)

"With additional storage space on the new solar jet, we will bring back more rock samples of all colors and sizes."

ANCHOR #1

"In other news, Senators will be meeting in the fall..."

Ben is thinking and seems angry before he gets up and carries beers over to the girls' table. Quincy turns TV volume down.

BEN

Here you go! Best beer in the west!

BRENDA

Thanks... You got some connection to Space Exploration?

BEN

Yeah... It was a long time ago.

MARY

We know one of the scientists. His name is Chris Evans. You know him?

BEN

Ohhh... I remember Chris. He's the guy that ran off with my girl.

BRENDA

Really? He's married to my cousin, Eve.

BEN

(surprised)

Married? How 'bout that?

(Ben thinks for a beat)

You know? Nothing goes better with a mug of beer than a shot of tequila. Quincy? Three shots of tequila!

Girls laugh, and Quincy pours shots.

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND - MORNING

Gabriel and Quazum are fishing in an old pirogue boat. They are both wearing heavy coat, pants, hat and boots. Quazum's face and hands are invisible.

QUAZUM

Fish ain't biting today.

GABRIEL

Check your bait.

Quazum lifts line out of the water to see a clean hook. He then moves hook over to Gabriel who has the can of worms. Gabriel grabs the hook and then stops.

GABRIEL

No. You gotta bait your own hook,
Quazum.

QUAZUM

I don't know how.

GABRIEL

It's somethin' you need to learn. My
dad used to say, 'Give 'em a fish, and
he'll eat for a day. Teach 'em to
fish, and he'll eat for a lifetime'.

Quazum carelessly pulls off lid from the can of worms as
Gabriel watches nervously.

QUAZUM

I don't see why fish would go for an
ugly worm on a hook...

GABRIEL

Careful! Don't just open it!

QUAZUM

I gotta open it to get the worm out.

GABRIEL

Now close it up! Hurry.

Quazum struggles to put the lid back on as worms crawl out.

QUAZUM

I got it. I got it.

GABRIEL

If you carelessly let one worm out,
more gonna get out. And you can't get
'em back in.

Quazum continues struggling to pick them up as more get out.

QUAZUM

What do I do?

GABRIEL

Just leave 'em down there, and seal up
the can. We'll just use 'em one at a
time. You don't let the worms out.

Quazum seems confused as he tries to bait his hook. Worms
squirm around his feet.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Ben is lying in bed, and Brenda and Mary are talking in the kitchen. Ben gets up and makes his way to the bathroom.

MARY

What's his name again?

BRENDA

I think it's Ben.

Mary walks up to bathroom door and knocks politely.

MARY

Morning Ben. I just wanted to know what hours we can come by the shop?

BRENDA

We just want to see one of those cars you told us about.

Toilet flushes, and hungover Ben walks back to the bedroom.

BEN

There's a lotta salesmen looking to dump those crappy old cars.

MARY

(confused)

So all you said last night about getting us a deal was a lie?

BEN

Yep.

BRENDA

(angry)

You really are just a car salesman.

MARY

It's no wonder you got fired from SEA.

Ladies walk out, and door slams.

Ben lies motionless in bed thinking. He finally rolls over and punches his pillow.

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND - DAY

Quazum and Gabriel are sitting in boat when Lacy walks up.

LACY

I'm going into town. Anything I can get for y'all?

GABRIEL

We caught a couple of catfish. Get some cornstarch, salt and cayenne pepper so we can fry 'em up!

LACY

I'm cooking red beans right now, and I'm going to serve that with a hot boudin sausage I made.

GABRIEL

Oh boy! We can just fry up catfish tomorrow. Me and Quazum love red beans and rice!

Lacy laughs and turns to her car. Quazum looks curious.

QUAZUM

Hey Mom? Can I come?

LACY

What? How come? You need something?

GABRIEL

Crazy people in town is one thing you need to stay away from.

QUAZUM

I want to see what stores look like. And maybe meet some people.

LACY

There's nothing to see. Stores are run-down, and people are mean. Why don't you check on the solar panels you made?

QUAZUM

They're fine.

GABRIEL

We're not getting the power we got when you first built 'em.

QUAZUM

That's cause it's been cloudy. They don't get the same charge.

LACY

Just check 'em. And make sure they're okay. I'll handle the shopping.

Lacy climbs into car, starts it, and drives down the dirt road leaving Quazum deep in thought as Gabriel looks on thinking.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ben sits at his computer wearing just underwear. He is unshaven with messy hair. With one finger, Ben pushes buttons and says to computer.

BEN

Space Exploration...

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Space Exploration has announced new plans for mission to Quazmopolis."

Ben moves finger across the screen and touches pictures.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"SEA explorers will be introducing new forms of life and testing new element combinations."

Scientist pictures and biographies pop up, and Ben clicks photo of Chris.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Chris Evans studied Geographical Space at Northwestern University."

Ben touches computer screen and types information.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Chris Evans is married to June Evans, and they have three children living in Southern California."

Ben is confused and searches for pictures of Lacy and last mission. Ben touches Lacy's face.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Scientist, Lacy Meaux, left SEA after first Quazmopolis mission."

Ben is surprised and examines screen searching for more information.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Lacy Meaux spent several days recovering after mission, then resigned. No further records are available."

Ben looks up at clock and finally gets up and walks around bedroom putting on dirty clothes. He goes by mirror to see unshaven face and messy hair, then rushes out.

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN - DAY

Quazum is effortlessly crawling around the roof and adjusting solar panels as Gabriel looks on.

GABRIEL

Do they look dirty? What are you doing up there?

QUAZUM

I'm adjusting photovoltaic angles.

GABRIEL

Is that the problem? Will that get us more 'lectricity?

QUAZUM

It's just a small adjustment. Power will continue to be high through the sunny day and slow down under afternoon clouds.

GABRIEL

What about the dirty panels? I can get some soap!

QUAZUM

That's not a problem. Rain will clean debris this afternoon, and we'll be receiving full power tomorrow.

Lightning strikes, and thunder roars. Quazum races down the ladder and onto the porch as rain begins to fall.

GABRIEL

Where did you learn all that hi-tech stuff!

QUAZUM

I'm just weird.

GABRIEL

Don't say that. You're a normal boy.

QUAZUM

I'm invisible, I can climb trees, and I like to eat bugs. I'm weird.

GABRIEL

Everyone's got different tastes.

QUAZUM

And I don't look like you and Mom.

GABRIEL

How do you know it's not me and your Mom that look different?

QUAZUM

No one has skin like mine.

GABRIEL

You're a normal kid. Now drop it.

Quazum sits deep in thought examining his strange invisible hands, as Gabriel thinks. Rain pours down.

INT. NEW USED CARS - DAY

Showroom is crowded. Paul, the boss, is out discussing cars with patrons. Older couple and Brenda and Mary are waiting.

Ben walks in looking sloppy and goes straight for the coffee. Paul quickly hurries over.

PAUL

You're late again! And we've got customers lined up. And you're a mess! I won't continue putting up with this.

BEN

Sorry I'm late. There was traffic, and I couldn't...

PAUL

I don't want to hear excuses! Just get out there!

Ben is thinking as he carries his coffee over to Brenda and Mary and pretends to be sincere.

BEN

So do you ladies see the car you're looking for?

MARY

We just want to know details about the VW we talked about last night.

BRENDA

Can you give us a historical value?

BEN

(reciting)

The Volkswagen Beetle started in 1938, then changed its style in the 1970's. The original shape and design has never been duplicated.

MARY

So what kind of deal can we get?

Ben stops the sales talk, thinks, and gets serious.

BEN

I want to ask you girls a few questions. What else can you tell me about Chris Evans and SEA?

BRENDA

Space Exploration? Why?

BEN

You said you knew his wife.

MARY

Yeah, she's my cousin. They started dating in high school.

BRENDA

And Chris started working at SEA in college... They got married when he got back from Quazmopolis.

MARY

Why do you care about my cousin?

Ben thinks as he listens, then turns to the exit door.

