THE LAST DAYS OF RAY

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

An alarm clock goes off.

An astronaut, laying in bed in full spacesuit and helmet, fumbles and hits the snooze.

The alarm goes off again and again the astronaut snoozes.

Finally, slowly, the astronaut sits up and turns.

The time, 11:54, reflects off his gold face shield.

Shit(!) -- he scrambles up and out of the messy room.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - MORNING

The astronaut hurries to a white van with Florida tags and primer grey panels -- until he spots a parking boot on it.

ANOTHER NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

The astronaut runs, not easy or pretty in a spacesuit.

He gets on a bus. When the driver points to the money taker, the astronaut metaphorically pulls out empty pockets.

A BIGGER STREET - LATER

Back to running, the astronaut passes a HEAVYSET GUY and a TATTOOED GUY, both 30s, sitting on a bench.

HEAVYSET GUY
Dude, so unrealistic.

TATTOOED GUY
Come on man, never gonna happen.

The astronaut keeps going.

Stuck at a busy corner waiting for the light, he impatiently watches a digital bank clock tick from 1:27 to 1:28.

SIDE OF A BUSY HIGHWAY - DAY

Slowed down, the astronaut holds his thumb out hitchhiking.

SIDE OF A BUSY HIGHWAY - LATER

The astronaut is bent over in despair when a horn HONKS.

Behind him, a motorcycle is stopped. The woman rider, unseen under her own helmet and face shield, nods.

BUSY HIGHWAY - LATER

With strands of the rider's dark hair blowing in his face shield, the astronaut holds on as they motor down the --

SUBURBAN ROAD - DUSK

Still buzzing along, now in a much quieter area, the astronaut points to a big industrial area with a gate.

AT THE GATE

A guard comes out of the shack, as the biker rides away.

The astronaut points past the gate. The guard shakes him off and in response, points to the sky.

The astronaut tilts his head up, where he sees a trail of exhaust smoke leading up to the...

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM (FLORIDA) - MORNING

...faded, glow-in-the-dark star stickers over the bed of a gangly, bearded guy. The guy, RAY FERN, 30, opens his eyes and finally shuts off his screeching alarm.

Gradually he gets up and goes to the mirror. He mats down his messy hair while staring at himself, wondering.

EXT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Out of a white van with primer grey panels and into the bright sun, Ray shuffles to the Titusville Medical Center.

Up the stairs and through a door, he disappears inside.

A sign on the door reads, "Healthy Volunteers Wanted".

EXT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - DROP-OFF LANE - DAY

At another part of the complex, an older car pulls up.

INT./EXT. OLDER CAR - DAY

The disheveled driver, MAX, 30s, gets out holding a cup.

MAX
I gotta get rid of this coffee, it's tearing me up inside.

Ignoring him, the blonde wearing nurse's scrubs in the car, AUDREY, late 30s, reaches to the backseat for her bag.

She knocks it over and as she turns around to gather her things, she discovers a pair of gross, zebra print panties.

Judging by her reaction, definitely not hers.

Seeing Max return, she quickly stuffs the panties back where they were and rushes off.

MAX (CONT'D)
Hey! You forget something?

Rattled, she barely turns around.

Max points to his lips for a kiss.

AUDREY
Oh please, I'm late as it is.

She waves him off and heads into the hospital.

MAX
Yeah, me too. Cool. Love you.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - TESTING ROOM - DAY

Laying in bed, with two drip towers looming behind him, Ray fills out a form for a young nurse, CAITLIN, 20s.

RAY
Release forms always scare me.

CAITLIN
Why? You're a guinea pig, isn't this what you volunteered for?

He signs and the nurse coldly JABS him with an IV drip.

RAY
(though clenched teeth)
I prefer clinical tester.

As she sets her sights on his other arm, Audrey scuttles in.

AUDREY
Thanks for covering Caitlin.

CAITLIN
No sweat, he's all yours Audrey.

She exits as Audrey takes over prepping Ray.

RAY
I was starting to worry you quit.

AUDREY
I was hoping the same for you.

Audrey gently inserts the second drip as Ray checks her out, specifically her ring-less left hand.

RAY
How you doing, everything okay?

Audrey forces a smile and changes the subject.

AUDREY
How about you, birthday boy?

RAY
You never forget, do you?

Audrey flashes a palm with writing on it.

AUDREY
I forget, I just always write things down.

Ray nods and continues.

RAY
I'm okay. If getting injected with experimental chemicals means okay. At least I get to hang with the prettiest nurse in the hospital.

Audrey pauses. She doesn't put a lot of effort into her looks. But the more you see, the more you like.

AUDREY
Oh, you mean me? Yeah, I'm sure I look ravishing today.

RAY
Always do. Matter of fact, why don't we go out for a drink tonight? You know it's tradition that I ask you out on my birthday.

AUDREY
You know you shouldn't drink for the next forty-eight hours.

RAY
They always say that.

AUDREY
I think you also know I'm married.

RAY
Still? I didn't see the ring. I thought there was some hope.

AUDREY
Still married.

RAY
I thought you didn't like that guy anymore?

AUDREY
I don't.

RAY
So why keep doing it?

AUDREY
Habit? Brainwashing? Psychosis? I'm open to a diagnosis.

RAY
We both know you could do better.

AUDREY
(to medicine drips)
We both know you can do better too.

Touché. An amicable stalemate is reached as Audrey sets a small present on the bed.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Got you a little something.

A genuinely surprised Ray grabs it.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Go ahead, open it.

He does. Inside is an old watch with a NASA logo on the face. Ray puts it on and admires it.

RAY
Very cool. Wait, this isn't about me turning thirty, is it?

AUDREY
I just thought you could use it.

Audrey opens up the valves and lets the meds flow into Ray.

RAY
So to be clear, there's no hope?

AUDREY
No. For either of us apparently.

