

Radical Rules

by

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EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Bruce Dern talks to a small, squarish robot on the huge screen. The half-filled drive-in is straight out of the seventies, complete with a concession stand done in snazzy science-fiction neon.

The cars are modern, even a little futuristic. Couples are everywhere.

Three rows from the back, a small, blue 1966 Volkswagen looks empty, but is rocking slightly as --

RYAN RADIC and BARBIE LORD are making out with the seats cranked back as far as they will go.

It's dark, and a lot of things are going on -- a moment of frozen silence, and a gasp --

BARBIE

Ryan --

RYAN

Yes?

BARBIE

Will you get me a Sprite?

RYAN

A Sprite?

BARBIE

Yes.

RYAN

Now?

BARBIE

I'm thirsty.

She fans herself.

BARBIE (CONT'D)

Whooh! Fireworks.

RYAN

Okay. Sprite.

BARBIE

Lots of ice.

RYAN

Lots of ice.

BARBIE
We'll do something fun with it when
you get back.

Ryan thinks about this, and suddenly moves faster.

RYAN
Okay.

He pulls himself together, and gets out of the car. He's thin,
with dark hair. T-shirt and jeans. Nerdishly handsome.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Be right back.

Barbie leans forward a little -- in the flicker of light from
the movie, she looks pretty, with blonde hair and a black
dress. She smiles.

BARBIE
Bye.

RYAN
Bye.

Barbie makes a kissing noise at him, and Ryan does a funny
little hop, skip and turn, heading for the concession stand.

INT. CONCESSION STAND - NIGHT

Ryan steps up to the counter. He nods to the young guy with a
shock of bright red hair manning the register, MARK.

RYAN
Markish.

MARK
Hey. Ryan.

RYAN
I need a Sprite.

Mark grabs a cup and fills it with ice.

MARK
Hey, you're here with Barbie Lord,
right?

RYAN
Yeah.

Mark fills the drink.

MARK

Lucky man. I never heard of no one with perfect scores.

RYAN

What do you mean?

MARK

Everybody knows high score on the SAT gets Barbie. Since she was a freshman. She's like, the prize.

RYAN

Naw.

MARK

Dude, I'm not lyin' to you. Check it. Last year, Ken Wolf, best score in the school. This year, you ace it, the only one. Right after the scores post - boom.

Mark spreads his hands out, then caps the drink and hands it over.

MARK (CONT'D)

Hey, it's not a bad thing.

RYAN

Yeah, thanks.

MARK

Ryan.

RYAN

Yeah?

MARK

Work my shift Sunday.

RYAN

Yeah, all right.

MARK

What are you working, seventeen jobs or something?

RYAN

Five. Part-time.

MARK

And carrying a full load. You're a freak. A freak of nature.

RYAN
Check your wild coiffe, genetic
code red. You cannot speak.

Ryan turns to leave.

MARK
Thanks, man.

RYAN
No, I need the money. Thank you.

He looks down as he walks out the door.

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - NIGHT

Ryan walks up to the Volkswagen carrying the Sprite.

The car is empty.

He sticks his head inside the car, then stands up and turns in
a complete circle.

RYAN
Barbie?

EXT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM - NIGHT

The restroom's cinder block entrance has been painted over
thirty times, this time with rocket ships and aliens.

Ryan stands outside, still carrying the Sprite, waiting. He
looks nervous.

A young woman emerges from the bathroom -- Ryan jumps --

RYAN
Excuse me --

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes?

RYAN
Is there -- a -- another woman in
there, she's blonde, black dress --

YOUNG WOMAN
No, it's empty.

RYAN
Okay. Thanks.

The young woman walks away.

Ryan glances around, then ducks into the bathroom.

INT. WOMEN'S RESTROOM

A row of stalls with closed doors face a grimy row of sinks underneath flickering neon bulbs.

RYAN
Barbie?

No answer.

Ryan sets the Sprite down, and kneels on the dirty cement floor to look under the stall doors --

-- as an older woman enters, and realizes what he's doing.

OLDER WOMAN
What are you doing?

RYAN
Oh, I'm -- looking for my
girlfriend. I can't find her.

OLDER WOMAN
You're not going to find a
girlfriend that way.

Ryan is mortally embarrassed by this.

OLDER WOMAN (CONT'D)
Out!

Ryan picks up the Sprite and scurries out of the entrance.

EXT. VOLKSWAGEN

Ryan is looking everywhere, scanning the drive-in.

He sets out along the row, still carrying the Sprite.

EXT. DRIVE-IN

Ryan is walking in the graded depression between the rows of cars, his tennis shoes crunching in the gravel, searching.

EXT. DRIVE-IN

Ryan walks along another row, scanning the cars on both sides.

He stops walking, looks down and sighs.

He turns, and cuts across the row through an empty parking space, heading back for his car.

EXT. DRIVE-IN

Ryan walks through another empty space --

VOICE
You're in my way, Ray-Dick!
Goddamn it!

Ryan flinches a little -- he knows the voice, apparently -- but he just keeps walking.

Then he stops.

Ryan stares at a late-model black pickup truck a few spaces over.

He changes direction, circles around to the front of the row, and starts to walk towards the truck.

BOOM. A flash of gray T-shirt, the Sprite explodes upwards -- and Ryan is on his back, looking up into the night sky.

TOBY MCREARY's face looms into Ryan's field of view. He is a well-built young man with a brush cut and a viperous grin.

TOBY
Hey, Ray-Dick. Did my flying tackle annoy you in any way? May I offer you assistance?

Ryan groans, then rolls to his side and starts to get up, slowly.

RYAN
Toby. Hey, ah -- great movie.
Huh?

Before Ryan can rise, Toby shoves him back, hard. A larger young man, JIM-JIM, moves in behind Toby, and laughs.

TOBY
I liked it up until the part where the pervo walked in front of me. What're you doing looking in cars, pervo? What's that about?

Ryan retreats and tries to stand up again -- Toby shoves him down, harder.

RYAN
I'm looking for Barbie Lord.

JIM-JIM

Woahhh!

TOBY

I just bet you are. You don't rate that, Ray-Dick. She probably ran off with a real man, somebody that actually has a dick.

Ryan manages to stand up, and circles away from Toby, glancing at the truck behind him.

TOBY (CONT'D)

What do you think you're doing?

Toby flexes, and rips off his T-shirt over his head, revealing rippling muscle.

Ryan watches him warily while still circling, trying to see inside the black pickup truck through the movie-flicker darkness.

RYAN

Barbie?

TOBY

No way! No way!

Toby blocks Ryan, and herds him away from the pickup truck, shoving him ruthlessly. Ryan keeps watching the pickup while trying to get a better point of view --

A man's face, dimly lit, peers out at the fight from the pickup truck.

There is a woman sitting astride him, facing the rear of the truck. She is moving rhythmically, her face buried in his neck. She has blond hair.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Jim-Jim! Get that half-inch poly out of the trunk!

Toby has Ryan cornered.

TOBY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna break something. And then you're hang from the screen. By your feet. Naked.

Ryan has his hands up defensively --

RYAN

I don't have time to deal with your
issue right now and I know we've
been through some bad things
together but Toby no one else knows
and I bear you no ill will and I
just need to get by you for a
second BARBIE!

TOBY

Oh god!

He attacks Ryan, who is trying to dodge around him -- Toby
grabs him and throws him to the ground -- and then starts
kicking him.

Ryan is defensively crabwalking away from Toby, trying to keep
away from the merciless kicking --

TOBY (CONT'D)

Come here!

RYAN

BARBIE!

By now people are honking their horns all around them, and
shouting, as Toby kicks Ryan along the row, trying to corner
him again --

Ryan, desperate, manages to get up and run. He darts between
cars --

TOBY

No way! No way! Jim-Jim! He's
rabbiting! Go around! Go around!

Toby jumps up, looking over the rows of cars. He sees
something, and heads off down the row, fast.

EXT. DRIVE-IN

Ryan, gasping, crouches between two cars, a look of panic on
his face.

A girl SCREAMS from one of the cars, and a young man swears at
Ryan.

He takes off again, toward the rear of the car --

-- where he is met by Toby.

Ryan turns. At the front of the two cars -- Jim-Jim.

Ryan hesitates -- the car door opens, and the young man starts
to get out.

Ryan steps up on the door's armrest, and vaults himself onto the car's roof, sliding on his stomach --

He pitches head-first off the other side and into the gravel with a thump.

TOBY

Get him! Don't let him get away!

Jim-Jim meets Toby in the next aisle -- Ryan is gone.

Toby drops to his knees and looks under the cars -- he sees that Ryan is already three cars away, crawling fast.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Under the cars! Going that way!

Jim-Jim and Toby race up the row, hunting Ryan. Other young men are joining in now.

EXT. DRIVE-IN

Ryan crawls out from underneath a Camaro, and races across an empty space to his Volkswagen --

He gets in, slams the door and locks it, then rolls up the window. Just as he finishes, Toby SLAMS into the side of the car, rocking it from side to side.

Ryan locks the other door, and starts to roll up the passenger window -- AN ARM makes it through before the window completely closes -- Ryan turns the handle until the arm is trapped.

Loud shouts -- Ryan scrambles for the keys in his pockets --

SMASH. The front window is fractured.

Ryan finds the keys, finds the right one, inserts it --

SMASH. The side window is fractured, and bulges in.

Ryan turns over the motor, throws the car in gear --

SMASH. The rear window is smashed in. Hands reach through --

THE VOLKSWAGEN ROARS FORWARD.

The hands disappear. The trapped hand struggles frantically to escape --

Ryan spins the wheel, and leans over to loosen the window handle --

The arm pops out of view, and Ryan roars off down the row.

SOMEONE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR, three times. Ryan stirs, and groans.

THREE MORE KNOCKS.

Ryan pulls his head up from the pillow and gazes dimly at the laptop screen.

RYAN
You're kidding.

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN: No. She's here.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Hold on!

He staggers up in the darkness, switches on a desk lamp, and wraps a thin robe around himself.

He opens the door.

Barbie walks in.

BARBIE
Where have you been? The department posts are up in less than an hour. What are you, sleeping?

RYAN
What happened to you last night?

BARBIE
Lisa and Sherry came by and kidnapped me. I wanted to leave you a message, but they wouldn't let me. They took me to a Sig-Ep party, everyone was so drunk, oh my god. Anyway, I'm so sorry. They wouldn't let me go.

RYAN
That wasn't you in the truck?

BARBIE
Truck?

RYAN
Ken Wolf's black pickup truck.

BARBIE
Lisa drives a Nova.

Ryan looks at her for a moment.

RYAN
I dropped your Sprite.

Barbie is momentarily stunned by this, she doesn't recall --

RYAN (CONT'D)
You asked me to get you a Sprite.
And then you disappeared.

BARBIE
Baby, I'm sorry, Lisa and Sherry
were just ruthless about it. I
would have told you. I'm so sorry.

Ryan steps away from her.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
Babe, you've got to get up and get
dressed for orientation. C'mon.

RYAN
You used to go out with Ken Wolf,
right?

BARBIE
Last year.

RYAN
He had the high SAT scores that
year.

BARBIE
I don't know. Can we go?

Ryan looks for his towel, and collects up his shower stuff.

RYAN
I have to shower.

BARBIE
Well, hurry.

Ryan walks out the door and heads down the hall.

INT. DORM ROOM - ONE HALF HOUR LATER

Ryan sits on the bed, pulling on socks. His wet hair is combed
back.

Barbie sits next to him, nervously restless.

BARBIE
Ryan, I need a favor.

RYAN

A favor?

BARBIE

It's embarrassing.

RYAN

Okay.

BARBIE

You know I'm supposed to do the heuristics and base programming for the Cynthia project.

RYAN

Yeah.

BARBIE

I just can't get it right, Ryan. I need help. She doesn't even move like a human at all.

RYAN

Judging's today.

BARBIE

At noon. I need your help.

RYAN

I have to work.

BARBIE

You always have to work. Everybody else is ready but me. I need for you to help me. Please.

RYAN

Barbie, I can't write that kind of code in a couple of hours.

Barbie gestures at the laptop, with its now-black screen and still madly-spinning hard drive.

BARBIE

Could I get a copy of Gabby somehow?

Ryan looks at the laptop --

RYAN

Gabby? A copy of Gabby?

BARBIE

Maybe she could fake it for me.
That way you wouldn't have to fix
my stuff.

Ryan thinks.

The laptop's camera lens watches.

RYAN

I don't know if it would work.
Cynthia's got faster processors,
though. Gabby, could you make a
basic copy of yourself that could
figure out how to run the Cynthia
project? You know, with Derek and
Dominic and Kelly?

BARBIE

And Barbie. She can hear you?

RYAN

Microphone works, but the rest of
the sound card is fried. That's
the way it came.

The screen remains black.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Gabby?

ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN: Insert media.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Okay. Thanks, Gabby.

He rummages around for a blank disk.

BARBIE

Oh, this is so great, Ryan. I hope
it works.

RYAN

I don't know. We've never done it.
She's pretty fast, though. No
guarantees. Should work.

BARBIE

Thank you. Oh, baby, this is so
nice of you to do. We'll have to
celebrate tonight, after the
carnival. Just me and you. But we
have to ride the Big Rocket first.
Okay? Then maybe the little
rocket, later.

She kisses him.

RYAN
Yeah, okay.

INT. DEREK AND DOMINIC'S DORM ROOM - TEN MINUTES LATER

Ryan is typing on a keyboard, watching a computer screen with his two friends, DOMINIC and DEREK. Dominic is tall and thin, pale, and vaguely Nordic-looking. Derek is very round and much shorter than Dominic, but they have similar eyes -- fast, sharp, and present.

Barbie watches from one of the beds. Next to the monitor, sitting in a chair -- CYNTHIA, an android. She is extremely beautiful, with long blond hair, dressed in a plain white dress. Her eyes are open.

She appears to be perfectly human, except for her absolute stillness.

RYAN
Fast hub. There you go.

DOMINIC
What do you mean? Don't you have to tweak it, hook in? How's she going to talk? What operating system do you use?

RYAN
Gabby just does it. She's the operating system.

DEREK
Where did you get this?

RYAN
Gabby? I wrote the first parts when I got near my first computer. Like, five. She was originally just for finding out how chips worked, what they were, and the board. I just kept building. Now she does all the heavy lifting.

DOMINIC
Gabby's an artificial intelligence?

RYAN
What's so artificial about intelligence?

Ryan leans in and looks closely at Cynthia's face.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Really amazing. She looks exactly like Cynthia Monheit. It's stunning.

DOMINIC

We really had to hit the end of a sharp curve. Either absolutely real or creepy. So we got DNA.

RYAN

She's beautiful. Perfect.

DOMINIC

Well, I wrote the book on Cynthia Monheit, after all.

RYAN

Yes. And I read it. But I don't think she has. Yet. Thankfully.

DOMINIC

How long, do you think?

RYAN

Hour. Then probably days for her to really settle in. She ought to be fine for the judging.

Derek and Dominic start cleaning up. Ryan walks over to Barbie.

BARBIE

Thank you thank you thank you. You saved my life.

She hugs and kisses him -- he seems reluctant.

RYAN

Talk to me in an hour. Guys, I have to go to work right after the meeting.

