

"QUAZUM"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - EARLY MORNING

SCIENTISTS are racing around SEA (Science Exploration Agency) Headquarters preparing for launch.

DR. WILLIAM PALMER, in formal clothes, is lying on his back beneath a solar jet space engine examining hi-tech panels and reading from screen. JENKINS and OLIVER are nervously watching.

JENKINS

Are you getting a reading?

PALMER

Solar power is less than eighty-seven percent capacity.

OLIVER

The sun'll be coming up in an hour.

PALMER

I want full capacity.

JENKINS

I can plug it into the wall.

PALMER (annoyed)

Just get a full charge.

Dr. Palmer climbs out as scientists watch.

OLIVER

Solar jet will be fully charged.

PALMER

And the "shock cord mount" is still detached. Reconnect.

JENKINS

Some of these tweeks are unnecessary.

OLIVER

It's half the gravity of earth.

PALMER (angry)
Sixty-three percent. I've been planning
this mission for the last three years.
I want no lives or equipment at risk.

Palmer makes his way out of solar jet area.

EXT. LAUNCH AREA - NIGHT - CONT'D

Skies are pitch black as Dr. Palmer rushes across open hangar towards main office. We see futuristic air jet and crew working diligently.

PALMER
(to other scientists)
Test vestibule doors in the craft, and
launch-down system.

ENGINEERS
Will do, doctor.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - CONT'D

Lights are off as Dr. Palmer runs down dark hallway, and into messy office.

INT. SEA OFFICE - CONT'D

Dr. Palmer rushes in and opens file drawer. He pulls out files and begins operating touch screen monitor. 3-D images pop up, and Palmer examines information of QUAZMOPOLIS.

COMPUTER (V/O)
"Quazmopolis mission on schedule.
Launch time, five point two hours.

EXT. APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Sun is rising as woman's hand taps lightly on the door.

INT. BEDROOM - CONT'D

BEN THOMAS, mid-20's, is lying in bed and ignores sound.

LACY (from outside)
"Ben, it's almost five o'clock. Wake
up."

Ben opens one eye and reads the glowing time of 4:59 AM on the hi-tech clock. Clock changes to 5:00 AM.

CLOCK (V/O)
"Good morning, Ben. Time is five
o'clock on Tuesday. Mission
scheduled..."

BEN (interrupting)
Shut up!

Clock stops, and Ben rolls over.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONT'D

LACY MEAUX, a pretty young girl in her mid-20's, is at the door wearing military outfit and peeking through window.

LACY (whispering)
Ben, it's five o'clock, and we've got
to be at Science Exploration by six.

Front door opens, and Lacy rushes in. Ben walks to bathroom.

INT. APARTMENT - CONT'D

LACY
I figured I'd fix breakfast while
you're getting ready.

Lacy turns on lights and starts computerized coffee maker.

LACY (cont'd)

Press conference starts at nine, and we won't see each other for seventeen days.

BEN (from bathroom)

Where were you last night?

Lacy opens fridge and pulls out orange juice and eggs.

LACY

I told you, we're going over details of exploration! My weight on Quazmopolis will be seventy-six pounds.

BEN

I want to have the wedding before you go. Get it over with.

LACY

The mission's just ten days. Plus possible quarantine. We can wait.

Ben walks into the kitchen, hugs Lacy from behind and begins kissing her. Ben pulls Lacy towards the bedroom.

LACY (cont'd)

Ben, what are you doing? I told you.

BEN

Just once before we're separated.

LACY

You have to hold out till after the wedding.

BEN

That's not for two months. I can't wait.

Ben pulls on Lacy's arm, and she laughs.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Dr. Palmer is sitting alone in office typing on computer and pressing buttons when face of Pilot Jenkins pops up.

JENKINS

Launch power is one hundred percent,
and slot table is checked.

PALMER

Is Vestibule seal coordinated?

JENKINS

There's no leakage, and temperatures
are being maintained.

PALMER

Well, recheck and document new
settings.

JENKINS

They're all checked.

PALMER

Document them. I don't see a reading!

JENKINS

Fine!

Palmer continues on computer and notices warning. He quickly jumps and races out of his office and down the hall.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Clock switches to five thirty, and computer voices start.

CLOCK (V/O)

"Time is now five thirty. Leave now to
arrive at Science Exploration Agency by
six. Quazmopolis will take off..."

BEN

Shut up!

Clock V/O stops. Lacy jumps up and puts on carefully folded clothes from bedside table. Ben reluctantly gets up and picks up clothes off the floor.

LACY

We've got thirty minutes to drive through traffic and get to 'Science Exploration Agency' by six.

BEN

Just call it 'SEA'. Means the same thing.

LACY

SEA makes it sound like we're going on a camping trip. Science Exploration is exploring another solar system!

BEN

I know. I know. I've heard it a million times. (serious voice) "It's important for SEA to study Quazmopolis, a dead, hot, lifeless moon in the middle of nowhere, no matter the expense."

LACY

That's a terrible impression of Dr. Palmer.

Ben grabs his officer hat, makes a face and follows Lacy.

INT. SHIP ENGINE - MORNING

Dr. Palmer is on a ladder screwing engine bolts back in. Jenkins, Oliver and mechanics look on.

OLIVER

Dr. Palmer, we can do that.

PALMER

I want no compromise in settings.

JENKINS

You got a press conference in a couple of hours. You can't look like a dirty mechanic.

PALMER

Vestibule seal is coordinated. I want documentation.

OLIVER

Fine.

PALMER

Get me the thermoplastic polymer. And the mold for confection.

MECHANICS

Yes sir.

Mechanics run off. Palmer continues. Jenkins and Oliver look annoyed.

EXT. CAR - MORNING

Car is swerving through traffic on California freeways.

INT. CAR - CONT'D

Ben is driving, and Lacy is reading her portable computer. Lacy grips seat belt.

Lacy

Just put it in auto, and let the car drive itself. It's safer.

BEN

I'm faster than 'auto' and willing to break laws.

Ben speeds up, and Lacy waves apologizing to drivers.

LACY

Remember to take my car out next week, and get it washed.

BEN

We can do all that when you get back.

LACY

I want my car kept up, and you agreed.

BEN

Fine. Not a problem. What about the wedding? My Mom's working on invitations and has already reserved location for the reception.

LACY

Fine. Your family's in charge.

BEN

She wants your dad to come!

LACY

Ha! Not a chance. He hasn't left Back Bayou in the last ten years.

Ben continues racing in and out of traffic.

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE

Dr. Palmer is in a hurry -- wiping oil off of his face, washing his hands and putting on his suit.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Mission on schedule. Air jet tests are complete. APC Lithium batteries charged. Vestibule doors sealed. And Arid Cactus modules stored in Bracket four."

PALMER (to computer)

Move Arid modules to Bracket three.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Spare solar panels stored in three."

PALMER

Then swap them!

Dr. Palmer gets up and runs down hall as SEA employees, ALICE and CHRIS, are walking in.

ALICE
Good morning, Dr. Palmer.

CHRIS
Hello doctor.

EXT. SEA FACILITIES - MORNING

Large glass sign reading "SEA Science Exploration Agency" stands out front of a large hi-tech building.

BEN is driving up, and LACY looks nervous.

LACY
Okay, let me out!

BEN
Just let me park. It'll just take thirty seconds, and we can walk in together.

LACY
I'm jumping out if you don't stop.

Lacy opens car door and drags her heel before Ben stops.

BEN
Will I see you again before take-off?

Ben leans over to give Lacy a kiss as she jumps out, slams door and races into building. Ben is annoyed.

INT. SEA BUILDING - CONT'D

Lacy looks at her phone as she walks through front door. Time flashes to 6:00 AM.

INT. SEA HALLWAY

Scientists are gathered and listening to Palmer.

PALMER

All scientists report to SEA medic for tests and body screening, then to green room seven. Change into C4A body suits. Pack all approved gear, then we will meet in Press Room.

CHRIS

Will we say anything to reporters?

PALMER

I want you to look like prepared scientists -- physically and mentally.

LACY runs in. Palmer checks watch and continues.

PALMER (cont'd)

Non-compliance of SEA regulations will result in immediate termination -- before or after mission.

Scientists walk down hall, and Palmer returns to his office.

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Ben is sitting behind computer typing information and ignoring announcements.

COMPUTER V/O

"Temperature averages on Quazmopolis will reach one hundred forty-three degrees today with lows near freezing. Daytime and nighttime will last little more than seven hours."

Pictures show hard rock surfaces of various colors with steam rising from heat. Ben touches screen.

COMPUTER V/O

"Explorers in mission are graduates of Science Exploration Academy. Trip will be made in Solar Jet, now able to land safely on unstable surface."

Ben clicks on picture of Lacy, and computer continues.

COMPUTER V/O (cont'd)

"Lacy Meaux, 23 years old, from
Louisiana, will be partnering with...
Chris Thomas, 25 years old, from
Florida."

Ben stares at pictures and is annoyed. Phone rings, and Ben presses touch screen.

BEN

This is Ben.

ALICE (on screen)

"Dr. Palmer asked me to send all
scientists to Briefing Room."

BEN (surprised)

Yes, for the press conference. Let Dr.
Palmer know I'm on my way!

Ben grabs his jacket and hurries out.

INT. SEA BRIEFING ROOM

Group of seven scientists in exploration suits are sitting behind Dr. Palmer at the podium.

PALMER

It's one moon of the fourth planet in
the Kepler Solar System called
Quazmopolis and is seven point two
light years from earth. Full days are
fifteen hours. Atmosphere is 79%
nitrogen and 21% oxygen, same as earth.

Dr. Palmer walks over to map on wide screen computer monitor. With a touch, screen zooms into close-up.

PALMER

Gravity power is 56% that of earth.
Salt water is natural, and temperatures

reached over 155 last year... making it very hot.

Reporters look around impressed with the mission.

PALMER (cont'd)

I will now take questions.

REPORTER #1

Does planet have fresh water?

PALMER

Tests have shown fresh water evaporates directly into atmosphere. Local salt water will be processed on solar jet, and scientists' food in airtight storage.

Ben walks in and sits in chair by reporters.

REPORTER #3

What do we know about the surface?

PALMER

The surface is a hard rock. We'll be doing tests on the unique colors, its history, and element combinations.

Dr. Palmer touches video screen and clicks on picture.

PALMER (cont'd)

Solar power will keep jet comfortable, and explorers will be wearing C4A suits to maintain body temperature.

BEN (yelling out)

Have we determined a purpose for this mission? (BEAT) I'm just curious, since scientists will be risking their lives.

Reporters laugh and look back around. Dr. Palmer is annoyed as he walks back to podium.

PALMER

We hope to document new elements, and introduce life to Quazmopolis.

Reporters look around satisfied, and Ben is quiet.

PALMER (cont'd)

Newly created breed of Arid Cacti can survive with salt water and wide range of temperatures.

REPORTER #4

What is this mission costing?

PALMER

Personal donations carry most of the cost, and new solar engines will provide temperature, air, and water. No cost to taxpayers. Thank you.

Dr. Palmer and scientists begin to walk off. Cameras flash, and reporters jump up.

REPORTER #5

What other expectations do you have?

REPORTER #6

Can this moon support life?

INT. SEA HALLWAY - CONT'D

Scientists are loading solar jet when Ben rushes in.

PALMER

Ben Thomas? I'd like to speak with you.

BEN

I've got a few things I'm working on.

PALMER

In my office. Now.

Scientist Chris notices Ben and walks over to Lacy.

CHRIS

What's Ben so upset about? He should be thrilled we got this opportunity.

LACY

He doesn't want to lose me for ten days. His family is planning a big wedding.

CHRIS

What about "your" family?

LACY

I don't have much family, at least no one interested in a wedding.

CHRIS

I'll look after you. Ben's got nothing to worry about!

LACY (laughing)

I think that's what he's worried about.

Lacy laughs as they walk into preparation quarters.

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE

PALMER (into phone)

"Then reset calibration, and dampen vibration."

Dr. Palmer is reading from computer and talking on phone. Ben is sitting and looking at his watch. Dr. Palmer finally hangs up and spins around to Ben.

PALMER

You understand why you're here?

BEN

No.

PALMER

This exploration is something I've been planning for seven years, and your blatant disregard...

BEN (interrupting)
I understand what's gone into this. I'm going through it too."

PALMER (interrupting)
Quazmopolis missions have brought nothing but unexplained confusion...

BEN (interrupting)
I know, I know.

PALMER
This moon has a history of documented tragedy.

Ben shrugs his shoulders as Palmer reads from computer.

PALMER (cont'd)
Two scientists were inexplicably injured on first mission twenty years ago. Mystery. Another unexplained damage to engine mount on one-day layover. No explanation. And four other mysteries recorded.

BEN
It's just a moon.

PALMER (reading)
I understand you are marrying Lacy Meaux, one of the scientists?

BEN
It's just bad timing.

PALMER
We're sending one member of every sex, age and race - no risk to family or dependents. Lacy is the best girl for the job, and I want complete support from every scientist at SEA.

BEN

Yes sir! Not a problem.

Ben stands up and salutes, then rapidly runs out leaving Palmer annoyed.

INT. HALLWAY - CONT'D

Ben runs down hall, through lobby and into Lacy's office. Door is locked. Lights off.

ALICE

Ben, the scientists are boarding.

Ben turns and runs back through lobby to press area overseeing group of explorers.

INT. PRESS ROOM - CONT'D

Scientists walk down ramp to the solar jet. Families wave, and press shoots video from the window.

REPORTER #8 (V/O)

"Quazmopolis crew is now boarding."

REPORTER #9

"Crew members vary in age and represent all nationalities!"

Ben shows his badge, and tries to get in.

BEN

Lacy!

Lacy looks back at crowd and seems confused.

BEN (cont'd)

I just wanted to tell you... I wish you success on the mission.

Lacy goes on board. Chris follows and looks back.

CHRIS (winking)

I'll take care of her!

Ben looks annoyed as Chris walks on. Pilot Jenkins seals jet door, and engines start. Ben walks back to media area.

INT. SOLAR JET

Explorers are all strapped in individual quarters watching monitors. Solar jet is taking off.

JENKINS (over intercom)
"We'll be travelling nearly four point seven trillion times the speed of light once we get out of earth atmosphere.

JENKINS (cont'd)
"First stop will be fourth moon in the Kepler Solar System, Quazmopolis."

INT. MEDIA ROOM - CONT'D

Media and families watch take-off. Reporters approach Ben.

REPORTER #10
What is your job with SEA?

REPORTER #11
Do you support this mission?

Ben ignores reporters and walks back into SEA Headquarters.

INT. SOLAR JET - LATER

Floating scientists move around. Engines begins to shake, and scientists grip handles on walls and chairs.

JENKINS (V/O)
"Don't let the little tremor bother you. It's a standard 'flex motion' when we pass surrounding solar systems. I've flown by this Quazmopolis moon before, but I've never actually landed."

Lacy lies in private quarters ignoring announcements. She opens personal files on touch screen computer.

JENKINS (background)
 "Today's satellite images explain this
 one of a kind exploration."

We see only two old pictures of Lacy as a child. GRAPHIC pops up reading, "No Further Information".

JENKINS (background)
 "The Kepler solar system has five
 planets, but the proximity of the
 Quazmopolis moon can make for some hot
 days -- and cold nights."