INT. TESTING ROOM - LATER

As a woozy Ray labors to button his shirt, a doctor enters.

LONGSTRETCH, late 50s, is short, bald and very well put-together. Pretty much Ray's total visual opposite.

LONGSTRETCH
Ray Fern, good to see you again.

RAY
Just in time too, Doc, financially speaking.

Longstretch checks Ray's vitals as he talks.

LONGSTRETCH
You've probably heard but our parent company Synthetica has had some very public problems with clinical trials lately. You don't smoke anymore do you?

Ray shakes his head as the Doctor lights Ray's pupils.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
Normally not a big deal but there's been rumors that a global pharma company is preparing to buy Synthetica. A deal that could make stockholders very wealthy. You still drink alcohol?

RAY
Just a bit, every now and then.

He listens to Ray's heart with a stethoscope.

LONGSTRETCH
Deep breath - how much is a bit?

RAY
Two, three beers a week, tops.

LONGSTRETCH
Um-hmm.

He pats Ray's shoulder and sits down on a wheeled stool.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
We'll get your bloodwork tomorrow and let you know if anything pops. But Ray, I have to tell you this.

Ray nods, waits.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
We're going to stop doing trials here. With the pending merger, they just can't risk it.

Ray runs a worried hand through his long hair.

RAY
Really? This has been my, you know, job for a long time now.

Longstretch searches his files.

LONGSTRETCH
One hundred thirty two trials.

RAY
A non minority with no family, no career who's not a retarded prisoner is pretty much the holy grail for you, isn't it?

LONGSTRETCH
We're glad you found us and we're glad to have you on this heart medication trial. You're actually the final guinea pig on it.

RAY
I prefer clinical tester.

LONGSTRETCH
One thirty two is probably enough no matter what you call it. Doing clinical trials is no way to spend a life, believe me, I know.
(MORE)

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
Whatever happened to you finishing school anyway?

RAY
Nothing. Just haven't gotten around to it. Like a lot things.

LONGSTRETCH
Engineering, right?

RAY
Aerospace Engineering.

LONGSTRETCH
That's right. I remember that.

Ray's head drops.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
Well, don't wait too long. I don't want you to wake up one day and realize it's too late.

RAY
I know, I know.

LONGSTRETCH
(checks chart)
You're not getting any younger, are you birthday boy?

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAR - NIGHT

A well-lubricated Ray lays his head on his arm and watches the TV above the bar.

ON THE TV

A hair-sprayed CNN newswoman reports from Houston above a news ticker that reads: FINAL SHUTTLE MISSION LANDING.

BACK TO SCENE

Ray sits between two friends. Business-casual, heavyset, DOM, leans in from the right side.

DOM
Did I tell you, we're thinking about having another kid?

The tattooed KURT, leans in from the other.

KURT
Did you hear I got a promotion at work? You're looking at a UPS district manager. Not bad, right?

Ray does a shot, then puts his head back down.

DOM
I like being an IT guy and all but I love being a dad. It really is a life-changing event.

KURT
This promotion came at the right time. Our new house needs so much work, you should see the floors.

Ray does another shot, as both sides keep chattering at him.

DOM
I don't know, I see us having three, four kids. Why not, right?

KURT
If I keep this up, I'll be running a sorting station in two years.

As Ray calls for another, a cute, DORKY GIRL, 25, approaches.

DORKY GIRL
(to Ray)
Can I squeak in here for a drink?

Ray can't think to say anything clever, so he motions her in.

DORKY GIRL (CONT'D)
Thanks. Cool hair by the way.

Paralyzed by booze and fear, Ray's buddies rush to his aid.

KURT
(under his breath)
Dude, she wears glasses, you're in.

DOM
(whispering as well)
Tell her you worked at the Kennedy Space Center, she'll eat it up.

The Dorky Girl orders her drink and smiles back at Ray.

KURT
Quick, say something about gravity or zero gravity. Come on, say it!

DOM
Tell her how you owned the science fair for like ten years, do it!

Ray nods and reaches out to tap her shoulder.

KURT
Don’t tell her you did experiments.

DOM
Or that you got fired from doing experiments today, that’s bad.

As Ray hesitates, the bartender brings her drink over.

She grabs it and turns.

DORKY GIRL
Well, have a good one.

Ray’s friends laugh it up as he silently watches her leave.

DOM
Dude, what happened?

KURT
You should’ve at least told her you wanted to be astronaut.

ON TV, the shuttle touches down for the last time.

RAY
Yeah, well, that’s all over now.

INT. RAY’S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ray sits on his messy bed, drinking with his laptop open.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

He types ‘Space Endeavors’ into a search box.

On a modern website, Ray plays a video and DENNIS TITO, 60s, a self-assured, short man in an astronaut suit, speaks.

DENNIS TITO
Hi, I’m Dennis Tito, the world’s first space tourist. When Russian Yuri Gagarin made man’s first successful mission into space in 1961, I made it my life’s mission to do the same.
(MORE)

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
And in April 2001, I did just that. Ever since I touched back down on Earth I've been working to make other people's dreams come true, and with Space Endeavors, my venture with the Russian government --

BACK TO SCENE

Ray shuts the computer and has another drink -- looking up at the muted, barely glowing stars on the ceiling.

INT. RAY'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - MORNING

In the same clothes as the night before but now inexplicably in the bathtub, a ringing phone wakes Ray.

The still-foggy Ray pats/checks his body.

Finally, he finds the phone in his shoe.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - LONGSTRETCH'S OFFICE - MORNING

Amongst pictures of the doctor's beautiful wife and kids and achievements from his long career, sits Ray.

His face, a deathly pale.

RAY
Are you sure?

LONGSTRETCH
We're sure.

RAY
And it's my heart?

LONGSTRETCH
You've had this condition for some time. A condition we, and you, were completely unaware of.