BRENDA

So, what about the Volkswagen?

Manager Paul walks over as Ben is walking out.

PAUL

Ben! Are you assisting these girls?

BEN

Sorry. I gotta go.

PAUL

If you walk out that door now, you'll never be welcome back! Ben? Come back!

Ben continues out, and everyone looks confused.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN - NIGHT

Rain is pouring down outside. Lightning flashes and thunder strikes. Lacy is in the kitchen frying up the catfish, and Gabriel is opening raw oysters.

Quazum is sitting quiet thinking and seems depressed when Lacy walks over.

LACY

That rain is soaking up the whole road back here. Quazum, maybe you can check the brakes on the car.

GABRIEL

Quazum adjusted the solar panels so we're getting more power now. Right?

LACY

Do you have enough salt water? I mixed some fresh this morning.

GABRIEL

Nothing better than Lacy's catfish! She's saving up red beans and rice for tomorrow!

Quazum finally looks up.

QUAZUM

So, who's my father?

Lacy is angry as she looks back at Gabriel.

GABRIEL

That's your Mom's personal business. That don't involve you.

QUAZUM

My dad is someone I have a right to know. I want to know who's my real father... and my real mother!

GABRIEL

Your Mom is a scientist that went exploring in space. She risked her life for you. Just let it be.

LACY

Quazum, we're just looking out for you.

QUAZUM

I need to know... Who am I? What am I?

LACY

When the time comes, I'll tell you all about my past. And everything I know about you. You just have to wait.

Quazum is quiet and looks down. Lacy and Gabriel continue eating awkwardly.

QUAZUM

Can I be excused?

GABRIEL

No, this is a classic cajun dinner. It's your mom's famous fried catfish.

Quazum sits motionless.

LACY

It's okay, Quazum. You can go.

Quazum walks into the bedroom and closes the door. Lacy and Gabriel are quiet.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Ben is clean shaven, wearing clean clothes and drives up in a clean car. Ben climbs out, straightens his tie and walks in.

INT. SEA BUILDING

Blanche, the receptionist, puts down phone and stares at Ben as he walks up to her desk.

BLANCHE
Is that who I think it is?

BEN
Good morning, Blanche.

BLANCHE
I don't believe it! Welcome back!

BEN
I'm just here to see Dr. Palmer.

Blanche types into computer screen as Ben sits down.

BLANCHE
This place hasn't been the same since you and Lacy left. What happened? You both just disappeared!

BEN
Oh... I don't know... Lots of stuff...

Dr. Palmer suddenly opens door and walks out with a smile.

PALMER
Mr. Ben Thomas? It's been a long time!

BEN
Hello Dr. Palmer. I just have a few questions.

PALMER
Come on in.

INT. SEA HALLWAY

Dr. Palmer and Ben walk down the hallway, and SEA employees (Alice and Chris) look on surprised.

ALICE
Hello Ben! Welcome back!

BEN
Hi.

CHRIS
We miss you and Lacy both. What are you guys up to?

BEN
Oh, I don't know...

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE

Ben walks in and sits down, and Dr. Palmer closes the door.

PALMER

So how can I help you?

BEN

I read online that Lacy quit after the last Quazmopolis mission... I'm just wondering what she's doing now.

PALMER

That was a long time ago. Lacy was given the option of ending her pregnancy and staying on. She chose to quit, and have her baby.

BEN

So who was the father?

PALMER

Well, the father was never identified. The baby had to have been conceived before she left.

BEN

Doesn't make sense... We did have sex, but we used birth control.

PALMER

You know, even with birth control, there's always a chance of conception.

Ben thinks for a beat, then finally gets up and hurries out.

PALMER (CONT'D)

So where are you going?

BEN

I gotta find her.

Dr. Palmer thinks.

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND - DAY

SFX: BAM! BAM! BAM!

Gabriel fires gun into trees and races across the marsh as he reloads gun and looks down the barrel.

GABRIEL

I'll get you today. Ain't no way you
gettin' by me.

Gabriel spins around pointing gun down as ugly rat runs
across the mud.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I ain't wasting no shells on you.

Invisible Quazum is quietly climbing trees, moving branches,
and blending in. Gabriel quickly spins around pointing the
gun into the trees where Quazum remains motionless.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I got you, Quazum! I know you're up
there... somewhere.

Gabriel hears another sound from the old swampland, spins
around and shoots again.

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Lacy is sweeping the porch and hears the continuing gun fire.
She looks annoyed and yells out.

LACY

I told you, Dad. No firing shots!

EXT. BACK BAYOU ROADS

Ben is driving slowly down the old highway seeing swamp area
with big trees and moss hanging down.

CAR (V/O)

"Property on left is registered to
Meaux family but is not filed with
Department of Tax and License."

Ben turns off car map audio and pulls over. Ben looks around
curiously and climbs out of the car.

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND

Gabriel is carrying his rifle through the swamps looking up
into the trees and studying strange footprints in the mud. No
sound or movement is seen across the swamp area. Birds fly
out making sounds in the trees above, and Gabriel swings gun
around again.

GABRIEL

I know you're up there. Just come down slowly, and I won't shoot.

Invisible Quazum slowly climbs down the side of the big tree, making noise and shaking branches.

QUAZUM

I surrender, Grandpa.

GABRIEL

Yeah! I knew you were up there. I saw footprints and broken sticks.

QUAZUM

It's getting late, and I kinda have to go to the bathroom.

Ben hears the voices and walks up with a friendly smile.

BEN

Howdy... My name is Ben, and I...

Gabriel and Quazum spin around and see Ben making his way up the path. Quazum quickly runs over to hide next to a tree.

Gabriel quickly points his gun at confused Ben.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm from Space Exploration... And I'm looking for a Miss Lacy Meaux?

Gabriel fires a shot at Ben's feet, then steps out looking down the barrel of his shotgun. Ben stops and raises both hands in fear.

GABRIEL

Get off my land! Or you die.

BEN

But... I just need information...

GABRIEL

This is your last warning!

Ben looks up in disbelief before Gabriel fires another shot.

Ben then turns and runs. He climbs through the fence, jumps into his car, and drives away.

Quazum then walks up and is confused.

QUAZUM

Why did you shoot? He knows Mom. Might be her friend.

GABRIEL

Cuz he was trespassing.

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Quazum runs up to Lacy outside followed by Gabriel.

QUAZUM

Mom! We saw somebody! And he asked about you! Grandpa shot at him, and he ran away!

LACY

Why did you shoot the gun?

GABRIEL

We didn't know what he wanted! I just tried to scare him.

LACY

I told you not to fire shots.

QUAZUM

They're just rubber bullets.

LACY

Doesn't matter. I think Grandpa just 'opened a can of worms'.

EXT. GUNS-R-US STORE - DAY

Ben nervously drives into the parking lot of a gun store.

Sign in the window highlights special prices on shotguns and rifles. Sign reads, "Guns Come With Free Box of Bullets".

Ben climbs out and nervously walks in.

INT. GUNS-R-US

BUDDY, the salesman, steps out from behind the counter as Ben enters and looks around.

BUDDY

What can I help you with? You looking for a new hunting rifle? Maybe a new Santa Ana shotgun?

Ben ignores questions and continues.

BUDDY (CONT'D)

We got a special deal on AR-14's. You interested in a 12-round blast rifle? Shells included?

BEN

I just want a simple handgun.

BUDDY

A pistol? Well, you've come to the right place. We got a deal on a basic twenty-four caliber, fully loaded.

Ben nervously nods, and Buddy begins ringing it up on cash register.

BEN

It's just for self-defense. I don't really...

BUDDY

Self-defense?

BEN

Yeah, just for some protection. A guy took a shot at me...

BUDDY

Hey, I know the sheriff and some of his boys. You want some help?

Ben looks confused and considers.

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND - DAY

Lacy drags barbed wire fence posts and blocks access to dirt road. Gabriel reluctantly moves branches and tree limbs, and Quazum helps.

LACY

Hide all signs of the gravel road.