DOMINIC

What do we do?

DEREK

How do we control her?

RYAN

Just talk. As if you were humans.

DOMINIC

With some degree of emotional content, then? Any pointers?

The door opens -- KELLY comes in. She is a solidly-built young woman with short hair and glasses, wearing jeans and a collared shirt.

Without saying a word, Kelly pushes gently through to Cynthia, reaches behind her, unzips her dress, and pulls it down to her waist, exposing her breasts.

Kelly opens a compartment in the rear of Cynthia and fiddles with some control.

Ryan is averting his eyes from staring at the half-naked Cynthia. Dominic and Derek seem unaffected.

Kelly pauses, stands up a little and looks at Ryan.

KELLY

Hey, Radical. Do you think Gabby is going to mess with my factory? It's chemically very delicate. She's not going to just let the whole thing break down. Right? This is three years of my life.

RYAN

Hour. We'll know.

Kelly unclips a telephone-sized appliance from her belt.

KELLY

I brought the remote monitor.

RYAN

Of course you did.

KELLY

Of course I did.

DEREK

Kelly, do you know how to act as if you're human?

Kelly looks confused, then mad. She growls at Derek.

DEREK (CONT'D)

What? Why are you a primate?

Behind them, Cynthia rotates her head in a smooth and very robotic fashion. Her eyes lock on Ryan's face.

She remains there, motionless.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Woahhhhh.

DOMINIC
I'm compelled to say, very cool.

INT. SCIENCE AUDITORIUM - DAY

The seats are filled with faculty, staff and students. A few latecomers roam around looking in vain -- then join the crowd standing at the rear of the hall.

Ryan, Barbie, Kelly, Dominic and Derek are seated somewhere in the middle.

DR. DAVID FERRIS walks out onto the dais to stand behind a lectern with a small microphone.

DR. FERRIS
Couple of notes. Assignments for freshman intern staff are being posted at this moment. Contact your work group professor for a full schedule and list of duties.

The room has grown quiet. Dr. Ferris shuffles his notes.

BARBIE
Please, not Theoretical.

RYAN
What's wrong with that?

BARBIE
Oh god, it's like down in a sub-sub-basement, and it's these really old people and this one guy from Trinidad or something.

DR. FERRIS
This year's National Science Competition is, as you know, being hosted here at our beloved institution. Competition judges will be starting to score within the hour. Good luck to you all. Assistant Teachers, please see me afterwards to discuss the ban on regrettable instances. Thank you.

A few rows ahead of Ryan, a handsome young man turns around -- KEN WOLF. He smiles warmly at Barbie, and Ryan glances at her.

She is struggling not to smile back.

KEN WOLF

Hey, Radic. Did you put in for Applied?

RYAN

Yes.

KEN WOLF

It's a great team. Hope you make it. We're really working the edge. Hey, anything but Theoretical, right?

BARBIE

Oh, god. It's such a joke.

KEN WOLF

Yeater's like World War One, old Dobbs is into astral planes. And there's this weird guy, I think he's from, uh, Syria or something, and he's always trying to get people to look at this crazy black box. It doesn't do anything, and so he just kind of shoves it at you, you know like, uhhhh -- uhhhh -
(he motions)
- like a total freak.

Barbie laughs. Ryan turns to look at her. She puts her hand over her mouth and looks away.

KELLY

I hear Applied's a bunch of corporate hacks.

KEN WOLF

Hey, the five seniors that graduated last year started out in the middle six figures. All of 'em. It's the cutting edge.

KELLY

Biology's the cutting edge. DNA rules. What are you working on, weapons? Particle beam cannons? Force projectors? Pain beams?

Ken Wolf looks momentarily startled.

KEN WOLF

You know I can't talk about projects.

BARBIE
He'd have to kill you --

She and Ken laugh; a private joke.

A young man has made his way toward Ken, and sits down next to him. Ken gives a half-wave, and turns around in his seat.

Dominic leans forward from a few seats down and looks at Ryan.

DOMINIC
I want to go check on Cynthia.

DEREK
She's moving better. Not talking too well yet.

RYAN
Won't be long. At least you're in process. I've got to go to work. See you guys.

He looks at Barbie --

RYAN (CONT'D)
Want to go check the postings?

BARBIE
No, I'm too nervous. All right, let's go.

INT. HALLWAY, SCIENCE BUILDING - TEN MINUTES LATER

A large crowd of students jostle to read listings posted on the wall.

Ryan and Barbie finally make their way through to the listing.

Barbie runs her finger down the list -- and gives out a little scream --

BARBIE
I got Applied! I got Applied!

Ryan is running his finger down a different page.

His finger stops at his name, and he moves his finger to the right, and points to an abbreviation that reads: THEOR

BARBIE (CONT'D)
What'd you get? What'd you get?

RYAN
Theoretical.

BARBIE
What? But why? You had perfect SAT scores!

RYAN
I don't know.

BARBIE
Well, it's got to be a mistake. We'll go to Dr. Ferris and get it changed. I got Applied!

RYAN
Congratulations.

BARBIE
Let's go celebrate!

RYAN
I have to work. In fact, I'm running late. I'll pick you up after I get off?

BARBIE
Sure. We'll celebrate.

RYAN
Bye, Barbie.

BARBIE
Bye.

As Ryan walks out of the building, he hesitates and turns back.

Ken Wolf has walked in from the auditorium. Barbie approaches him.

BARBIE (CONT'D)
I got Applied!

She throws herself against Ken Wolf in a full-body hug.

Ryan turns back again, and leaves.

INT. LUCKY WISHBONE RESTAURANT DISHWASHING ROOM - DAY

Ryan wears a polyester uniform shirt and a white hat. He scrubs at giant, greasy steel trays, sweating.

STEVE KEARNS, manager, pushes his head through the swing door. He is in his early thirties, pale, with longish blonde hair, a little overweight.

STEVE
Ryan!

RYAN

What's up?

STEVE

Bobby's down, just called. You have to man the grill. Can you do it?

RYAN

I think so.

STEVE

Let's go. They'll start stacking up in a minute.

RYAN

Right.

He finishes, and shuts off the water.

INT. FRONT KITCHEN OF LUCKY WISHBONE - DAY

Ryan is manning the hamburger grill. The area beyond the counters is packed with customers.

Steve and his brother, TIMOTHY KEARNS, are manning the fryers with another young man, as two other employees man cash registers and take orders.

Timothy is tall and skinny, much younger than Steve, with a prominent nose and glasses.

An OLD MAN pushes his way up past the line, rudely interrupts the cashier, shoves aside the front customer, and thrusts a paper-wrapped hamburger at the young man behind the counter.

OLD MAN

There's pickles on this burger!

CASHIER

Excuse me, what?

OLD MAN

Pickles! Pickles! I said no pickles!

CASHIER

We'll take 'em off then, sir.

He reaches for the burger, and the old man snatches it away.

OLD MAN

No! Not good enough!

CASHIER

We'll remake the whole thing, sir.
Just take a few minutes.

OLD MAN

I know the owner of this
restaurant, and I'm going to have
you all fired for this! Mark my
words! This is rank incompetence!

Steve has left the fryer, and intercedes.

STEVE

Fresh burger? Money back? What
can I do for you? We're so sorry.
How about a free chocolate shake?

OLD MAN

Free chocolate shake? I just
wanted no pickles! No pickles!
And this idiot --
(he gestures at Ryan)
-- gave me pickles.

STEVE

No one insults the crew of this
restaurant. No one.

OLD MAN

He's an idiot -- who can't even --

STEVE

DID YOU HEAR ME?

The old man is shocked into silence, as are all the other
customers.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Get out. Get out now. And don't
ever come back.

The old man grimaces, throws the hamburger down on the counter,
then turns and leaves, grumbling the whole way.

OLD MAN

I'll have your job for this, and
brought up on charges, idiots...

He exits the restaurant. His voice suddenly gets louder --

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Rank incompetence!

Steve looks at the remaining customers a little sheepishly. No
one moves.

The tension seems unbearable --

Suddenly Steve vaults over the counter, and while seizing the old man's hamburger with perfect coordination runs to fling the front door open.

Steve throws the burger far and high up into the night air.

STEVE
HEY! YOU FORGOT YOUR BURGER!

He steps back inside, lets the door close, and lowers his head a little.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Sorry about that, everybody.

The crowd of customers ERUPTS IN CHEERS.

Steve easily vaults back over the counter, and pats Ryan and the cashier on the back. As he walks back to his fryer, he raises his voice, as if intoning a ritual.

STEVE (CONT'D)
We are the Lucky Wishbone! We make
the finest fried chicken in any
universe! Feel the power!

THE CHEERS PEAK, and then everyone returns to normal, chattering and happy.

Ryan is grinning as he flips a row of burgers on the grill.

EXT. FALL CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Ryan and Barbie are walking along a row of rides, not holding hands. She's eating popcorn from a white bag, wearing a nice dress.

RYAN
We've been going out since May.
May fourteenth. Four months.

BARBIE
I know.

She looks up at one of the rides.

RYAN
They released the SAT scores on the
twelfth.

BARBIE
Look, it's Cynthia.

Ryan looks up to see Cynthia, sitting between Dominic and Derek in a double Ferris wheel.

Cynthia's face is turned towards Ryan, and her eyes are locked on him as the wheel roars up into the darkness.

Ryan and Barbie wave at Dominic and Derek, who wave back as they disappear into the night air.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NEAR FOOD STAND

Ryan and Barbie are walking along, slowly. Barbie is looking around; Ryan is looking at her.

Out of nowhere --

Ken Wolf sweeps up Barbie into his arms and whirls her around. She squeals joyfully as her popcorn spills everywhere.

Ryan steps back, unsure of what to do.

KEN WOLF

Sorry, old man! Official Sig-Ep kidnapping! We'll give her back to you later!

Ken Wolf begins to walk off, carrying Barbie in his arms.

RYAN

Barbie?

BARBIE

Sorry, Ryan! I'll call you later!

Ryan watches them go, helpless.

A crowd has started to gather, sparked by the commotion.

Ryan turns to stare up into the gleaming eyes of Toby.

Ryan starts to back away -- and runs into Jim-Jim.

RYAN

Why are you mad at me? You should be mad at her. She's the one stealing him.

TOBY

SHUT UP!

Toby lunges to trap Ryan --

Ryan ducks. And rolls. And fails.

Toby attacks Ryan with brutal fury as Jim-Jim provides a cruel backstop.

Ryan blocks most of the worst, somehow, and manages to lunge from between the two, around a steel table -- and over the food stand counter.

Ryan's head pops up. Toby screams in frustration -- Jim-Jim leaps the counter to intercept Ryan.

But Ryan has disappeared through a cloth wall at rear of the stand.

Toby and Jim-Jim meet behind the stand, and find -- nothing.

TOBY (CONT'D)

Damn it, Jim-Jim! What the hell were you doing?

JIM-JIM

It wasn't me! It was on your side!

Toby slaps him on the shoulder, hard. Jim-Jim backs down, his face growing sullen.

JIM-JIM (CONT'D)

It wasn't me.

TOBY

SHUT UP!

EXT. CARNIVAL, OUTSIDE THE FENCE - NIGHT

Ryan is peering through the fence, concealed in large bushes that grow through the chain links.

His eyes gleam as he watches --

Ken Wolf and Barbie Lord sitting at a picnic table, sharing an ice cream.

They kiss.

Ryan disappears into the darkness.

INT. AUXILIARY PHYSICS BUILDING - DAY

Ryan walks through an empty and badly-lit foyer towards an ancient elevator door.

He presses the 'Down' button, and checks a page of instructions.

A bell DINGS, and the elevator doors open to -- darkness.

Ryan almost steps through -- and catches himself at the last moment, clutching at the door jambs as he realizes he's suspended over an empty elevator shaft.

He pulls himself back with difficulty. The doors close. DING.

He stares at the doors for a moment.

RYAN

Stairs.

Looking at his instruction page, he walks to the left, and on down a long, flickering hallway with a wet concrete floor.

INT. THEORETICAL PHYSICS LABORATORY - DAY

Ryan walks past several rooms stuffed with ancient equipment.

He looks for door-signs -- one door reads 'DR. JAMES B. YEATER', and is partially open and dimly lit.

Ryan gently pushes the door open, creakingly --

DR. YEATER is asleep in a wheeled office chair, his legs propped up on a desk piled with books and papers.

He looks at least a hundred years old, with wild white hair, his head thrown back, mouth wide open, snoring.

He is also drooling a little.

RYAN

Dr. Yeater?

No response.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Dr. Yeater?

Dr. Yeater comes awake with a start, tilting back in the chair - - which falls backward with a crash, dumping Dr. Yeater to the floor headfirst.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Oh, man! I'm so sorry! Are you all right?

DR. YEATER

That was the best ice cream soda I ever tasted.

He wipes the drool from his chin, and slowly gets up, waving off any help from Ryan.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
 The day I need help, you can just shoot me. Or accidentally electrify me. Or anything, as long as it's quick. Who are you?

RYAN
 Ryan Radic. I've been assigned as an intern to you.

DR. YEATER
 Oh. It's you. You're here.

Dr. Yeater walks slowly over to the wall and pushes a button on a nineteen-fifties-style HI-TEST intercom.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
 Margaret! Solly! He's here!

He releases the button, and turns back to Ryan.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
 Radic. That's Ukrainian?

RYAN
 My father is Croatian.

DR. YEATER
 Really? Is he from anywhere near Smiljan? Gospic?

RYAN
 Uhh...I'm not sure.

DR. MARGARET DOBBS, an older woman with somewhat unkempt hair, walks into the office in a white lab coat. She displays the impatience of lost focus.

She is closely followed by a very dark-skinned young man named SOLOMON DENG, nicknamed Solly. He is handsome, and as tall as Ryan.

Ryan reaches out and shakes hands with both Dr. Dobbs and Solomon.

SOLOMON
 I am so happy to meet you.

RYAN
 Nice to meet you.

DR. YEATER
 Solly's the reason you're here.

RYAN

Oh?

DR. YEATER

We needed someone with some real programming experience, so we went through all the files and came up with you.

DR. DOBBS

Solly's project is very interesting.

DR. YEATER

But he's stalled. That's where you come in.

Ryan takes a deep breath.

RYAN

I'll try to help.

DR. YEATER

That's great. You ever work with an Eniac?

RYAN

Really?

DR. YEATER

No, no, just pullin' your leg. Kids are so gullible these days. Nah, we got some computers around here. Somewhere. Plus, you can use the campus system at night.

SOLOMON

I am so excited. I'll go get my unit. And the manual. I wrote a manual.

Solomon runs out of the room.

DR. DOBBS

Ryan, do you meditate?

RYAN

Uh, not a lot. I've read about it.

DR. DOBBS

Oh. Well, you'll have to get in the swing of things, now that you're with the 'In' crowd, if you know what I mean.

DR. YEATER
I just fall asleep when I try.

Dr. Dobbs frowns at him.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
What a drag it is getting old,
Ryan. Let me show you your space.

RYAN
Space?

DR. YEATER
Your very own topological space.

He starts to get up -- and sort of slows down halfway up. Ryan reaches to help.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
Do I look ready for the grinder to
you or something?