Longstretch points to multiple MRI scans of Ray's chest.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
You have a heart abnormality called Danon disease and yesterday's trial severely exacerbated it.

Ray feels for his heart to see if it's still beating.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
It's extremely rare and there are very few defining symptoms until --

RAY
But, I feel fine. Normal.

LONGSTRETCH
The condition requires immediate medication and is complicated by atrial fibrillation and embolic strokes with possible neurological disability, leading to congestive heart failure and then, death.
(clears throat)
You have thirty days.

RAY
To die?

LONGSTRETCH
To live.

Ray stands and silently counts weeks on a wall calendar.

A group of nurses gawk outside the window until Ray notices, causing all but one to scatter. Audrey. She knows.

The two share a pained look. He pivots back to Longstretch.

RAY
So, you poisoned me. You and Synthetica killed me.

LONGSTRETCH
(gently)
Ray, you, of all people, knew the risks. In the last ten years there's been clinical testing involving seventy million people and only eight reported fatalities. Those are still good odds.

RAY
Tell that to the eight --
(to himself)
-- nine dead guys.

LONGSTRETCH
I'm sorry Ray. So is Synthetica. In fact, here --

Longstretch hands Ray an envelope from his desk.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
It's a copy of the check they will deposit into your account today.

Ray opens the envelope. CLOSE-UP on the check: Pay to the order of Mr. Ray Fern, five million U.S. Dollars.

RAY
If I knew the risks, why are you paying me off?

LONGSTRETCH
It's not a pay-off, it's a settlement. Contingent on you signing a confidentiality agreement. Right now.

Longstretch pushes a document and pen over to him.

RAY
So, I'm just gonna drop dead in a month and no one will know why?

LONGSTRETCH
You'll know. Isn't that the important part?

Ray signs the document and wipes his suddenly damp palms.

RAY
I need a minute here. I can't...

LONGSTRETCH
We have to work together on this Ray. For both our sakes, right?

Ray nods as Longstretch circles him.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
The other part of this, is what's going on inside you.

Ray wipes his spinning head on his sleeve, as Longstretch's voice raises and quickens.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
The unintended combination of your disease and the trial drug has created incredible cardiomyopathic cell activity. Inside your heart right now, are combinations and levels no one has ever seen before.

RAY
Am I that bad of a person? Do I somehow deserve this?

LONGSTRETCH
Ray, what I'm saying is, I believe somewhere in there...
(pointing to Ray's chest)
...is a breakthrough for coronary heart disease, the number one cause of death in the world. Think about what a discovery like that could do for us. It's staggering.

Ray is staggered alright.

RAY
But yesterday --

LONGSTRETCH
Forget yesterday, everything changed today. I told Synthetica I need to study and harvest these cells and after some convincing, they agreed. Due to the sensitive legal nature of this, we'll give you 24/7 care -- and another five million. That's ten million total. You'll be the highest paid guinea -- er, clinical tester, in history.

RAY
Ten, twenty million, what's the difference? What can I do with it?

LONGSTRETCH
You could take care of any family or friends. You could donate it, create a foundation, a legacy that will outlive us all. This is our chance Ray. We could be remembered as heroes, if you help me do this.

RAY
I, I don't know. Just let me, I got to get some air.

Ray gets up to leave and Longstretch snatches his wrist.

LONGSTRETCH
Let me know. There's literally no time to waste. Not anymore.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Stumbling out of the hospital, Ray floats weakly through the streets, like a hot dog wrapper in the outfield.

Drivers honk and curse as he lurches through a crosswalk.

Burning up and queasy, Ray rushes to the first thing he sees

-- a big blue mailbox -- and THROWS UP in it.

Taking a knee on the sidewalk, he tries to collect himself.

What did he just hear? Did that really just happen?

He spots an ATM up ahead.

AT THE ATM

Ray mashes some buttons and snatches the receipt.

CLOSE UP on the receipt. Available Balance: 5,000,242.47.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 30 DAYS

INT. RAY'S VAN - DAY

Looking more dead every second, Ray's mind churns as he sits in total traffic gridlock.

A nearby billboard shows a man proposing with a big diamond.

Another minute clicks off the clock.

In a car next to him, a young guy and girl joke and laugh.

Another minute clicks off the clock.

In another car, a couple happily tends to a cranky baby.

Ray honks and yells at no one particular --

RAY
Come on people!

In another, fancy car, an older man calmly enjoys a cigar.

Another minute ticks off the clock.

Sweat starts rolling down Ray's face and he completely loses it, pounding on the steering wheel and screaming.

None of the other drivers even notice.

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

With his back to the sunset, Ray stands over two gravestones.

CLOSE-UP:

Raymond Fern, 1941-2001, Husband to Loretta, Father to Ray.
Loretta Fern, 1945-2001, Wife to Raymond, Mother to Ray.

He stomps off before looking at the empty plot next to them.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Amongst the modern entrances, is a frosted glass door with the words Monte Manischewitz, Esq., in gold leaf type.

INT. MONTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

In a wood paneled office with nary a computer in sight, Ray sits across from MONTE, 80s, a thin, elderly gentleman.

MONTE
You want to know what I think? Get a second opinion. Half of these doctors are quacks, the other half are in cahoots with the pharma companies. Bunch of crooks.

RAY
But Monte, look at this.

Ray pulls out the ATM receipt and puts it on the desk.

MONTE
(grabs it)
Oy vey.

RAY
Remember, you can't tell anyone about this. It's top secret.

MONTE
Oh yeah, what are they going to do to you?

RAY
Good point.

MONTE
Raymond, your Mom and Dad weren't just clients, they were friends. Why didn't you ask me for help?

RAY
I didn't know what I was supposed to ask for.

Monte takes off his glasses and leans back in his chair.