Lacy opens file of Ben, and many files of pictures and video pop up. We see ongoing video of Ben's family, Ben growing up, college, and Ben working at SEA.

INT. SEA OFFICE

Ben is sitting behind computer watching images of space flight. Ben zooms in on video of Lacy and Chris at press conference. Ben types personal message.

GRAPHICS
 "Miss me yet?"

COMPUTER (V/O)
 "Message blocked. Communications of
 personal messages will be reopen..."

Ben is embarrassed and turns down volume.

INT. SOLAR JET - LATER

Scientists are moving around conference area when Jenkins begins announcements.

JENKINS (V/O)
 "Time to buckle up. Please go to your
 quarters, lie down, attach belt."

Scientists begin latching in, and Lacy examines monitor with overhead shot. Solar jet begins to lower.

JENKINS (cont'd)

"We can now see the famous Quazmopolis Moon. It's the little dot in the middle of the Kepler Solar System."

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Audio message of Jenkins is playing over speakers as scientists are watching big monitor.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Beautiful unique colored rock surface! Temperatures in the mid 140's. Skies are clear, and no chance of showers. Where I come from, that's good news."

Ben types message into personal computer.

BEN'S MESSAGE

"You must be hot - as usual."

INT. SOLAR JET - CONT'D

Lacy smiles as she reads messages from Ben.

JENKINS (V/O)

"I'm turning up the AC a little as we start to descend. This will use extra energy but will keep things cool in the cockpit. That's important."

Scientists close video screens as jet enters atmosphere.

JENKINS (cont'd)

"When we come to a full landing, first job will be getting up solar panels to restore full energy."

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS

Solar jet lowers and finally touches down.

Doors open, and scientists bounce around on surface as they stretch cables and adjust angles of solar panels.

JENKINS (over PA)

"Feeling light on your feet? Must be nice. Solar Jet is now charging. You can begin tests around the surface. I'll be in the air-conditioned jet if you need anything."

Phone buzzes, and Lacy sees several text messages from Ben.

GRAPHICS

"How were your first steps?"

"What do you see on Quazmopolis?"

"Is this trip going to be worthwhile?"

After a quick look, Lacy smiles, turns off phone and places it in inner pocket, then continues setting up.

INT. SEA OFFICE - LATER

Ben is sitting behind computer overlooking video being shot from satellite and from helmets of scientists. Ben notices satellite video of Lacy and Chris standing close. He zooms in and looks annoyed. Dr. Palmer walks up.

PALMER

Any unique findings?

BEN (startled)

No. Everything looks the same as photos shot by satellite.

PALMER

What's the temperature?

BEN

Current temperature is 146.

PALMER

First day of exploration will end in forty-three minutes. Follow explorers, and document all photos and video.

BEN

Yes sir.

Dr. Palmer walks over to another scientist.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - LATER

Lacy looks around at busy scientists and begins moving backwards. Chris looks up.

CHRIS

Where are you going?

LACY

I'm going to explore.

Lacy jumps from rock to rock enjoying her light weight. She studies colored rock moving towards center hill area.

LACY (into mic)

"Quazmopolis is comprised of unique colors and large jagged edge rock -- dangerous to the step."

Lacy notices smaller rock formations and shines light between cracks. Lacy suddenly jumps back.

LACY (startled)

"Oh! Possible motion spotted, but no visible explanation!"

Lacy pushes camera between rocks but sees nothing, then continues measuring with tephra gauge.

LACY (nervous)

"Not able to record. Examination of rock uncovers no explanation of movement."

Lacy is examining area when Jenkins makes announcement.

JENKINS (V/O)

"First day of exploration is coming to an end. Please return to Solar Jet. Doors will open in one minute."

Lacy skips back on rugged surface and is last to return. Scientists look on impatiently as Vestibule doors open.

INT. SOLAR JET - CONT'D

Scientists remove helmets, exploration gear and unload rock samples into computer scanner.

CHRIS

Well, did you find anything?

LACY (nervously)

I don't know.

COMPUTER V/O

"Substance not recognized."

JENKINS

Must be a new combination of elements.

OLIVER

I think this entire trip is going to be examination of rocks.

LACY

I believe I saw motion.

CHRIS

Motion?

Lacy opens video on her personal computer and scans to close-ups and wide shots of colored rock.

OLIVER

Where is the motion?

LACY

It was slight movement between rocks.

JENKINS

No video?

OLIVER

Your mind saw movement in 150 degree heat? Common hallucination.

LACY

I don't know. I need to study it more.

JENKINS

Just the hot air can appear as motion to the human eye.

CHRIS

Lacy's got no motivation to exaggerate, and we've got eight more days.

Scientists gather around microscopes and computers as Lacy walks over to her empty module and studies helmet video.

Lacy's private phone buzzes and she sees more text messages from Ben.

PHONE TEXT

"What did you find?"

"Any discovery?"

"Palmer wants something."

Lacy thinks about possible response when announcement begins.

JENKINS (speaker)

"First day on Quazmopolis has come to an end. Please turn off lights, and try to get a good seven hours sleep. Tomorrow's investigation will begin at sunrise."

Scientists all make their way to private quarters. Lacy lies wide awake, still studying video.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS SUNRISE - NEXT DAY

Unique colored sun rises behind unique colored rock surface.

INT. SOLAR JET - CONT'D

LACY lies sound asleep when announcement begins.

JENKINS (speaker)

"Okay scientists. Wake up. Drink some fresh SEA Vitamin-Aid, and gather tools. Temperatures are now in the mid-80's, and numbers will be rising to around 125 in the next hour."

Scientists rush around solar jet drinking vitamin drink and putting on SEA exploration outfits.

JENKINS (cont'd)

"When you return to the ship in six hours, doors will be open for ten seconds."

Lacy gathers personal gear. Scientists seem annoyed again.

JENKINS (cont'd)

"Please be careful to shoot video and take photos of stones, unexplained motion, or 'possible form of life'."

Scientists look at Lacy and laugh as door opens.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - CONT'D

Lightweight scientists continue working on solar panels and planting cacti. Temperatures rise as Lacy walks off.

OLIVER

Bring back some of those 'life' forms!

CHRIS

Just get in on video!

OLIVER

Actually, one discovery like that could justify this entire mission.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - LATER

Lacy moves carefully along hillside, examining rock and talking into helmet.

LACY (V/O)

"Rocks seem to be different colors and different shapes. Don't recognize rock motion as witnessed yesterday."

Lacy continues climbing and is startled.

LACY (V/O)

"Oh! I have spotted possible opening in side of sharp stone surface."

Lacy slips, then regains control. She continues.

LACY (V/O)

"I am climbing up the side of colored mountain to examine possible opening."

Lacy adjusts video recording as she climbs.

LACY (cont'd)

"I am crawling into hole. Opening is about fourteen inches on the south east side, and about halfway up."

Lacy carefully squeezes in.

INT. CAVE OPENING - CONT'D

Cave is dark with a variety of colored stone. Lacy has helmet light and flashlight and continues recording.

LACY (V/O)

"All is dark inside formation.
Temperatures have dropped below one
hundred in cave. Air is breathable."

Lacy pulls off helmet, shines flashlight, and examines
computer readings.

LACY (speaking)

Water inside cave is also form of salt
water, non-survivable for human life.

Lacy continues examining when she notices moving shadow.

LACY (speaking)

Oh! I believe I saw motion. May have
been shadow. Disappeared quickly.

More motion and shadows show in back of cave as Lacy spins
around shining flashlight.

LACY (speaking)

I have witnessed definite motion. I'm
sure it was picked up by Suit-Cam.

Lacy points umber flash light into corner and notices
another hole.

LACY (speaking)

Another small opening spotted. Must be
investigated. Stand by.

Lacy walks up to small crack and struggles to peak in. She
suddenly drops helmet and looks on in shock.

LACY (speaking)

Oh my God! I don't believe it.

Lacy sees hi-tech flashing computer lights, with large
screens and unoperated futuristic equipment.

LACY (cont'd)

"Inner rock cave appears to contain
state of the art technology. I have not

only discovered moving shadows, but
this is intelligent life!"

SFX: "Bam!"

Lacy falls to the ground after blow to the head. Shadows quickly move around as Lacy goes unconscious.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - SUNSET

Sun is setting with unique colors, and scientists continue measuring dirt and performing tests. Temperature signs show levels over 150 degrees.

OLIVER

Wow... Now that is a beautiful sunset.

CHRIS

It's something we'll never witness
first-hand again after this trip.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Explorers, please gather. Quazmopolis
temperatures will quickly be dropping
below freezing as Kepler sun sets.
Doors will remain open for thirty
seconds."

Scientists look tired as they walk by planted Aris Cacti.

OLIVER

I don't believe any plant can survive
temperatures over 150 daytime and
freezing nights.

CHRIS

We got natural salt water flowing.

SCIENTIST

They surely won't die of thirst.

CHRIS

Where's Lacy?

OLIVER

Maybe another attack of aliens?

Doors open, and scientists move in.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Lacy? Please return to Solar Jet."

OLIVER

Does anyone have a possible guess where she was last exploring?

CHRIS

Let's start a search.

JENKINS

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

OLIVER

It's too dark. Temperatures will be freezing in the next hour, and exterior light and body heat might exhaust power.

JENKINS

She can survive freezing temperatures. We'll begin search in six hours, and we'll have two hours before temperatures rise above 100. Let's get some sleep.

INT. SOLAR JET - NEXT MORNING

Pilot Jenkins is studying Lacy's helmet video which was recorded on hard drive of solar jet. Scientists are pulling on exploration uniforms preparing for search.

JENKINS

We have the last video recorded by Lacy's helmet. This video was transmitted directly to solar jet.

CHRIS

What do you see?

JENKINS

The last part of video shows
exploration of granite cliff side.

Recordings of Lacy's voice and video plays on screen.

RECORDING

"I am climbing up the side of colored
mountain to examine possible opening."

Video cuts out as Lacy slides down side of the hill.

JENKINS

It is here that we lose all video
recording from Lacy's helmet.

CHRIS

She saw something.

JENKINS

Begin search at southeast side of the
hill. Look for any hole or colored rock
you recognize from the video.

OLIVER

We'll find her.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - MORNING

Scientists in uniform are carefully moving across areas and
examining mounds of rock.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Search party is to remain spread out.
With any sighting, immediately press
emergency button, and all scientists
are to gather before approaching."

OLIVER (V/O)

No deportation in rock is visible to the human eye.

SCIENTIST (V/O)

No sign of opening.

SCIENTIST #2 (V/O)

Temperatures are rising.

SFX: EMERGENCY ALARM

CHRIS (V/O)

I see her! There! Behind green rock!

JENKINS (V/O)

"Lacy has been found! Everyone gather at southwest side."

Oliver is examining Lacy's body. Head is bleeding.

OLIVER (V/O)

She has a 137 pulse rate, and body temperature steady at 103 point 7.

CHRIS (V/O)

She's alive!

SCIENTIST (V/O)

Observation shows that Lacy Meaux fell down side of sharp blue boulder.

CHRIS (V/O)

Looks like she was knocked unconscious.

INT. SOLAR JET - LATER

Lacy is lying in bed. Air is pumped into medical mask placed on Lacy's face. Lasers are shot over some injuries, and bandages are placed over parts of arms and legs.

OLIVER

Body temperature is down, now at 102.

CHRIS (to Lacy)
We're here. You're safe. Just relax.

Lacy struggles to open her eyes and look around.

LACY (mumbling)
I saw... life.

CHRIS
Life? Something moved?

OLIVER
Lots of dreams and visions appear in an unconscious mind. In her condition, sightings have little credibility.

Scientists continue, and Lacy lies unconscious.

INT. DR. PALMER'S OFFICE

Dr. Palmer is nervously sitting at desk and takes live phone call from Pilot Jenkins of solar jet.

JENKINS
We believe she fell down hill of sharp rock, suffered injuries to head and loss of consciousness, but doctor believes she'll be okay.

PALMER
Do we know what caused the fall?

JENKINS
Video shows possible slip on rock. Suit ripped, and she lay unconscious.

Lacy's helmet video plays on Dr. Palmer's computer.

RECORDING
"I am climbing up the side of colored mountain to examine possible opening."

Video shows Lacy's fall, then comes to an end.

JENKINS

Helmet recorder was damaged, and Lacy's signal was lost. We are studying all possible signs?

PALMER

But she'll be okay?

JENKINS

Oliver believes she just needs cortex reparation, and a lot of rest. If we leave today, we can get her...

PALMER (interrupting)

You are to continue the exploration.

JENKINS

The doctor said she'd get better treatment in SEA medical facilities.

PALMER

She'll get the same rest in the Solar Jet. Continue investigation. That's my decision.

Dr. Palmer turns off communications monitor and studies solar photos and video again.

EXT. QUAZMOPOLIS - MORNING

Sun is rising, and solar jet is surrounded by dying Cacti plants with hi-tech salt watering system.

INT. SOLAR JET - CONT'D

Scientists are sleeping in cabin. Lacy is lying motionless with patches and bandages around her body.

JENKINS (V/O)

"Good morning crew. This is the last day of our ten day mission to the infamous Quazmopolis moon. Dead Arid cacti plants will remain planted with fertilized dirt and salt-watering system."

Scientists are putting on gear and look tired.

OLIVER

Well, this mission turned out to be a big waste of time.

SCIENTIST

Seven days trying to create life that could not survive the temperatures.

OLIVER

And one human life nearly lost.

CHRIS

One scientist saw movement.

SCIENTIST

We've all explored the same areas where Lacy claimed to see life and found nothing.

INT. DR. PALMER'S OFFICE

Dr. Palmer is working at desk when there is a knock.

PALMER

Yes?

Door opens, and Ben walks in.

BEN

Dr. Palmer?

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

I'm not talking about the mission. Scientists will go through mandatory quarantine, and artifacts will be examined and tested.

BEN

I've had no communications with Lacy. I think her phone was damaged.

PALMER

Daily postings and video is playing in control room. Scientists are analyzing discoveries, and data is being held in complete confidence.

BEN

But Dr. Palmer, Lacy and I are getting married in just a few weeks. Can I just get an explanation?

PALMER

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

BEN (confused)

No, I guess that's all.

Ben turns and walks out, and Dr. Palmer thinks.

EXT. SOLAR JET

Jet is flying through space passing stars and solar systems.

INT. SOLAR JET

Pilot Jenkins is talking over speaker as scientists are reviewing collections.

JENKINS (V/O)

"We are now just three light years from earth and will be arriving in less than six hours. We witnessed a wide range of temperatures and discovered new elements in natural rock."

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

JENKINS (V/O)

"When we land, we will first be met by media. SEA requires scientists to be in isolation for one week as medical and psychological exams are performed."

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - LATER

Solar Jet is slowly landing. Families and media are standing at window watching. Ben stands with crowd.

INT. SOLAR JET - CONT'D

Jet doors open. Lacy unbuckles belt and climbs out of bed. She begins limping out. Chris tries to help.

CHRIS

Are you okay?

LACY

I can make it.

CHRIS

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

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - CONT'D

Scientists exit jet. Chris walks out holding Lacy's arm, and they both smile and wave. Ben is shocked.

REPORTER #1

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

REPORTER #2

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

INT. SEA MEDICAL FACILITIES - LATER

DR. KJELL examines wiring, tubes and conductors, stretched around Lacy's brain as she wakes up.

LACY

I just want to talk to someone. I believe I witnessed life on Quazmopolis.