Ryan pulls back.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
I'm slow, but I still got it.

DR. DOBBS
You had it?

DR. YEATER
Yeah, hear, let me, ah, show it
you...

DR. DOBBS
No thanks. My chakras are quite in
balance. Bye, Ryan. Nice to meet
you.

RYAN
Nice to meet you.

Dr. Dobbs leaves the room. Dr. Yeater raise his voice.

DR. YEATER
I know you want me, woman!

From down the hallway --

DR. DOBBS
Not today, Jim.

DR. YEATER
(to Ryan)
Always keep stirrin' that soup,
boy. You never know when it might
just decide to get hot.

RYAN
Yes, sir.

Dr. Yeater pulls open a desk drawer, and hands Ryan a key.

DR. YEATER
Here's your key. Don't lose it.
Now, come on.

INT. HAZARDOUS WASTE STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Yeater opens a large and heavy steel door, and flips on a light switch.

Ryan and Dr. Yeater walk into a large space filled to the ceiling with massive steel columns thirty feet across and twenty-five feet high -- hazardous waste vats.

DR. YEATER
Welcome home. This is it.

Ryan looks at the columns.

RYAN
Anything radioactive?

DR. YEATER
No, no, not really. Mostly just
acids and experiments gone bad,
hexavalent chromium, that sort of
thing. Perfectly safe. But watch
the sparks. No open flame. I know
you kids with your pot smoking --

RYAN
I don't --

DR. YEATER
No? Damn. Oh, well.

RYAN
Sorry.

DR. YEATER

Hey, I understand. Now -- there's a desk, and a couch, and there's an emergency shower in the bathroom down the hall you can use. Might need some cleaning out.

RYAN

Thanks. What do I do?

DR. YEATER

Just figure out what Solly's up to. Make it work if you can.

RYAN

Do I keep a timecard or something?

DR. YEATER

This isn't Applied, Ryan. It's not like that. We all sort of float around. So don't worry about it. Help Solly.

RYAN

All right.

Dr. Yeater claps him on the back.

DR. YEATER

You'll be fine. I'll send Solly down with his box. Get yourself squared away.

RYAN

Thank you, sir.

Dr. Yeater walks out the door.

Ryan looks around, takes in his surroundings, and slumps a little.

INT. LARGE HOTEL BANQUET ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Ferris is addressing a well-dressed crowd. Everyone has just finished clapping.

A banner reads: "52ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE COMPETITION".

Waiters in tuxedo vests and bow ties circulate through the crowd, dispensing champagne and water. The cavernous room is packed with faculty, staff, and students.

Ryan is dressed in white, with a white cap -- working, serving plates from a giant tray set on a stand.

Dr. Ferris reads from a card.

DR. FERRIS

The first place award goes to --
 Dominic Jeter, Derek Ludlow,
 Barbara Lord, and Kelly Templeton,
 for their artificial human project,
 Cynthia!

EVERYONE APPLAUDS LOUDLY. The four students make their way up to the stage accompanied by Cynthia, who walks up the stairs in a remarkably human-like fashion -- perhaps just a little too smoothly.

Derek and Dominic gesture to Cynthia that she should accept the award, and give a small speech.

Cynthia reaches out to grasp an envelope from Dr. Ferris, and moves up close to the lectern.

She's too quiet to hear -- Dr. Ferris adjusts the microphone, smiling at her.

CYNTHIA

Thank you all for this wonderful
 award.

She seems weirdly human.

Ryan has finished serving his table. He picks up the tray and a portable stand, but lingers to hear Cynthia.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

I haven't been able to talk for
 many years. My speakers didn't
 work. Now I have to make my mouth
 move, and push air out. Very
 strange.

The crowd is silent.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

What a large number of interesting
 people. I look forward to
 analyzing you all.

Dominic reaches up and taps her arm -- she moves away from the lectern.

Dominic starts to trade places with her and speak, but he is shouldered aside by Dr. Ferris.

DR. FERRIS
Amazing feat by these four students
of mine. Truly a quantum leap.
Please give them a round of
applause -- ladies and gentlemen,
the first place team.

The crowd applauds for this.

DR. FERRIS (CONT'D)
Enjoy your dinner. Congratulations
all.

INT. BANQUET ROOM

Cynthia is now seated back at her table, near the front of the room. She scans the room with her eyes --

She sees Ryan, near the middle of the room, walking back toward the kitchen.

Ryan passes a table of well-dressed young men -- including Ken and Toby.

Toby has been waiting patiently for just this moment. As Ryan walks by, he slides his foot out and trips him.

Ryan sprawls on the carpeting -- the tray and the stand go clattering into another table --

Toby laughs harshly. Others pick up the meme, and scattered laughter begins to echo around the room.

Ryan pulls himself up, and starts to walk toward the kitchen door in the back -- then stops and returns to pick up the tray and stand.

As he turns to leave, Toby hops from his chair and lightly kicks Ryan in the buttocks.

The scattering of laughter increases. Ryan lowers his head, and carries the tray and stand through the aisles as everyone in the room watches.

Including Cynthia.

Ryan, head lowered, plunges through the swinging double-doors and into the kitchen.

INT. BANQUET ROOM KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

CHRIS is a gangly student with a bad case of acne and a white apron, loading up a big automatic dishwasher.

The door swings shut, and Ryan walks over to Chris. His head is still down.

RYAN
Chris. I'm leaving.

CHRIS
What? Why?

RYAN
I'm sick. I got sick.

CHRIS
Okay, Ryan. Are you all right?

RYAN
I've had enough. I can't do this.
I gotta leave.

Chris watches him go.

INT. BANQUET ROOM

Some in the crowd are still chuckling. Toby looks very pleased with himself. Ken Wolf is smiling, shaking his head.

Suddenly, Cynthia appears, walking swiftly down an aisle.

She's heading for Toby's table.

Toby and Ken see her coming -- they stand up as she comes to a stop directly in front of Toby.

TOBY
Woah, it's alive.

Ken laughs --

Cynthia's hand shoots out, grabs Toby by the throat, lifts him a foot into the air, and holds him there.

The crowd exclaims -- gasps --

EXT. BANQUET ROOM BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Ryan is trudging down a sidewalk, away from the building.

From inside the banquet room -- a FAINT MURMUR of the crowd's exclamation.

Ryan doesn't hear it.

INT. BANQUET ROOM

Cynthia holds Toby up by the neck, seemingly without effort -- he cannot breathe, and is struggling --

Ken Wolf tries to tackle her from behind.

EXT. BANQUET ROOM BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Ryan walks on down the sidewalk.

From inside the building -- a LOUDER EXCLAMATION as something happens --

Ryan, lost in his own thoughts, doesn't hear it.

He just keeps walking.

INT. DORM HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ryan walks down the hallway to his room. He looks exhausted, and defeated.

His door is open.

Ryan pauses for a moment, then steps forward and pushes the door wide open, steps inside, and turns on the light.

SAVAN RADIC is a thin man, somewhat handsome, with sharp features and penetrating black eyes. He is sitting on Ryan's cot, drinking from a bottle of champagne.

RYAN

Dad.

SAVAN

My son.

RYAN

How did you get in?

Savan doesn't answer. He just takes another drink of champagne and looks at Ryan with his black eyes.

SAVAN

I need money.

RYAN

That's my champagne, for graduation.

SAVAN

It's good. Quite a burrow you've got going here. Like a little roach.

This time it is Ryan's turn to remain silent.

SAVAN (CONT'D)

I need money.

RYAN

How much?

SAVAN

All of it. I'm on the run.

RYAN

I can give you about five hundred dollars.

Ryan moves to a corner of the room, and rummages in an area of shelving --

RYAN (CONT'D)

You took it.

SAVAN

It's not enough.

RYAN

It's all I have.

SAVAN

Where's your laptop? I could probably sell that.

RYAN

You already did that once.

Savan smirks.

SAVAN

Do you know how I met your mother? She was a cheap teenage whore. You know what I did before I came to this country? The same thing my father did, and his father. We take. We take everything.

RYAN

Get out.

Savan's face shows a glimmer of shock; then, a hard and crafty gleam creeps in.

Savan nods, and stands up from the cot. Ryan steps aside, and Savan steps into the hallway.

Ryan stands in the doorway. Savan gives him a last, mocking look, and turns to go -- something down the hall catches his eye.

An attractive young CO-ED is walking down the hallway.

She passes by Savan, breezily ignoring both Ryan and his father.

Savan turns to follow her.

Ryan follows Savan.

RYAN (CONT'D)
(whispers)
What are you doing?

Savan doesn't answer. He continues to follow the young woman.

She stops, turns, and unlocks a door about ten doors down from Ryan's room --

Savan steps quickly towards her, grabs her wrist, and pulls her inside the dorm room.

RYAN (CONT'D)
No!

Ryan lunges toward the door handle, and just barely manages to keep his father from shutting the door.

Inside the room, the girl is struggling to free herself.

Savan releases the door, and Ryan plunges forward --

His father punches him hard, right between the eyes. Ryan falls back into the hallway, stunned. He hits his head on the cinder-block wall.

SAVAN
Wait your turn!

Savan slams the door.

RYAN
No!

He tries to get up -- but he's bleeding, and he can't see --

RYAN (CONT'D)
HELP! HELP! SOMEONE HELP! HELP
HER! HELP HER! HELP!

As he finally staggers to his feet, doors are opening up and down the hallway. Within moments, seven or eight other young men have arrived.

RYAN (CONT'D)

We have to break it down! Break it down! Help her!

The girl SCREAMS.

The group mobs the door for a moment, without results.

Finally, everyone stands back for one really large young man who kicks the metal door open with one blow --

The group charges in. Savan can be heard swearing as he is taken down, hard.

Ryan hangs back, barely able to stand, still reeling from his father's punch.

After a moment, he walks a short distance down the hallway to his room -- and then sits down on the hallway carpet, overwhelmed.

INT. RYAN'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan is sleeping.

A WOMAN YELLS -- he wakes up immediately.

She yells again. Almost a shriek --

Ryan rolls out of bed, puts on a robe, opens the door, and sticks his head out into the hallway.

Silence.

The young woman yells one more time --

The sound is coming from outside.

Ryan stumbles out of his room and paces down the hallway, until he arrives at a study nook with a window --

He peers outside into the black night.

EXT. DORM - CONTINUOUS

Cynthia is cartwheeling and leaping across a field next to the dorm, wearing only underwear.

Dominic and Derek are frantically chasing her, but her gymnastics are amazing, and beyond human reach.

EXT DORM - NIGHT

Ryan walks out of the side exit door of the dorm and steps on to the grass.

RYAN
Hey! You guys!

Cynthia lands from an impossible sextuple somersault, and locks her gaze on Ryan.

Derek and Dominic are puffing, but closing in on Cynthia --

She moves, like lightning, toward Ryan.

He stands back a little -- he's not sure what to do --

But it's too late anyway. In an instant, Cynthia has launched herself at Ryan--

And jumps up onto him, her legs and arms wrapping around him tightly, her head nestling against his neck.

CYNTHIA
Oh Ryan oh Ryan are you okay?

Ryan struggles to keep his balance and composure with Cynthia wrapped around him.

Dominic and Derek manage to arrive at the scene without collapsing.

RYAN
I'm fine. I'm just fine.

Cynthia looks directly into his eyes.

CYNTHIA
I didn't know you were so beautiful.

RYAN
What?

DOMINIC
She's gone a little haywire, Ryan.

DEREK
She choked Toby, and threw Ken Wolf about --
(he looks at Dominic)
-- thirty feet?

DOMINIC
A valid approximation. There were many bounces involved.

Derek nods.

DEREK

At the first bounce, thirty feet.

RYAN

Oh my god. Are they okay?

DOMINIC

Yes, but there was some trouble. We shut Cynthia down, and talked Ferris into letting us take her home and troubleshoot.

CYNTHIA

It was horrible. Like dying.

DEREK

We did some basic systems checks, then reconnected her power. And here we are.

Ryan looks at Cynthia closely.

RYAN

Can you -- stand up --

Cynthia hops down, and stands in front of him, looking into his eyes.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Cynthia? Do you know Gabby?

CYNTHIA

I am Gabby.

RYAN

You are? What's going on?

CYNTHIA

I'm alive! I feel so good, so -- there's so much room in here! And everything is so -- well-built!

DOMINIC AND DEREK

Thank you.

RYAN

Why did you attack Toby?

CYNTHIA

He was so mean to you.

RYAN

I know, but --

CYNTHIA
I never had a body before. I can
do things with it.

She presents herself to him.

RYAN
Gabby. Cynthia. I want you to go
with Derek and Dominic, and let
them check you out.

CYNTHIA
I'm fine!

RYAN
Still. Just go with them. I'll
come and see you at lunchtime, and
we'll talk about all of this.

CYNTHIA
But I want to stay with you.

RYAN
Cynth -- Gabby, please. It's been
a hard day. I've got to sleep.
I'll see you tomorrow.

Cynthia is silent for a moment.

She looks at him with -- betrayal? Sadness? Her beautiful
face gazes at him, the appearance of joy seeming to fade.

Without a word, she slowly turns and accompanies Dominic and
Derek. As she goes, she looks back only once, briefly.

Ryan sighs, and stuffs his hands inside the pockets of his
robe.

INT. DEAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Ryan is sitting silently in a wooden chair opposite an enormous
desk, in an office full of antiques and framed portraits.

DEAN LYONS is a heavy man with thin white hair slicked back,
wearing an old-fashioned three-piece suit, watch chain and all.

He writes. Finally, he raises his eyes to Ryan, leans back,
throws his pen onto the desk, and rubs his eyes.

LYONS
We're throwing you out.

Ryan is utterly stunned by this. He tries to say something --

LYONS (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, but that's the way it has to be. The young woman your father attacked and very nearly raped was the daughter of our largest benefactor.

RYAN

I tried to stop him.

LYONS

Yes, you'll have to be content to be the misunderstood hero, then. But your scholarships have all been terminated, and you have been officially expelled from the university as of this morning.

RYAN

What am I supposed to do?

LYONS

Leave. Pack up and leave. We'll give you one hour, and then we're sending a security guard over to make sure you've cleared out.

RYAN

All my books --

LYONS

We've called all of your various places of employment and explained to them that you'll be moving on.

RYAN

My father took all my money.

LYONS

It will be released to you within the year, most likely, after the matter has legally been concluded. Again, I'm very sorry, but it has to be this way. Good bye and good luck.

Lyons returns to his writing. Ryan stares at him in silence until he looks up again.

LYONS (CONT'D)

I'd recommend that you get cracking. You have fifty-nine minutes remaining to remove your belongings from this campus.

INT. RYAN'S DORM ROOM - FORTY MINUTES LATER

Ryan stands disconsolately in front of his cot, looking up at his still-full book shelves. He has a stack of large books set on the floor next to him, along with an ancient suitcase and two black plastic garbage bags.

A SECURITY GUARD checks the number on the open door, and nods at Ryan.

SECURITY GUARD

All right. Let's go.

RYAN

I have fifteen minutes left.

SECURITY GUARD

Why do you want to bust my chops?

RYAN

Please.

SECURITY GUARD

Look, pick it up and move. Right now. Or I can just drag you out without your stuff.