MONTE
It's not your fault. The way we lost your parents -- if our lawsuit had went the other way, you would've never had to worry about money again. I wish I could make that up to you Raymond, I do.

Ray nods, wishing the same thing.

MONTE (CONT'D)
But after not seeing you for so long and then getting hit with this awful news...I don't know what to say. It's a lot for an old man.

RAY
I'm sorry Monte. I just don't have anyone else. I wish I did.

As a humiliated Ray moves toward the door, Monte sits up and puts his glasses back on.

MONTE
Oh! Where do you think you're going young man? Sit back down here.

Ray stops.

MONTE (CONT'D)
Look, you should do whatever it is you feel like doing, okay? You want to go cliff diving in Mexico with the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders? Do it. But ultimately, the only one who should decide is you.

RAY
(sitting down)
What about Longstretch and this breakthrough?

MONTE
Breakthrough, schmakethrough. Me? I take the money and run. Life is too short Raymond, especially yours.

Ray takes a breath, trying to slow it all down.

MONTE (CONT'D)
Whatever you decide, I'm here for you. I'll help you get your affairs in order. I'll help you get to Mexico with those cheerleaders -- whatever. I just wish we could've talked like this, you know, sooner.

RAY
Me too Monte. Me too.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAR - NIGHT

Accompanied only by a few professional boozers, Ray drinks his way through the night. Habitually, he checks his phone.

ON THE DISPLAY

A text from Dom: "Wife out gotta watch the kid. Next time."

One from Kurt: "Can't. Mo' house, Mo' problems. LOL."

BACK TO SCENE

He throws the phone aside as the burly, mutton-chopped bartender, WILBUR, 30s, points for another round.

RAY
Why not? Hey Wilbur, can I ask you a hypothetical question?

Wilbur nods as he pours another.

WILBUR
Yeah, what's up?

RAY
Hypothetically, what would you do if you knew you had a day to live?

Wilbur sets down Ray's drink and rests on the bar.

WILBUR
A day, huh? Hmm.

The minute he stops -- a DRUNK yells for him across the bar.

DRUNK
Ayye! How 'bout some cussstomer service Jack!

Wilbur turns to Ray, intensely.

WILBUR
You know what? I'd kill someone. Fuck it, I might kill like five, six people depending on traffic.

The same filthy drunk keeps at it.

DRUNK
Whatta am I, unvisible over here?

WILBUR
And the first body to drop -- would be that motherfucker.

Ray totally agrees. At least until Wilbur turns his back.

EXT./INT. RAY'S VAN - NIGHT

Rain pours as Ray swerves all over the dark, winding road.

Ray opens a window and turns up the radio to sharpen up. It doesn't help. His head bobs and his eyes start to close.

The van drifts and leaves the road for a second, before Ray quickly rights the ship.

Ray shakes and rattles his head. He grimaces as he cranks the wheel and hits the gas into a sharp turn.

The van slides around the turn, straight toward a DEER(!) standing in the middle of the road - almost like he was waiting for him.

Ray screams!

The alcohol does its worse and Ray overreacts. The van hydroplanes into a row of trees, WILDLY BOUNCES off them and SPINS to a halt, facing the wrong direction in the left lane.

The deer, having done his work, leaps off into the woods.

INT. RAY'S VAN - NIGHT

Shaken, Ray closes his eyes and catches his breath.

His eyes open just in time to see red and blue roof lights flash on, directly in front of him.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Metal doors clank and slam shut off in the darkness.

Alone, Ray sits on the bunk, head in his hands.

Just when it can't get worse, a cute white mouse ambles over.

He holds his finger out as a friendly greeting and GOD-DAMN IT the little fucker bites him.

It can always get worse.

As he falls back in the bunk, *a blue shimmering light appears on the ceiling. He turns, rubs his eyes and...*

Standing there, in full astronaut gear, is the dream-like vision of --

DENNIS TITO
Hello Ray, I'm Dennis Tito, world's first --

Ray straightens up.

RAY
We got it already, 'world's first space tourist.' What do you want?

DENNIS TITO
Tough day, huh kid?

RAY
You could say that.

DENNIS TITO
I'm here to help you Ray.

RAY
Help me do what, bust out of jail?

Ray snickers at Dennis Tito, who's dead serious.

DENNIS TITO
Do you know that before I became a billionaire financier, I worked for NASA?

RAY
Of course, every idiot knows you were a jet propulsion scientist.

DENNIS TITO
Well, do you know why I left NASA?

RAY
To get rich?

DENNIS TITO
No. I mean, yes, but no. I left because I knew I was never gonna get into space at NASA. I knew I had to find another way to get my chance. Just like you.

RAY
The similarities are striking.

DENNIS TITO
Ray, do you think going to space is supposed to be easy?

RAY
For me I think it's impossible.

DENNIS TITO
Of the roughly 108 billion people who have ever walked our planet, how many do you think wanted or dreamed about going to space?

Ray gives a lifeless shrug as Dennis Tito heats up.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
All of them! Of those 108 billion, do you know only 448 have been to space. And of those 448, how many do you think waltzed off the street and onto the launch pad without encountering some massive obstacle?

Another passive shrug -- and Dennis Tito SLAPS(!) Ray's face.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
Come on, guess!

RAY
(feeling his face)
Ow. I don't know, zero?

DENNIS TITO
Exactly zero. Nothing great is easy.

RAY
But Dennis --

DENNIS TITO
-- Mr. Tito.

RAY
Sorry, Mr. Tito, what difference is thirty days gonna make when I've already had thirty years?

DENNIS TITO
The difference is, this is our chance. Right now, today.

RAY
Five million won't get me into orbit with Space Endeavors -- I checked.

DENNIS TITO
No. But nine or ten will.

RAY
But Longstretch --

DENNIS TITO
Longstretch knows what you need to hear to do what he wants. He's gonna tell you this...
(gesturing around cell)
...is who you are.