KJELL

I'm sorry, but neurological examination is being conducted.

NURSE

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

KJELL

When quarantine is concluded, you can reveal sightings.

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

NURSE

Boy, she's a complete loon.

KJELL (concentrating)

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

INT. BEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Office is messy, and Ben is examining information about mission on computer. News clips run of scientists.

COMPUTER V/O

"Mission has proven life cannot survive extreme temperatures of Quazmopolis."

Ben continues opening new screens.

COMPUTER V/O

"Tests uncovered new combinations of elements in rock samples."

Computer screen flashes "CLASSIFIED" when Alice yells from outside office.

ALICE

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

BEN

No. Tell her I'm busy with research.

Ben continues clicking information on screen.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Requested information not available. Access denied."

ALICE

She says she wants to confirm reservations. What can I tell her?

Ben looks annoyed before picking up the phone.

BEN

Hi Mom. No, Lacy is still tied up.

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

BEN (cont'd)

Okay Mom. I gotta go.

INT. SEA MEDICAL FACILITIES

Scientists are quarantined, and Dr. Palmer looks in window.

PALMER

Did anyone else witness motion?

JENKINS

No.

OLIVER

Temperatures cannot support life.

JENKINS

After one week in the heat, all
unnatural life forms were dead.

SCIENTIST

Temperatures ranged more than one
hundred degrees a day. No life can
survive that.

JENKINS

And Lacy Meaux's claims?

OLIVER

Lacy is lucky to be alive.

JENKINS

Video shows no unexplained motion.

OLIVER

Memories seemed to grow as she
recovered from brain trauma. Not
unusual.

Dr. Palmer looks around at scientists, then walks out.

INT. SEA MEDICAL HALLWAY

Dr. Palmer walks to Lacy's room. Door is locked. He tries fingerprint on lock, but door does not open. Palmer peaks through window and sees Lacy lying unconscious.

Doctor Kjell in quarantine suit walks up to window.

KJELL

Yes, Dr. Palmer?

PALMER

I need to know patient's condition.

KJELL

Recovering from brain dysfunction.
Needs two more days examination.

PARKER

So, what do tests show?

KJELL

I'm afraid that's personal.

PALMER (interrupting)

I'm in charge! What have tests shown?

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

KJELL (whispering)

She's pregnant.

Dr. Palmer is in shock.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

We see an old bar without many cars as Dr. Palmer walks up.

INT. BAR - CONT'D

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

PALMER

Hello Mr. Thomas. How do you feel?

BEN

My family's been preparing for my big wedding for more than a year. And I believe it's now off. "We changed our mind. Sorry"!

PALMER

So what will you do?

BEN

I'm starting a new life.

PALMER

Are you planning to just quit SEA?

BEN

I don't think I can stand being around Lacy. I've got to move on.

PALMER

So what will you do?

BEN

I'll start dating and making friends.

PALMER

Lacy will be getting out of incubation tomorrow. I want you to come to my office. I have some things to go over.

BEN

I don't know. She hasn't answered a message in two weeks. I can't live like that.

PALMER

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 was injured on the mission. Tests are being performed, but doctors have informed me...

BEN (interrupting)

What? What happened?

PALMER

Your fiance' is pregnant.

BEN (shocked)

I don't believe it.

PALMER

Conception must have happened before mission breaking all SEA rules.

BEN (angry)

That's not possible!

PALMER

You don't know that.

BEN

I do know! And I'm not the father!

PALMER

Lacy had unprotected sex. And she made commitment to SEA.

BEN (interrupting)

We've been holding out till after the wedding, Doctor! I'm not the father!

Ben gets up and starts walking to the door. Dr. Palmer takes another drink and thinks when Ben turns and walks back.

BEN (cont'd)

And I quit! I'm done with all your SEA crap!

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

INT. SEA HOSPITAL ROOM

Lacy is lying in bed fully conscious. Dr. Kjell is removing attachment around head with tubes and wires. Readings are popping up on computer.

LACY

I'm going to be released? Right?

KJELL

More tests need to be performed.

LACY

I'm fine. My incubation is supposed to be seven days!

Dr. Kjell continues removing medical devices. Lacy gets up and begins putting on uniform.

KJELL

Tests are still being conducted, and there are questions to be resolved.

LACY

But I've been unconscious, and I know I didn't see anything.

KJELL

I can release you just for the morning, but you need to return by... 10:30.

LACY

Not a problem.

KJELL

Dr. Palmer needs to speak with you. He has questions.

LACY

I'll report to his office in thirty minutes.

Lacy pulls on jacket and rushes out. Kjell looks upset.

INT. SEA HALLWAY - CONT'D

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

Alice is sitting at desk.

ALICE

Lacy! Welcome home!

LACY

Is Ben around?

ALICE

No, he's been out.

CO-WORKER

We heard you had a really nasty fall.

LACY

I'm fine. I gotta go.

Lacy races down hallway holding phone to her ear.

BEN'S V/O

(answering machine)

"Hello. This is Ben, and I can't come to the phone..."

Lacy pushes buttons as she runs. Office workers and Heidi (receptionist) wave, but Lacy is in a hurry.

WORKERS

Lacy, welcome home!

HEIDI

It's good to have you back!

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Lacy runs past security guard and waves as she passes.

CHARLES

Welcome home, Lacy! How was your trip?

Driver pulls up and sticks head out of window.

DRIVER

I'm here to pick up a Lacy Meaux?

LACY

That's me! Bye Charles!

Lacy climbs in, and car drives off.

INT. CAR - CONT'D

Driver sees Lacy texting on phone and making calls.

DRIVER

You one of those SEA scientists
studying that hot planet?

LACY

It was the moon of Quazmopolis.

DRIVER

You were up in space for two weeks?

LACY

Ten days. I'm just glad to be home!

DRIVER

I watched take-off on news, and saw you
guys planting. Was it cactus?

Lacy nods and smiles as driver speeds through traffic.

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT - LATER

Driver pulls into driveway, and Lacy jumps out. She runs
out waving as driver pulls out.

Lacy shakes her head as she passes dirty car, then runs up to front door and knocks.

LACY

Ben? I'm back!

Lacy peaks through Ben's window, then rings doorbell.

LACY (cont'd)

I'm back from the mission. I missed you!

Older woman in nightgown finally opens the door looking like she just woke up.

WOMAN

What do you want?

Lacy looks surprised and steps back.

LACY

I'm sorry. I was just coming to see Ben. Do you know where he might be?

Ben suddenly steps up behind half-dressed woman. He is wearing underwear, no shirt, and looks bad.

BEN

What do you want?

LACY (confused)

Ben? I missed you. I just wanted to start planning.

BEN (interrupting)

The wedding's off! I know about your new friends. I quit SEA, and we're finished.

LACY

I thought we...

BEN (interrupting)

It's over. I've got a new life.

Ben slams the door leaving Lacy confused. She turns and walks to her dirty car, opens door, and climbs in. Car starts slowly from unused battery, and Lacy backs out.

CAR (V/O)

"Lacy! It's good to have you back. We missed having you for now... seventeen days. Do you need directions?"

Lacy turns off car computer and starts windshield wipers to clear dirty windows as she drives onto busy freeway. She sees herself in the rearview mirror and breaks down crying.

EXT. SEA PARKING LOT

Lacy parks and walks across parking lot into SEA building.

INT. SEA OFFICE

Lacy looks confused. Heidi, the receptionist, opens door.

HEIDI

Welcome back to SEA Miss Meaux. Dr. Palmer is expecting you.

Lacy ignores scientists and secretaries, making welcoming comments as she walks up the hall.

INT. DR. PALMER'S OFFICE

Lacy knocks politely on the side of Palmer's open door and looks shaken up. Dr. Palmer is reading from computer.

PALMER

Come in.

LACY

Yes sir? You wanted to see me?

PALMER

We have strict regulations that must be abided to under penalty of termination.

LACY

Yes sir?

Dr. Palmer opens file and reads.

PALMER

A tiny embryo was discovered in uterus showing conception took place sometime the last seventeen days.

LACY

What are you talking about? Conception of what?

PALMER

You're pregnant.

LACY

But I haven't. That's not possible.

PALMER

Doctors have performed tests on all male scientists. No match. As you know, leaving on mission while pregnant results in job termination.

LACY (confused)

But Dr. Palmer, I haven't had unprotected sex. I can't be pregnant.

PALMER

I am now giving you a simple option. You allow for simple pregnancy termination, and agree to complete non-disclosure.

LACY

I'm not doing that.

PALMER

Or you can retire from SEA agreeing to complete silence.

LACY

I won't abort my baby.

PALMER

Then I guess you've made your decision.
Your office needs to be cleared out,
and you will speak to no one after you
depart SEA facilities. You are excused.

Dr. Palmer turns back to computer. Lacy walks out.

INT. SEA HALLWAY - CONT'D

Lacy is in more shock as she walks down hall. SEA employees stare as Lacy unlocks office door to her office.

INT. LACY'S OFFICE - CONT'D

Lacy walks in and picks up box. She begins loading pictures and files.

Secretary Alice walks up.

ALICE

Lacy, I'm really sorry. You know? My
uncle sells cars. I could give him a
call. They're looking for a new
receptionist.

Lacy looks up at Alice with a confused look. She then drops the box and heads for the door.

EXT. SEA BUILDING - CONT'D

Lacy runs out of building into parking lot to dirty car. Charles watches but is confused.

EXT. FREEWAYS - CONT'D

Lacy's car is driving slowly, and cars are passing.

INT. LACY'S CAR - CONT'D

Lacy's is holding back tears as she drives. She pulls into her small apartment driveway. Lacy sits in car thinking when LANDLORD walks out with a smile.

LANDLORD

Miss Lacy! You're back from space!
How'd it go? We've been watching news
updates!

LACY (crying)

I'm fine.

LANDLORD (confused)

When's the next big adventure?

LACY (mumbling)

I'm moving.

LANDLORD

You're getting married, right?

LACY

I'm moving home. Back to Louisiana.

LANDLORD (confused)

You're moving?

Lacy begins backing up. Landlord runs alongside car.

LANDLORD (cont'd)

What about your stuff? Your furniture?

LACY

It's yours. You can have it.

Landlord looks confused, as Lacy drives off.

EXT. FREEWAYS - DAYS LATER

Lacy is driving with confused look and wiping her eyes.

EXT. OLD ROADS - WEEK LATER - RAINY DAY

Thunder crashes as dirty car drives by dirty sign that reads "Swampville City Limits".

INT. LACY'S CAR

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

CAR (V/O)

"You have now entered Swampville,
Louisiana. Continue down highway
fourteen for one point seven miles.
Driveway will be on your left."

Meters on car gauge show outdoor temperature at 98 and humidity at 93 percent. Big old trees with moss hang over the street.

CAR (V/O)

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

Lacy turns off computer radio and continues driving in rain.

She pulls up to an old cabin and parks in open area.

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 door opens, and Gabriel peaks out holding a shotgun.

Lacy smiles and walks up giving Dad an unreturned hug.

LACY

I'm so glad to be home. It's just so beautiful around here.

GABRIEL

What do you want?

LACY

Well, since Mom died, I've been so busy with school and work, I just haven't had time to visit, and I just missed you and the swamp land.

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

LACY (cont'd)

Science Exploration Agency has provided opportunity of missions to unexplored parts of the galaxy.

GABRIEL

Why are you here?

LACY

I've been busy with exploration of the universe. The latest was my mission to Quazmopolis.

GABRIEL

Never heard of it.

LACY

We tried to bring mineralized dirt to plant a variety of cacti... but mission was unsuccessful.

GABRIEL

Sounds like a big waste of money.

LACY

We discovered new formation of elements.

Lacy begins cleaning kitchen and putting dishes in cabinets.

GABRIEL

So what do you want?

LACY

I had big plans for my career, along with my wedding.

GABRIEL

I don't want no part of that. Just go back home, and get married.

LACY

I'm pregnant.

GABRIEL (surprised)

So get married.

LACY

I wanna stay here and have the baby.

GABRIEL

That's not gonna work. I don't want a pregnant girl running around.

Gabriel walks out, and Lacy jumps up and follows.

LACY

I can help! I'll cook, clean and wash clothes. And when my baby is born, I'll move out.

Lacy breaks down crying, and Gabriel finally gives in.

GABRIEL

You can stay till you have the baby.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - NINE MONTHS LATER

Gabriel is in the cold swamp paddling an old pirogue, wearing camouflaged hat and coat. Sun is rising.

Gabriel blows into duck whistle, and two green-head mallard ducks fly next to decoys. Gabriel begins firing, and both ducks fall. Gabriel paddles pirogue towards ducks.

GABRIEL (to himself)

Ha! You're gonna be my dinner tonight.

Gabriel grabs duck by the head and spins him around, breaking his neck. The other duck is thrown into the boat.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

LACY (in pain)

Oh! Ah!

Lacy holds her big pregnant stomach as she walks over to couch and sits down.

Gabriel walks in carrying dead ducks by the neck and drops them into the sink.

GABRIEL

Got two greenheads. Good for a "Sauce Piquantn".

Gabriel walks across room leaving mud tracks.

LACY

I only heard two shots all morning. You shot one hundred percent.

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

LACY

Ohhh!

GABRIEL

When will you be having this baby? It's gotta be close.

LACY

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

GABRIEL

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

LACY

Not a problem. I got an apartment I'm looking at, and job possibilities. I might sell cars.

GABRIEL

College? Masters? Four years at SEA? And you're gonna sell cars?

LACY

Oh! It'll be a good job. Oooh!

Lacy holds stomach and moves towards bedroom.

GABRIEL

What am I supposed to do? I ain't no doctor.

LACY

You ain't gotta do nothing. I can do it alone.

Lacy closes bedroom door, and Gabriel paces scared and nervous and hears Lacy in bedroom.

LACY (in pain)

Oh! Umph! Owww!

Gabriel paces the floor.

INT. MEAUX BEDROOM - LATER

Lacy is lying in bed in dark room with sounds of crying baby. Gabriel opens the door and peaks inside.

GABRIEL (nervously)

You got him out? Lacy? You okay?

Lacy, with a confused look, holds up small baby and looks confused. Gabriel walks over.

Baby is a strange shape and color. He is covered with blood, partially invisible and doesn't look human. Gabriel stares with a confused look as Lacy holds up the reptilian infant.

LACY (scared)

It's a boy. I think.

Gabriel is speechless, as we:

FADE OUT

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

Gabriel looks older and is walking by mossy old trees nervously aiming shotgun. He is wearing camouflaged hat and heavy boots and walking through mud.

Gabriel hears sound coming from swamp and stares down the barrel, then turns gun slightly before firing.

SFX: Bam! Bam! Bam!

Small squirrel jumps from behind leaves and runs up tree. Gabriel reloads, and continues.

GABRIEL

Where are you, boy? It's getting dark.
I'm ready to give up.

A moving creature of different colors, and partially invisible, climbs down tree and runs up.

QUAZUM

Here I am, Grandpa!

GABRIEL

Where you been hiding?

Colors of QUAZUM change as he runs alongside Gabriel. He quickly blends in with background of a beautiful sunset.

QUAZUM

I knew you couldn't find me in the
tree!

GABRIEL

How did you get up there?

QUAZUM

I just wrapped my legs 'round the trunk
and gripped the bark. It's easy!

GABRIEL

Now I gotta start searchin' the trees?