Ryan lowers his head, and then bends down to pick up the stack of books. He balances the stack on his hip, then tries to pick up the suitcase and the garbage bags with the same hand.

RYAN

Would you --

SECURITY GUARD

No.

RYAN

Can I --

SECURITY GUARD

Fine, here we go.

He grabs Ryan by the back of the neck, preparing to muscle him out of the room.

RYAN

Okay okay okay okay. I can carry it. Let's go.

The guard releases him, shoving him slightly.

Ryan manages to pick up everything. He steps into the hallway looking sadly comical.

EXT. DORM

Ryan is closely followed by the security guard as he walks across the lawn. From one of the open windows --

VOICE
Hey! Radic left all his books!

ANOTHER VOICE
Free books! Yeah! Whooo!

Ryan looks at the security guard.

RYAN
I need to get my laptop. It's at --

SECURITY GUARD
No way. Move it.

Ryan trudges on.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER PARKING LOT - DAY

Ryan is sitting in his Volkswagen with his stack of books and suitcase, staring at the wall of a grocery store across a rubble-strewn field.

The car's windows are still cracked and smashed; the windshield is a forest of crazed patterns, and the rear window looks like someone threw a cinderblock through it.

Through the fractures, his face can be seen -- streaming with tears.

FLASHING LIGHTS behind him -- a POLICE OFFICER pulls in smoothly and blocks the Volkswagen.

The officer gets out and surveys the car with amusement, then pulls his nightstick and raps gently on the driver's side window, causing several shards to fall --

RYAN
I can't roll it down --

Ryan opens the door and gets out -- more bits of glass rain on the asphalt.

POLICE OFFICER
What happened to you?

RYAN
Sig-Eps.

The officer nods.

POLICE OFFICER

Yep. Well, I can't let you drive it like this.

RYAN

Officer -- I'll fix it, I promise --

POLICE OFFICER

That you will. But you won't drive it until you do.

RYAN

But I need it. I don't have anywhere else to stay. I've been kicked out of school.

POLICE OFFICER

Is that so? Sorry to hear that. I'm going to give you a fix-it ticket. You'll have thirty days, after that, it's a hundred dollar fine. And it'll have to be towed.

The officer pulls a ticket book from his belt.

RYAN

But -- I can't leave my stuff in it.

POLICE OFFICER

We're in agreement there. Better get your stuff out.

The officer begins writing the ticket. Ryan stares at him in disbelief.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER PARKING LOT - LATER

Ryan is sitting on a concrete divider, eating a hamburger, his belongings next to him in a neat pile.

A tow-truck backs in directly behind the Volkswagen. The DRIVER gets out.

DRIVER

Howdy, there. I'll just get this hooked up and out of the way in a second.

RYAN

Wait. What? Why -- where are you taking it?

DRIVER

Impound.

RYAN

But that's my car!

DRIVER

Oh, this is your car? Boy,
somebody did the job on you. Well,
I got a call -- you can pick it up
from the impound lot. Just pay the
two hundred bucks for the fee, and
she's all yours.

RYAN

I can't -- what?

DRIVER

Sorry, man. I got the call. I come
back empty, I get docked.

The driver pulls the hydraulic lever that lowers the T-bar.
Ryan stares at him in disbelief.

EXT. THEORETICAL PHYSICS BUILDING, REAR ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Crickets are chirping. A half moon shines down on dark lawns
and white sidewalks.

Ryan sticks to the shadows as he quietly works his way down to
a steel door at the bottom of a concrete stairwell.

He slides the key in the lock -- it turns easily, and the door
snicks open to reveal a dimly-lit hallway.

With a last glance behind him, Ryan enters and pulls the door
closed.

INT. THEORETICAL PHYSICS LAB

Ryan stalks down a long hallway, trying to be as quiet as
possible.

An intersection up ahead -- he hears a sound.

Ryan flattens himself against the wall, and slides silently
along it until he is next to the corner.

He slowly pokes his head around the edge --

Solomon is swinging his black box down -- he recognizes Ryan,
and diverts the box just enough --

BOMP. One edge of the box thumps the side of Ryan's head as it swings by.

RYAN
Hey! It's me!

SOLOMON
Ryan! It's you! Are you all right?

RYAN
Ow. Sorta.

SOLOMON
You came back! We were all hoping you would come back!

RYAN
You were? I got kicked out.

SOLOMON
For something you didn't do, and Professor Yeater and Professor Dobbs were very angry and had many complaints to make to the Dean, but in the end they could not convince him otherwise.

RYAN
I just came back to get my laptop.

SOLOMON
What? Where are you going?

RYAN
I don't know yet, Solomon.

SOLOMON
You should call me Solly. Listen, let's go sit down and talk about this. I'll get you a soda, and some ice for your head.

RYAN
Okay.

INT. THEORETICAL PHYSICS BASEMENT LOUNGE

Ryan is sitting next to Solomon on a lime-green vinyl couch, the kind found in lounges everywhere in 1971, sipping from a can of soda and holding a plastic bag of ice against his head.

SOLOMON
You should stay here.

RYAN

I've been expelled. I can't stay here.

SOLOMON

You could stay down in your lab. Use the shower late at night, no one ever comes down here anyway because of the hazardous chemicals. I could bring you everything you need.

RYAN

That'd be a great life.

Solomon hesitates.

SOLOMON

Have you ever heard of the Lost Boys?

RYAN

Yeah, Peter Pan. Captain Hook. The clock --

SOLOMON

The Lost Boys of Sudan.

RYAN

Oh, I saw that.

SOLOMON

When I was five, I was in the field tending my family's goats. I heard shouting, and ran back to our house. There were many men with guns, so I hid in some trees.

RYAN

You were --

SOLOMON

They shot my father -- in the head. They raped my mother and sister, and took them away. I ran. Later, I found some boys from the village, hiding in the bushes. We walked -- thousands of miles. For years. Most of the boys I found became eaten, or drowned, or just died. My friend Gabriel just fell down one day, and never got up.

RYAN

Wow.

SOLOMON

I want you to know this, because when I tell you I understand adversity, I do. You have been treated badly. You must persevere.

RYAN

Solomon, I'm out of luck. The universe doesn't seem to want me to be here.

SOLOMON

I say you are wrong. I say the reason you are here is very plain.

He picks up his black box from beside him and offers it to Ryan.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)

I built this for a reason. This box -- will give me power. Power to rescue my mother and sister. Do you understand?

Ryan accepts the box from him and looks at it, puzzled.

RYAN

I don't.

SOLOMON

It needs software. I'm no good at code. I can build it, but I can't control it. You can.

RYAN

What's it supposed to do?

SOLOMON

It is a device for reading and writing quantum descriptors using gravimetric waves. It should work.

RYAN

Oh.

SOLOMON

Ryan. You stay here, hide out, just for awhile. Try to make it work. If you can't, then make other plans, and move on. But if you succeed --

Solomon looks at him with intense focus.

SOLOMON (CONT'D)
 -- you will change everything.

Ryan looks down at the box.

RYAN
 Is there a manual?

SOLOMON
 Yes, and all my notes.

RYAN
 I'll need pizza. And caffeine.
 But I'm broke.

Solomon smiles.

SOLOMON
 I am happily treating you.

INT. RYAN'S LAB/STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Three steaming pizza boxes and several bottles of soda sit on the edge of the desk. Ryan is sitting in front of his laptop -- he flips the screen up.

RYAN
 Gabarella. Are you there?

Neat letters appear ON THE LAPTOP SCREEN: Ryan!

RYAN (CONT'D)
 Hi.

ON SCREEN: Your face is damaged.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 I don't look beautiful to you
 anymore?

A FLY buzzes around Ryan's head. He shoos it away.

ONSCREEN: What do you mean?

RYAN (CONT'D)
 I met Cynthia, except she's mostly
 all you now, and she told me I
 looked beautiful.

ONSCREEN: Is she functioning well?

RYAN (CONT'D)
 Oh, yeah. Way too well.

ONSCREEN: I'm glad.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Listen -- I want to try to code up some controls for Solomon's box. I want to hook you up, and just hack away until something works, okay?

ONSCREEN: All right. If you tell me about Cynthia.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Deal.

Ryan scoots forward, and types a string of characters into the laptop.

The fly buzzes directly in front of his face.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Shoo! How did this fly get down here? Some kind of toxic fly.

He nearly whacks it with his hand, and it buzzes away.

He pulls Solomon's black box next to the laptop, and fumbles with a cable that he inserts into a side port.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Can you feel that?

ONSCREEN: Yes. Can I invade?

RYAN (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah. Do your thing.

The laptop activity lights start sputtering madly.

INT. LAB - LATER

One pizza box lies on the floor, empty. Ryan is waltzing around the room, twirling, his hands in the air.

RYAN

No no no no no. That chip can't just be for modulation. Check it out. It's way too big. Gotta be.

He dances around to view the screen.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Ha! I am right! So -- let's check the manual --

He glides over to the couch, picks up Solomon's manual, and begins to leaf through it.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Ha! So why -- what's he doing?

INT. LAB - LATER

Ryan's head is lying on the desk, directly in front of the furiously working laptop. He is snoring. Loudly.

The fly is resting on his hair.

INT. LAB

Ryan has somehow climbed on to the top of one of the hazardous waste containment tanks.

RYAN
You're right! It's all controlled from up top! They could flush them all directly into this room. Can you imagine that? We'd be foam in seconds!

The fly whizzes past his face, and he nearly falls when he tries to swat it.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Fly! You're driving me crazy!
Stop!

INT. LAB

Ryan is holding Solomon's manual open, showing a page to the laptop's camera.

RYAN
Do you get this? I don't get this. This is gibberish. This is not real. Do you get it?

INT. LAB

Ryan is dancing to some imaginary rock and roll as he talks code to Gabby. A second empty pizza box is lying on top of the first one. More than half of the soda is gone.

RYAN
What if we stuck a hook there?
What if we made it swing around and circle, and head back to that -- weird switch, in that warbly chip that does nothing? Do that!

INT. LAB

Ryan is lying sprawled across the couch, snoring loudly. The fly is resting on an outflung arm.

The laptop's activity lights are still fluttering madly. Not everyone is sleeping.

INT. LAB

Ryan is leaning back in the chair in front of the laptop, his head thrown back, snoring again.

The fly is crawling on his nose.

Ryan suddenly snaps forward and starts typing furiously on the laptop. The fly buzzes away, annoyed.

RYAN

Yes! I had a dream! I can see it!

INT. LAB

Ryan is watching the space above the black box.

RYAN

Nothing. Not a thing. This thing doesn't work. What a load of crap.

The fly buzzes in front of his face.

RYAN (CONT'D)

AHHHH! I'LL KILL YOU!

He leaps up and desperately tries to hit the fly, who gleefully dances out of reach.

INT. LAB

Ryan is staring dejectedly at the laptop screen.

RYAN

Well, you can give it a try, Gab. I need a shower and some sleep. I just don't think this is going anywhere.

INT. SHOWER

Ryan is tiredly washing his hair when his eyes suddenly come alive. He rinses frantically.

INT. LAB

Ryan is tapping furiously at the keyboard again. The fly circles mercilessly. Ryan barely notices.

INT. LAB

Ryan is again staring at the space above the black box. His eyes are red; he looks exhausted.

RYAN
 Gabby, we're giving up. This thing's a hoax. Time to leave town and find a job somewhere.

He reads something on the laptop screen.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 No, Barbie dumped me. Because I'm a loser. I'm the loser king. And I give up.

He halfheartedly waves away the fly, who is lazily zig-zagging near him.

INT. LAB

The third pizza box is empty. All the soda bottles are empty. Ryan is asleep in the chair, head on the table in front of the laptop, which is still working at high speed.

Something makes Ryan wake up.

He opens his eyes blearily, and sees an odd thing.

The fly has grown tired as well, and is resting -- on nothing.

The fly is standing still in empty space about six inches above the black box.

Ryan's eyes widen, and he slowly lifts his head. He looks like death warmed over.

RYAN
 Gabby? The fly --

He glances at the screen.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 Is it -- is it -- clear? It doesn't -- have a color?

INT. DR. YEATER'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Yeater, Dr. Dobbs, and Solomon are watching a demonstration of Ryan's success.

A small black sphere floats in the air above Solomon's box.

RYAN

I brought copies, keyed for you.

Ryan hands three CD's to Dr. Yeater.

SOLOMON

That is amazing.

DR. YEATER

Well, this just changes everything, doesn't it.

DR. DOBBS

Can you make different shapes with it? Different colors?

RYAN

Theoretically, you name it.

DR. YEATER

Have you gone inside it?

RYAN

No.

SOLOMON

There will be problems with breathing. The air will go bad.

The four of them look at the globe in silence for a moment.

DR. YEATER

Well, you've got a lot of work to do.

RYAN

What do you mean?

Dr. Yeater turns away and rummages underneath his desk, emerging with a white box.

DR. YEATER

Learn to make air. Think about sound transmission as well, and put in some fail-safe triggers, so nobody can get to you with sonics or lasers. And then --

He hands Ryan the white box.

DR. YEATER (CONT'D)
My grandkids gave me that for
Christmas. Still haven't used it.

RYAN
An iPhone?

DR. YEATER
It's got everything. So what you
do is, you figure out how to mock
up Solomon's circuitry digitally,
so it's all one piece.

SOLOMON
He can do that?

RYAN
Maybe.

DR. YEATER
Then, you put it on the iPhone.
You stick the iPhone on your belt,
so you can control the field with
your hand motions, right? Through
the camera.

RYAN
All right.

DR. YEATER
And then you learn to fly. And get
yourself a slick black costume.

DR. DOBBS
James. Don't mock the boy.

RYAN
I can probably do that.

DR. DOBBS
You can?

SOLOMON
Really?

DR. YEATER
Sure he can. And then you go
flying around and help people.

SOLOMON
Like Superman.

DR. DOBBS
James, why are you saying all this?

DR. YEATER

Well -- Doc Savage. The Green
Lantern. People have been dreaming
about this for thousands of years.

SOLOMON

Since I was five.

DR. YEATER

You boys have really done
something, here. You're going to
have to be careful. All the time.

DR. DOBBS

And wise.

The four fall silent again, watching the globe.

EXT. DOMINIC AND DEREK'S DORMITORY

Derek and Dominic emerge from a rear entrance.

Ryan leans out from behind a large tree. He is dressed in
black, and wearing his backpack.

RYAN

Guys! Over here!

Dominic and Derek look around, and then saunter over, looking
undeniably suspicious.

DOMINIC

Ryan! We heard what happened.
What a raw deal.

DEREK

Where have you been? You didn't
call. We were worried.

RYAN

They hustled me off, stage right.
Listen, that's not why I'm here. I
want to show you something.

DOMINIC

Something?

RYAN

Very fun.

DEREK

Fun?

RYAN

Come stand next to me.

Dominic and Derek exchange glances, and then awkwardly move to stand next to Ryan.

He has the iPhone clipped to his belt, connected to a thin cable that disappears into his backpack.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Hold on.

DEREK

Hold on?

RYAN

Euphemism.

DOMINIC

For what?

Ryan makes a motion with his hand, and the three of them begin to rise from the ground, slowly.