RAY
What if he's right?

DENNIS TITO
He's not.

RAY
How do you know?

DENNIS TITO
I know that when everyone else allowed life to slowly and sensibly ease their dream from their grip, those 448 hung on.

RAY
So?

DENNIS TITO
So, the only way to tell if Longstretch is right is to answer one question: Do you still believe in your dream? You said you thought it was impossible but in your heart do you believe that? Well, do you?

Ray turns to the sound of a metal door rolling open.

As the guard moves to his cell with keys in hand, Ray looks back to empty spot where Dennis Tito just was.

EXT. RAY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A Mercedes stops on the wet street in front of Ray's place.

INT. MERCEDES - NIGHT

Longstretch faces Ray in the passenger seat.

RAY
Thanks again for bailing me out.

LONGSTRETCH
You're welcome.

RAY
Apparently, my lawyer goes to bed very early.

Ray opens the door --

LONGSTRETCH
Ray, wait. Can I be honest with you?

-- and hesitates before getting out.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
I like you a lot but don't kid yourself, this is who you are. Having said that, you *still* have a chance to do something real. A chance I don't want you to waste. I know I can't speak for them but if your parents were still here, I'm guessing they'd agree with me.

Ray listens closely, then nods and exits. As the car drives off, he looks up at the suddenly star-filled sky.

INT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

Fifteen miles south and across the NASA Causeway, Ray strolls around a gigantic reproduction of the Shuttle Enterprise.

Overhead, a tethered, isolated astronaut keeps watch on him.

In his hand, his phone rings. He answers as he comes to an evolutionary line-up of NASA space suits through the years.

His expression of awe reflects off the exhibit glass.

RAY
(on phone)
Thanks Monte, I'll be in touch.

As Ray checks his new watch, something catches his eye down the long hallway. Rather someone, as --

Audrey approaches. She waves, he smiles.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - LONGSTRETCH'S OFFICE - DAY

A satisfied Longstretch shakes Ray's hand over the desk.

LONGSTRETCH
Very glad to hear you're onboard.

RAY
I do have one request.

LONGSTRETCH
Name it.

RAY
I need the extra five million up front. Today. A man in my condition can't accept I.O.U.'s.

LONGSTRETCH
I don't know if I can do that Ray. It's Synthetica's money, not mine.

RAY
I realize that but before my condition deteriorates, I'd like to witness some of the good I have planned. You should see what I have in mind.

Longstretch mulls it over, then tries to get Ray moving.

LONGSTRETCH
Okay, why don't we get you situated first --

RAY
Sorry, Doc. I'm not going anywhere till the money is in my account.

LONGSTRETCH
Ray, is this really necessary? Don't you trust us?

RAY
Of course I trust you, Doc. But like you said, it's not your money, it's Synthetica's. And the stuff I read about Synthetica these days...

Longstretch eyes Ray, as another minute melts off the clock.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - PRIVATE TESTING LAB - NIGHT

Ray peeks out the rectangular door window at the guard in front of his room. He tries the locked handle.

He walks through the modern white lab. Shiny equipment fills the room. No sunlight anywhere. Cameras everywhere.

He enters a suite area and lays down on the bed, gazing out one of the two large fishbowl windows.

He pulls out his phone and taps the screen.

CLOSE-UP on the display. It's his bank account. Next to available balance, it reads: 10,000,242.47.

INT. PRIVATE TESTING LAB - LATER

Laying in bed watching TV, Ray reaches for a glass of water.

He grabs it and CRASH! - it falls out of his hand as he CLUTCHES his suddenly HEAVING chest.

He can't breathe. His body SEIZES.

Machines squeal in alarm as he fumbles for the call buzzer.

INT. PRIVATE TESTING LAB - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hustling down the steps and to the door is Audrey. The guard does crosswords passively as she tries the locked door.

AUDREY
I need to get in there NOW!

The GUARD, 50s, puts down his puzzles and stands.

GUARD
I ain't supposed to let nobody in or out without telling Longstretch.

Audrey points to the window, where we see Ray seizing up.

AUDREY
Tell whoever you want, just let me in before this guy dies!

The guard peers in and quickly unlocks the door for Audrey, who rushes in.

INSIDE RAY'S AREA

Audrey fights to put a breathing mask on Ray, who is now convulsing VIOLENTLY.

He's all over her. She can't hold him down.

AUDREY
Hey! Give me a hand over here, I gotta get him to the ER, he's going into cardiac arrest!

The guard races over and helps steady Ray as Audrey pushes the bed through the door.

IN THE HALLWAY

They punch the elevator button and it dings open.

IN THE ELEVATOR

The doors close and Ray awkwardly FLOPS out of bed. The guard reaches to pick him up, and Ray, suddenly clear-eyed and in control, injects a needle into the guard's neck.

The guard drops into Ray's arms as Audrey stops the elevator.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elevator doors open and the gangly, bearded security guard -- in the ill-fitting uniform -- walks left.

Audrey, wheeling a sheet-covered body, goes right.

ON AUDREY

A few feet down, she parks the body in the crowded ward and is back in the same elevator before the doors close.

IN THE ELEVATOR

She pushes the button and pulls a syringe out of her pocket, identical to the one Ray had.

She gets ready to inject herself, aiming for her neck. One, two -- she STOPS.

On the floor of the elevator she sees a set of keys. Shit.

EXT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Audrey comes upon Ray desperately trying to open the door of a brand new BMW with his belt and a pen.

AUDREY
You're gonna need these.

She BEEPS the doors open and throws him the keys.

RAY
Thank you, again.
(nods to her)
You better get back.

He gets in and starts the car.

AUDREY
It's too late. Another nurse was getting into that elevator as I was leaving. For this to work, I had to be knocked out in that elevator.