Quazum grabs from a small bag on Gabriel's back and puts on a red baseball cap.

QUAZUM

When I was lying in the mud, you stepped on my back. I had to bite my tongue to keep from yelling!

GABRIEL

When you lie next to anything, I can't find you!

QUAZUM

I got lots of places I can hide!

Gabriel and Quazum climb over fence.

EXT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

The exterior of the cabin is clean and painted with gardens and decorative plants. Gabriel and Quazum walk onto porch.

GABRIEL

What's your mom cooking for dinner tonight?

QUAZUM

I don't know. Smells like crawfish.

GABRIEL

Good! Your mom cooks a great etouffee!

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

QUAZUM

How long will crawfish be in season?

GABRIEL

Maybe another month. Then we'll be fishing and duck hunting.

QUAZUM

One gator could feed us through the winter.

When all clean, Gabriel and Quazum politely walk inside.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Lacy is cooking in kitchen. She looks older, and the cabin looks nicely decorated with pictures hanging and flowers.

GABRIEL

Oh, it smells good! Quazum could smell that 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 I got a whole new batch of roaches.

QUAZUM

I'll wait on the roaches. I just want some etouffee.

GABRIEL

Quazum's now climbing up trees and turning colors. No way I can spot him.

LACY

I don't like this game. I heard you shooting. Someone's going to get hurt!

GABRIEL

Ha! I can't never find him to shoot at anyway!

LACY

It's not funny. It's dangerous!

GABRIEL

I ain't using real bullets. These rubber balls don't penetrate skin.

Gabriel holds up box of rubber bullets.

GABRIEL (cont'd)
At least not the skin on Quazum.

QUAZUM
I'm okay, Mom.

GABRIEL
We can play "hide and shoot" tomorrow,
and I just won't fire any shots.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - LATER

Lacy, Gabriel and Quazum are sitting around the table eating. Quazum is changing shape and color as he eats but remains visible because of jacket and cap.

GABRIEL
This etouffee is a real cajun treat!

LACY
We only got one month left of crawfish.

GABRIEL
Lacy's etouffee is as good as your
Grandma's used to be.

LACY
She taught me how to make it, and it's
a recipe I want to teach you.

QUAZUM
Where do they go in the winter?

LACY
They hibernate! Go deep in the lake to
stay warm. It'll be about eight months
before they're back in season.

GABRIEL
But the ducks'll be flyin' in. It
should be a great winter season for
catfish and wild duck and goose
hunting!

Quazum smiles and continues eating.

INT. NEW USED CARS - DAY

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

SALESMAN

Looks like you had a busy night.

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 couch in the waiting room, sits down, and picks up remote control.

PAUL, the manager, walks in.

PAUL

Ben, this is the third time this week. You show up after lunch and sit in waiting room drinking coffee.

BEN

I'm fine. I just got a headache.

Old couple walks in looking for help. Ben ignores them as baseball game plays on TV. Paul walks over.

PAUL

Good morning. Are you looking for a "new used car"?

OLD MAN

I think we just need some information.

PAUL

Well, you've come to the right place.
I'll get you some qualified help.

Paul walks over to Ben.

PAUL (angry)

Get up! We've got two customers looking
for an old Toyota.

BEN

They ain't buying. They come every
week.

PAUL

Just sell. I want these old cars off
the lot! Today!

Paul walks back to office. Ben gets up, walks over and puts
on a fake smile as he greets customers.

BEN

Hello! Welcome back to New Used Cars!

OLD WOMAN

We just had some questions.

BEN

I see you've got your eyes on a vintage
Toyota, a real classic!

OLD MAN

We want to know how many miles it has.

BEN

I can check that right now!

OLD WOMAN

I used to own a Toyota like this.

BEN

Oh, Toyota's never go out of style.
This was one of the very best models.

OLD MAN

How many miles to the gallon?

BEN

This car still uses that classic gasoline. You can't find that feature in many cars these days.

OLD WOMAN

Where can we buy gasoline for this car?

BEN

It's being sold in specialty stations around the world. I can guarantee that!

OLD MAN

Can we take it on a test drive?

BEN

Sure! You can drive this vehicle once around the parking lot at a low speed.

Ben sees Paul is out of sight, then turns away.

OLD WOMAN

How does the air condition work?

BEN

All information can be found in glove compartment. When you've made up your mind, just come find me.

Ben walks back to couch, sits down and turns up volume. Older couple are confused, then walk out.

Paul walks out of office.

PAUL

That's it? No sale?

BEN

They ask the same questions every week. They are a complete waste of time.

PAUL

I believe you're the big waste of time.

Paul walks to another man looking at cars. Ben takes another sip of coffee and stretches out on the couch.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE - NIGHT

Gabriel is working over moonshine still in back of cabin. Water is boiling, and alcohol is flowing through tubes. Gabriel is carefully examining flames.

Lacy walks in and seems surprised.

LACY

I thought you were giving up the moonshine.

GABRIEL

I did. I don't drink nothing like I used to.

LACY

You promised you would not drink any of your impurities.

GABRIEL

I don't. This is my private distillery.

LACY

Quazum knows. He can smell this junk cooking a mile away.

GABRIEL

Hand me that dried oak log.

LACY

If I catch Quazum anywhere near this brewery, it goes in the trash. And I don't want to smell it on your breath.

Lacy hand log to Gabriel and walks out.

GABRIEL

It's more natural than eating bugs.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - DAY

Quazum is staring at the computer screen as loud sounds and bright lights flash. Skin under Quazum's clothes changes color as computer screen changes. 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 computer noise. He walks up and sits at barstool next to Lacy.

GABRIEL

Is there anything that can come from
being an expert of a computer game?

LACY

It's a test of hand-eye coordination.

GABRIEL

Maybe he could use that skill for
something else?

LACY

If anyone discovers what we've got,
they'll put Quazum in a zoo. He's too
important.

GABRIEL

Is his father an alien?

LACY

His mother and father. I believe a
fertilized egg, natural to Quazmopolis,
was implanted in my unconscious body.

Gabriel is confused and sits at chair thinking.

QUAZUM (from computer)

I did it! I just got a personal record
on the Rocket Bomb program!

GABRIEL (to Lacy)

Why would aliens do something like
that?

LACY

I believe the species knows it's dying,
and they want to start over.

GABRIEL

What does Quazum think?

LACY

He only knows what we tell him.

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

QUAZUM (excited)

The highest record in Rocket Bomb
history is now held by Quazum!

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 (cont'd)

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

QUINCY (annoyed)

Whatever's left on tap.

BEN

I want to buy you a couple mugs of the best beer west of the Mississippi.

BRENDA

Thank you.

MARY

We don't say 'no' too often.

QUINCY

Here you go! Two of the best brews in California -- on Ben!

Ben walks back to bar and sits down next to empty mug.

QUINCY

You want another refill? Or you gonna call it a night?

BEN

One more. This'll be my last.

News on TV monitor suddenly cuts to story about Quazmopolis. Ben notices graphics and video.

BEN

Hey! Turn it up. I wanna hear this!

Bartender turns up volume on TV speakers and stops music.

TV NEWS ANCHOR

"Exploration of Quazmopolis, a moon in the Kepler solar system, has an oxygen based atmosphere but is unable to support life. Science Exploration Agency is planning a new mission."

Video on screen shows rock of different colors with scientists and temperatures gauges.

TV NEWS ANCHOR (cont'd)

"President of SEA, Dr. William Palmer, has selected crew and will plant life that will grow in all temperatures."

Dr. Palmer appears on screen giving interview.

PALMER

"Our new Arid Cacti will be planted in soil natural to the Quazmopolis.

TV NEWS ANCHOR

"Temperatures range from zero at night to upper one fifties in day."

Ben looks disgusted as Quincy walks over.

QUINCY

So what do you think?

BEN

I worked for SEA. I was going to marry one of the scientists.

QUINCY

You were? What happened?

BEN

Well, she went on the mission with some horny explorer, got pregnant, and we called off the wedding.

QUINCY

Now you're happy selling cars?

BEN

I think I'm doing okay.

Ben gets up and walks over to table with the two girls.

BEN (cont'd)

How's the beer? Was I right?

MARY

You got some connection to Quazmopolis?

BRENDA

We know one of the SEA scientists.

MARY

He still works there.

BEN

Yeah? Who do you know?

BRENDA

His name is Chris Evans. You know him?

BEN

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

BRENDA (surprised)

He's married to my cousin and still works at SEA.

BEN (thinking)

You know? Nothing goes better with a mug of beer than a shot of vodka. Have you ever tried that?

Ladies laugh as Ben turns to bartender.

BEN (yelling)

Quincy? Three shots of tequila!

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - MORNING - WINTER

Gabriel and Quazum are fishing in old pirogue boat. Quazum is wearing red cap and specially cut clothes, but face and hands are barely visible.

QUAZUM

Fish aren't biting today.

GABRIEL

Check your bait. Make sure you still got your worm.

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

GABRIEL

No, you have to bait your own hook.

QUAZUM

I don't know how.

GABRIEL

It's something you need to learn. My dad 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'.

Quazum thinks, then opens can and carelessly pulls off lid. Gabriel watches.

GABRIEL

Careful! Don't just open the can!

QUAZUM

I gotta open it to get a worm.

GABRIEL

Now seal it back up! Close it. Quick!

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

QUAZUM

I got it. I got it.

GABRIEL

There's a danger to 'opening a can of worms'.

Worms continue escaping and crawling around the bottom of the boat as Quazum tries to gather them.

QUAZUM

What's the danger?

GABRIEL

If you carelessly let one worm out,
more and more will escape. And you
can't get 'em back. You gotta remember
that.

Worms continue crawling, and Quazum struggles trying to
pick them up and return them.

QUAZUM

What do I do?

GABRIEL

Just leave 'em down there. And seal up
the can. You can just pick 'em one at a
time.

QUAZUM

I guess.

Quazum baits his hook and throws spins rod back in the
water. Quazum sees confused, and Gabriel looks on.

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 (to Brenda)

What's his name again?

BRENDA

I think it's Ben.

Mary walks up to bathroom door and knocks.

MARY (through door)

Morning Ben. I just wanted to know what
hours we can come by that car dealer?

BRENDA

We just want to see the car you told us
about last night.

Toilet flushes, and Ben walks back to bedroom.

BEN

There are a lot of salesmen looking to
dump the old crappy cars.

MARY (confused)

You said they were top of the line, and
you could get us a deal.

BEN (laughs)

You got free drinks and a lot of
promises. That was the deal.

MARY

So all you said last night about cars
was just a lie?

BEN

Yep.

Ben lies down in bed.

BRENDA

You're just a liar and a cheat. Let's
get out of here.

MARY

It's no wonder you got fired from SEA.

Ladies walk out and door slams. Ben lies motionless in bed
and begins thinking. He finally rolls over and hits pillow.

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - DAY

Quazum and Gabriel are climbing out of 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 peppers so you can fry up some spicy catfish tonight!

LACY

I'm cooking some red beans right now, and I'm going to serve it over rice with some hot boudin.

GABRIEL

Sounds good! We can fry up these catfish tomorrow.

Lacy laughs and turns to car. Quazum looks curious

QUAZUM

Hey Mom? Can I come?

LACY

What? Why? What's the matter?

GABRIEL

People 'round Louisiana is one thing you need to stay away from.

QUAZUM

I want to go into town and see what stores look like. Meet some people. Maybe go shopping?

LACY

There's nothing to see. It's run-down stores, stale food, and people doing stupid things. That's not for you.

QUAZUM

Yeah? Why not?

GABRIEL

Being thrown in with bad locals can start a riot. It's like opening a can of worms when you're fishing.

LACY

Why don't you check the solar panels
you put up on the roof?

QUAZUM

They're fine.

LACY

We're not getting the electricity we
used to get when you first built them.

QUAZUM

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

LACY

Make them shine like new.

QUAZUM

That's what the rain does. Every
afternoon, they get a good rinse.

LACY

You can find something.

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

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ben sits at computer wearing underwear. He is unshaven with
messy hair. With one finger, he types "S E A" in internet
search. Advertisements pop up with pictures of beaches and
ocean vacations.

With two fingers, Ben types "Science Exploration Agency".
News articles and voice begins announcements of SEA
mission.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Science Exploration Agency is planning
new mission to Quazmopolis."

Ben moves finger across touch screen and pushes pictures.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"SEA explorers are hoping to plant life and bring back element combinations."

Ben sees picture of scientists and clicks photo of Chris.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Chris Evans studied Geographical Science at Northwestern University and began working at SEA after graduation."

Ben clicks on more information of personal life.

COMPUTER (V/O)

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

Ben sees sees picture of Lacy and scientists boarding solar jet on last mission. Ben touches Lacy's face.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Scientist, Lacy Meaux, was seriously injured on second day of exploration after reports of sightings. Doctors concluded visions were caused by brain concussion."

Ben seems confused and touches screen for information.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Lacy Meaux spent one week recovering after mission, as scientists performed tests. No records available."

Ben requests more information, but nothing comes up.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"No records available."

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

EXT. BEN'S APARTMENT - CONT'D

Ben runs to car when apartment manager MS. REED walks out.

MS. REED

Mr. Thomas? You're late on your rent again. You've got late electricity and phone bills, and this dirty car still sitting in my driveway.

BEN

Sorry Ms. Reed. Nothing to worry about.

Ben climbs into car and starts it.

MS. REED

It's not something we're willing to put up with. We got lots of people looking to rent.

Ben backs out of driveway in a hurry, and car computer begins to talk.

COMPUTER V/O

"Good afternoon, Ben. Interstate ten is backed up, but easier route is Pixley Drive west."

BEN

Shut up!

Computer stops, and Ben continues driving.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE CABIN - AFTERNOON

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

GABRIEL

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

QUAZUM

I'm just adjusting the photovoltaic angle.

GABRIEL

Is that the problem? Will that bring us more power?

QUAZUM

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

GABRIEL

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

QUAZUM

That's not a problem. Rain will clean all debris, and we'll then be receiving full power.

SFX: Pow!

Lightning strikes, and Quazum races down the ladder heading for cabin.

GABRIEL

That's it? You think that's enough?

QUAZUM

That's enough for now. We've got a thunderstorm on its way. We should go inside before the rain starts.

Gabriel and Quazum rush onto porch as rain begins to fall.

GABRIEL

You really know all the hi-tech stuff!

QUAZUM

I'm just weird.

GABRIEL

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

QUAZUM

I can climb trees. I change colors, and
I like the taste of bugs.

GABRIEL

Everyone's got different taste.

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

Do other kids have skin like mine?"

GABRIEL

You're normal.

Quazum is deep in thought examining his strange color
changing hands.

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 Paul quickly walks over.

PAUL

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

BEN

Sorry I'm late. I got backed up in
traffic, and I...

PAUL (interrupting)

I don't want to hear excuses! Just
start selling!

Paul is thinking as he walks to Brenda and Mary from last
night and pretends to be sincere.

BEN

So do you ladies see the car you were looking for? We've got a wide assortment of unique automobiles.

MARY

We want to know about the classic Volkswagen Bug we talked about last night.

BRENDA

Can you tell us the historical value?

BEN

The Volkswagen Beetle started in 1938, then changed its style in the 1970's and again in the 1990's. The original shape and design has not been duplicated since making this original design priceless!

MARY

So what kind of deal can you get us?

BEN

I want to ask you something. What else can you tell me about Chris at SEA?