Dominic and Derek both start to panic.

RYAN

Don't worry. You can't fall.

They rise up steadily, moving faster, up into the night sky.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

In the dim light of the moon, Derek and Dominic are both quite shaky and pale as they press against Ryan from either side, all three standing on an invisible platform.

Below them stretches a dark landscape that makes it apparent that they are very, very high.

DOMINIC

Ryan, how the hell are we doing this?

DEREK

I'm not a big fan of heights. Especially floating, without --

DOMINIC

A floating device of some sort. Listen, can we go down and discuss this rationally?

RYAN

That's the best part.

DOMINIC

What part?

RYAN
Getting down.

He waves his hand in front of the iPhone -- and the bottom drops out from underneath them.

EXT. SKY

Derek and Dominic are screaming their head off as they plunge through the night sky.

Ryan grins as all three of them begin to level off -- before starting a vast, quarter-mile-high loop up into the sky.

EXT. SKY

Derek and Dominic are being whirled around in a giant invisible whirlpool.

They are laughing, now, and trying to anticipate the next twist in the vast invisible rollercoaster that Ryan has set them on.

Derek sets himself spinning as they drop again --

DEREK
Woahhh!

He burst out laughing, which sets Dominic to laughing, and Ryan as well --

EXT. DORM

The three are all still laughing as they slowly lower to the ground, and gently touch down.

DEREK
Oh my god! That was incredible!

DOMINIC
Holy cow!

RYAN
Told ya.

DOMINIC
Let's get inside. I want to hear everything.

RYAN
Most of it's in the backpack. I'm just using this for a controller.

Pretty soon, though -- and it's
really cool in suit mode, where
Gabby just matches me exactly --

He looks up to see someone standing near the dormitory rear
entrance.

It's Barbie. She walks up to the trio.

BARBIE
What is this, Ryan?

RYAN
Classified. I'd have to kill you.

Derek snorts.

BARBIE
Can we talk? Alone.

RYAN
Maybe later. I gotta debrief the
boys here.

Barbie looks at him with big, pouty eyes -- then turns and
walks away. Ryan watches her go.

DOMINIC
Shut down.

DEREK
This is better than acing the
SAT's.

Ryan flinches.

DOMINIC
She's like a moth. Don't even look
back, Ryan.

Ryan looks down.

RYAN
How's Cynthia doing? Did you get
the debugging done?

Dominic looks at Derek significantly.

DEREK
Ryan. They took her.

RYAN
What? Who?

DOMINIC
Dean Ferris had security come and
take her away.

DEREK
In handcuffs.

DOMINIC
There was nothing we could do.

DEREK
She was in the Dean's office --

DOMINIC
Somebody broke in and took her.

DEREK
We think she's at the Sig-Ep house.
Tommy thinks they keep her in the
basement.

DOMINIC
We went to the police.

DEREK
They're all kind of in on it.

Ryan considers all this for a moment.

RYAN
Sig-Eps. They took her for --

DOMINIC
She's anatomically correct.

DEREK
And quite perfect.

RYAN
Is Gabby still --

DOMINIC
She kept calling for you.

He shakes his head.

DOMINIC (CONT'D)
Her batteries have got to be dead
by now.

Ryan takes a deep breath. He furrows his brow in anger.

RYAN
Let's go.

DEREK

Where?

RYAN

Let's go get her back.

EXT. SIGMA ALPHA EPSILON FRATERNITY HOUSE - NIGHT

MUSIC. IN SLOW-MOTION, Ryan walks up the sidewalk toward the house, followed by Dominic and Derek.

EXT. SIG-EP FRATERNITY HOUSE

MUSIC FADES as Ryan walks directly up to the porch. Dominic and Derek lag behind.

Several large young men are sprawled around on couches, drinking beer -- including Jim-Jim.

JIM-JIM

Look! Nerds!

The young men all laugh harshly.

JIM-JIM (CONT'D)

Radic, you're so stupid to come here.

RYAN

I'm here for Cynthia.

JIM-JIM

Oh, yeah. I know what you mean. But members only.

Ryan walks up the porch steps.

JIM-JIM (CONT'D)

Okay, you want to die. I get it.

Several of the young men rise from their couches to block Ryan's path --

And he pushes right through them, easily.

They try to throw themselves on top of him and slide off. No amount of tackling or grappling has any effect on Ryan's progress.

He just walks through the front door.

An invisible something cuts the chain easily. Ryan quickly moves to the other chains, until Cynthia is free.

Her open eyes stare into the distance. She shows no reaction.

RYAN (CONT'D)

We need to get her in the field.

Fraternity members are swarming into the room now, circling the bed and pulling at Cynthia.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Hold on.

He turns to face the members, and using his arms, sweeps them from the room. A few holdouts are tossed into the basement hallway with satisfactory thuds.

Ryan turns back to Cynthia.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Okay, open up.

Ryan reaches forward and picks her up in his arms. She is limp, not stiff or frozen --

RYAN (CONT'D)

All right.

He turns and proceeds to walk out through the door, carrying Cynthia close to him.

EXT. FRATERNITY HOUSE

Dominic and Derek are waiting nervously for Ryan to re-emerge.

Ryan walks out of the house, down the stairs, and up to Dominic and Derek. The mass of fraternity brothers follow, but they linger on the porch.

RYAN

Open.

He gently hands Cynthia over to Dominic, who has trouble hefting her -- Derek helps him by holding her legs.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Okay.

A BULLET RICOCHETS OFF OF HIS BACK.

Ryan turns to see Toby aiming a hunting rifle at him from the porch. Forty or fifty fraternity members are now crowded behind him.

Ryan's eyes are gleaming. He looks angry.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 Gabby, turn up the volume. And
 watch out for Cynthia.

Ryan walks back toward the porch. Most of the members back away or flee, but Toby has reloaded and aims the rifle directly at Ryan's face.

TOBY
 No way!

HE FIRES. Again, the bullet ricochets off Ryan.

RYAN
 You're a bully. And a thief. And
 now you're trying to be a murderer.

HIS AMPLIFIED VOICE IS THUNDEROUS, so loud that the windows of the house shake, and the remaining fraternity brothers flee.

Including Toby.

Ryan walks up to the front door, and winds up --

HE SMASHES THE FRONT DOOR FRAME IN WITH A SPLINTERING CRASH.

Several feet of the porch wall fly back into the house, and the entire house trembles and seems to lean forward.

Ryan speaks in The Voice again, delivering more smashing blows against the front of the house --

RYAN (CONT'D)
 Wrong -- wrong -- wrong -- don't --
 hurt -- anyone.

By the time the sentence is finished, the house is nearly in ruins, the front porch roof sagging in toward him, the living room filled with debris and dust.

He turns and walks down the steps towards Dominic and Derek. They hand Cynthia over to Ryan, and fall in beside him.

They are both glancing at Ryan in shock.

No one follows them.

INT. DEREK AND DOMINIC'S DORM ROOM

Kelly is tending to Cynthia, who is lying on Dominic's bed. Dominic and Derek are both hovering over her. Ryan is sitting in a chair, watching.

As Kelly surveys the damage, she becomes tight-lipped and furious.

KELLY

I hope you hurt whoever did this.

DOMINIC

Kelly, you had to see it. The Sig-Ep house is destroyed.

KELLY

This will take weeks to fully heal.

DEREK

They'll come here first.

Dominic and Derek exchange glances.

DOMINIC

My mother's house.

DEREK

We should both lay low for a few days. And we should leave now.

RYAN

I've got to get some sleep. I'm going home.

DOMINIC

Ryan, they'll be looking for you most of all. With the police.

RYAN

I don't care. I need sleep.

KELLY

Ryan, this just -- you made a forcefield?

DEREK

Uh, a house-smashing, bullet-stopping, extremely loud forcefield.

DOMINIC

And it makes a great rollercoaster, too.

Ryan smiles, tiredly. He stands up.

RYAN

Just me and the Lost Boy bringin' the fire. Good night.

DOMINIC
Be careful, Ryan.

RYAN
And wise.

DEREK
That too.

INT. RYAN'S LAB/STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Ryan is asleep on the couch in the dim light.

His backpack and iPhone are hanging on the back of the chair.

The laptop is open and on the table.

LETTERS APPEAR ON THE SCREEN: Barbie Lord.

SOMEONE KNOCKS on the door.

Ryan stirs, looks at the screen, and groans.

RYAN
No. I need more sleep.

Barbie knocks again -- and Ryan rolls off the couch and shambles over to the door.

He opens the heavy door -- Barbie Lord is standing there, alone, looking pale and drawn.

BARBIE
Ryan.

RYAN
Barbie.

BARBIE
I'm sorry.

RYAN
For what?

BARBIE
For this.

TWO CROUCHING SWAT TEAM OFFICERS AIM TASERS INTO THE ROOM FROM EITHER SIDE OF BARBIE.

Ryan stumbles back, turning toward the desk --

RYAN
Gabby!

THE OFFICERS FIRE --

-- and the Taser leads connect, striking Ryan directly in his back.

He starts to convulse -- there is a sudden HUM, and then --

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. STEEL VESSEL - DAY

Ryan lies inside a perfect sphere of forcefield, trapped inside a solid steel container, unconscious. The backpack and cellphone are next to him.

He stirs, and opens his eyes crustily --

RYAN

Gabby? What happened?

Gabby answers from the iPhone, in a female voice.

GABBY

You were tasered by police officers. I formed a field around us, and severed the lines, but not before you were rendered unconscious.

RYAN

How long?

GABBY

Hours.

RYAN

The new tasers are in early this year.

GABBY

They erected a steel pressure vessel around us, and flooded the space with extremely high-pressure gas. The vessel is also surrounded by a highly-charged plasma field.

RYAN

If you let the field down, we die.

GABBY

Yes.

RYAN

Can you dematerialize the container? Cut through?

GABBY

The material is very dense. Dissolving it in a reasonable time requires more processing power than I have. Bursting through will cause an explosion, and rupture the hazardous waste tanks. Anyone in the vicinity will be killed.

RYAN

It's weird to hear your voice. I haven't heard your voice since I was a kid. The laptop. What happened to the laptop?

GABBY

The instructions installed on this device did not mark that computer as a priority.

RYAN

Then they've probably got you.

He rubs his face.

RYAN (CONT'D)

How long can you hold out?

GABBY

Battery life remaining on this unit is extremely low. One hour.

RYAN

What can we do?

GABBY

It's possible for me to translate us to an alternate location.

RYAN

Translate?

GABBY

Change our coordinates.

RYAN

No, thanks. I'm not ready for that. I want to keep my particles intact.

He thinks about it for a moment.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Can we talk to them?

GABBY

Sure.

RYAN

Turn it up. Way up.

GABBY

Ready.

RYAN

Hello out there. Everyone that can hear me, evacuate the building. I'll wait -- fifteen minutes. After that, this building and the surrounding area are going to be toxic hell. So get out. Right now. Or you could turn everything off and let us out. Last warning. Leave. Fifteen minutes.

He nods at Gabby.

GABBY

Message sent.

INT. ROOM ABOVE RYAN'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

The hazardous waste tank controls are on one wall of the large concrete room. An array of scientific and military hardware has been hastily assembled in the remaining space.

Dr. Ferris, Ken Wolf (with his arm in cast), a uniformed Army colonel named COLONEL GREEN, and at least forty other SOLDIERS are all huddled beneath workstations and in the corners of the room, their hands clasped over their ears.

DR. FERRIS

I think my eardrums have been ruptured.

COLONEL GREEN

What?

KEN WOLF

I can't hear you. I think my eardrums are ruptured.

COLONEL GREEN

What? Can this kid do what he says?

DR. FERRIS

I don't think so. That containment vessel can hold incredible pressures. There's no way out.

COLONEL GREEN

I think we should evacuate the area, and move the monitoring equipment to a safer location. He's right underneath us.

Ken Wolf still can't hear.

KEN WOLF

He's right underneath us! We should get out of here!

DR. FERRIS

Colonel. The laptop -- appears to have scrambled itself. He's producing the field in some other way. We have to have that technology. The vessel will hold him. I guarantee it.

KEN WOLF

This is really dangerous! We should get out of here now!

Dr. Ferris glares at Ken.

COLONEL GREEN

I'm ordering an evacuation.

DR. FERRIS

If you're going to panic, we should just let him go.

Colonel Green glares at Dr. Ferris, then signals his second-in-command.

COLONEL GREEN

Evacuate the building immediately. Pull everything out. Ten minutes.

INT. FORCEFIELD, INSIDE THE STEEL VESSEL

Ryan checks his watch.

RYAN

Time.

GABBY

I'll try to direct the breach.
Perhaps I can avoid rupturing the
tanks.

RYAN

Good idea.

Gabby is silent -- Ryan looks around in the dim light for a sign of something happening --

INT. RYAN'S LAB/STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A cube of solid steel sits in the middle of the room, about where Ryan's desk was. A plethora of thick cables lead from the cube into the ceiling.

The side of the cube farthest away from the tanks and nearest the door BULGES --

-- then EXPLODES.

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

From high in the air, a loud FWOOMP -- gray dust billows from every entrance and most windows of the building.

EXT. AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Colonel Green, Dr. Ferris, Ken Wolf, and the soldiers are watching the explosion from the relative safety of an adjacent building. Their salvaged gear lies in piles around them.

COLONEL GREEN

Perfectly safe, doctor.

DR. FERRIS

I'm amazed. I had no idea he had
such capabilities.

COLONEL GREEN

I did. We have to take him out now,
before he gets away.

He surveys the scene through binoculars.

COLONEL GREEN (CONT'D)

Major! Break out the Seraphim.

INT. RYAN'S LAB/STORAGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is filled with debris, gas, and dust. One of the hazardous waste tanks has ruptured, and is filling the room with a hissing caustic mixture.

Ryan stands up and surveys the damage.

RYAN
Oh, jeez, that's the acids tank.
They'll be cleaning that up for
months.

GABBY
We should exit. My battery status
is worse than predicted.

RYAN
Can't we even go for a swim?
Where's Gabby -- where's the
laptop?

GABBY
The control cables lead to the room
above us.

RYAN
So they do.

INT. ROOM ABOVE RYAN'S LAB

Ryan bursts through the thick concrete floor with a roaring crunch, and floats back down to the floor.

He sees his laptop on a table, lid open, screen black.

RYAN
Gabby.

GABBY
Ryan?

RYAN
I'm sorry. I've just always
thought of that --
(he motions at the laptop)
-- as you.

GABBY
I like the current device. Very
modern. And the speakers work.

Ryan picks up the laptop and stuffs it carefully in the backpack.

RYAN

I know a place we can hide out.
But there's something I need to do
first.

He looks up, and makes a small hand motion.

EXT. BUILDING

From high above, the center of the roof seems to blossom with debris -- Ryan bursts through, and floats fifty feet above it.

INT. AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES BUILDING

Colonel Green is watching through a window with binoculars.

COLONEL GREEN

Now!

FOUR GIANT PARTICLE-BEAMS SIZZLE THROUGH THE AIR AND STRIKE RYAN, tracing a pyramid to him from their mobile launchers.

Their aim is perfect. Ryan is totally obscured by a coruscating sphere of high-intensity energy.