GABRIEL

What's this gonna do? He knows we're here.

Lacy lays down leaves to cover driveway entrance.

QUAZUM

Mom, why are we doing this? Just let me talk to him.

Lacy points at signs on trees and fence. "No Trespassing" and "Shoot First, Ask Questions Later".

LACY

Quazum! Take down those signs.

GABRIEL

My signs are to keep trespassers out!
It's what we need!

LACY

They just draw more attention.

QUAZUM

I can get 'em.

Quazum quickly climbs trees and easily pulls down nailed-in signs. Lacy continues cleaning as Gabriel watches.

EXT. BACK BAYOU ROAD - DAY

Ben nervously drives down old highway toward Meaux property followed by SHERIFF NEIL and police cars. Ben drives by the same covered entrance looking around. Cops follow confused.

CAR (V/O)

"Property is registered to Meaux family but is not filed..."

Ben looks confused and makes a U-turn. He then turns off radio and pulls to a stop. Police follow.

EXT. BACK BAYOU HOME - DAY

Lacy nervously hides plants and decorations around the cabin. Quazum tries to help. Gabriel looks on.

LACY

Cover up those panels on the roof.

QUAZUM

I can hide 'em with moss and leaves.

GABRIEL

So now we're giving up 'lectricity?

QUAZUM

Panels will just be out of sight till
the next rain.

Quazum grabs a handful of leaves and moss and quickly climbs
up the side of the house.

Lacy turns to Gabriel and is very serious.

LACY

Okay Dad... You don't have a car. You
live all alone. And you've been living
off the land for a long time.

GABRIEL

I ain't committed no crimes.

LACY

And you haven't seen me in a long
time. Understand?

GABRIEL

And what if he ain't satisfied with
that? Can I shoot 'em then?

Gabriel picks up his shotgun.

LACY

No! No guns!

QUAZUM

Maybe he's looking for me?

GABRIEL

Ain't no one knows you even exist.

LACY

Quazum, you're staying with me. And
just be nice, Dad. No suspicion.

Gabriel reluctantly puts gun down and walks out.

EXT. BACK BAYOU ENTRANCE

Ben examines blocked off fence with dirt and grass covering
the entrance. Police cars park, and SHERIFF NEIL climbs out.

NEIL

This ain't it. Meaux's house got a
driveway.

BEN
I'm sure this is where I went in.

POLICE #1
And his driveway's got 'No
Trespassing' signs.

Ben examines marsh and leafy surface. Sheriff Neil kicks dirt off exposing gravel road.

BEN
Just wait outside the gate. I just
want to ask a few questions.

NEIL
Fine. We can wait.

Policemen watch as Ben walks slowly down the muddy path looking around old trees and moss.

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND

Gabriel is hiding behind trees when he sees Ben nervously walking up the path and towards the cabin.

Gabriel suddenly steps out from behind the trees with the bright sun behind him.

GABRIEL
What you want?

BEN
Hello. You must be Gabriel.

GABRIEL
Who wants to know?

BEN
My name is Ben. I'm from Space
Exploration, and I'm just looking for
one of the scientists... Lacy Meaux?

GABRIEL
That ain't got nothing to do with my
swampland. You just trespassing on my
property.

BEN
I just need information... Do you know
where Lacy might be living now? Or how
I can get in touch?

GABRIEL
I ain't seen that girl in a long time.

BEN
I'm a friend, and I'm just...

GABRIEL
You're trespassing. And I'm gonna to
give you three seconds to get off my
land. One!

Ben reaches into his pocket and nervously grabs his pistol.

BEN
I'm not leaving, Mr. Meaux. I have
questions.

GABRIEL
Two!

Ben holds up the gun, and Gabriel suddenly jumps behind
trees.

SFX: POW!

In a panic, Ben fires a shot.

EXT. BACK BAYOU STREET

Sheriff Neil and police look up when they hear the shot and
begin racing through the barbed wire fence.

POLICEMAN #1
(into radio)
"Gunfire in confrontation with Gabriel
Meaux. Immediate back-up needed!"

EXT. BACK BAYOU SWAMPLAND

Gabriel is lying on his back and covered with blood over
chest as Ben nervously walks up.

BEN
I'm sorry, Mr. Meaux. I just want to
see Lacy. I didn't mean to shoot.

GABRIEL
(struggling to talk)
You leave them alone.

BEN

Them?

GABRIEL

Leave 'em both alone!

Gabriel drops his head and appears dead as blood continues pouring from his chest.

Sheriff Neil and other police rush up and check Gabriel's heart. Ben stands up deep in thought.

NEIL

Did he have a gun?

POLICEMAN #3

He's unarmed.

Sheriff Neil pulls out pistol from his holster and puts it in the hand of Gabriel.

NEIL

He was shot in self-defense.

Ben is confused as police race by with guns and rifles towards cabin. Ben stands up.

NEIL

Keep your guns drawn, and fire weapons only in retaliation.

BEN

Stop! Sheriff, this is a mistake!

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Lacy hears gunshots and commotion outside. She races around the house turning off lights and grabs Gabriel's rifle.

QUAZUM

What do I do? I know they're looking for me.

LACY

You stay undercover. You are not to be seen. Understand?

QUAZUM

Why?

LACY

Take your hat off, and hide! Now!

Quazum rips off hat and runs into bedroom. He looks around the room, and squats next to the bedside table.

LACY (CONT'D)

Under no circumstances are you to be discovered. You don't move!

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Police slowly surround the cabin when Sheriff Neil speaks into a speaker.

NEIL

(yelling)

"Mr. Gabriel Meaux pulled weapon on police and was shot! The cabin is now surrounded! Please give yourself up! And step out with your hands up!"

Lights shine through windows, and cabin appears empty. Police begin slowly moving in before Ben runs past.

BEN

Just let me talk. No guns.

Policemen look around, before Sheriff Neil nods giving Ben the okay sign. Ben then nervously walks up to the front door.

BEN (CONT'D)

Is anyone inside? My name is Ben. Ben Thomas, and I'm looking for Lacy Meaux. I just need information.

Ben gets no response, knocks again and tries to look through window.

BEN (CONT'D)

I worked with Lacy. I'm just a friend.

After no response Sheriff Neil waves officers in again.

When front door slowly begins to open, the police stop. Ben waves them off and walks in slowly with his hands up.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Ben looks nervously around the empty room before Lacy steps out with shotgun pointed right between the eyes of Ben.

LACY

What do you want?

BEN

Lacy? Is that you? It's me. Ben. I just want to talk.

LACY

You got no business here. Where's my dad?

BEN

Gabriel? I'm sorry. He got shot, but they're rushing him to a hospital now. I'm sorry.

LACY

Damn you! We were doing fine, and you come here and destroy our lives.

BEN

Lacy, I screwed up. I know I did. I just want another chance.

LACY

You had your chance. It's over.

BEN

I spoke to Dr. Palmer, and he explained you were pregnant... before Quazmopolis. (BEAT) I want to... meet my child.

LACY

Your child? Ha! My personal life is none of your business.

BEN

You don't have to marry me. I just want to help, any way I can.

LACY

I want you and these cops to go away. And get my Dad back! That's what I want.

Ben falls on his knees and begins crying.

BEN

Lacy, I'm sorry... I'll do anything...

LACY
God dammit!

Lacy finally turns and carries shotgun over to the door.

LACY
Hey! It's all over...

SFX: POW!

EXT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

When Lacy's shadow appears in doorway holding the gun, one nervous policeman fires a shot. Lacy goes down, and more guns fire at the cabin.

INT. BACK BAYOU CABIN

Lacy tries to crawl with a big hole in the side of her head and part of skull hanging off. Blood is pouring out. Ben rushes to the door yelling and waving his arms.

BEN
Stop! Don't shoot! She's unarmed!

When Ben turns back, he sees Lacy lying on the ground with the side of her head open and bleeding, and her eyes are partially closed. Ben walks towards her and kneels down.

BEN (CONT'D)
Lacy, you'll be okay. I promise. You
and your dad will get your lives back.