BRENDA

Who?

BEN

You said you're related to the wife of one of the scientists. I looked him up, and the computer said he was married with kids.

MARY

Yeah! He's been married a long time!

BRENDA

Since that last mission to Quazmopolis!

BEN

How do you know?

MARY

I used to baby-sit for him.

BEN

Did he ever date a girl from SEA? A scientist named Lacy?

BRENDA

Chris started dating my cousin in high school!

Ben thinks, then searches on his phone.

MARY

So, what about the Volkswagen?

Manager Paul walks over, and Ben walks towards exit door.

PAUL

Ben, can you help this experienced couple?

BEN

I'm sorry. I've got some important business.

PAUL

If you walk out that door, you'll never be welcome back!

Ben continues out closing door behind him.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - NIGHT

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

LACY

That rain is soaking up the whole road back here. It's all mud and puddles. I

need Quazum to take a look at my brake pads.

Quazum does not respond.

GABRIEL

Quazum adjusted those solar panels so we're getting full power. Right?

Quazum does not respond.

LACY

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

Quazum does not respond.

GABRIEL

Nothing better than Lacy's catfish with the special sauce! It's truly the bayou's best! You won't get food like this anywhere in the world, Quazum!

QUAZUM

So, who's my father? I want to meet him.

GABRIEL

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

QUAZUM

My dad is someone I have a right to know.

LACY

I'll tell you all about him one day.

QUAZUM

I just want to see a picture.

GABRIEL

Your Mom was a scientist that went around exploring. She made the decision

to have you and move back to the marshland. Now just let it be.

LACY

I just wanted to do what's best for you.

QUAZUM

So I can't see him?

LACY

When the time comes, I'll tell you all about my adventures. And everything I know about your father.

Quazum is quiet and looks down at his plate.

QUAZUM

Can I be excused?

GABRIEL

No, this is a classic cajun dinner. Eat your catfish.

Quazum doesn't eat and sits motionless.

LACY

It's okay Quazum. You can go. When the time comes, I'll tell you everything I know about your father.

Quazum walks into bedroom and closes door. Lacy and Gabriel continue eating.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Ben is clean shaven, wearing clean clothes and driving in a clean car.

CAR (V/O)

"Science Exploration Agency is to your right."

Ben pulls up to security. Charles, the same guard, stops him at the gate.

CHARLES

Can I help you sir?

BEN

Good morning Charles. I'm here to visit Dr. Palmer.

CHARLES

I remember you! Where have you been? Did you run off with Miss Lacy?

BEN

No, we never got married.

CHARLES

You guys both left the same day. I thought you just eloped!

BEN

Can I go into SEA headquarters? I don't have an appointment.

CHARLES

Sure, you can! And when you see Miss Lacy, tell her Charles says hi.

BEN

Thank you.

Gates open, and Ben pulls into parking lot.

INT. SEA BUILDING

Heidi, the receptionist, puts down phone and stares at Ben as he walks into the lobby.

HEIDI

Is that who I think it is?

BEN

Good morning Heidi.

HEIDI

I don't believe it! This place just hasn't been the same since you and Lacy left. What are you guys doing?

BEN

I'm just here to see Dr. Palmer. Any chance he might be available?

HEIDI

I'll get him. Just sit down.

Heidi touches computer screen, and Ben walks over and picks up a SEA magazine. He looks around at exploration pictures of Quazmopolis on the walls.

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

PALMER

Ben Thomas? It's been a long time! What are you doing now?

BEN

I'm just getting by. Can we talk?

INT. SEA HALLWAY - CONT'D

Dr. Palmer and Ben walk down the hallway, and SEA employees look on.

PALMER

Have you seen Miss Lacy?

BEN

No. Not since I left.

PALMER

We all miss Lacy around here.

BEN

I guess that's what I wanted to talk to you about.

PALMER

What is it?

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE - CONT'D

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

BEN

I read online that Lacy quit, and I just wanted to know why.

PALMER

Lacy was given the option of ending her pregnancy and staying with SEA, but she chose to quit.

BEN

So, who was the father?

PALMER

DNA of all scientists on mission were tested, but father was no one from SEA. Lacy got pregnant before the expedition, grounds for termination.

BEN

I know I'm not the father. We used birth control.

PALMER

Then it was someone else before the mission.

BEN

I don't believe that.

Ben sits deep in thought as Palmer looks on.

PALMER

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

Ben gets up and walks out.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE PROPERTY - MORNING

SFX: BAM! BAM! BAM!

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

GABRIEL

I'll get you today. Ain't no way you
can get 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.

Gabriel lowers rifle and continues through the mud looking at various colored mud piles and up at moss in trees.

EXT. TREES - CONT'D

Quazum is quietly climbing tree, changing colors and blending in. He then easily swings across branches directly above Gabriel.

Gabriel quickly spins around pointing the gun up into the trees. Quazum is barely visible and remains motionless, quietly watches Gabriel.

GABRIEL (cont'd)

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

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

SFX: BAM! BAM!

EXT. CABIN - CONT'D

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

LACY (yelling)

I told you Dad. No firing guns! It's
dangerous.

Lacy walks back inside.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE

Ben is driving slowly down old highway seeing swamp area for the first time.

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 and and turns down muddy road into Meaux property. He stops when he sees road dip. Ben then climbs out of car and begins walking up to old rusty wired fence. He then climbs through cautiously.

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - CONT'D

Gabriel is carrying his rifle through the swamps looking up in the trees and studying strange footprints in the mud. No sound or movement can be seen across the swamp area.

Birds fly out making sounds in the trees above, and Gabriel swings gun and walks around looking straight up.

GABRIEL

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

Quazum changes shape and color and begins crawling down the side of a tree.

QUAZUM

I surrender.

GABRIEL

I knew that had to be you. I saw footprints and broken branches. There was just no getting away!

QUAZUM

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

Ben hears voices and walks up with a friendly smile.

BEN

Hello. I'm visiting from California, and my name is Ben.

Gabriel and Quazum spin around and see Ben making his way down the path. Quazum changes color and shape and hides next to moss covered tree. Gabriel points gun.

BEN (cont'd)

I'm from Science Exploration, and I'm looking for a Mr. Gabriel Meaux. I just want to ask some questions about Lacy Meaux?

SFX: POW!

Gabriel steps out looking down the barrel of his shotgun. Ben raises both hands in fear.

GABRIEL

Lacy Meaux is off limits. Now get off my land!

BEN

I'm sorry. I just...

GABRIEL (interrupting)

This is your last warning!

Ben looks at Gabriel, then turns and begins running away. He climbs through fence to his car, starts it, and backs out.

QUAZUM (to Gabriel)

Why did you shoot? I think he knows Mom.

GABRIEL

He's got no business trespassing.

Gabriel reloads gun as they walk back towards the cabin.

EXT. CABIN - CONT'D

Quazum runs up to Lacy outside.

QUAZUM

Mama, we saw somebody! And he asked
about you!

LACY

Why did you fire the gun?

GABRIEL

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

LACY

I told you not to shoot that thing.

GABRIEL

They were just rubber bullets -- only
meant to scare him.

LACY

That's not the point. Now he's going to
get more people involved.

QUAZUM

It was just to scare him.

LACY

I think your Grandpa just 'opened a can
of worms'.

EXT. GUNS-R-US STORE - DAY

Ben drives into the parking lot of gun store. Ben reads
sign in the window highlighting special prices on shotguns
and hunting rifles, all sold with a box of bullets
included. Ben parks car, walks in.

INT. GUNS-R-US - CONT'D

BUDDY, the salesman, steps out from behind the counter.

BUDDY

What can I help you with? You looking for a new hunting rifle, or maybe just a new ZAC Pistol?

Ben ignores questions and looks around.

BUDDY (cont'd)

We got a special deal on shotguns. You interested in a 12-round blast with shells included?

BEN

I just want a simple handgun for defense.

BUDDY

A pistol? Well, you've come to the right place. We got pistols with both centerfire to a rim fire primer.

BEN

Just a small gun for protection.

BUDDY

We got a deal today on a basic twenty-four caliber pistol. Comes fully loaded.

BEN

I guess. I don't have any kind of license. Does that matter?

Buddy begins ringing it up on cash register.

BUDDY

Not 'round here. You looking for someone? I know everyone around this town.

BEN

I just want to speak with Gabriel Meaux.

BUDDY

You want see old Gabriel? Face to face?

BEN

It's concerning his daughter, and work at Science Exploration.

BUDDY

I wouldn't go near Gabriel without a gun. You should get some local cops behind you.

Buddy hands Ben the gun in a shopping bag.

BENNY

It's strictly personal business. This gun is only for defense.

BUDDY

Let me call Neil. He's the Sheriff. He can just gather up a group of cops to stand behind you.

BEN

I don't know if that is going to help.

BUDDY (into phone)

Neil, this is Buddy at the gun shop. I got a guy here wants to talk to Gabriel Meaux. You got any men that can get behind him?

INT. SHERIFF NEIL'S OFFICE - CONT'D

Sheriff Neil is sitting behind desk in full police uniform.

NEIL

Why does he want to see Gabriel Meaux?

BUDDY

He's from Science Exploration in California. Says he knows Gabriel's daughter Lacy.

NEIL

And he just wants to talk?

BUDDY

That's it. It should all just take a few minutes.

NEIL (thinks for a beat)

Yeah, I think I can do that.

INT. GUNS-R-US - CONT'D

Buddy hangs up the phone.

BUDDY

Okay. Sheriff Neil's going to escort you. And keep you safe.

BEN (confused)

Will I need a gun?

BUDDY

(pointing at sign)

I'm sorry. "All Sales Final".

Ben reads sign, thinks for a beat, then picks up gun and walks out.

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - DAY

Lacy drags barbed wire fence posts and blocks access to dirt road. Gabriel and Quazum follow directions and move branches and tree limbs.

LACY

Block all signs of the gravel road.

GABRIEL

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

Lacy lays down hay and leaves along street opening covering driveway entrance.

QUAZUM

Why are we even doing this? Let me talk to him.

Lacy points at two signs. "No Trespassing" and "Shoot First, Ask Questions Later" sign.

LACY

Take down those signs.

GABRIEL

The signs are to keep people away.

LACY

They just draw more attention.

GABRIEL

They're too high, and they're nailed in.

QUAZUM

I can get 'em.

Quazum quickly climbs trees and posts and easily pulls down nailed-in signs.

GABRIEL

This is crazy.

LACY

We've got to get the "worms back in the jar".

EXT. SWAMPVILLE ROAD - LATER

Ben nervously drives down old highway toward Meaux property followed by line of Sheriff Neil and police cars.

Ben drives by entrance looking around looking around. Cops follow.

Ben turns on radio.

CAR (V/O)

"Driveway to unregistered Meaux property is now four hundred thirty-seven yards behind you."

Ben tries to make a U-turn followed by row of confused police cars.

INT. MEAUX HOME

Lacy is hiding plants and decorations around the cabin and carrying them inside. Quazum and Gabriel try to help.

LACY

Cover up those hi-tech looking gadgets you got up on the roof.

QUAZUM

I guess I can move some of the moss from the old trees to hide their glow.

GABRIEL

We're giving up power?

QUAZUM

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

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

Lacy looks around, then jumps in car and backs it up out of site at the rear of cabin.

GABRIEL

The car too?

LACY (to Gabriel)

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

GABRIEL

What do they care? I ain't committed no crime.

LACY

And you haven't seen me in twenty years. You understand?

GABRIEL

And what if they ain't satisfied with that can I shoot 'em?

QUAZUM

Maybe they're just looking for me?

GABRIEL

You just stay here with your Mom.

Gabriel picks up his shotgun and heads out.

LACY

You leave that here. No violence.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE - CONT'D

Ben finally stops at blocked off barbed wire fence with dirt and grass covering the entrance. Police cars are slowly driving behind him. Ben climbs out slowly. Neil and police follow.

NEIL

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

BEN

I'm sure this is where I went in.

POLICE #1

Meaux's entrance has 'No Trespassing' signs.

POLICE #2

And multiple warning signs.

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

BEN

You can stay outside the gate. I just want to ask a few questions.

NEIL

Fine. We can wait.

Policemen watch as Ben crosses the barbed wire fence and walks down muddy path looking around old trees and moss.

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - CONT'D

Gabriel is hiding behind trees when he sees line of police cars and Ben walking down path. Ben examines covered path and continues.

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

GABRIEL

What do you want?

BEN

Oh! Hello. Are you Mr. Meaux?

GABRIEL

Who wants to know?

Gabriel stands motionless in the marsh. Ben looks back at parked police cars and steps forward.

BEN (politely)

My name is Ben from Science Exploration, and I'm just looking for one of our scientists.

GABRIEL

That ain't got nothing to do with my swamp land, and nothing to do with your trespassing.

BEN

I just want information about Lacy Meaux. Do you know her?

GABRIEL

I ain't seen Lacy Meaux in twenty years.

BEN

Do you have any knowledge of...

GABRIEL (interrupting)

I'm going to ask you again politely. Just get off my land, and go on back where you came from.

BEN

Can you just give me some idea of where I might find...

GABRIEL (interrupting)

You're trespassing on my property.

BEN

You can't give any information?

GABRIEL

You got three seconds.

Ben reaches into his pocket and nervously pulls out pistol.

BEN

I'm not leaving without an answer.

Gabriel jumps back behind trees, and Ben fires gun.

SFX: "Bang! Bang!"

EXT. SWAMPVILLE STREETS - CONT'D

Sheriff Neil and police look up in shock and begin racing through the barbed wire fence. They hold pistols and automatic weapons as they run.

POLICEMAN #1 (into

radio)

Gunfire on personal property of Gabriel Meaux. We need immediate back-up!

POLICEMAN #2 (into radio)
We got one man down. Please get an ambulance down here.

EXT. MEAUX PROPERTY - CONT'D

Sheriff Neil runs up to find Ben leaning over Gabriel who is lying on his back and covered with blood.

BEN (crying)
I'm sorry, Mr. Meaux. I didn't want a shoot-out. I just want to find Lacy.

GABRIEL (mumbling)
Leave them alone.

Gabriel then drops his head and appears dead.

BEN (confused)
Them?

Sheriff Neil jumps in and tries to check Gabriel's heart.

NEIL (to Ben)
Did he pull a gun?

POLICEMAN #3
He's unarmed.

BEN (shocked)
I was just trying to warn him.

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

NEIL (cont'd)
You shot him in self-defense.

Ben stands up in shock as police race by with rifles.

POLICEMAN #4

The cabin is this way!

NEIL

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

BEN

Stop! This is a mistake!

Ben follows Sheriff Neil towards cabin in center of property.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

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

QUAZUM

What do I do? They're looking for me.

LACY

You stay undercover. You are not to be seen or questioned by anyone. Do you understand?

QUAZUM

Why?

LACY

Take off your clothes and hide! Go in the bedroom!" And don't let them see you!

QUAZUM

I'm scared.

Quazum rips off clothes and runs into bedroom. He looks around room for cover, before changing shape and color matching nightstand next to the bed.

LACY

Under no circumstances are you to be discovered. You are to remain motionless.

EXT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

NEIL (through P.A.)
"Mr. Gabriel Meaux tried to fight
Swampville Police and was shot. The
cabin is surrounded. Please give
yourself up peacefully. We just need to
ask questions.

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

BEN
Just let me talk. No guns. Just
peaceful conversation.