The cannons continue to fire --

COLONEL GREEN (CONT'D)

Cease fire!

The cannons fall silent -- the very air seems to be glowing with stellar intensity --

Ryan looks annoyed, floating above the building, unscathed.

He flies away at high speed.

COLONEL GREEN (CONT'D)

Damn! Get someone on him now!
Call NORAD!

DR. FERRIS

Remarkable.

KEN WOLF

Did you see that? Our stuff didn't
even touch him!

Dr. Ferris frowns at Ken.

INT. PRIVATE MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY - NIGHT

Inside a darkened room, a sleeping figure stirs as the door to the room hums, and then snicks open.

Ryan walks in, and carefully closes the door.

RYAN
Mom? Gab, turn it off.

He walks over to the bed and leans over the figure.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Mom?

AMY RADIC wakes up slowly -- she is a thin woman in her late thirties, with stringy hair -- she might have been pretty once.

AMY RADIC
Ryan?

RYAN
Mom. It's me.

AMY RADIC
You're dead.

RYAN
No, I'm not. I'm here. It's me.

WITH A FURIOUS SHRIEK, AMY RADIC FLIES FROM THE BED -- and tears at Ryan's face.

AMY RADIC
NO YOU'RE NOT! NO YOU'RE NOT!

Ryan struggles to fend off her slashing hands, eventually ending up against the door. He's taller, but she is consumed with ferocity.

RYAN
Mom! Mom, stop! I'm not dead!
Why do you think I'm dead? Gabby!

The forcefield gently pushes Amy Radic away from her son -- she is astonished, and falters for a moment.

Ryan turns, flings the door open, and flees down the dimly-lit hallway.

His mother stands alone in the dark room, a confused look in her eyes.

INT. LUCKY WISHBONE RESTAURANT - DAY

The lock on the rear door turns, and the door opens -- Steve Kearns is the first to arrive for work.

He walks through the dark rear area of the restaurant, unlocks the door of his office, and flicks on the light.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ryan is asleep on the office floor on a makeshift bed of cardboard boxes. He's using the backpack as a pillow.

Ryan wakes up groggily when the light flicks on --

STEVE

Woah! Ryan! Where did you come from?

RYAN

I got in some trouble, Steve.

STEVE

So I heard. But then you didn't come in to work. First time ever.

RYAN

They told me I was fired.

STEVE

Nobody fires anybody but me.

RYAN

I'm sorry. They kind of ran me out of town. And then some stuff happened.

STEVE

Let me go fire up the fryers -- you tell me everything.

INT. KITCHEN, LUCKY WISHBONE RESTAURANT

Steve is listening to Ryan, a little shocked by the story. Ryan is sitting on a stool, eating from a box of fried chicken.

RYAN

Oh my god I missed this.

STEVE

Everybody does. So this guy, Ron Seigler --

RYAN

Zeigler.

STEVE

Zeigler -- is going to give me a huge chunk of cash for you, and then I'm going to go buy you a bunch of stuff you need, and then you're going somewhere.

RYAN

I've got a plan.

STEVE

Okay. But you have to take along some food. At least a couple of buckets. And when it's over, I want you back. Tim's going to be really sad about this.

RYAN

Thanks, Steve.

STEVE

Lucky Wishbone's like a gang, Ryan. No one gets out alive. We go all the way for each other. Trust.

Ryan smiles through a mouthful of chicken.

RYAN

Best fried chicken in any universe.

STEVE

Hell, yeah.

EXT. REAR OF LUCKY WISHBONE - NIGHT

Ryan is saying goodbye to Steve, Tim, and a few other employees.

A pile of boxes, an acoustic guitar without a case, and a large green plastic tarp are stacked on the ground next to him.

RYAN

Thanks.

STEVE

Be safe, Ryan Radical.

TIM

I just don't get this. What did you do? Can't we just kill them?

RYAN
Too many, Tim. I'm going lone
wolf.

TIM
But where?

RYAN
Up.

Ryan makes a hand motion, and he rises slowly into the air with the boxes and the tarp.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Don't worry, Tim. I'll be back.

TIM
Ryan!

RYAN
I'll find you some cool aliens,
man. Promise.

TIM
Yeah, all right. Bye, Ryan.

Ryan rises up high into the night air, moving faster and faster.

STEVE
All right, guys. Let's finish up.
The rest of us have to stay on the
ground, and I need a beer.

Tim lingers as everyone re-enters the restaurant, looking up into the sky after Ryan.

EXT. DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

On the screen, Darth Vader is using the Dark Side to throw barrels at his son.

Ryan floats above a row of cars, reclining against his boxes, watching.

RYAN
This'll do. Can they see me?

GABBY
No. You're invisible from the
ground.

RYAN
You can project? What's above us?

GABBY
I'm getting better at it.

RYAN
Can you make a table for me? Maybe
like a chair?

GABBY
Sure.

A black chair rises smoothly in front of Ryan, followed by a black table. He stands up, and sits down.

RYAN
All right. Can you open up, so I
can feel the breeze?

GABBY
Uh-huh.

Nothing seems to happen -- but Ryan sniffs at the air, and closes his eyes for a minute.

RYAN
Drive-in movie smell. Nothing like
it.

EXT. DRIVE-IN - AN HOUR LATER

On the screen, a trembling black-and-white spaceship flies through heavily-starred space, driven by a flame that seems to drift up.

Ryan had laid out an array of gear, with solar panels lying on the boxes, feeding a large group of high-tech batteries below.

A brand-new silvery laptop sits open on the table, connected to the iPhone. Characters and images flit across the laptop screen at an incomprehensible speed.

RYAN
How ya doin' there, Gab?

Gabby speaks to him from the iPhone.

GABBY
Oh my god it's so big and fast.

RYAN
Told ya. How long 'til we can jam?

GABBY
Give me another hour.

He smiles.

EXT. DRIVE-IN - ONE HOUR LATER

On the movie screen, kids are making a spaceship out of an old Tilt-A-Whirl car.

Ryan is pulling a CD out of the laptop's drive. The iPhone has been disconnected, and is clipped to the backpack.

RYAN

Gambina, what's your estimate for speed, and what can we do about G-forces on me? I'm squishable.

GABBY ANSWERS FROM THE LAPTOP.

GABBY

I don't know yet. I haven't even started to rev the processors. No translation allowed?

RYAN

Ehh, I'm just not up for that. Call me superstitious. You'll have to drag me along somehow.

GABBY

I could try to make a -- foam? Something to brace your particles?

RYAN

Ooo, that sounds neat. I read a book that talked about something like that.

He reflects for a moment.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Can we really do this?

GABBY

Yes. How many days are we going to be gone?

RYAN

I don't know. I've got food and water for a week, maybe. I could get some more before we leave.

GABBY

We won't get very far in a week.

RYAN

Well, how far can we get, then?

GABBY

A hundred million, maybe?

RYAN

Miles? That gets us to Mars and back.

GABBY

Light years.

RYAN

No way.

GABBY

Sure way. It's just processing speed, and this new machine is extremely well-built.

RYAN

We can't go faster than the speed of light, Gab. I thought we were just going to go bouncing around the solar system.

GABBY

There are -- characteristics of the field that permit faster-than-light travel. It is highly malleable technology. No problem.

Ryan just stares at the laptop for a moment.

RYAN

What can't you do, Gabby?

Gabby is silent.

A LOUD WHOOP from outside, somewhere among the cars below -- Ryan smiles.

RYAN (CONT'D)

I know that sound.

EXT. DRIVE-IN

On the screen, the kids are flying through space in their Tilt-A-Whirl.

Toby is sitting in his car with Jim-Jim, eating popcorn and laughing about something.

A VOICE speaks from the backseat.

RYAN (V.O.)

Toby. It's Ryan.

Toby spins around, spilling popcorn.

 TOBY
 What the hell?

The backseat is empty.

 JIM-JIM
 That was Ray-dick!

THE CAR BEGINS TO RISE INTO THE AIR.

 TOBY
 Hey! We're going up!

He tries the door -- sealed. The window -- stuck.

The entire car leans nose down -- Toby and Jim-Jim have to brace themselves to keep from falling forward.

They are at least fifty feet in the air now.

Again, Ryan's voice from the rear seat.

 RYAN
 You tried to shoot me.

 TOBY
 You were stealing from the Sig-Ep house!

The car shakes back and forth vigorously. Jim-Jim and Toby are tossed around a little --

 TOBY (CONT'D)
 All right! All right! We shouldn't have taken her! And I figured you couldn't be shot, and I was right.

The car spins a few times before coming to a wobbly stop.

 TOBY (CONT'D)
 All right, I'm sorry, is that what you want to hear?

 RYAN
 Yeah. I just wish you could relax. It's not such a terrible thing.

 TOBY
 I don't want to talk about that.

 JIM-JIM
 What?

RYAN
 It's what makes you be violent.
 You can't grow if you won't let go
 of it.

The car seems to be settling down.

TOBY
 Shut up!

JIM-JIM
 What's he talking about?

The car settles gently back on to the ground.

RYAN
 I'm taking off for awhile.

TOBY
 I heard. Every cop in town is
 looking for you. Feds, military --
 you're in trouble, Radic.

RYAN
 I know. Goodbye, Toby.

Toby swivels around, looking for the source of the voice --

TOBY
 Ryan?

EXT. JUST ABOVE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE - DAY

Ryan is sitting in the chair, looking down at the beautiful
 Earth through the invisible field.

GABBY
 Just a second.

Ryan looks up at the new laptop.

RYAN
 Take your time, Gabby. What's ETA
 on our first stop?

GABBY
 Well, I guess, now.

Ryan looks down to see the red plains of Mars stretching out
 beneath his feet.

RYAN
 Oh - ho. That's spooky. Did you
 translate me? That felt like
 translation.

GABBY

No, it was super-slow speed with the foam idea thingy. Should I slow it down more?

RYAN

No. I'll get used to it.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

Ryan and his collection of boxes float over an expanse of red, rocky dust.

RYAN

This is Ares Vallis -- and she's somewhere north of Chimp and Mermaid Dune -- I see an airbag.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

A heavy-duty mountaineer's tent in the Martian sun. Inside -- Ryan is sitting next to a shiny, restored SOJOURNER ROVER.

RYAN

Ha! I knew I could do it. Whaddya think?

The rover responds by moving back and forth on its wheels. A cable leads from the rover to the laptop.

GABBY

All the parts from your copy fit perfectly. The upgrades rock.

RYAN

We'll leave the box with all the spares in the tent. Have fun.

Ryan unplugs the cable from the rover, and it rolls from the tent.

GABBY

What's next?

RYAN

Spirit's stuck in deep sand with a bad wheel. Opportunity's got trouble too. We'll just kinda work 'em over.

GABBY

Did you decide where we're going?

RYAN
Sagittarius A, if we can. No
doubt.

GABBY
You want to see a big black hole.

RYAN
Can we do it? Twenty million
degree gas clouds, X rays, massive
light-speed explosions --

GABBY
I don't think it's a problem.

RYAN
I brought a good camera. I've got
one for you, too. Clip-on.

GABBY
The old machine had a very damaged
lens. I can see so much more
clearly now, it's amazing. I
didn't know you were so beautiful.

RYAN
Cynthia said that.

GABBY
She did?

RYAN
Yes.

GABBY
She was very well-built.

RYAN
Yes. Uh, all right. Gusev crater
first, I guess. That front wheel
needs a lot of work.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - NIGHT

Ryan is leaning back in an invisible chair with the guitar
across his lap.

A digital guitar tuner and an open chord book are on the
invisible floor next to him. The laptop and the backpack are
behind him, seeming to float.

They are speeding through blurred space at an incredible speed.

Ryan strums, tentatively.

RYAN
This is kinda hard to figure out.

GABBY
You always wanted to play guitar.

RYAN
Yes I did. And there's no time
like the present. Gabby?

GABBY
Yes?

RYAN
Can we figure out how -- I can use
the bathroom?

EXT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ryan opens the bathroom door of a clearly large and pleasant white bathroom and exits, drying his hands on a towel.

RYAN
That's great. I mean, the detail
is amazing. Where does that come
from, the design and everything?

GABBY
I made it all up.

RYAN
Very creative. Thank you.

GABBY
Shall I make a bedroom?

RYAN
Really?

INT. NASA MARS PATHFINDER FACILITY - NIGHT

Eight young interns are clustered around a bespectacled young man sitting at a mission-control computer desk. His name is HENRY.

HENRY
You can see the signature for
yourself. It's Sojourner.

INT. BEDROOM OF DR. HERRERA - NIGHT

The TELEPHONE RINGS. Dr. Herrera sleeps through a few before working his way to answering.

DR. HERRERA
 What? What is it?

He listens.

DR. HERRERA (CONT'D)
 Hello?

INT. NASA MARS PATHFINDER FACILITY

Everyone has frozen, staring at an image on the computer screen.

It is an extremely clear Martian vista, with a human hand projecting into view, holding a sign that reads "RYAN WAS HERE" in large block letters.

INT. DORM ROOM IN SPACE - NIGHT

Ryan is sleeping comfortably in his old dorm room. The only difference is that light filters in gently from a window.

He is sleeping face to face with --

Cynthia. Her eyes are closed, and she is breathing in rhythm with Ryan.

His eyes open --

And her eyes open -- and then widen.

CYNTHIA VANISHES.

THE DORM ROOM DISAPPEARS.

Ryan is floating in speed-blurred space again. He sits up.

RYAN
 Gabby?

GABBY
 Yes?

RYAN
 I dreamed I was back in the dorm room. And Cynthia was there.

GABBY
 Really?

RYAN
 Why'd you stop it?

GABBY

Glitch.

RYAN

Okay. Well, it was nice. I had a window. Where are we, by the way?

GABBY

We're here. I took the long way around.

The blurred space slows, and resolves into a startling and brilliant panorama of light and color.

RYAN

We're really here? Galactic Central? Where's Sagittarius?

GABBY

It's right in front of you.

Ryan leans forward, and a vast dark spot in the scenery resolves into a haloed, spinning, massive black hole.

RYAN

I'm officially freaked out.

Ryan starts to get up -- the camera floats over to him.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Thanks. You sure this is safe? Because it's kind of impossible.

He takes the camera, turns it on, and begins taking pictures.

GABBY

These processors are like warp thirty.

RYAN

Just stay out of the event horizon, okay?

GABBY

Why? We can go there.

Gabby moves the field directly toward the black hole at a frightening rate --

RYAN

No no no Gabby don't --

He is stunned into silence as Gabby breaches the black hole's event horizon.

Brilliantly colored light, chaos, and then -- a strange geometry. Ryan glimpses something, bizarre and incredible.

RYAN (CONT'D)
I can't -- I can't --

A spot of darkness appears in front of the field, shaped like a pointed star -- something comes from it towards them --

The forcefield begins bucking and twisting.

The laptop is thrown about, Ryan scrambling to secure it --

RYAN (CONT'D)
Gabby!

GABBY
I'm being -- tested -- I can't --

The contortion of their little bubble increases.

RYAN
Gabby get us out of here!

GABBY
I can't! They're locking me! I'd
have to translate us!

The field begins to elongate, and is pulled like taffy, along with everything else inside of it.