QUAZUM
Mom? Are you okay?

Ben spins around to see the shadow of invisible Quazum walking across the room to his bleeding mother. Ben stands up and looks on in shock.

Quazum leans over Lacy and carefully begins reattaching and cleaning her skull.

BEN
(confused)
Who are you? What are you?

Quazum continues reattaching skull by using tongue, saliva, and rapid moving fingers to clean and stop the bleeding. Lacy looks up, then turns to Ben.

LACY
 (mumbling)
 This is... Quazum.

QUAZUM
 Just keep still, Mom. I can fix this.

Lacy struggles to remain conscious as Quazum works.

BEN
 Quazum?

LACY
 From Quazmopolis... My baby... And
 you're not the father.

QUAZUM
 I'm still your son, Mom. Just keep
 still.

LACY
 You're a healthy smart boy, Quazum.
 (turns to Ben)
 Ben, take care of him. I love you,
 Quazum. Good-bye.

Lacy then leans her head back and closes her eyes. Quazum
 continues rapidly treating the injury.

QUAZUM
 Hang in there, Mom. You'll be okay!

Ben looks on in amazement as Quazum rapidly operates.

Front door suddenly swings open, and police rush in and see
 Lacy lying down. Invisible Quazum jumps up and rushes to
 window.

Ben examines Lacy's sealed skull as Sheriff Neil walks over.

NEIL
 Search the bedrooms and the closets!
 Everywhere!

BEN
 Why did you shoot?

NEIL
 We were trying to protect you. This
 woman had a gun pointed at an innocent
 civilian and made threats.

BEN

She wasn't going to shoot...

Sheriff Neil walks over to rifle lying next to Lacy's body. He picks it up and fires a shot through the window.

NEIL

She did shoot. One shot.

Ben spins around looking for Quazum as police race in and out of rooms shining lights.

Quazum finally jumps out of the broken window and races into the marsh. Several police hear sounds of broken window and spin around confused. They run over shining flashlights but see nothing.

POLICEMAN #1

(into phone)

We've got a man with one shot to the heart, and a lady with one bullet to the head... Skull reattached... We need cars and ambulance to pick up the bodies.

Ben remains deep in thought, then walks over and looks out the window, noticing slight motion in mud, bushes and trees.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Empty chairs are gathered in an old graveyard. Ben is sitting alone. A cheap coffin stands next to a MINISTER speaking from a podium, and reading from a notebook.

MINISTER

Gabriel Meaux was a proud man living alone in the Back Bayou. He had one daughter, and they both had a bit of misfortune.

Minister reads paper to himself, then flips page and continues reading.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Gabriel Meaux will join his wife. May they both rest in peace. Amen.

Minister looks at his watch, then walks back to office area.

Ben gets up and walks over, holding back emotion as he leans over Gabriel's coffin.

BEN

I'm sorry, Mr. Meaux. I truly loved your daughter, and I will spend my life helping your grandson... after I find him.

Ben suddenly hears a crying voice from behind and spins around. He looks around graveyard searching for motion but sees nothing. Ben gets up and walks around.

BEN (CONT'D)

Quazum? I can only imagine what you're going through. You miss your Grandpa and your Mom.

Gravediggers look on confused, then continue digging. Ben listens before finally turning and walking out to his car.

BEN (CONT'D)

We need to talk. I want to help you. I'm here for you.

When Ben drives away, invisible Quazum walks quietly to the grave headstone. Footprints move in the grass as he slowly goes up to the gravediggers.

QUAZUM

Good-bye Grandpa.

Gravediggers are confused when they hear the voice. They stop and stare at slight motion and shadows around the body. Gravediggers then panic.

GRAVEDIGGER #1

Argh!!! It's a ghost!

GRAVEDIGGER #2

Get out of here! Now!

Gravedigger #2 swings shovel hitting Quazum. In fear, Quazum makes sounds and runs across graveyard. Gravediggers look around in shock.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

Dr. Palmer is discussing new mission with group of scientists sitting around a table.

PALMER

This mission is vitally important. New satellite readings show unexplained motion on the surface of Quazmopolis.

CHRIS

Motion has been reported before.

PALMER

I believe there may possibly be a form of insect -- never detected.

OLIVER

No life can survive a daily climate change of a hundred fifty degrees.

CHRIS

I think we should visit a different solar system... There are planets with temperatures and gravity more akin to earth.

Alice walks in.

ALICE

Dr. Palmer? I've got information about Lacy and her father involved in a police confrontation.

PALMER

Lacy? Lacy Meaux?

ALICE

All we know is police went in to ask questions, and her father responded with gunfire. He was shot and killed.

PALMER

Killed?

ALICE

Lacy was shot in the head and is in Emergency Care.

PALMER

Was Ben Thomas involved?

ALICE

Ben? He's not mentioned in the report.

Dr. Palmer rushes out leaving everyone confused.

EXT. BACK BAYOU MEAUX HOME

Ben drives up, parks and walks onto swampland looking around curiously.

BEN

Quazum? It's me... Ben. I just want to help. Please. Come out.

Ben walks up to where Gabriel was shot and examines the blood, then continues toward the house.

BEN (CONT'D)

I was very close to your mother. I just want to help you.

Ben walks into the cabin and sees the bloody floor.

BEN (CONT'D)

Your mother asked me to help you. You can trust me.

Ben sees the roaches in the aquarium and notices fishing poles and guns around the cabin.

BEN (CONT'D)

Quazum, I loved your mother. You can hide. But my entire life is now dedicated to you. I mean that.

Ben examines rubber bullets and thinks about what to do next.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS - DAY

Wearing no clothes and scared, Quazum walks along the sidewalk of big city streets hiding in alleys, getting bumped and continually trying to remain unseen. Quazum approaches a grocery store and peaks in.

INT. GROCERY STORE

People are walking in and out and pushing carts. Quazum is partially invisible when he jumps into the base of a shopping cart that rolls in.

NANCY, a cashier, notices the unusual motion.

NANCY

Hey, did you see something in that cart?

CO-WORKER

What? I ain't seen nothin'.

When cart stops, Quazum jumps out and climbs shelves knocking down items.

Nancy notices again and closes her register. She then walks down a shopping aisle looking around curiously. Quazum nervously hides on a shelf and remains still as Nancy walks over.

Nancy stops and stares directly into Quazum's invisible eyes.

QUAZUM

Hello.

NANCY

Ahh! It's a ghost! I heard it! We got a ghost in aisle six!

Nancy runs away. Quazum, in fear, climbs over shelves to hide. Employees and shoppers rush over and look around.

CO-WORKER

I don't see no ghost!

NANCY

It was next to a cereal box! It was invisible, but I heard it!

Quazum climbs down and grabs a box of salt, then runs past confused customers, and out the front door.

CUSTOMER

It was a ghost, and it stole salt! I'm calling the police!

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALLEY - DAY

Invisible Quazum hurries down dark alley to a water tap. He turns it on and takes a big gulp, then pours salt in his mouth, swishes and swallows.

Homeless people in the dark alley look confused. Quazum then kneels down and crawls alongside licking the wall and eating small bugs.

A homeless man, HARRY, notices the strange motion of salt and walks over. When he reaches out to touch, Quazum pushes him away and scares him.

HARRY

A ghost! I saw a ghost!

Harry drops his half-full whiskey bottle and runs down the alley. Quazum looks around, then picks up alcohol bottle and pours in salt.

INT. LOCAL NEWS ROOM - DAY

NEWS ANCHOR #1 walks out to group of REPORTERS and a PRODUCER who are typing on computers and editing video.

ANCHOR #1

Do we have anything interesting for tonight's news? Anything new?

REPORTER #1

A birthday party for a 98-year-old man. We've got video of him blowing out candles.

PRODUCER

A fire was reported in Riverside.

ANCHOR #1

What was the damage?

PRODUCER

Well, the fire was put out before any damage.

REPORTER #2

And we don't have video.

ANCHOR

Do we have anything that can draw an audience? Maybe get ratings?