A jittery Ray gets out and starts pacing.

RAY
Let's think, I still have an extra syringe on me. I could drug you --

AUDREY
That won't work. They'll see me on the parking lot cameras.

RAY
Well, what do you want to do? 'Cause I gotta go, like, right now!

She looks back at the hospital. Then to Ray.

AUDREY
I want to go.

RAY
You what?

AUDREY
I'm trying to list all the reasons in my head why I shouldn't do this. And I can't come up with any.

RAY
You know I'm not coming back.

Audrey nods as another minute passes.

AUDREY
Neither am I. If I go, I'm gone. This is it. Right now. Today.

Ray looks back at the hospital. Then to her.

He doesn't overthink it.

RAY
Well get in already, I've got somewhere to be.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - PRIVATE TESTING HALLWAY - NIGHT

An older nurse gets off the elevator and sees the guard desk empty and the door to the lab wide open.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Audrey rolls down the windows as Ray watches the town fade into the rearview, *where a familiar face appears only to him.*

DENNIS TITO
I like where this is going.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 28 DAYS

INT. STUDY - MORNING

In a room filled with animal heads and trophies, Longstretch sits across from a man in a cowboy-style suit.

The man, WES, 40s, is lean with sunburnt, leathery skin.

WES
So this isn't like that time in Philadelphia?

LONGSTRETCH
No, I need him alive.

Wes points a scarred finger to a laptop with a grainy still of Ray and Audrey in the parking lot on it.

WES
And the woman?

LONGSTRETCH
Not important. Ray, is the one I need, not her.

Wes sifts through an open file on the table.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
That's all we have on him. I have the airports covered but after he liquidated his accounts this morning, he can't fly with that kind of cash. He's running. And I need you to catch him.

WES
What did he do again?

LONGSTRETCH
He stole something very important.

WES
What was it?

LONGSTRETCH
Himself.

Wes gets to his feet. He takes his time as he pulls out a pouch of leafy tobacco and stuffs a wad into his cheek.

WES
Sounds like a desperate hombre. Man like that is dangerous.

LONGSTRETCH
I'll triple your normal rate.

WES
Then again, so am I.

LONGSTRETCH
It's better than poaching rhino horns and shark fins, isn't it?

Wes stops and considers one of his crowded walls.

WES
Strange to think as a kid I wanted to be a Game Marshall, isn't it? That's life, I guess.

LONGSTRETCH
(looking at watch)
If you're in, I need to know now. Otherwise, I gotta find another bounty hunter as well as Ray.

Wes eyes an empty spot on his wall and spits into a cup.

WES
Don't get your panties all bunched, I'm in. But something tells me you knew I'd say that with this god-damn divorce hanging over my head.

LONGSTRETCH
(slyly)
Divorce? Sorry to hear that Wes.

WES
Right. I'll get the word out to my people ASAP.

Longstretch gets up to leave.

LONGSTRETCH
And Wes, whatever you do, do it quietly. Synthetica doesn't even know he's gone yet and hopefully, they never will.

Wes confidently nods and spits again.

WES
Don't worry Doc. I'll have him back in the pen before you know it.

INT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - MORNING

Audrey's husband, Max, finishes rolling up a sleeping bag and listens to the quiet house for a moment.

He heads upstairs, passing a few photos on the way.

CLOSE-UP: An old wedding picture of Audrey and Max, both with fantastically bad hair.

UPSTAIRS BEDROOM

After a soft knock, he enters and sees an undisturbed bed.

He checks the closet and sees shoes, clothes, even a HUGE musical instrument case buried in the back. But no Audrey.

Hmm.

INT. BMW - DAY

Speeding down a sunny Panhandle road headed west, Ray smiles at Audrey as he finishes up a call.

RAY
(on phone)
Okay, got it. Call when you hear back from them, thanks Monte.

Sipping a to-go coffee, she smiles back, in a quiet, 'now what?' moment.

RAY (CONT'D)
You want to get dropped off yet? You can always say I kidnapped you or something.

AUDREY
No, I'm an adult. And if I want to run away, that's what I'm gonna do.

RAY
The problem with running away is you always end up going back home. That or you end up doing porno.

AUDREY
Yeah, well I'm not going home. Or doing porno, thank you very much.

RAY
So what's your plan?

AUDREY
How the hell do I know? It took me years to get to this point, I might need some time to work out the rest.
(sip of coffee)
What's the latest with yours?

RAY
Monte and Space Endeavors are working out the money. There's a ways to go but -- and I can't believe I'm saying this out loud -- it looks like it might happen.

AUDREY
Space?

He looks over and grins.

RAY
A ten-day orbit around the Earth.

AUDREY
Wow, that is just, wow.

RAY
But I gotta get to Russia first.

AUDREY
Russia's a long drive.

RAY
I'm meeting the escorts in San Francisco. And I gotta wire the cash to the Russians, as soon as they agree on price.

Ray nods to the two suitcases in the backseat.

AUDREY
What's the general cost for this sort of thing?

RAY
Generally, ten, fifteen million.

Audrey gags on her coffee.

RAY (CONT'D)
But Monte said he'll get me in for under ten. He loves a good deal. He just warned me to never get between a Russian and his money. Said it makes them do crazy shit. Whatever that means.

AUDREY
Why Russia? Seems a bit inconvenient for most travelers.

RAY
NASA doesn't believe in letting non-professionals go up. Even though they need cash as much as the Russians.

Impressed, Audrey glances over at Ray, then out her window.

AUDREY
Man, your plan is way better than mine. So embarrassing.

Ray reaches over and grabs Audrey's hand.

RAY
I know you've gone out on a very thin, very shaky limb for me here. And before anything else happens, I just want to say, thank you. You've saved what's left of my life.

AUDREY
You're welcome.
(beat)
Hey, what do you think Longstretch is gonna do when he finds out?