Policemen look around, before Sheriff Neil finally nods
giving Ben the okay sign. Ben nervously walks up to cabin
door, and knocks politely.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Ben talks through door.

BEN
Is anyone here? My name is Ben Thomas.
I am looking for Lacy Meaux. Can you
please help me?

Ben gets no response, knocks again and continues.

BEN (cont'd)
I worked with Lacy at the SEA Agency,
and I just need information. No one is
wanted for arrest or investigation. I
just need to speak to Lacy.

EXT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Still no response comes from cabin, and police look around.
Sheriff Neil gives a sign, and officers begin moving in.

Door suddenly begins to squeak open slowly, and police
stop.

Ben slowly waves off officers and walks in with hands up.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

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

LACY

What do you want?

BEN (shocked)

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

LACY

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

BEN

Your dad got shot, but they're rushing him to a hospital. They'll do everything they can to save him.

LACY

Damn you! We were doing fine, and you had to come out here and destroy our lives. Just get out of here.

BEN

Lacy, I screwed up ten years ago. I know I did. I just want another chance to try and make things right.

LACY

You had your chance. It's all over.

BEN

I spoke to Dr. Palmer, and he explained you were pregnant before you went to Quazmopolis. I know it was my baby.

LACY

My personal life is private.

BEN

You don't have to marry me, or protect me. I just want to help.

LACY

Just get these cops out of here, and get my Dad back.

Lacy carries shotgun over to door.

EXT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Lacy's shadow appears in doorway holding gun.

One nervous policeman fires a shot, and Lacy goes down. More guns fire at the cabin.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Lacy tries to crawl with a big hole in the side of her head. Blood is pouring out.

Ben rushes to the door yelling and waving his arms,

BEN

No guns! No gunfire! Please!

Ben closes the door and runs back to Lacy who is lying on the ground. Her head is bleeding, and her eyes are closed.

BEN (crying)

Lacy, you'll be okay. I promise. I'll do everything I can. You and your dad will both have your confidential lives back. I didn't mean for this to happen.

QUAZUM

Mom? Are you okay?

Ben spins around to see the multi-colored chameleon staring nervously at his bleeding mother. Ben stands up and looks on in shock.

BEN

Who are you? What are you?

Quazum leans over Lacy and uses tongue, saliva, and rapid moving fingers to stop bleeding.

BEN (cont'd)

She's your Mom?

Quazum continues using amazing medical skills.

LACY (mumbling to Ben)

This is Quazum, and he is not our son.

QUAZUM

Mom, I am your son.

Lacy struggles to remain conscious.

LACY

I believe intelligent life planted a fertilized egg inside me to try and save the species.

QUAZUM

Mom? What are you saying?

LACY

You're a healthy smart boy, Quazum.
(turns to Ben)
Protect him.

Lacy leans her head back and closes her eyes. Quazum continues treatment.

QUAZUM

Just hang in there, Mom. You'll be okay.

Front door suddenly opens, and police rush in. Medics carry in a stretcher and begin carrying Lacy out.

Quazum rushes over next to window quickly blending in with the wall and the chair.

POLICEMAN #5

Search the bedrooms and the closets!

Sheriff Neil walks in and looks around.

NEIL (to Ben)

Did she have a gun?

BEN

Why did you shoot her?

NEIL

We were only trying to protect you.
This woman had a gun pointed at an
innocent civilian and made threatening
gestures.

BEN

She never fired a shot.

Sheriff Neil walks over to rifle lying next to Lacy. He
picks up the gun and fires one shot out the window.

NEIL

Yes she did.

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

Quazum suddenly changes color and jumps out of open window
racing into the marsh. Several police hear a sound and spin
around looking curiously.

Ben remains deep in thought as he walks over to look out
window.

EXT. FUNERAL - DAY

Empty chairs are gathered in an old graveyard. A cheap
coffin stands next to a minister speaking from a podium.

MINISTER (reading)

Gabriel Meaux was a proud man living
alone in the swamps of Louisiana. He
had one daughter who moved to
California, and they both had a bit of
misfortune.

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

MINISTER (cont'd)

Gabriel Meaux will join his wife of twenty years. They will both rest in peace. Amen.

Minister looks at his watch, then walks back to office area. Ben walks over and holds back emotion as he leans over Gabriel's body.

BEN

I'm sorry, Mr. Meaux. I truly loved your daughter, and I owe you my life.

Ben suddenly hears a crying voice from behind and spins around. He looks around graveyard searching for motion.

BEN (cont'd)

Quazum? I know what you're going through. I just want to talk.

Ben finally walks out. Gravediggers look on confused, then continue digging.

Quazum changes shape and color and walks up to gravediggers.

QUAZUM (crying)

He was my Grampa.

Gravediggers stop and stare at partially invisible Quazum.

GRAVEDIGGER #1 (yelling)

Argh!!! It's a ghost!

Gravedigger #2 swings shovel at Quazum.

GRAVEDIGGER #2

Get out of here! Now!

In fear, Quazum runs across graveyard changing shape and color and disappears. Gravediggers look on in shock.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - DAY

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

PALMER

This mission is vitally important. New satellites have detected motion.

CHRIS

Motion has been reported before.

PALMER

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

OLIVER

No life can survive a daily climate change of more than one hundred degrees.

CHRIS

Shouldn't we just leave Quazmopolis alone?

PALMER

All right. You are all excused. Continue preparation.

Everyone gets up and heads out the door. Alice walks in.

ALICE

Dr. Palmer? I've got information that Lacy Meaux and her father were shot at their home in Louisiana.

PALMER (surprised)

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

And Lacy?

ALICE

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

PALMER

Was Ben Thomas involved?

ALICE (confused)

Ben? He's not mentioned in the report.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS - DAY

Wearing no clothes, Quazum walks along sidewalk next to big city street jumping into alleys and changing shape and color. Quazum approaches grocery store and peaks in.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CONT'D

People are walking in and out and pushing carts. Quazum changes shape and color and jumps into the base of a shopping cart. NANCY, a cashier, notices motion.

NANCY

Did you see something in that cart?

CO-WORKER

What? I didn't see nothing.

Quazum rides along partially invisible. When cart stops, Quazum jumps out and climbs shelves knocking down items.

Nancy notices movement and closes register, then walks down aisle. She notices a strange box on a shelf and walks up. Quazum changes shape suddenly and sticks out his hand.

QUAZUM (shyly)

My name is Quazum.

NANCY (scared)

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

Nancy runs away. Quazum climbs up and over shelves to hide.
Employees and shoppers rush over.

CO-WORKER

I don't see no ghost!

NANCY

It was a cereal box that turned
invisible!

Quazum climbs down and grabs a box of salt, then changes
shape and color and runs past customers out front door.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE

Ben is driving slowly, with windows rolled down and
examining fences and old trees around the city of
Swampville. He looks like he hasn't eaten or slept.

BEN

Quazum? Can you hear me? It's me, Ben.
I just want to help.

A soft rain begins to drizzle down. Ben rolls up windows
and turns on wipers but sees no movement. He continues
driving slowly.

He sees big city lights in the distance and thinks.

INT. PALMER'S OFFICE - DAY

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

COMPUTER V/O

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

PALMER

Lacy Palmer? Still critical condition?

COMPUTER V/O

"Bleeding from head was reported
'unnaturally' slow, but doctors believe
she has no chance of recovery."

PALMER

And other news in the city?

COMPUTER V/O

"City Council member accused of tax
evasion. One DUI reported, and reports
of ghost sightings."

PALMER (surprised)

Ghosts sightings? More information.

COMPUTER V/O

"Sightings reported at Swampville
burial grounds and local grocery store.
No video available."

Dr. Palmer stares at computer screen deep in thought.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALLEY - DAY

Invisible Quazum fills bottle with water from tap on the
side of a building, pours in salt, and takes a swig.

Homeless people in the dark alley look confused as Quazum
walks by drinking from bottle.

Quazum studies crack in the side of a building. He looks
around, then licks wall eating small bugs.

Drunk man notices motion and walks over. When he reaches
out to touch, Quazum spins around startled.

HOMELESS #1

A ghost! I saw a ghost!

Man drops bottle and runs down the alley. Quazum looks around, then picks up bottle and smells. He then climbs wall and runs across buildings to next alley carrying bottle.

INT. LOCAL NEWS ROOM

Local news anchor walks out to group of reporters who are typing on computers. Reporters are editing video.

NEWS ANCHOR

Do we have anything interesting for tonight's news? Or something online?

REPORTER #1

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

PRODUCER

A fire was reported in Riverside camp.

NEWS ANCHOR

What was the damage?

PRODUCER

Well, the fire was put out before any damage.

REPORTER #2

And we don't have video.

NEWS ANCHOR

Do we have anything that can draw an audience? Ratings?

REPORTER #1

A few reports of ghost sightings, but witnesses have no credibility, and one was a homeless drunk.

NEWS ANCHOR (excited)

I believe 'em! Let's get interviews and a full report!

News reporters and cameramen rush out.

INT. SEA HALLWAY

Scientists are gathered around. Doors are closed to Dr. Palmer's office.

CHRIS

What's Palmer doing in there?

OLIVER

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

Buzzer on desk of Alice rings, and she pushes button.

ALICE

Yes Dr. Palmer?

PALMER (V/O)

I want you to book an immediate flight to airport nearest Swampville, Louisiana.

ALICE (confused)

But the Quazmopolis mission is scheduled in just a few days!

JENKINS

Dr. Palmer, we need to begin...

PALMER (interrupting)

Schedule soonest take off!

Phone hangs up. Alice and scientists look around confused.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT - AFTERNOON

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?

REPORTER #2

Can your office confirm sightings at graveyard?

NEIL

Reports of ghosts is common claim in every city. It means nothing and will not be investigated.

REPORTER #3

And the cashier at Grocery Mart? She claimed to witness irregular motion?

NEIL

There are no respectable observations. And no investigation.

REPORTER #4

Do you believe these sightings may correlate with killing of Gabriel Meaux?

Sheriff Neil looks surprised, then turns and walks past reporters and into office area.

NEIL

I've said enough. No comment.

EXT. BIG CITY - AFTERNOON

Ben drives down busy street and pulls over and rolls down window when he sees HOMELESS MAN #1.

BEN

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

HOMELESS MAN #1

I see strange things everyday.

BEN

Have there been any unusual sightings?
Just a shadow or out of place color. Or
maybe you just heard a voice?

HOMELESS MAN #1

A guy over there said he heard a voice.

BEN

Okay. Thank you.

Ben continues driving through downtown in the rain.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE FUNERAL HOME - AFTERNOON

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

INT. FUNERAL HOME - CONT'D

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

NEIL

I want to talk to someone about the
Meaux funeral that took place here.

REVEREND

Are these questions about a ghost?

PALMER

I want to speak to the gravediggers.

REVEREND

No one saw anything! And gravediggers
are not talking!

EXT. GRAVEYARD - CONT'D

Sheriff Neil walks out, policemen follow. The same two diggers are patting down dirt as Neil walks up.

NEIL

What did you witness at the burial of Gabriel Meaux?

REVEREND

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

NEIL

Did you hear any ghost sounds?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

Sounded like crying at first.

GRAVEDIGGER #2

Then a voice said he wanted to say goodbye to his Grandpa.

NEIL

His Grandpa?

Neil is surprised and deep in thought.

REVEREND

All odysseys have been legally filed, and we have no further information.

Neil then turns and walks back towards police car. Police, reverend and gravediggers look confused.

INT. NEWS STUDIO

NEWS ANCHOR is sitting at news desk in studio with ghost box over shoulder.

NEWS ANCHOR

"First reports of ghost sightings were made at investigation of Mr. Gabriel Meaux. Unusual movement was seen by officers after shooting. Police found illegal still, and Mr. Meaux reportedly fired twenty-two caliber pistol at sheriff and two policemen before being shot and killed. Daughter Lacy Meaux

was also shot by police officers after resisting arrest."

EXT. FAST-MOVING JET - AFTERNOON

Jet is moving over southwest.

PILOT (V/O)

"There are some beautiful locations around Louisiana that you might want to visit -- like the timeless French Quarters with historical landmarks."

INT. JET - CONT'D

Dr. Palmer is uncomfortably riding in center seat and reading from his laptop computer. Stewardess walks up.

STEWARDESS

Can I get you something?

PALMER

No, I'm fine.

PASSENGER #1

Did you hear about the ghosts in Louisiana?

PALMER

I've heard bits.

PASSENGER #2

My uncle is a cop and said news 'round the world is investigating ghosts.

PALMER

Interesting.

PASSENGER #3

I wanna see one.

Dr. Palmer smiles, and jet continues.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Dr. Palmer pulls carry-on luggage through New Orleans airport and heads for street. Palmer quickly waves down first empty taxi. RICO, the driver, rolls down window.

RICO

Yes sir. You need a lift?

Palmer loads suitcase.

PALMER

Take me to the Tickfaw Memorial.

RICO

That's kind of far...

PALMER

As fast as possible.

Palmer climbs in, and taxi takes off.

EXT. GROCERY MART - LATE AFTERNOON

Police cars drive into Grocery Mart, and Sheriff Neil walks out. Policemen open doors.

NEIL (to officers)

Wait in the car. I want to keep this simple.

INT. GROCERY MART - CONT'D

Sheriff Neil walks in and looks around. Nancy and workers are checking out customers as Neil walks up.

NEIL

Hello. I want to ask some questions.

WORKER

What you need to know?

NEIL

I heard about a ghost sighting in your store and possible theft.

WORKER

Oh boy! Everybody asking 'bout that.

MANAGER

I know it scared the crap out of Nancy. That I can say for sure.

Neil walks over to Nancy.

NEIL

Excuse me. Are you the one that witnessed unexplained movement?

NANCY

I saw something, and I ain't got nothing more to say.

NEIL

I want to hear your first hand account.

Nancy finishes checking out the customer and puts up chain.

NANCY (to customer)

Sorry mam. This aisle is closed.

NANCY

I told everyone already. You can see it all on the news.

NEIL

I want to know what you heard? Specifically.

NANCY (thinking)

What I heard? Well, it sounded like talking, maybe a boy's voice.

NEIL

And what did it say?

NANCY (nervously)
I think it said something that sounded
like, 'Quazum... my name is Quazum'.

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

NANCY (cont'd)
I don't know. There was yelling and
everyone running up and down the
aisles. I don't know for sure.

EXT. TICKFAW MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - LATE AFTERNOON

Rico drives in to dirty run-down hospital. Parking lot is
full. Dr. Palmer rushes out.

PALMER (to Rico)
Just wait here.

RICO
I can wait all night if you want, but
the time's going to cost you. I mean,
you understand. The meter's running.

PALMER
Money is not a problem.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONT'D

Dr. Palmer walks through crowded waiting room and up to
receptionist behind bullet proof glass counter.

PALMER
I'm here to see Miss Meaux?

RECEPTIONIST
You family?

PALMER (showing ID)
I am a certified doctor from California
and need to perform examination.

RECEPTIONIST

She was shot in the head, skull is cracked, and she's not in condition to be examined. Doctor says no visitors.

PALMER

Tell the doctor I'm not leaving.

Confused receptionist walks back, and Dr. Palmer looks around noticing waiting room is filled.

An older man limps out to waiting room area. Dr. Palmer holds door open for man, then walks in. NURSE runs up.