REPORTER #1

Reports of ghost sightings at a funeral and a little grocery store. But witnesses have no credibility, and no video.

ANCHOR #1

I believe them! Let's get interviews, computer animations! That's our top story!

News reporters and cameramen rush out. News anchor smiles.

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Palmer is sitting at his desk searching through files and touching his computer screen.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Father of former SEA scientist, Gabriel Meaux, was shot by officers in self-defense. Meaux took one bullet to chest and was pronounced dead."

PALMER

And Lacy? How's Lacy Meaux?

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Lacy Meaux took one bullet to skull. Bleeding from head was reported to be unnaturally slow, with unexplained reattachment and treatment on site. Suffered major brain damage. Critical condition. Little chance of survival."

Palmer leans back, deep in thought. Computer continues.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Other local news involves city council member accused of tax evasion. One DUI was reported last night. And multiple reports of ghost sightings."

PALMER

(spins around surprised)
Ghosts sightings?

COMPUTER (V/O)

Ghost sightings were made at local grocery store involving theft of salt.

Dr. Palmer is deep in thought and begins pushing buttons and searching on the computer.

INT. SEA HALLWAY - DAY

Scientists are gathered around outside of Palmer's office. Doors are closed.

CHRIS

Why is Palmer so worked up over two ex-employees?

OLIVER

I don't believe he even realizes the money this mission is costing.

Phone on desk of Alice rings. Palmer's face appears on screen when she pushes button.

PALMER (V/O)

"I want an immediate flight to airport nearest Back Bayou, Louisiana."

ALICE

Doctor, the Quazmopolis mission is scheduled in just a few days!

JENKINS

We need additional preparation...

PALMER

Schedule soonest flight out!

Palmer hangs up. Alice and scientists look confused.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT

Lobby is crowded with reporters when Sheriff Neil walks in. He is surprised to see reporters and cameras.

REPORTER #1

Sheriff? What can you tell us about the ghost sightings?

NEIL

Ghosts?

REPORTER #2

Can your office confirm sightings at the graveyard where Gabriel Meaux was buried?

NEIL

Graveyard? Reports of ghosts is a common claim in every graveyard.

REPORTER #3

What about ghost sightings at the local supermarket?

NEIL

There are no respectable reports. And there will be no investigation.

Sheriff Neil turns and struggles past reporters and into office area. Reporters try to follow.

EXT. BACK BAYOU OLD ROADS

Ben drives slowly along empty Back Bayou roads next to big trees. His window is rolled down, and he is yelling out. Light music is playing on his radio.

BEN

Quazum? Quazum! It's me Ben. I just want to help!

An old truck pulls up behind Ben's slow moving car. Driver is angry and honks loud horn.

SFX: HONK! HONK!

Ben waves and pulls over. The truck passes, and Ben thinks as radio music ends and an announcer begins.

RADIO V/O

"Welcome back to the classic cajun music station! We've got more reports of ghosts in the Back Bayou!"

Ben looks up surprised, then turns up the radio and listens.

RADIO V/O

"We've been talking about ghost sightings from the graveyards and grocery stores... And now we're getting new reports of some homeless ghosts downtown! Can you believe it?"

"Downtown" plays on the radio. Ben thinks, then puts the car in gear and takes off.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME

Sheriff Neil and several police officers pull into funeral home, then walk into the front door.

INT. FUNERAL HOME

Neil walks in and looks around. Reverend is sitting behind a table and jumps up.

NEIL

I want to talk to someone about the Gabriel Meaux funeral.

REVEREND

No one saw ghosts! And we're not answering anymore questions!

EXT. GRAVEYARD

Sheriff Neil walks through, and reverend and policemen follow. The same two gravediggers are patting down dirt.

NEIL

What did you witness at the burial of Gabriel Meaux?

REVEREND

We've already been questioned by the news, and given full reports.

NEIL

Do you think you saw a ghost? Gabriel Meaux's ghost?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

Actually sounded more like a kid.

GRAVEDIGGER #2

And I think he said something about his Grandpa.

NEIL

"Grandpa?"

Neil is surprised and thinks. Policemen are also confused.

INT. JET

Dr. Palmer is uncomfortably riding in the center seat and is talking on his phone and reading from his computer.

PALMER

(into phone)

Have Eddie use solar jet bunkers underneath for excess storage. (BEAT) What? Yes, I've heard about the ghosts. (BEAT) No, I'm not concerned.

Palmer hangs up and goes back to his computer. Passenger #1 pats Dr. Palmer's arm.

PASSENGER #1

You heard about the ghost sightings too? Hunh?

PALMER

Yes. I am aware.

PASSENGER #2

My uncle is a cop down there, and he said the ghost is out looking for his Grandpa.

Passengers continue talking. Palmer thinks, then politely goes back to his computer.

EXT. BIG CITY

Ben drives slowly along old downtown city streets and pulls over. Ben rolls down his window when he sees HOMELESS MAN #1 and HOMELESS MAN #2 begging for money.

BEN

Excuse me. I want to know if you've witnessed anything... strange.

HOMELESS MAN #1

I see strange things everyday, man.

BEN

Have there been any unusual sightings? Shadows? Or unexplained motion? Maybe a ghost?

HOMELESS MAN #2

Oh, another ghost hunter.

BEN

Just following up on some reports.

HOMELESS MAN #1

Alcoholics and druggies are always seeing ghosts. Nothing new.

BEN

Any idea where?

Homeless Man #1 looks around at a lot of homeless men around the streets.

Ben then parks his car and walks out nervously.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT - DAY

Dr. Palmer pulls carry-on luggage through New Orleans airport and waves down first taxi. Driver is RICO.

RICO
You need a lift?

Dr. Palmer loads suitcase and climbs in.

PALMER
Take me to the Tickfawe Hospital.

RICO
That's kind of far...

PALMER
As fast as possible.

RICO
Yes sir!

Taxi takes off speeding down small roads.

INT. GROCERY MART - DAY

Sheriff Neil walks in followed by police. Nancy and workers are checking out customers as Neil walks up.

MANAGER
(laughing)
Welcome to the 'ghostery' Mart,
Sheriff.

Sheriff Neil walks over to Nancy.

NEIL
Are you the one that witnessed the
ghost?

NANCY
I told the news already. I saw
something move, and it said 'hello'.

MANAGER
And that ghost stole some salt!

NANCY
I told reporters everything.

NEIL
So what did the ghost sound like?

MANAGER
It was a ghost!

NANCY

Actually it sounded like a little boy.

Neil is surprised and thinks, then turns and walks out.

NANCY (CONT'D)

I don't know. There was yelling and everyone running in the aisles.

EXT. TICKFAWE HOSPITAL - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Rico drives in to the dirty hospital, and Dr. Palmer rushes out of the taxi.

PALMER

Just wait here.

RICO

I can wait all night if you want, but the meter's running.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM

Dr. Palmer walks through waiting room to the receptionist.

PALMER

I'm here to see Miss Lacy Meaux.

RECEPTIONIST

Are you family?

PALMER

I am a certified doctor and need to perform immediate examination.

RECEPTIONIST

She was shot in the head. She's brain-dead. Doctor said "no visitors".

PALMER

Tell the doctor I'm not leaving.

Confused receptionist walks back, and Dr. Palmer sits down.

When an older man limps out of office into waiting room area, Dr. Palmer jumps up to hold door, then walks in.

NURSE

You can't come in here! You are not authorized!

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Dr. Palmer walks down the hall seeing rooms filled with dirty patients and reads from files on doors.

DR. WINSTON rushes out of his lounge area.

WINSTON

I don't know who you think you are.
But Lacy Meaux's body is only
surviving due to life support. She has
no brains left.

PALMER

I am the formal doctor of Miss Lacy
from Space Exploration. Any attempt to
obstruct access to official
examination will result in criminal
penalization. Excuse me.

Doctors and nurses are confused and step back.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Dr. Palmer walks in and sees Lacy surrounded by other dying patients. He immediately examines bloody bandages around head and medical attachments as Winston and nurses look on.