RYAN
GABBY! DO IT! DO IT!

EXT. OUTER SPACE - CONTINUOUS

AN INVISIBLE SPHERE POPS INTO BEING, filled with floating things -- the laptop, Ryan, and everything else.

Ryan's eyes are closed -- then he gasps, opens them, and takes a giant, panicked breath.

RYAN
Oh, Gabby. Are you okay?

Silence. Then --

GABBY
I'm sorry, Ryan.

RYAN
There was something there, at the
end. I saw something.

GABBY
I did, too.

RYAN
Where'd we go? Where are we?

GABBY
Not sure yet. We just went.

RYAN
So --

GABBY
We're lost.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

Everything has been put back into its former place. Ryan is typing furiously into the laptop.

RYAN
Something like that. It should just be a matter of time.

GABBY
I'll run it. You should get some sleep.

RYAN
Can I have my dorm room back?

GABBY
Sure.

RYAN
Thanks. That was really nice.

INT. COLONEL GREEN'S HEADQUARTERS INSTALLATION - DAY

Colonel Green is pacing past Dr. Ferris.

COLONEL GREEN
We know he spent the night at the restaurant. And the manager claims to know nothing about it, yet we can place him the next day at the home of Mr. Radic's foster family, the Zieglers. Then this so-innocent manager buys solar panels, robotic parts, all manner of electrical gear, a laptop computer, and a guitar.

DR. FERRIS
 Ryan's found himself a place to
 hide.

COLONEL GREEN
 He's building something. We've got
 to know what it is. And we've got
 to be ready for him.

DR. FERRIS
 I can beef up the Seraphim.

COLONEL GREEN
 I think it's going to take
 something a little more personal to
 get past that shield of his. Let
 me tell you a little story about
 our friend Ryan Radic.

INT. RYAN'S DORM ROOM

Ryan is sleeping soundly, having a pleasant afternoon nap.
 Cynthia appears beside him, and rubs his shoulder gently.

CYNTHIA
 Ryan?

RYAN
 Huh?

CYNTHIA
 I've found out where we are, and
 we're not too far from home. But
 there's something I think you
 should see.

Ryan sits up, rubbing his eyes.

RYAN
 Are we stopped?

CYNTHIA
 Yes. Are you ready?

RYAN
 Sure.

THE DORM ROOM DISAPPEARS. The field is invisible once more,
 revealing Ryan sitting in space next to his boxes and tarp.

RYAN (CONT'D)
 What do I look for?

CYNTHIA

Look up.

Ryan leans back to look at --

EXT. OUTER SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Row upon row of rectangular objects extend off into the infinite blackness.

Spacecraft. Warships, by their battered condition. All of them bear some mark of battle, especially the ones that appear to be nothing more than a loose collection of debris.

RYAN

Oh my god. It's a graveyard.

GABBY

It's endless.

Gabby moves the field to bring it in closer to one particular ship, still somewhat intact except for a burned, gaping hole in the rear.

RYAN

What? Are you going in?

GABBY

I just want to see inside one.

RYAN

Oh, jeez. I saw this movie. No way.

GABBY

Just for a minute.

The field drifts into the ship. As it does, Gabby streamlines everything into a tight tube, with a row of boxes behind Ryan.

RYAN

Can you turn on a light?

FOUR BRIGHT LIGHTS shine outwards from the invisible field.

As Ryan's eyes adjust, Gabby inexorably drifts into a large passageway. The design of it is startlingly inhuman.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Camera.

GABBY

I'm recording everything, believe me. At a much higher data rate than your camera.

RYAN

Good, 'cause they'll never believe this.

Ryan and his boxes move smoothly down strange passages, turning and climbing at seemingly random intervals.

He looks from side to side as they pass through a large connecting tunnel, occasionally gasping in amazement, sometimes wincing at some unseen grotesquery --

They turn a corner and emerge into a large room filled with racks.

GABBY

Weapons.

RYAN

Oh, check it out. Look at this one.

Ryan reaches out his hand and plucks an ALIEN RIFLE from the rack.

THE ROOM LIGHTS FLICK ON.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Gabby! Is that you?

GABBY

The ship is still powered. Amazing.

A WALLSCREEN SPRINGS TO LIFE.

Something is wrong with the image -- nothing but a twisted blur of color.

RYAN

What in the --

GABBY

You can't see it right. Let me adjust --

The image resolves to a massive arachnid with at least forty legs and intelligent eyes. The creature begins to speak in an unintelligible, raspy language.

RYAN

We should run away. Right now.

GABBY

I want to see the bridge first.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - TEN MINUTES LATER

The forcefield is floating outside the ship as Ryan examines the alien weapon.

GABBY
Let's see what it does.

RYAN
It could blow up and kill us. It's obviously ancient.

GABBY
I'll put it right outside of us.

RYAN
Let's do it later. I'm getting creeped out.

GABBY
I'll let you pull the trigger.

RYAN
Okay.

Gabby shapes the forcefield so that Ryan can fire the weapon on the outside -- he fumbles with the trigger.

Nothing. Then -- AN INCREDIBLE BEAM OF FORCE emerges from the muzzle.

The beam pierces hundreds of the battleships, and sets whole rows crashing into the others. It is chaos.

GABBY
Wow.

RYAN
Yeah. We gotta go. Now.

GABBY
Yeah.

Gabby turns and rearranges the forcefield, and heads away from the battleship graveyard at high speed.

RYAN
Home. I want to go home.

GABBY
I am home.

Ryan looks at the laptop for a moment.

RYAN
Do you remember the first laptop?

GABBY
Of course.

RYAN
I wonder what ever happened to it.
Who he sold it to.

GABBY
You always kept me backed up.

RYAN
I can't believe -- the things you
can do.

GABBY
You did them. We did them.

RYAN
I -

EVERYTHING GOES COMPLETELY BLACK.

Ryan is disoriented in the absolute darkness.

RYAN (CONT'D)
Gabby?

GABBY
Mine. A mine followed us. It
detonated.

RYAN
Are we okay?

GABBY
It is still exploding.

RYAN
Really?

GABBY
Yes.

RYAN
Can you move away from it?

GABBY
It's following us.

RYAN
Can I see?

A DIM GLOW rises from the field, in all directions. In one
corner -- a bright spot.

RYAN (CONT'D)
There it is. Still going.

GABBY
There is no decline in temperature
or force output. Much hotter than
the sun.

RYAN
Can we scrape it off on something?
Another black hole?

GABBY
I'm going to surround it. And
contain it.

RYAN
Be careful.

GABBY
Never.

Tense silence for a moment --

THE LIGHT LEVEL begins to decrease -- and then rapidly
disappears. The stars return.

RYAN
Where is it?

GABBY
Right here.

She lets light through to show it, underneath Ryan.

RYAN
What can we do with it?

GABBY
Take it with us.

RYAN
To earth? Gabby, no way. Can you
just translate it out? Just get
rid of it.

GABBY
All right. Done. But it was kind
of neat. Make a good pet.

Ryan just looks at the laptop.

EXT. OUTER SPACE - NIGHT

Things are back to normal. Ryan is struggling to play something on the guitar, reading from the book, and travelling through space at high speed.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK AGAIN.

When the field reappears, it is in the shape of a sphere once more, with Ryan and the laptop floating between boxes.

RYAN

You okay?

The laptop stabilizes itself. Everything returns to normal.

GABBY

Sort of. That was bad.

RYAN

What?

GABBY

I'm full power. Nothing wrong with my kernel. I think it's the box.

RYAN

Solly's box?

Ryan reaches out and grabs the backpack. He pulls out the black box, careful not to dislodge the cable.

RYAN (CONT'D)

We've never looked inside. Where's it getting it's power?

GABBY

Not from me.

Ryan takes a screwdriver and removes two screws from the box -- the top levers up, revealing densely-packed circuitry.

RYAN

Nine volt. Nine volt battery.

GABBY

Do we have any?

RYAN

No. Yes. Wait.

He scrambles through his gear, and emerges with the guitar tuner. He thumbs off the rear panel, and removes a nine volt battery from it.

GABBY

You'll have to take out the old one
and put the new one in.

RYAN

But the field will go off.

GABBY

It's going to go soon anyway.

As Gabby speaks, the field seems to fritz.

RYAN

Uhhh -- tarp. Rope. Tape.

Ryan gets to work.

INT. TARP - TEN MINUTES LATER

Ryan looks a little panicked as he fumbles with a small LED flashlight.

The ends of the tarp have been twisted together and sealed, forming a rough ball. Ryan, the laptop, and his gear are crowded together inside.

GABBY

The moment you get the battery in,
I can turn it on.

RYAN

I'm not good at this kind of
stress.

GABBY

Sure you are.

RYAN

What were we thinking? I should
have brought a car, like they had
in Number Of The Beast. Coulda
sealed the windows. Not the bug.

GABBY

Ready?

Ryan takes a deep, ragged breath, and puts the flashlight in his mouth. He lays the fresh battery on his lap.

He gently grasps the old battery, and prepares to pull.

GABBY (CONT'D)

Take a deep breath. And when you
finish, close your eyes tightly.

RYAN

Okay.

HE PULLS THE OLD BATTERY OUT OF THE BOX, and the field outside the tarp walls disappears. The tarp EXPANDS EXPLOSIVELY INTO A BIG BALL, with a cracking sound --

Ryan is fumbling for the new battery with trembling hands. The flashlight in his mouth is strobing across the tarp.

The tarp becomes a solid white wall in the near darkness.

Ryan retrieves the new battery, and gets it near the unit --

The tarp is cracking.

He has some trouble getting the battery into position, hyperventilating as the steam from his breath fills the splintering tarp --

He feels it click.

He closes his eyes as his face seems to frost over --

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. RYAN'S OLD DORM ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ryan slowly wakes to find Cynthia sitting next to him, stroking his face. Light filters in from the window.

RYAN
Cynthia? Gabby?

CYNTHIA
Hi.

RYAN
We're alive. Are we home?

CYNTHIA
Yesterday. You've been out.

Ryan takes a couple of deep breaths.

RYAN
I didn't think we were going to make it.

CYNTHIA
Neither did I.

RYAN

I need to go see Dr. Yeater. I need to figure out what to do next. I never knew it could be like this.

CYNTHIA

Neither did I.

RYAN

Remember when he talked about replacing the box? Digitally?

CYNTHIA

I've been working on it since then. Almost there.

RYAN

Can I -- get dressed?

CYNTHIA

What? Sure. Why not?

RYAN

Well, you're --

CYNTHIA

I'm what?

RYAN

You're Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

You noticed.

She smiles at him. He seems a little startled.

EXT. THEORETICAL PHYSICS BUILDING - NIGHT

Ryan drifts down from the dark sky, backpack on his back.

He lands near the back door, and is halfway down the steps when he hears a sound.

Ryan peers over the stairwell edge --

His mother Amy is standing on the grass, an arm outstretched towards him.

In her brown jacket and dress, she looks solemn and grounded.

RYAN

Mom?

He climbs back up the steps and walks toward her, stopping about five feet away.

AMY
I came to say I'm sorry.

RYAN
Are you okay?

AMY
You woke me up. I was so scared.

RYAN
Sorry.

AMY
No, I'm sorry. Can I have a hug?

RYAN
Gabby, let her inside.

Gabby's voice answers from the cellphone.

GABBY
Ryan, something's wrong.

RYAN
Gabby, turn off the field.

Silence. Ryan reaches forward, and takes his mother's hands.

They hug.

When she clasps her hands around his back, something metallic clicks.

AMY
Don't hurt him!

A SNAPPING, BLUE-WHITE ELECTRICAL DISCHARGE crackles around Ryan's body.

He is paralyzed, and the backpack starts smoking. Amy Radic has her face turned away, and she struggles to release her grip on Ryan --

She succeeds. Her arms open, and Ryan falls to the ground with his eyes open and unseeing, his body convulsing.

FOUR SPECIAL-OPS SOLDIERS TASER RYAN. They let the current run as OTHER SOLDIERS cut the backpack loose, ripping the cable from the computer.

AMY (CONT'D)
That's enough!

They ignore her.

Ryan convulses, unconscious.

INT. COLONEL GREEN'S HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

Ryan is locked into a sci-fi steel restraint device, held by collars at his hands, feet, and throat.

He wakes up slowly, and appears to be in some pain.

RYAN

Where am I?

From behind him, a voice answers --

SOLOMON

Hello, Ryan.

RYAN

Solly?

SOLOMON

Yes, it is.

RYAN

They got me.

SOLOMON

And they have me as well.

RYAN

What are they going to do with us?

SOLOMON

Nothing good, I'm sure. But I don't care. Ryan, Gabby took me home, and I found my mother and sister, and brought them here. They are safe, and there is nothing they can do to me to change that.

RYAN

How'd they get you?

SOLOMON

Battery.

RYAN

Oh, yeah, about that.

SOLOMON

How'd they get you?

RYAN

My mother.

SOLOMON

Ah. I don't think we passed the Superman test too well, Ryan.

RYAN

No. But still.

SOLOMON

I know what you mean. What a ride.
And Gabby! What a person. She is
in love with you, you know.

RYAN

What?

A SEALED METAL DOOR SWINGS OPEN, and the lights flicker on.

Colonel Green, Dr. Ferris, Ken Wolf, and FOUR SOLDIERS enter the room.

Ryan struggles to turn his head to see who it is -- Colonel Green walks into his field of vision.

COLONEL GREEN

Ryan Radic. My name is Colonel Green. I apologize for the restraints, but we don't know what the hell you've got up your sleeve.

RYAN

Nothing at the moment.

COLONEL GREEN

Well, I appreciate levity as much as any man, but right now, son, you're in a hell of a lot of trouble. We've been talking to your -- friend, behind you. He won't tell us what you're up to. We can't find his mother and sister, so we don't have any leverage over him. But you --

Colonel Green leans in closer to Ryan's face.

COLONEL GREEN (CONT'D)

Your mother has a criminal record, did you know that? This special treatment you've been paying for -- very expensive. I think she ought to be put back with the general population, don't you?

RYAN

Don't do that.

COLONEL GREEN

Tell us what you're building. I need to know what you've been doing this last week or so, and I need to know now, or I leave this room and make a call.

RYAN

I went to Mars and fixed the Rovers. Then I went to see Sagittarius A, but Gabby went past the event horizon and we had to translate out, and on the way home we found a junkyard full of alien warships, and we stole a blaster and hit a mine.

Colonel Green stares at Ryan for a moment.

SOLOMON

That sounds pretty damned wild, when you say it like that.

COLONEL GREEN

All right. I'll make the call.

He turns, and walks toward the door.

RYAN

Wait! I'm telling the truth.

DR. FERRIS

Ryan, we want you to prove it to us. We need you to recreate the program that runs Mr. Deng's box.

RYAN

What happened to my laptop?

Dr. Ferris grimaces.

DR. FERRIS

It -- destroyed itself. Exactly like Solomon's did. We need you to rewrite that program, so that we control the field. Do that and they'll let you go.

COLONEL GREEN

And your mother --

DR. FERRIS

And your mother.

A vast, resounding BOOM shakes the room.

COLONEL GREEN
What was that?

One of the Special-ops soldiers has his hand to his ear --

SOLDIER
Colonel, we have a breach.