NURSE

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

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONT'D

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

DR. WINSTON rushes out of the employee lounge area, and cuts off Palmer.

WINSTON

I don't know who you think you are. But the Meaux body is only surviving due to full life support.

PALMER

I am formal doctor of Miss Lacy Meaux from Science Exploration. Any attempt to obstruct access to official examination will result in full legal consequence and criminal penalization.

Doctors and nurses are confused, and then step back.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONT'D

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

PALMER

Has Lacy Meaux received homeopathic cranial?

WINSTON

She's been given treatment for hairline fracture with complete intervention of brainstem.

PALMER

Did she receive treatment for occipital lobe?

WINSTON

Occipital lobe? This machine is the only thing making her heart beat.

PALMER (examining)

Where's prognosis for traumatic bleeding hemangioma.

WINSTON

We're doing the best we can with the remains of what was brought in here.

Dr. Palmer pulls personal 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!

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

KJELL

"Hello Dr. Palmer. Is it an emergency?"

PALMER

Yes. Miss Lacy Meaux took a bullet to the skull with damage to right cortex.

Palmer holds up phone showing live video of Lacy's head.

KJELL

"What pericardial treatment has been administered?"

PALMER

She has only received bandages to stop bleeding. I need you to drop everything you're doing. This is a SEA emergency.

KJELL

I'll be there in the morning.

Doctors and nurses look on surprised, and Palmer continues.

EXT. BIG CITY ALLEY - NIGHT

Ben is walking through alley with a flashlight and walks up to homeless HOMELESS MAN #2.

BEN

Hello. I just want to ask about a possible moving figure? Have you seen anything unusual?

HOMELESS MAN #2

I saw something. But it turned invisible and disappeared!

BEN

Where did it go?

HOMELESS MAN #2

It ran around the side of a building! I yelled out, but it was gone!

Ben walks curiously down the street and up alleyways between buildings and calls out. Homeless bodies are wrapped in old clothes and old blankets.

BEN (down alley)
Quazum? I want to help you.

Ben spots motionless blanket at back of alley and approaches cautiously. Ben picks up empty whiskey bottle and smells. He puts down bottle, and leans over. HOMELESS MAN #3 looks on.

Ben taps on blanket, and body moves slightly.

BEN (cont'd)
Excuse me. I just want to ask a few questions.

Ben pulls off blanket and notices color change and partially invisible body. Homeless Man #3 sees body change colors and runs out.

HOMELESS MAN #3
It's a ghost! I saw it move!

Ben hugs unconscious Quazum and lays down with him.

BEN
Quazum? It's me. I'm Ben, and I'm here to take care of you. Everything's going to be okay.

Ben wraps blanket around Quazum, then leans back holding Quazum and is near tears in the dark, cold alleyway.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

News media is gathered around graveyard, trying to interview nervous gravediggers.

GRAVEDIGGER #1
It was just a little motion we saw.
Nothing to speak of.

GRAVEDIGGER #2
It's really not so uncommon when you're working outside in the summer.

Reverend steps in.

REVEREND

What we witnessed was absolutely mind-blowing. Ghosts were flying around, and voices were ringing out. It was a new form of reality floating around the graveyard.

Gravediggers look confused.

EXT. ALLEY - MORNING

Homeless Man #3 leads GANG LEADER and GANG MEMBER down alley to Ben and Quazum. Homeless Man #3 points to Ben.

HOMELESS MAN #3

That's him!

GANG LEADER

So where's the ghost?

HOMELESS MAN #3

He was hiding under the blanket. I saw him move.

BEN

I'm alone.

Gang member walks over and tries to examine the blanket.

GANG MEMBER

What you got under there?

Ben jumps up and yells at group.

BEN

Just leave me alone. Please.

HOMELESS MAN #3

There! I saw something move!

Gang Member walks up and tries to pull blanket off.

BEN

Step back, and move away.

Ben tries to push him away when gang member swings pipe and knocks Ben down. Gang Member continues examining blanket.

GANG LEADER (to Ben)

Just keep your hands to yourself and
your mouth shut.

Quazum suddenly jumps up becoming partially visible. He picks up Ben and carries him up the side of the building. Gang looks on in shock.

INT. CALIFORNIA AIRPORT - MORNING

Airport Security is examining strange refrigerator box being wheeled in by Dr. Kjell.

SECURITY

What's in the box?

KJELL

It's frangible storage for cerebrum
latex to be used in resection of
cerebellum transplant...

SECURITY (interrupting)

What's in the box?

Security opens box, and looks in confused.

KJELL (annoyed)

It's a brain.

Security immediately closes box and pushes it aside.

SECURITY

Next?

Dr. Kjell carefully closes boxes and wheels it out.

INT. POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICE - MORNING

Police are questioning Homeless Man, who is rapped with lie detector bands around head, body and arms.

POLICE #1

You saw this ghost yourself?

HOMELESS

Yeah! It was just an invisible ghost.

POLICE #2

How can you 'see' something invisible?

HOMELESS

He jumped over guys, got stabbed with a knife. And he carried a guy up the side of a wall onto the rooftop.

POLICE #3

The ghost carried a guy up a wall?

SHERIFF

The ghost was invisible... So what did the man look like?

HOMELESS

He was in his thirties, brown hair, six feet, weight around 160.

SHERIFF

What was he wearing?

HOMELESS

He was wearing a dirty suit. Hadn't shaved. Messy hair.

Sheriff Neil is searching on phone and holds up picture of Ben.

SHERIFF

Is this the guy?

MAN #3

Yeah! That's him! Where'd you get that?

Surrounding policemen are surprised. Sheriff Neil walks out alone, and everyone is confused.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - TOP OF BUILDING - MORNING

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

BEN

What are you doing?

QUAZUM

I'm just sealing cuts. Keep still.

BEN

Do I need a doctor?

QUAZUM

No. I've stitched injuries to arms and face. You are healing normally.

Ben examines treated injuries.

BEN

You have medical training?

QUAZUM

I've got a formula in my saliva, which stops bleeding and kills bacteria. My diacetyl hands can repair torn human skin. And also provide grip which allows me to climb flat surface.

BEN

So that's how you got me up the wall?

QUAZUM

Who are you?

BEN

I'm a friend of your Mom.

QUAZUM

My mom didn't have friends.

BEN

It was a long time ago. We were going to get married... but I chickened out.

QUAZUM

You left my Mom?

BEN

It was the stupidest thing I've ever done. I now spend every day in regret wondering how I can make it up.

QUAZUM

There's nothing you can do.

BEN

I want to help you, Quazum. We can move back to the swamps. I can pay the bills.

QUAZUM

I don't want to live there without Mom and Grandpa.

BEN

We could move to California. I've got an apartment. We can be like a family.

QUAZUM

I wanna go home.

BEN

And where's that?

QUAZUM

My home is Quazmopolis.

Quazum looks upset, and Ben thinks.

EXT. AIRPORT - MORNING

Dr. Kjell is walking through crowds of people at busy airport rolling cart of medical box. He is looking confused and reading information from his computer.

SFX: BOOM

Kjell bumps into Ben who is clean-shaven and dressed nicely. Ben is cautiously rolling Quazum, disguised as suitcase.

Quazum immediately changes shape and colors as he falls. Ben jumps to try and catch him. Quazum hits the ground.

QUAZUM

Ooohhh!

BEN (whispering)

I got you. Everything's fine.

QUAZUM

I'm okay.

Quazum changes shape and color again, and Ben loads him back. Dr. Kjell looks on.

KJELL

I'm sorry. Let me help.

BEN

No! We're fine. Just checking in for flight.

KJELL (confused)

We?

BEN

I mean, I'm fine. Thank you.

Dr. Kjell seems confused and watches as Ben rolls Quazum into airport.

INT. AIRPORT CHECK-IN - MORNING

Ben sends Quazum shaped as luggage through metal scanner. He then removes shoes and belt, and stands with hands up in metal scanners. Ben watches Quazum as security continues.

Security agent performs pat-down search of Ben's body before Ben moves back over to Quazum shaped as suitcase. Security dog stops at Quazum and begins sniffing. Security follows.

SECURITY

What are you carrying onto the plane?

BEN

It's just a suitcase, with clothes and brush, and hygiene kit.

Security tries to open Quazum as dog continues sniffing.

SECURITY

What's in here?

BEN

It's not a bomb. I can tell you that.

SECURITY

Please open box. I need to examine contents.

Ben looks around at waiting passengers and continues being defensive. Dog continues sniffing.

BEN

Okay. It contains some heavy books and magazines. Things I'll be reading on the plane. Nothing more.

SECURITY

Please open bag, and reveal contents.

BEN

There's no metal. Your scanner has detected nothing.

Security tries to open bag again.

SECURITY

Are there any drugs or an illegal substance?

BEN

There is nothing illegal. I don't want to spread contents while you've got a long line of people just waiting.

Security thinks for a beat, looks at line, then hands Quazum back to Ben and turns to next customer. Dog barks.

SECURITY

Next?

Ben picks up Quazum, adjusts rolling cart, then continues.

INT. TICKFAW HOSPITAL PRIVATE ROOM - MORNING

Lacy is lying in clean room with freshly wrapped bandages around head. Dr. Palmer is performing tests with wires attached to brain, chest and body. Nurses are assisting.

Dr. Kjell pokes his head in.

KJELL

Dr. Palmer? Is this our patient?

PALMER

It's Miss Lacy Meaux. She took a bullet to the skull four days ago.

Dr. Kjell walks over and immediately begins unwrapping tissue and examining skull.

PALMER (cont'd)

Cerebral tissue has encapsulated fragment of bullet.

KJELL

Traumatic concussion is minor, but cerebellum implant may cause damage to cortex.

Dr. Kjell, without hesitation, begins cutting and opening skull gaining access to brain. Nurses and Dr. Palmer assist.

PALMER

You remember Lacy? She left after Quazmopolis mission.

KJELL

I remember. She suffered brain injury and grave hallucinations.

PALMER

Hallucinations?

KJELL

She claimed to see aliens and advanced civilizations after skull fracture.

Dr. Kjell continues opening skull, and Dr. Palmer seems deep in thought. Dr. Winston walks in.

WINSTON

It's been one full day of non-stop surgery for a brain dead patient. Will this ever end?

PALMER

Dr. Kjell will be performing reconstruction and partial implant.

WINSTON

Implant? Doctor, this is not a neurosurgical complex. I will not give authentication to unnecessary...

KJELL (interrupting)

There! She moved her pinky finger! Lateral vertical cortex has exposed leverage of cerebrum.

Dr. Winston looks on in awe as Dr. Kjell has cut into brain and is lifting part with his hands.

INT. JET IN AIRPORT

Ben walks onto jet and up the aisle. Quazum lies motionless.

STEWARDESS

Good morning. Welcome aboard.

BEN

Thank you.

Ben places Quazum into open seat and pulls blankets from overhead bin.

BEN (cont'd)

Now just sit comfortably. You can lay back and rest the entire flight. And you can move around if you like. No one will notice.

QUAZUM

Why didn't you just get an extra seat?

BEN

We don't need it.

Quazum sits up, and Ben pulls out his personal computer.

Heavy-set older woman walks up looking at seat numbers as she walks. When woman gets to Ben's row, she looks at her ticket and stands waiting.

WOMAN

Excuse me. I'm sorry, but that's my seat.

Ben gets up and looks around at open seats. Stewardess walks up.

STEWARDESS

Can I help you sir?

BEN

I'm just looking for two open seats so I can sit with my private luggage.

STEWARDESS (reciting)
All seating is preassigned. Carry-on
items must be stored in overhead bins
or under seat in front.

BEN
Oh yes. I forgot about those rules.

Ben sits back down and stuffs Quazum under seat in front.

BEN (cont'd)
It's a fast jet. We'll be there in no
time.

INT. MEDICAL ROOM

Dr. Kjell is sewing parts of brain into skull. Dr. Palmer
is holding open skull over brain tissue. Nurses are
helping. Palmer looks at his watch. Dr. Winston is
watching.

NURSE
Body temperature is remaining at one
hundred and one point three seven.

KJELL (to nurse)
Administer four and a half cc's of
Tegretol with one part phenobarbital.

PALMER
Doctor, I've got to go.

KJELL
Not a problem. Interlace of vernal
cerebrum is surviving cv, and I will
continue with temporal vesucle.

WINSTON
You're leaving now?

PALMER
I must return to SEA Exploration Base
in time for take-off.

KJELL

I will do everything I can for Miss Lacy.

PALMER

I know you will.

Dr. Palmer walks out, and Dr. Kjell and nurses continue.
Dr. Winston looks surprised.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTER - DAY

Alice is sitting at desk typing in files. Scientists are rushing in and out.

OLIVER

Did Palmer even call?

ALICE

He will be back before takeoff.

CHRIS

Can we just make the decision to postpone.

ALICE

Dr. Palmer wants mission to leave on schedule.

JENKINS

This is ridiculous.

OLIVER

Have you loaded solar plexus?

JENKINS

I've got part of it. (TO ALICE) Can you help me set levels?

ALICE

I'm still documenting fourteen years of anemometer levels.

Scientists continue rushing in and out, and Alice continues.

EXT. SWAMPVILLE ROADS - AFTERNOON

Dr. Palmer jumps in cab, waking up Rico the driver.

RICO

Oh! Good morning. I mean good afternoon. You wanna head for the airport?

PALMER

No. I want you to go by Swampville property belonging to Gabriel Meaux.

RICO

That's a really run-down area without proper signs. I don't know if...

Dr. Palmer holds up computer.

COMPUTER V/O

"Take right turn at intersection, and drive one mile.

Rico begins pulling out.

INT. NATIONAL NEWS

Animated graphic video of ghosts is playing.

ANCHOR

"Reports of ghost sightings have continued being reported across southern Louisiana. It all began at a funeral home in Swampville."

REVEREND

"I have been conducting services for more than thirty years and have never encountered such enlightened vision of the paranormal."

ANCHOR

"The manager at the local grocery store said the ghost went into the store shopping for 'seasonings'."

INT. SHERIFF NEIL'S HOME

Sheriff Neil is deep in thought, sitting on the sofa of his Swampville home and watching the television news.

WIFE

Have you gotten reports of all these ghost sightings?

NEIL

I don't talk about work at home. You know that.

WIFE

They're claiming ghost sightings all across New Orleans now.

SFX: "RING"

Telephone rings, and wife immediately picks up.

WIFE

Hello? (TURNS TO NEIL) Officer Covert wants to speak with you. Says he's got another report of a ghost.

NEIL

I ain't talking to no one about ghosts.

WIFE (into phone)

The sheriff is not taking calls about sightings.

Wife walks back over to Neil and sits down.

WIFE (cont'd)

You know? Your son called today.

NEIL (surprised)
Yeah? What did he say?

WIFE
He says he wants to come by so his kids
can spend some time with their grandpa.

NEIL
Tell him to bring 'em over this
weekend. I haven't seen them in a
while.

WIFE
Your son said it's been about six
months.

NEIL
I want to spend some time with my son
and my grandchildren. I think every
parent should do everything he can for
his kids.

Wife seems surprised and nods her head in agreement.

EXT. MEAUX SWAMPLAND - SUNSET

Taxi drives slowly up bumpy mud road, and Dr. Palmer gets
out looking around curiously.

RICO (through window)
Looks like that old cabin there behind
the barbed wire fence.