PALMER

Has Lacy Meaux received homeopathic
cranial?

WINSTON

She's been given treatment for
hairline fracture of her brainstem.

PALMER

What are occipital measurements?

WINSTON

We did the best with her occipital
lobe with what we have.

Dr. Palmer pulls personal computer phone up to his ear.

PALMER

(into phone)
I'd like to speak with Dr. Kjell,
chief neurosurgeon.

WINSTON

What are you doing? This is my patient now!

Live shot on phone pops up suddenly of Dr. Kjell wearing surgery gear looking into monitor on screen.

KJELL

(on phone)

"Hello Dr. Palmer."

PALMER

I have an emergency. Miss Lacy Meaux took a bullet to the skull with damage to left cortex.

Palmer holds up phone camera showing Lacy's bleeding skull.

KJELL

Looks like pericardial trauma. May need partial implant. I'm on my way.

Dr. Palmer hangs up phone and begins unwrapping bloody bandages. Dr. Winston and nurses look on amazed.

EXT. BIG CITY ALLEY - NIGHT

Ben is walking through dark alley with a flashlight and walks up to HARRY and another HOMELESS MAN #3.

BEN

Hello. I just want to ask about a possible sighting? Did you see anything unusual?

HOMELESS MAN #3

Everything's unusual here, man.

BEN

An unexplained form of motion?

HARRY

I thought I saw something move, but there was nothing there.

BEN

Where was that?

HARRY

It was down that alley. There!

Ben turns and walks curiously down the street.

HOMELESS MAN #3

Hey! Can you spare some change?

EXT. ALLEY

Ben walks up alleyways between buildings and calls out. Homeless bodies, wrapped in old clothes and old blankets, look on.

BEN

Quazum? Quazum, I just want to help you.

Ben finally spots motionless blanket at back of alley and approaches cautiously. Ben picks up empty whiskey bottle and smells. Ben then leans down.

Homeless Man and Harry look on.

BEN (CONT'D)

Excuse me. I just want to ask a few questions.

Ben pulls off blanket and sees the invisible body underneath begin to move.

HARRY

That's the ghost! I saw it!

Homeless man and Harry run away in fear. Other homeless men look around and are confused. Ben kneels down.

BEN

Quazum, it's me. Ben. This is all my fault. I just want to help you.

Ben hugs unconscious Quazum and is near tears in the dark, cold alleyway.

INT. HOSPITAL PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Lacy is lying unconscious with freshly wrapped bandages around her head. Dr. Palmer is performing tests with wires attached to Lacy's brain, chest and body.

Dr. Kjell pokes his head in.

KJELL

Dr. Palmer? Is this our patient?

PALMER

Lacy Meaux took a bullet to the head.
We see part of the skull came off and
was unexplainably reattached. Police
say this is how she was found.

Dr. Kjell walks over and immediately begins examining.

KJELL

Hmmm... Interesting. It appears
cerebellum reattachment was performed.
But I've got to examine detached
cortex. Possible implant imperative.

PALMER

Whatever it takes.

Dr. Kjell, without hesitation, begins cutting and opening
Lacy's skull, gaining access to brain. Dr. Palmer assists,
and nurses look on in amazement.

KJELL

Oh, I remember Miss Lacy. She had the
brain injury and saw hallucinations
after the Quazmopolis mission.

PALMER

Hallucinations?

KJELL

She claimed to have seen aliens.

PALMER

Why wasn't that reported?

KJELL

Hallucination is a common side effect
of all brain injuries.

Dr. Palmer thinks as Kjell removes portion of Lacy's skull.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Harry leads GANG MEMBER #1, GANG MEMBER #2, and GANG MEMBER
#3 down alley to Ben and Quazum. Harry points to Ben.

HARRY

That's him!

GANG MEMBER #1

This is the guy? So where's the ghost?

HARRY
I think it's hiding under the blanket.

GANG MEMBER #2
Hey! You got a ghost in there?

BEN
I'm alone here.

Gang Member #3 walks over and tries to examine the blanket.

GANG MEMBER #3
What you got under there?

Ben pushes him away, and gang members pull out weapons.

BEN
Just leave me alone. Please.

HARRY
There! I saw something move! You see
it?

Gang Member #2 walks over and tries to lift the blanket.

GANG MEMBER #2
What are you hiding?

BEN
Please. There's no ghost.

Ben pushes back and is stabbed in the arm with a knife, then struck in the head with the bar. Ben falls unconscious.

Gang Member #2 then walks over to examine under the blanket.

GANG MEMBER #3
Take his wallet. And his keys.

Invisible Quazum suddenly jumps up making noises and shadows.

Gang members step back in shock before attacking with knife and swinging a bar. Quazum pulls knife out of Gang Member #1's hand and pushes down others.

Quazum then picks up Ben and quickly carries him up the side of the building as group looks on in amazement.

INT. NEWS STUDIO - MORNING

National News Anchor is on air live. Computer generated

animated video of ghosts plays on screen.

ANCHOR #1

"First reports of ghost sightings were made at the home of Gabriel Meaux in the Back Bayou. Meaux lived with just his daughter. Police saw unexplained movements around the property. Then at Meaux's funeral, a voice was heard by men digging graves, calling out for his 'Grandpa'. New sightings have been made in a local grocery store hearing a child's voice. And now reports are being made of the ghost carrying the unidentified man in this video.

Security video shows Ben searching in the dark alleys.

INT. TICKFAWE HOSPITAL - MORNING

Dr. Palmer is watching Ben on television news and thinking.

Dr. Kjell suddenly yells from inside hospital room.

KJELL

Dr. Palmer, I need your help!

INT. TICKFAWE HOSPITAL ROOM

Kjell is performing brain surgery on Lacy and carries over large brain sections as Palmer walks in.

KJELL

This is part of lineal cortex for muscular functions.

PALMER

Is nothing salvageable?

KJELL

For motion and body control, she needs entirely new TBI cortex. But I'll keep as much brainstem as possible.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - TOP OF BUILDING - MORNING

Quazum uses saliva and specially shaped fingers to treat Ben's injuries to head and arm, and Ben begins to wake up.

BEN

Hunh? What are you doing?

QUAZUM

I'm just sealing cuts. Keep still.

BEN

Do I need a doctor?

QUAZUM

No. I've stitched the cut in your arm and damage to skull. You are healing normally.

Ben examines treated injuries on arm and is amazed.

BEN

Do you have medical training?

QUAZUM

I've got a formula in my saliva, which sterilizes and stops bleeding. My dialectal fingers repair injuries and provide stronger grip. You'll be fine.

Quazum walks to edge of building and looks across the city. He steps up on the balcony and is deep in thought.

BEN

Quazum, I was a friend of your Mom. We worked together at Space Exploration. I wanted to marry her.

QUAZUM

Marry?

BEN

Yeah, but I chickened out. I was immature. I promised to make up for my mistake. Now I just want to help you.

QUAZUM

There's nothing you can do.

BEN

I can move to the swampland, the Back Bayou. And I can pay the bills. I'll take care of you there. You can live in peace.

QUAZUM

I won't go back there without Mom and Grandpa.

BEN
 You could move to California with me.
 I've got an apartment, on the beach!
 We can be like a family.

QUAZUM
 No thanks.

BEN
 What then? I'll do anything...

QUAZUM
 I just wanna go home.

BEN
 Home? And where's that?

QUAZUM
 My home is Quazmopolis. I want to
 return to Kepler Solar System and my
 natural family.

Quazum is quiet, and Ben thinks. Ben suddenly gets an idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

Ben is rushing through crowds of people at a busy airport,
 and Quazum is invisible, riding on the wheeled suitcase.

Ben makes a quick turn, and Quazum falls and hits the ground.

QUAZUM
 Oh!

BEN
 (whispering)
 I got you. Everything's fine.

Ben loads him back on top of suitcase and continues. People
 look on curiously.

BEN
 We're fine. I mean, I'm fine. Thank
 you.