RAY
Oh yeah, him...he'll live.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Ray hits the gas and they pass everything on the road: cars, trucks, motorcycles -- and old people, lots of old people.

At a Starbucks, Ray pays people to get to the head of the massive line.

EXT. CITY STREET (FLORIDA) - DAY

Back home, Wes casually hops out the back of a UPS truck.

As he closes the truck doors, we see Ray's tattooed friend Kurt sprawled out inside.

MONTAGE CONTINUES

Out on the road, Ray buys an array of gaudy sunglasses and souvenir clothing without waiting for change.

In the rearview, *Dennis Tito gives Ray a thumbs-up as they blow through a quiet toll booth.*

INT. HOUSE (FLORIDA) - DUSK

Ray's buddy Dom walks in and sees his wife -- THEN Wes holding Dom's young daughter, making her wave 'hello.'

MONTAGE CONTINUES

Ray makes Audrey go to the bathroom on the side of road -- as the truckers honk approval.

Getting food in a drive-thru, Ray gives the surly-looking woman a $500 tip. She pockets it and grabs her phone.

EXT. HOUSE (FLORIDA) - NIGHT

A smirking Wes answers his phone as he leaves Dom's house but not before Dom snaps a quick picture of him.

INT. MONTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Monte checks his watch -- time to call it a day.

As he creaks to his feet, the door opens. It's Wes.

Before saying a word, Wes takes a chair from in front of Monte's desk, drags it in front of the door and sits.

Monte stops and smiles in recognition of the moment.

WES
Trail leads right here old-timer.
Right to you.

As Monte sits back down, he gathers papers with the Space Endeavors logo on them.

MONTE
I suspect it does.

WES
Where is he?

MONTE
I don't know.

WES
Where's he headin'?

MONTE
He mentioned Mexico but maybe it was South America. I'm old, what do you want?

Wes dips into a tobacco pouch and loads up a chew.

WES
I know you're a lawyer but we just met and you're already lying to me. Not a good start.

MONTE
As Raymond's attorney, anything he told me is privileged information and therefore I am under no legal obligation to tell you anything.

WES
Sure you want to play it like this?

Monte takes a breath, then a long look around his office.

MONTE
You're right, I do know.

WES
There you go.

MONTE
But I'm not going to tell you.

WES
You might want to rethink that.

Monte stands and starts packing up.

He grabs his coat and hat as Wes looks around incredulously.

WES (CONT'D)
You know neither of us is leaving here till I get something, right?

MONTE
That may be, but I sure as hell don't have to give it you, do I?

He walks over to Wes, who puts on leather work gloves.

WES
You're out of time here Pops.

MONTE
That's okay. Sooner or later, you will be too.

Wes gives him a slight nod, then spits on the floor before rearing back and WHAM! -- everything goes dark.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Off a quiet, wooded road, the BMW slides into an old closed-down drive-in theater.

EXT. REBEL DRIVE-IN (HAMMOND, LA) - LATER

A weary Ray and Audrey stretch out on the windshield and hood, facing the giant, worn movie screen.

RAY
Just a couple hours, then we'll get back on the road, okay?

AUDREY
Okay with me. We've gotta rest sometime. You especially.

A cricket orchestra fills the overgrown theater around them.

RAY
Not that I recommend it but having limited time really forces you to focus on what you want.
(laughs)
Man, listen to me. Who am I?

They giggle and prop their feet up on the two money-filled suitcases, when Ray's phone starts buzzing.

ON THE DISPLAY

A text from Kurt: "Where R U? Call me ASAP! UR N trouble!"

One from Dom. Under a PICTURE OF WES it says: "Dude who is this guy? He's looking 4U and is scary!"

BACK TO SCENE

Ray shows it to Audrey, who sniffs and hands it back.

AUDREY
Guess we know what Longstretch is going to do.

RAY
They're fine. I didn't tell them anything. Besides, they could use a little scare in their lives.

Audrey bites her lip as Ray lays his head back.

AUDREY
Okay, I have to ask. Why space?

RAY
What do you mean?

AUDREY
I mean there's a lot of other ways to spend that kind of cash. Are you just one of those guys who saw *Star Wars* seventy times as a kid?

RAY
I love *Star Wars,* like any decent American should. But my reasons are a little closer to home.

Audrey bends her elbow and props her head up, waiting.

AUDREY
Continue...

ON THE DRIVE-IN SCREEN

Silent clips of home movies featuring his Mom and Dad MAGICALLY appear as Ray speaks.

RAY (V.O.)
You got to understand, my mom was a high school physics teacher and my dad an orbital designer for Boeing.

More clips of a young Ray and his parents celebrating different shuttle launches at home.

RAY (V.O.)
These people worshipped the space program.
(MORE)

RAY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Every shuttle launch was like the Super Bowl at my house. We never missed one.

Photos of a delighted young Ray posing with his parents after winning multiple science fairs.

RAY (V.O.)
Pretty soon, my dream was to be on one of those launches and nothing could've made my parents prouder. Nothing.

The images slowly dim and fade away.

RAY (V.O.)
Then, about ten years ago, I get a call from Monte telling me there's been a car accident. They were gone. And that was it. Everything stopped right there. Including me.

BACK TO SCENE

AUDREY
Ray, I'm sorry. I had no idea.

RAY
I took a semester off and never went back. I started doing experiments for the easy cash and because, frankly I didn't care what they were doing to me. I was numb.

Ray takes a drink from a water bottle.

RAY (CONT'D)
When Longstretch, you know, told me -- all that wasted time hit me like a cement fist. Suddenly, I can't finish school. I can't have a career. I can't get married and have kids. But I thought, maybe I can get a last chance. Maybe I can get to space. And maybe I can still make my parents proud.
(to the stars)
I know they'll be watching.