Dr. Palmer climbs through fence and walks towards cabin. He
sees blown out windows and damaged log shaped walls. Roof
is covered with solar panels, and front door is wide open.

Stepping over muddy holes and walking towards cabin, Dr.
Palmer sees clean porch and muddy steps.

INT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Palmer notices aquarium of roaches next to the kitchen.

RICO (from car)
You see any ghosts in there?

Dr. Palmer ignores Rico and studies chess board and walks back to separate rooms noticing three beds and old computer.

EXT. MEAUX CABIN - CONT'D

Dr. Palmer walks out back and notices old car with old SEA parking sticker and mechanical still.

SFX: "Honk! Honk!"

Shiny new sports car drives up the bumpy dirt road and parks next to taxi. Real estate salesman in nice suit sees Palmer and jumps out. Dr. Palmer walks out quietly.

REALTOR
Hello. This is a really nice piece of property you've discovered.

PALMER (annoyed)
Yes. I'm sure it's very nice.

REALTOR
I'm from Acadian Realty, and we're getting daily offers from people who want to buy this plot of land. It's around one hundred and fifty acres of undeveloped prime real estate.

PALMER
One hundred forty-seven acres.

Realtor grabs Palmer's arm and turns him around.

REALTOR
Did you know Gabriel Meaux?

PALMER
No. His daughter Lacy worked for me at Science Exploration.

REALTOR

Yeah, she was living out here with her Dad when they got killed.

PALMER

Lacy didn't die. She is being treated at Tickfaw Memorial.

REALTOR

If she lives, I guess she will own the property. But if she dies, the property belongs to the state. And it's for sale.

PALMER

There are no other relatives?

REALTOR

No. Gabriel Meaux's only relative was his daughter, Lacy.

PALMER

What is the cost of one hundred and forty-seven acres?

REALTOR

If you're interested in investing, I'm the man to talk to. Land like this is something that's growing in value across all of Louisiana.

Dr. Palmer reaches out to the hanging moss and thinks about the possibilities.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Ben drives in with Quazum shaped like a box sitting next to him. Security guard Charles waves as Ben drives through.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Ben rolls Quazum through the lobby and into busy headquarters. SEA scientists spin around surprised.

ALICE

Well, look who's here.

CHRIS

What brings you into SEA on the busiest day of the year?

BEN

I just wanted to offer my help.

CHRIS

Looks like you still have an antique SEA computer drive?

BEN

It's just some old files requested by Dr. Palmer.

ALICE

Palmer is on a direct flight. He promises to be here before take-off.

BEN

Is there something I can do to help?

OLIVER

You can document measured levels on Quazmopolis.

Ben walks over to computer next to Alice and types name "Ben Thomas" and password. He is then surprised to see it still registered.

BEN

Are these files from previous mission?

ALICE

New photos and video are being recorded, and we just need to document locations.

BEN

That's something I'm good at.

Ben studies video of Quazmopolis surface. Ben then notices slight motion by Quazum on the side as Chris walks up.

CHRIS

This mission is turning into an investigation of possible moving rocks!

Ben smiles and continues helping.

EXT. CA FREEWAY - MORNING

Dr. Palmer is riding in a taxi in heavy traffic. DRIVER is using auto driving service and is laughing as he watches video on his phone.

PALMER

Could you take it off the automatic setting, and just get around the backed-up traffic?

DRIVER

Oh no, we have rules. Cars must maintain automatic steering and controls.

PALMER

So, why have a driver?

DRIVER

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

PALMER

Overseeing what? You're watching television.

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

ALICE

Good morning, Dr. Palmer.

PALMER

Are explorers preparing for conference?

ALICE

Working right now on video and photos.
Scientist Ben Thomas is helping.

PALMER (surprised)

Did he bring a container or artifact?

Ben and Alice look over to Quazum sitting motionless.

ALICE

Yes. He rolled in an old hard drive.

PALMER (thinking)

It's something I wanted him to bring.

CHRIS (yelling out)

Should we cancel the press conference?

PALMER

Press conference will go on as
scheduled... along with take-off.

OLIVER

What should we say? Do we have
documentation?

PALMER

No video. All information is
classified.

Dr. Palmer hangs up leaving everyone confused.

INT. CAB - CONT'D

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

DRIVER

I've been following stories about
Quazmopolis for years.

PALMER

I need to arrive at SEA before
take-off.

DRIVER

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

Driver pushes buttons and begins self-driving around cars.

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM

Disorganized press is gathered around as explorers walk in.
Oliver walks up and tries to read from prompter.

OLIVER

Welcome to Science Exploration. We are
preparing for liftoff, and information
will be documented and posted when...

REPORTER #1

(interrupting)

Where's Dr. Palmer?

REPORTER #2

Why is he not here?

OLIVER

Dr. Palmer is on personal business.

REPORTER #3

Is he paying for this mission?

REPORTER #4

What is the new motion detected?

OLIVER

All that is being investigated.

REPORTER #5

When will video be released publicly?

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

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - CONT'D

Ben quietly sneaks back to SEA Headquarters to Quazum who is motionless disguised as computer drive.

BEN

How are you doing? You okay?

QUAZUM

I don't know.

BEN

I think it's time to get you on board.
You'll be home in twenty hours.

QUAZUM (nervously)

In Quazmopolis?

BEN (concentrating)

I want you to now change shape into the
solar axel that can be placed into
storage cargo.

QUAZUM

Like this?

Quazum changes shape and color slightly as Ben loads him.

BEN

Maybe a little more circular. You'll be
locked in Bracket two. You can change
to whatever is comfortable.

EXT. SEA SOLAR JET

Ben carries Quazum out and quickly to loading area.
ENGINEER steps out.

ENGINEER

Hey! All equipment has been packed,
loaded and weighed. New element

bearings can be carried on with explorers.

BEN

This is just a final seal of artifacts from last mission, approved by Palmer.

ENGINEER

Are you the infamous Ben Thomas?

BEN

Yeah, that's me. I promised Dr. Palmer I'd get it on board before take-off.

ENGINEER

Bring it on. You can load it into Cylinder Four.

Ben carries Quazum over to storage cylinder.

BEN

Thanks.

ENGINEER

You're a regular topic of conversation 'round here. You and Lacy both! You guys ran off and eloped instead of going through a big ceremony. Right?

BEN

Well, not exactly.

Ben pushes Quazum into the corner and whispers.

BEN (whispering)

Just adjust your shape and color to match the equipment.

QUAZUM (whispering)

How do I get out?

BEN (whispering)

You can change shape and color when doors close.

QUAZUM

I'm scared.

BEN

I'll be following you, and I'll do everything I can to help.

ENGINEER

All right! All processing units are accounted for."

BEN (whispers)

Good-bye Quazum.

Quazum sits quietly and looks scared as doors close.

BEN (cont'd)

(turns to engineer)

Thanks for your help. I've got to get back to headquarters.

ENGINEER

The entire SEA crew needs help inside. This place is a zoo without Palmer.

Ben quickly heads back in.

INT. TICKFAW HOSPITAL - DAY

Dr. Kjell is sitting in kitchen area and listening to coverage of Quazmopolis mission.

NEWS ANCHOR

"First we had ghost sightings in Louisiana, and now questions are popping up of possible ghost sightings on an uninhabited moon outside our solar system called Quazmopolis."

Nurse runs out.

NURSE

Doctor! Her heart stopped. She's losing blood!

Dr. Kjell rushes out.

INT. LACY'S ROOM - CONT'D

Dr. Winston is pumping heart, and machines are beeping and making warning sounds. Dr. Kjell immediately begins unwrapping bloody cloth around skull.

KJELL

Begin pumping O negative blood!
Continue resuscitation.

WINSTON

She had a perfect rhythmic and lost
brain reverberation!

KJELL

Continue resuscitation of arteries!

WINSTON

I gave her two grams Avestin. She
showed no reaction.

KJELL

It's a Trigeminal Neuralgia! She cannot
have anti-convulsant chemicals!

Winston and Kjell continue heart resuscitation when meter begins heartbeat sounds again. Doctors stop and adjust settings on computer.

EXT. SEA HEADQUARTERS

Unorganized scientists surround solar jet as confused press and families look on.

CHRIS

I truly think we should wait for Dr.
Palmer. Just one hour delay!

JENKINS

We can discuss options from space.

ALICE

Palmer insisted the mission leave on schedule!

OLIVER

Press will be shooting take-off. We've got to leave just to show we know what we're doing.

JENKINS

Solar Jet will take off at regular schedule. No debate.

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM - CONT'D

Ben is deep in thought as he walks through crowd of families and reporters.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Solar Jet Forty-Seven-D is now ready. Take off in one minute."

Cameras are shooting video as Ben steps up to window.

CAMERAMAN (to Ben)

Excuse me. Move to the side please?

REPORTER #1

You're blocking our shot!

REPORTER #2 (to camera)

"We now see jet engines of solar jet have started. SEA leader, Dr. William Palmer, is not attending take-off."

EXT. SEA SOLAR JET - CONT'D

Solar jet is beginning lift-off.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Solar jet is lifting off in ten seconds."

Solar begins to sway back and forth. Everyone notices strange motion.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Solar Jet Forty-Seven D is experiencing transient balance agitation. Please stand by."

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM - CONT'D

Media and crowd watch curiously. Scientists look confused.

REPORTER #1

We are now getting reports of unexplained disturbance.

REPORTER #2

Possible cause of interference is being investigated.

EXT. SOLAR JET - CONT'D

Storage cylinder containing Quazum suddenly swings open, and assorted SEA equipment falls out.

INT. SEA PRESS ROOM - CONT'D

Ben looks on in shock. Media shoots close ups of fallen items.

REPORTER #3

"It looks like careless seal on jet cylinder has caused unintended discharge."

REPORTER #4

"SEA scientists are performing solar investigation of exfiltration."

Ben stares before noticing slight motion. Ben races out.

INT. SEA OFFICE AREA - CONT'D

Alice is talking on phone, and scientists are running in panic. Ben runs through on his way out.

COMPUTER (V/O)

"Weight of solar jet shows unexplained added weight. Cylinder doors were locked and could only be opened from inside."

Phones are ringing, and Alice is answering questions.

ALICE (into phone)

We have not determined cause. We are currently investigating and believe there is no damage.

EXT. SEA TAKE-OFF - CONT'D

Ben rushes over to fallen items and grabs Quazum shaped as SEA equipment. Ben picks him up.

BEN

Quazum? Are you okay?

Engineers look on curiously as news reporters, family and scientists are all watching.

BEN (cont'd)

Just give me a sign.

Ben then carries Quazum over to area behind wall and out of sight. Ben lays Quazum down and covers him.

BEN (cont'd)

Engineers don't know what caused the opening. I can get you back in when solar jet takes off again.

QUAZUM (slowly)

Ben?

BEN

It's okay. Everything's going to be alright. Just relax.

QUAZUM

"I" opened the cylinder door.

BEN

What? Why would you do something like that?

QUAZUM

I want to go home.

BEN

I thought Quazmopolis was your home. What are you saying?

QUAZUM

I just want to move back to the swamp with Mom and Grampa.

Quazum begins to cry in Ben's arms. Ben is confused when Engineer walks back.

ENGINEER

Hey! We're loading the cylinder. You want to put that SEA equipment back on?

BEN

Uhhh, no! This package has to go back home.

Ben rushes out.

INT. SEA HEADQUARTERS - CONT'D

Ben carries Quazum past engineers and scientists.

ALICE

Ben, are you okay?

CHRIS

Was SEA equipment damaged?

Ben continues walking at a fast pace down the hall carrying motionless Quazum. Scientists look confused.

INT. SEA LOBBY - CONT'D

Ben walks through to front door. Commotion is going on across SEA with reporters and confused employees.

When Ben gets to the exit doors, Dr. Palmer walks in. They both look surprised.

PALMER

Hello Ben.

BEN (startled)

Dr. Palmer?

PALMER

Was there a problem boarding this "equipment" onto flight?

BEN (stuttering)

I was just trying to help. But it's okay now, doctor. Solar Jet is ready, and everyone is waiting for you.

Ben tries to step by, but Dr. Palmer moves to block Ben.

PALMER

Mission is cancelled.

BEN

I just need to return this equipment.

All is quiet as Dr. Palmer stares at Quazum.

PALMER

Let's go somewhere for coffee. And some salt water.

Dr. Palmer, Ben and Quazum exit SEA Headquarters together.

FADE TO:

EXT. SWAMPLAND - DAY

Quazum and Ben are sitting in the old pirogue boat floating in the swamp. The sun is rising as Quazum casts out his rod. Ben is watching bamboo pole with cork floating.

BEN

My hook needs a new worm.

Quazum looks up at Ben and remembers being in the same position with Grandpa.

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, so he can eat for a lifetime".

Ben looks confused as he carelessly opens the can of worms.

BEN

If Gabriel Meaux said it, it must be true. Your Grandpa was a wise man.

Quazum nervously watches.

QUAZUM

Careful! Open slowly.

BEN

I got it. No big deal.

QUAZUM

You understand the danger of 'opening a can of worms'.

BEN

I don't get it. How else can you get a worm without opening the can?

Ben carelessly opens the jar, and worms begin crawling out.

QUAZUM

Just leave worms at the bottom of the boat. You can use them later.

All is quiet, and Ben and Quazum continue fishing.

SFX: "Honk! Honk!"

Ben and Quazum look out to see an old yellow taxi driving up the bumpy dirt road.

QUAZUM

What is this?

BEN

How did they get back here? I thought we had the entrance blocked off.

Ben paddles up to the side as Dr. Palmer climbs out of the cab talking to Rico. Rico opens the trunk and begins unloading a box and unfolding.

Quazum remains motionless as Ben climbs out and walks over.

PALMER

Good morning, Ben.

Dr. Palmer moves box over to side of taxi cab, and Rico climbs back into driver's seat.

BEN

Hello Dr. Palmer. Quazum and I have been documenting video from Quazmopolis.

PALMER

I've brought something for Quazum. Is he here?

BEN

He's in the boat.

PALMER (yelling out)

Hello Quazum! I have something for you.

Dr. Palmer opens the back side of the cab door, and Ben watches as Dr. Palmer lifts a motionless body with bandages around head into wheelchair, then carefully straps her in.

PALMER

I'd like to introduce you to a recovering Lacy Meaux.

When Ben sees it is Lacy, he runs over to hug her body.

BEN

Lacy, I'm so glad you made it. Quazum and I are running things, and he's teaching me how to fish.

Wheelchair rolls around taxi. Quazum sees Lacy and immediately rushes towards the cab yelling.

QUAZUM

Mom! You're alive! It's me!

Rico is sitting in the cab and looks around confused, but then continues listening to radio.

PALMER

Quazum, this is your recovering mother. She has been through major brain surgery and has a new cerebellum.

QUAZUM

Mom, welcome home!

PALMER

She is recovering from cerebral bypass, and regaining motion of neural cortex.

BEN

What does that mean?

PALMER

She is basically recovering.

Ben, Quazum, and Dr. Palmer stare at Lacy who seems unconscious when she slowly begins to lift her head. She looks around the swampland, then back to Quazum.

QUAZUM

Mom, it's me! Quazum!

LACY

I love you Quazum. And it's good to be home.

QUAZUM

I love you too, Mom.

Near tears, Quazum hugs Lacy. Ben and Dr. Palmer smile, and the sun is setting over the swamp river, as we:

FADE OUT

THE END