INT. AIRPORT CHECK-IN

Ben sends Quazum with luggage through metal scanner.

Ben removes shoes and belt and stands with hands up as security agent performs pat-down search of Ben's body. Security dog stops and sniffs around Quazum, then begins barking.

SFX: BARK! BARK!

Ben runs over.

SECURITY

What are you carrying onto the plane?

BEN

What? It's just a suitcase, with clothes and brush...

Security examines curiously as dog continues barking.

SECURITY

Please open the suitcase.

Ben looks around at waiting passengers and is defensive.

BEN

Okay, there may be a sandwich and chips. I don't know.

Quazum finally reaches out to pet the confused dog till he calms down.

SECURITY

Are there drugs or illegal substance?

BEN

No! There's nothing illegal. And you've got a long line of passengers waiting.

Security thinks for a beat, looks down at his now comfortable dog, then goes to the next suitcase.

SECURITY

Next?

Ben carefully moves Quazum onto the suitcase again and heads for the jet.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Dr. Kjell and Dr. Palmer are performing intense brain surgery on Lacy's open skull.

PALMER
Pericardial treatment shows no
progress in right cerebellum...

KJELL
(suddenly excited)
There! She moved her pinky finger!
Lateral cortex has exposed leverage of
vertical cerebrum. She could regain
motion her whole finger.

PALMER
(pulling off gloves)
Doctor, I must return to Space
Exploration in time for take-off.

KJELL
Not a problem. I will continue
interlace of temporal lobe.

PALMER
Whatever you can do.

Palmer removes mask and walks out, and Dr. Kjell continues.
Dr. Winston follows Palmer up the hallway.

WINSTON
You leaving? Just like that?

PALMER
I have important business.

WINSTON
The Quazmopolis mission?

Dr. Palmer stops and turns around.

PALMER
It's a lot bigger than that.

As Palmer leaves, Dr. Winston is confused.

INT. NATIONAL NEWS - MORNING

REPORTER
"Reports of ghost sightings have
continued across southern Louisiana.
We're getting new reports of
unexplained attacks in downtown
streets of the city."

GANG MEMBER #1

"Ghost was hiding out before he just attacked me and my friends."

GANG MEMBER #2

"And the ghost tried to rob me."

REPORTER

"The ghost stole money?"

GANG MEMBER #3

"Well, he took my knife."

INT. TAXI - MORNING

Ben and Quazum are watching television screen in the taxi and look at each other confused.

EXT. SEA BUILDING - MORNING

Taxi pulls up to Space Exploration entrance. When they come to a stop, Ben climbs out. He carefully walks towards entrance of building, and Quazum nervously follows.

BEN

Just stay close. No sounds. No movement.

INT. SEA LOBBY

Ben walks up to Blanche the receptionist who is on the phone. He is surprised when she opens the door and waves him in.

BLANCE

Come on in. They're expecting you.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Ben is surprised and walks in nervously. Quazum follows closely behind when they walk up. Everyone is busy.

ALICE

Well, look who's here!

BEN

I just wanted to offer my help for today's expedition.

ALICE

Yes. Dr. Palmer called and said you'd be coming in.

BEN
He said that?

ALICE
He went to Back Bayou when he heard
about Lacy's injury...

CHRIS
And he said you are now to be treated
as a full time employee.

Ben awkwardly walks Quazum over to the wall.

BEN
Just keep still and stay quiet.

QUAZUM
But Ben...

BEN
So is there anything I can do to help?

OLIVER
You can measure radiant levels.

ALICE
Or lay out temperature graphs.

BEN
Sure. I can still do that.

Ben walks to computer next to Alice and types "Ben Thomas"
and same password and sees everything still registered.

ALICE
New photos and video are being
recorded by satellite, and we just
need to document signs of motion.

Chris looks curiously at Quazum's shadow, and Ben nervously
sees slight motion. No one else notices.

CHRIS
This mission is an investigation of
possible "moving rocks". Exciting,
hunh?

EXT. CALIFORNIA FREEWAY - MORNING

Taxi is driving slowly on big freeway in traffic.

INT. TAXI

DRIVER is using auto driving service and is laughing as he watches TV on his phone. Dr. Palmer is looking over driver's shoulder.

PALMER

Could you take car off of automatic settings, and just get around the backed-up traffic?

DRIVER

Oh no. We have rules. Cars must maintain automatic steering at all times.

PALMER

So, why have a driver?

DRIVER

I'm just overseeing. That's an important part of our service.

Dr. Palmer opens his laptop, clicks on pictures of SEA, and face of Alice appears.

ALICE

Good morning, Dr. Palmer.

PALMER

Are scientists prepared for press conference?

ALICE

I'm heading over right now. Ben Thomas also showed up to help... just like you predicted.

PALMER

Did he bring anything? Or artifact of some kind?

Alice looks over to Quazum sitting motionless.

ALICE

Nothing I can see.

PALMER

(thinks for a beat)
Quazmopolis mission will continue on schedule.

ALICE
Okay, but...

Dr. Palmer hangs up, and Alice seems confused.

Taxi driver looks back at Dr. Palmer on his computer.

DRIVER
Hey, I'm following that Quazmopolis mission.

PALMER
I must get to SEA before take-off.

DRIVER
Is that where you're going? Why didn't you say so? I can speed around this traffic.

Driver pushes buttons and begins self-driving and speeding around cars.

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM

Disorganized press is going on as Alice walks in. Oliver stands at the mic and tries to read from papers.

OLIVER
(nervous and awkward)
Space Exploration is preparing... for liftoff and mission to Quazmopolis...

REPORTER #1
Where's Palmer?

OLIVER
Dr. Palmer is on personal business.

REPORTER #2
How much will this mission cost?

REPORTER #3
What's an explanation for the new motion detected?

OLIVER
All that is being investigated and will posted.

Reporters continue interrupting and yelling questions. Oliver struggles to maintain control.

Ben looks around, then sneaks out.

INT. SEA HALLWAY

Ben quietly sneaks back to SEA office where Quazum sits motionless, with partially visible shadow. Ben leans down.

BEN

How are you doing? You okay?

QUAZUM

(nervous)

I don't know.

BEN

It's okay. I can get you on board.
You'll be home in about ten hours.

QUAZUM

Quazmopolis?

BEN

I'll load you next to the solar axel,
and you will be placed in cargo.

QUAZUM

You sure you can get me onboard?

BEN

Follow me. And just keep quiet.

Quazum hurries alongside of Ben as he walks out.

EXT. SEA SOLAR JET

Ben walks confidently down hallways and out to solar jet. Scientists and engineers are loading and checking numbers. When Ben finally arrives at solar jet packing, he moves stairs and quietly walks towards the loading zone.

Eddie, the mechanic, steps out.

EDDIE

Hey! All equipment has been weighed
with approved element bearings.

BEN

(mumbling)

Oh! I need to check final seal of
artifacts in Bracket Two... It's all
approved by Dr. Palmer...

EDDIE

Hey, are you the infamous Ben Thomas?
Is that you?

BEN

Yeah, that's me. I promised Dr. Palmer
I'd check artifacts before takeoff.

EDDIE

Yeah? Palmer always has crazy little
specifications.

Ben nervously climbs the portable staircase leading invisible
Quazum onto the solar jet. Eddie is hardly paying attention.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You know, you're a regular topic of
conversation 'round here. You and Lacy
both! You guys ran off and eloped,
right after that last mission.

BEN

Not exactly.

EDDIE

Cause you didn't want the big parties,
and the big ceremony. That's what they
said.

BEN

(whispering to Quazum)
Just remain quiet and motionless.
Blend in with surrounding equipment.

QUAZUM

(nervous)
But how do I get out?

EDDIE

Yeah, I remember I was disappointed.
That was going to be the wedding of
the century...

BEN

(whispering to Quazum)
You can climb out when you get to
Quazmopolis. They'll be pulling out
solar panels.

QUAZUM

I don't know...

EDDIE
Me and the boys were going to hold a
big bachelor party for you...