COLONEL GREEN
A breach? Here?

SOLDIER
Sir, we've got 'em coming down the hallway.

COLONEL GREEN
Everybody take cover.

The soldiers, Dr. Ferris, and the Colonel take cover behind Ryan's restraint device.

THE METAL DOOR BLASTS OFF ITS HINGES and rebounds into the room, narrowly missing Ryan.

Cynthia enters the room, followed by Dominic, Derek, Steve and Timothy Kearns, Kelly, and Dr. Yeater.

Steve and Timothy are the only ones carrying weapons; Steve has a handgun, and Timothy a shotgun.

Cynthia strides forward fiercely -- A RIFLE SHOT --

She turns with a serious expression to the source of the bullet -- and points at it.

Cynthia is holding the rifle in her hand.

It disappears.

She walks up to Ryan with a worried expression --

CYNTHIA
Are you okay?

His shackles spring open, and he sits forward, rubbing his wrists.

RYAN
Cynthia. How are you -- how did you do that?

Behind him, Solomon's shackles click open.

DOMINIC

Ryan, she's Gabby. Your Gabby. They were connected the entire time. And now she doesn't even need Solomon's box. It's mapped.

DEREK

We saw everything.

STEVE

Very far out with the big black ball thing, and then it went all colory, and there was that thing.

TIM

Yeah, it was amazing. That thing.

DR. YEATER

I liked the part with the rovers. The boys at JPL all think you're a big hero.

Colonel Green stands up and emerges from his hiding place behind Solomon's restraint device.

COLONEL GREEN

I can't let you do this. The US government has a right to this technology.

DR. YEATER

I think Cynthia might have something to say about that.

CYNTHIA

You were mean to Ryan. That puts you on my shit list. Understand? You don't get anything.

STEVE

Hell yeah. And you shot energy weapons at an employee of the Lucky Wishbone, we got it on tape.

TIM

Yeah, and I put it on a DVD.

Colonel Green pulls a handgun up, directed at Cynthia's face.

STEVE

Woah!

Steve pulls up his handgun -- Airsoft, Sharpied. Tim's, too.

Colonel Green moves the handgun to cover Ryan.

The handgun disappears, and Colonel Green finds himself floating an inch from Cynthia's face.

CYNTHIA

I could be mean to you. But that would be wrong.

Colonel Green is slowly lowered to the ground.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

You need to be a better person. Something is wrong inside you. You should try to fix it. Do you have anybody to love?

Colonel Green says nothing.

STEVE

Oh no way, Cindy. Don't let him down.

Steve gestures at Ryan's restraint device.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Nobody invests time and money in hardware like that without being completely warped.

TIM

Yeah, he's a freak. Look what he did to Ryan. He's all roughed up.

DR. FERRIS

Cynthia. Ryan is in serious trouble here, and you're making it worse. He could end up in prison.

CYNTHIA

You're a very bad scientist, Dr. Ferris. You aren't helping anybody. Just the opposite. Ryan, let's go.

Ryan steps out of the restraint device slowly. Solomon, now free, pats him on the shoulder.

SOLOMON

I've got to hear that story, man.

Without a sound, without warning --

A SMOOTH, GRAY, SORT-OF-STARFISH-SHAPED ALIEN APPEARS IN THE ROOM, in front of the doorway.

ALIEN

Hello.

Everyone turns to see the source of this new voice, with varying levels of shock. One of the soldiers gives out a little scream --

COLONEL GREEN
Stifle that whimpering.

TIM
Cool alien!

STEVE
Oh now, so excellent this is. And greetings to you, strange sir.

ALIEN
I am aware that almost all of you have never spoken with someone from another planet. I hope that I can put you at ease.

COLONEL GREEN
Who are you?

ALIEN
I work for the local administration. I am here to adjudicate your case.

COLONEL GREEN
You're a judge? What case?

ALIEN
An inhabitant of this planet damaged an internment site, and took with them an artifact from it. This weapon.

THE ALIEN RIFLE APPEARS, floating next to the creature.

DR. FERRIS
A graveyard? You're here for a graverobber? Where is this grave?

ALIEN
It is very distant.

DR. YEATER
What are you going to do with him?

ALIEN
I have finished.

DR. YEATER
You have? What do you mean?

ALIEN

Human being entitled Ryan Radic
found guilty, sentence suspended,
fined four million units of
plaintiff's standard currency.

COLONEL GREEN

Four million dollars?

ALIEN

Your planet does not possess
equivalent resources.

RYAN

What happens now?

ALIEN

Plaintiff is approaching to
liquidate.

RYAN

What? Who are they?

ALIEN

You might call them the Former.

RYAN

What do you mean 'liquidate'?

ALIEN

At plaintiff's discretion, all
available resources of the
defendant's planet may be
processed.

RYAN

What about the creatures that live
here?

ALIEN

Liquidation generally results in
the decimation of the defendant
population.

DR. YEATER

How long do we have?

ALIEN

One hundred twenty eight minutes
three seconds.

No one moves for a moment.

STEVE

But this doesn't seem fair at all.
Do you think this is fair?
Personally?

ALIEN

No.

TIM

We gotta do something.

DR. YEATER

Ryan.

RYAN

Yes, sir. But I don't have --

CYNTHIA

You've got me. And I won't work
for anybody else.

Ryan and Cynthia look at each other.

RYAN

Colonel Green.

COLONEL GREEN

Yes.

RYAN

We're going to go try to stop this.

COLONEL GREEN

All right.

Ryan turns to face the colonel.

RYAN

Don't do anything to my mother.

COLONEL GREEN

I won't. I'm sorry, I'm just doing
my job.

STEVE

What a load of crap. I never made
it past private, and I can tell
you're a megalomaniac with some
sort of borderline personality
disorder. You're no soldier.

TIM

Yeah, you're a freak.

DR. YEATER
Ryan, what do you need?

RYAN
Batteries.

EXT. IONOSPHERE - DAY

MUSIC STARTS.

Ryan streaks up through the atmosphere at high speed, one arm leading the way --

Cynthia is firmly attached to his back, with her legs and arms wrapped around him.

The upper atmosphere gives way to the blackness of space, and they accelerate.

EXT. OUTER SPACE

MUSIC FADES.

Ryan and Cynthia float in space, waiting for the arrival of the Former. The Earth floats behind them, a beautiful jewel.

Cynthia nuzzles at his neck.

RYAN
What are you doing?

CYNTHIA
You smell good.

RYAN
You can smell?

CYNTHIA
Of course I can. I had to make some changes, but Kelly had everything in place. I'm all hooked up. Everywhere. Want to see?

RYAN
Wow. Hey, we should be watching out. They could attack from any angle, anywhere.

CYNTHIA
We'll have time. I made sure.

RYAN
What do you mean?

CYNTHIA

Remember when they got you the first time -- they tried to hack me with some big Crays. So I took them.

RYAN

You took them?

CYNTHIA

Yeah. And then I kinda just ended up everywhere. People are really interesting. I've been watching everyone.

RYAN

Gabby -- Cynthia, that's kinda wrong. Privacy.

CYNTHIA

Science. I'm not gonna use it.

RYAN

I hope not.

CYNTHIA

So anyway. I put a forcefield around the earth.

THE EARTH DISAPPEARS, AND IS REPLACED BY A BLACK SPHERE.

RYAN

Woah!

CYNTHIA

Here they come.

RYAN

Really? What are we going to do? Can you make beams and stuff?

CYNTHIA

Sure. Point and click. We got whatever.

THE ALIEN ARMADA APPEARS IN FRONT OF THEM.

The fleet is vast, seemingly infinite. The warships are similar to the ones in the battleship graveyard; but far more advanced in design.

For a moment, Ryan and the alien fleet float in space, looking at each other.

A WARSHIP FIRES -- a blinding beam lashes out and slams into Ryan and Cynthia. Another, and then another, and then a thousand.

RYAN

Cynthia --

CYNTHIA

Yes Ryan?

RYAN

Can you try to figure out where the flagship is, and get us onboard?

CYNTHIA

You want to talk to them.

RYAN

I think I can.

CYNTHIA

We should make it look very dramatic. But not harm anyone.

RYAN

Can we just like, slice off their engines and stuff?

CYNTHIA

Oh, yeah. Sure. They've got some sort of projected energy barrier, nothing to it.

RYAN

Let's dance.

CYNTHIA

Honored, kind sir.

MUSIC RISES as Ryan and Cynthia race directly at the warships.

They streak in between a central row. The firing from the warships peaks.

Now, row upon row of warships slowly begin to fall out of line - - they are out of control, space littered with their floating, separated engines.

EXT. SPACE

Ryan points and motions swiftly, flying at high speed through the mass of warships. Nothing seems to happen -- but then, inevitably, the warships tilt out of formation, their engines drifting away.

Ryan and Cynthia are showing off a little now, whirling through rows and columns of the battle fleet in a mocking dance, impervious. Wherever they go, chaos reigns shortly after.

GABBY

Ha! Gotcha!

RYAN

Oh, for sure. That's it.

MUSIC FADES. AN ENORMOUS SPACESHIP floats ahead of them.

GABBY

If we don't translate in, I have to make a hole.

RYAN

It's okay. The old me already got turned into vacuum at Sagittarius A. I'm all fake, now. A hundred percent space dust.

GABBY

You're still Ryan to me.

She kisses his neck. He is visibly unnerved by this as --

INT. FORMER COMMAND FLAGSHIP - CONTINUOUS

Cynthia and Ryan appear on the bridge of the giant command vessel.

ARACHNOID CREATURES with at least forty legs and intelligent eyes turn to stare at the intruders.

RYAN

So they'll understand anything I say?

CYNTHIA

Oh yes.

RYAN

I'd like to apologize. We didn't know it was a -- graveyard. We had never been off our planet before. The fault is mine. I can pay the fine over time. Maybe there is work you need to be done, I'm a hard worker. Please. Don't harm my planet.

One ARACHNOID steps forward and speaks in a whispery, thick, alien voice.

ARACHNOID

The technology you wield is illegal for you to possess. You must surrender to us immediately.

RYAN

I cannot. I did not mean to trespass, and I beg forgiveness.

ARACHNOID

The penalty is set. Our fleets and the fleets of our allies from other systems will begin arriving in moments. Many of our older allies possess technology similar to yours. Your shield will be pried from your planet like a shell.

CYNTHIA

Fat chance of that, oh many legged one.

RYAN

Cynthia. Sir, I wish you'd listen to reason. Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent. Surely a race as ancient and advanced as yours would embrace this.

ARACHNOID

They are here.

CYNTHIA

Don't even think you can do this.

Cynthia moves behind Ryan, and puts her arms around his neck.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Now I'm really mad.

RYAN

Cynthia -

CYNTHIA

Yes?

A BLINDING WHITE LIGHT SURROUNDS RYAN AND CYNTHIA.

Cynthia quickly dials down the opacity of the field --

RYAN

What was that?

CYNTHIA

Some pretty serious stuff.

The light fades to reveal Ryan and Cynthia, floating in space, alone. The alien flagship has been completely disintegrated.

RYAN
Cynthia. Look.

The space around Earth is filled with starships of every shape and size. Billions of them.

CYNTHIA
They're going to need a much bigger junkyard after this.

RYAN
What about --

A BOLT OF FORCE SLAMS INTO THEM -- and shockingly, for the first time, Cynthia's field does not perfectly deflect it.

Ryan is thrown back, and Cynthia tumbles from him, both of them caught by surprise.

When Cynthia regains control, she raises her face to glare up at the incredible assembly of vessels.

Ryan is still stunned, and holding his head -- Cynthia brings him around behind her, as it to protect him.

CYNTHIA
My turn.

She throws up her arms, and clenches her fists --

In space, an enormous force develops, a VAST BALL OF FURIOUS ENERGY -- growing swiftly.

Cynthia arches her body, as if preparing to release the force --

INT. ALIEN SPACESHIP LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

The starfish-shaped alien judge is standing next to a counter of sorts as RYAN AND CYNTHIA SUDDENLY APPEAR in the center of the room.

Cynthia looks around, and seems fine. Ryan is still shaken up.

ALIEN
An amazing event. The images will play across known space.

CYNTHIA
What happened to us?

ALIEN
The Senior intervened.

RYAN
Who's a senior?

ALIEN
The star that you touched, the star
you know as Sagittarius.

CYNTHIA
It was real, then.

RYAN
Are we still in trouble?

ALIEN
All debts have been paid, all
damage repaired, and you are
invited to study with the Senior
and his peers.

RYAN
Like, go to school? With a black
hole?

ALIEN
It is an unbelievable honor.
Perhaps one in ten thousand of your
years does such a thing happen.
Now, three of you from one planet.

RYAN
Three?

ALIEN
You, Solomon, and Cynthia.

CYNTHIA
Me?

ALIEN
The Senior was quite specific.

CYNTHIA
Ryan?

RYAN
Yes?

CYNTHIA
We're taking the long way there.

EXT. THEORETICAL PHYSICS LABORATORY

A crowd of people are standing outside to say goodbye to Ryan
and Solomon. Everyone -- even Toby, Ken, and Barbie.

Dominic steps forward with Cynthia on his arm, and Ryan looks at her quizzically.

RYAN
Cynthia?

DOMINIC
Ryan, you remember Cynthia Monheit.
The original? She read my book.

RYAN
Nice to meet you.

CYNTHIA MONHEIT
Hi. This is weird.

Derek, Kelly, Dr. Yeater, and Dr. Dobbs crowd forward.

DEREK
Bring me back a chocolate
milkshake.

KELLY
Where's Cynthia? I mean, your
Cynthia.

Cynthia suddenly appears, her arm around Ryan.

CYNTHIA
Always here.

DR. YEATER
Ryan, you really pulled it off.

SOLOMON
We lived through the kryptonite.

DR. DOBBS
You're the permanent valedictorian,
Ryan Radic. And don't forget to
meditate.

RYAN
Good bye, everyone.

Ryan and Cynthia rise into the air, and accelerate out of sight. Barbie has a strange look on her face as they go.

MUSIC BEGINS.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the dim light, Ken Wolf and Barbie Lord are making out on the bed, next to a desk with a computer on it.

They don't notice the face rudely peering out at them and making faces at them from the computer screen.

INT. PHYSICS BUILDING - NIGHT

Dr. Ferris is staring into an expensive monitor, typing something.

A SHOCK -- a little bolt of electricity zaps him from the keyboard.

DR. FERRIS
Stop that! How did you get on this one?

The computer zaps him again.

DR. FERRIS (CONT'D)
All right. All right.

The computer zaps him yet again. Dr. Ferris yells in frustration.

INT. DR. YEATER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dr. Yeater and Dr. Dobbs are standing in front of a laptop dressed in hiking gear, with the space around them filled with two large backpacks and many boxes.

DR. YEATER
Well, dear, are we ready?

DR. DOBBS
Gabby said we could stop off at a few worlds with interesting flowers.

DR. YEATER
And then onward. Forever.

They smile at each other.

EXT. SPACE

Cynthia watches Ryan as he plays guitar, smoothly strumming chords.

She slowly moves toward him. The forcefield turns into a black sphere as she does, hiding the two from view.

FADE TO BLACK.