BEN
(whispers)
Good-bye Quazum.

Ben tries to hug Quazum as he closes the door and climbs
down.

EDDIE
We had girls from the accounting
department all lined up...

BEN
Okay. It looks good. I better go.

Eddie looks confused as Ben quickly walks back inside.

EDDIE
Okay! Let me know if you need
something.

EXT. CALIFORNIA FREEWAY

Taxi is racing in and out of traffic. Palmer is watching
through window and holding on.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Disorganized scientists are rushing around putting on
uniforms and working on computers. Ben sits at computer and
watches nervously.

ALICE
(announcing)
Okay mission crew! Begin boarding.

CHRIS
Let's just wait for Dr. Palmer. Just a
one hour delay!

JENKINS
We can discuss options from space.

ALICE
Palmer insisted the mission leave on
schedule!

OLIVER

But we're not ready. Nothing's ready.

JENKINS

Begin boarding. No debate.

Scientists hurry out, and Ben walks out to press room window.

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM

Ben is deep in thought surrounded by families and reporters. News cameras are shooting video and reporters are broadcasting live.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V/O)

"Solar Jet Forty-Seven-D is now prepared for take-off."

CAMERAMAN

(yelling at Ben)

Excuse me. Move to the side please?

REPORTER #1

You're blocking our shot!

Ben remains motionless watching the solar jet.

EXT. SEA SOLAR JET

Solar jet engines light up and countdown begins.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V/O)

"Solar jet lift off in ten seconds."

REPORTERS

"We now see solar jet engines have started."

Jet suddenly begins to sway back and forth. Everyone notices strange motion. Ben looks confused. Reporters and cameramen focus on problem.

ANNOUNCEMENT (V/O)

"Solar Jet Forty-Seven D is experiencing transient agitation. Please stand by."

Media and crowd watch curiously. Ben looks scared as he stares out the window.

REPORTER #1

"We are now getting reports of an unexplained disturbance."

REPORTER #2

Possible cause of interference is being investigated.

EXT. SOLAR JET

Suddenly, the storage cylinder containing Quazum swings open, and assorted SEA equipment falls out.

REPORTER #5

"We now see an unexplained rejection of transport storage..."

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM

Ben looks on in shock as media continues reporting.

When Ben recognizes motion of invisible Quazum on the ground, Ben runs out of the press room.

INT. SEA OFFICE AREA

Ben hurries down hallway passing scientists and officials.

SCIENTIST

It was just an unsealed storage door.
Not a problem!

Phones are ringing, and Alice is answering questions.

ALICE

No, we're just going to reload storage, and takeoff will just be an extra minute.

EXT. SEA TAKE-OFF

Ben rushes out and runs past Eddie and other engineers.

ENGINEER

Why wasn't the door sealed?

EDDIE

I think I just didn't check it.

ENGINEER

Get it loaded, and resealed!

Ben hurries over to the fallen items and sees motion. Eddie steps up.

EDDIE
 Sorry about that. I guess I didn't
 double check the seal.

BEN
 It's okay.

Ben picks up Quazum and hurries out of sight.

Engineers look on curiously, and news reporters, family and scientists are all confused as the cleanup continues.

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM

REPORTER #3
 "It looks like the crane seal on jet
 cylinder caused unintended discharge."

REPORTER #4
 "We are told Quazmopolis mission will
 commence in just minutes."

EXT. SEA TAKE OFF

Ben carries Quazum to an area out of sight.

BEN
 Everything's going to be okay, Quazum.
 I can get you back on. We just
 gotta...

QUAZUM
 Ben?

Eddie pokes his head out, and Ben looks around.

EDDIE
 You okay?

BEN
 (to Eddie)
 Yeah, I'm fine. I just need a minute.

EDDIE
 Okay.

Eddie walks away.

QUAZUM

Ben? I... I opened the cylinder door.

BEN

You? Why? You were all set.

QUAZUM

(trembling)

I'm scared... I just want to go home.

BEN

I thought Quazmopolis was your home.

QUAZUM

I'm just a kid. I want to go back to the Back Bayou with Mom and Grandpa. That's my home.

Quazum begins to cry in Ben's arms, and Eddie walks back up.

EDDIE

Mr. Thomas? You wanna check the seal?

BEN

Uhhh, no! I gotta go. We're fine.

Ben rushes out carrying Quazum as engineers look confused.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Ben awkwardly carries invisible Quazum past scientists and up the hall.

ALICE

Ben, are you okay?

SCIENTIST

You need some help?

BEN

No, everything's fine.

Ben continues walking at a fast pace. Employees and scientists look confused.

INT. SEA LOBBY

Ben carries Quazum through the lobby of reporters.

When Ben and Quazum get to front door, Dr. Palmer is walking in. They each look surprised and are all breathing heavy.

PALMER
Hello Ben. Where are you going?

BEN
Dr. Palmer?

PALMER
(looking at Quazum)
Is that who I think...?

BEN
I... I was just trying to help out for
the mission. But I'm okay now, doctor.
And they need you.

Ben tries to step by, but Dr. Palmer doesn't move. All is quiet as Dr. Palmer stares at Quazum thinking. The crowd of scientists and reporters look on confused.

PALMER
The mission is cancelled, Ben. Let's
go somewhere for coffee. And maybe
some salt water?

Dr. Palmer, Ben and Quazum exit SEA Headquarters together as everyone goes back to work.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SWAMPLAND - DAY

Quazum and Ben are sitting in the old pirogue boat floating wearing coat and hat in the swamp. The sun is rising as Quazum casts out his rod. Ben is watching his bamboo pole with cork floating.

BEN
My hook needs a new worm.

Quazum looks up at Ben and smiles.

QUAZUM
You have to bait your own hook.
Grandpa used to say, "Give someone a
fish, and he'll eat for a day. Teach
him to fish, and he'll eat for a
lifetime".

Ben looks confused as he carelessly opens the can of worms.

BEN

If Gabriel said that, it must be true.
Your Grandpa was a wise man.

QUAZUM

Careful! Open it slowly.

BEN

I got it. No big deal.

QUAZUM

You understand the danger of "opening
a can of worms". Right?

SFX: "Honk! Honk!"

Ben and Quazum look out to see an old yellow taxi driving up
the bumpy dirt road.

BEN

Uh oh... who is this? You better hide.

Quazum takes off his cap and jacket becoming invisible in the
boat seat. Ben paddles to the mud and climbs out of the boat
cautiously.

Dr. Palmer gets out of the cab, driven by Rico. Rico opens
the trunk and begins unfolding a box.

PALMER

Good morning, Ben.

Dr. Palmer moves box over to the side of taxi cab, and Rico
climbs back into the driver's seat and listens to music.

BEN

Hello Dr. Palmer. Quazum and I have
been documenting and studying the
Quazmopolis geography... like we
promised.

PALMER

Good.

BEN

Is there a problem?

PALMER

I brought something for Quazum.

BEN
He's not really seeing anyone...

Dr. Palmer opens the back side of the cab door, and Ben watches as Dr. Palmer lifts the motionless body into the wheelchair and straps her in.

PALMER
I'd like to introduce you to the
"recovering" Lacy Meaux.

When Ben sees it is Lacy, he looks back at Quazum. Palmer rolls her around so Quazum can see Lacy.

Quazum immediately jumps out of the boat and rushes towards the cab yelling.

QUAZUM
Mom! You're back! You're home!

Rico is sitting in the cab and looks around confused, but sees nothing and continues listening to his radio. Lacy appears completely brain dead.

PALMER
Quazum, your mother is recovering from major brain injury. She had cerebral bypass implant, and is slowly regaining motion in neural cortex.

Lacy slowly begins to lift her head. She looks around the swampland, then back to Quazum and smiles.

LACY
Quazum? I'm home.

QUAZUM
Mom! I love you.

LACY
And I love you.

Near tears, Quazum hugs Lacy.

Ben and Dr. Palmer smile, as the sun is setting over the Back Bayou.

FADE OUT.

THE END