Audrey grabs Ray's hand, leans over and kisses him. Ray moves back, a little startled.

AUDREY
This is what you mean by focusing on what you really want, right?

As Ray pulls her close, the movie screen lights up again.

ON THE DRIVE-IN SCREEN: Fantastical images of fireworks launch and wondrously combust through the night sky.

RAY (V.O.)
Yeah, exactly.

EXT. REBEL DRIVE-IN - MORNING

A persistent cough wakes Ray up and he eases away from Audrey, off the hood of the car.

As it lets up, he sees Dennis Tito pointing to his watch.

DENNIS TITO
Stay on track here loverboy.

Ray pulls his phone out. Damn it! They overslept.

In a blur, Ray gets back to car, hurries Audrey along and in a mad rush, they're outta there.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 27 DAYS

EXT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN (FLORIDA) - DAY

Max leads Longstretch to a large, empty kitchen.

Longstretch, noticing the sparseness of the room, declines a beer as Max takes one for himself.

LONGSTRETCH
Did you two just move in?

MAX
No, we've been here almost five years now. Why, you want to buy it?

LONGSTRETCH
No thanks. Have you heard anything from her?

MAX
Not a peep. I didn't even know she hit the road till you called me. I was at a gig last night.

LONGSTRETCH
A gig? I thought you were in real estate.

MAX
Oh yeah I'm a licensed agent. But I play in a band too. We're called 'Balls In' -- ever hear of us?

LONGSTRETCH
(moving right along)
Did she mention anything about a trip to you? Or going somewhere?

MAX
(swig of beer)
She didn't. But we don't say much of anything to each other these days. Things on the homestead, haven't been great Doc.

LONGSTRETCH
Max, I'm not here to intrude on your personal business. I just need to know where she and Ray are. He's a very important patient of mine.

MAX
She didn't have a ton of friends. And her family drives her crazy, so I doubt she's there either.

LONGSTRETCH
Again, Max, I don't want to intrude but I understand you're in a good deal of debt, is that true?

MAX
Well, yeah, a little -- wait, who told you that?

Longstretch coolly slides his card on the marble counter.

LONGSTRETCH
Not important. What is important, is that if you hear anything, call me immediately. I promise you'll be rewarded handsomely.
(MORE)

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
I'm not going to say Audrey's life is in danger but there are lives in danger.

MAX
How handsome?

EXT. MOM AND POP STORE (WINN, LA) - DAY

In a sleepy little parish outside Shreveport, Ray and Audrey park right next to a front porch and spring out of the car.

AUDREY
Don't forget to lock it.

RAY
(nods, locks it)
Can never be too careful, can you?

As they hurry inside, a big white Lincoln slowly floats behind Ray's BMW.

INSIDE THE LINCOLN

The bee-hived senior behind the wheel, scowls at Ray's BMW and determinedly pulls out her cell phone.

INT. MOM AND POP STORE - LATER

Ray bangs on the men's room door, as Audrey laughs and waits for the ladies' room nearby.

Out of line (and the bathroom), Ray whistles as he scavenges the aisles for road snacks, fountain sodas and the like.

He glances back to the ladies' room door and shakes his head.

AT THE COUNTER

Ray unloads his bounty and tries to get the spacey cashier's attention, who's off to the side, grinning out the window.

RAY
Ahem, how you doing today, man?

A few throat clears later, the CASHIER, 20s, wakes.

CASHIER
(slowly, to window)
Better than that guy.

Curious, Ray hops over and sees his BMW hitched to a tow truck(!)

OUTSIDE THE STORE

Like a shot, Ray comes bolting out of the store but the truck is already moving. He runs alongside of it.

RAY
Whoa, whoa! What are you doing?!
That's my car, man! I need that!

The DRIVER flips him a business card and keeps rolling.

DRIVER
Once it's up, it's up.

RAY
What did I do? I have cash! How much
do you need? Wait!

As the tow truck takes off, Ray stops, realizing.

INT. BMW TRUNK - RAY'S MIND'S EYE - CONTINUOUS

The two money suitcases sit neatly next to each other.

EXT. MOM AND POP STORE - DAY

Happily bounding out the door with a big soda, Audrey sees Ray breathing deeply in the crash position.

And then she sees the faded handicap sign where they parked.

And then she's so not happy.

AUDREY
Oh shit.

As Audrey tries to get Ray moving, a car HONKS for them to move out of the handicap space.

They do, and the big white Lincoln from before pulls in.

MONTAGE BEGINS

Riding in the back of a pickup truck, Ray and Audrey give a subtle 'what's up' to a crew of stone-faced migrant workers.

They pace and sweat in front of a government building with a ‘Be Right Back Y’all!’ sign hanging on the door.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Further back, Wes tears ahead on his black motorcycle.

MONTAGE CONTINUES

In the government building, Ray and Audrey seethe while the thick-armed woman behind the counter takes a phone call.

The stress takes a toll on Ray as he grabs his chest -- which Audrey points out to the woman, still on the phone.

EXT. BEHIND A STARBUCKS - DAY

A listless teen in Starbuck’s green nods at Ray’s picture and takes some cash from Wes, who hops on his bike and rolls out.

MONTAGE CONTINUES

Outside the fence of a secluded impound lot, Ray and Audrey search high and low for anyone working there.

An old hound dog pats over to say ‘hi’ and eventually, a man with headphones on, emerges from a shack behind the fence.

EXT. FAST FOOD DRIVE-THRU - DUSK

Not so far back now, Wes rumbles up and grins at a familiar surly woman working the window.

INT. BMW - NIGHT

Bitter but finally moving forward, Ray and Audrey haul ass.

The unhappy silence is broken when Ray’s phone rings. He checks the number and answers.

RAY
(into phone)
Hey Monte, not a good time.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A petite STRESSED WOMAN, 40s, is on the line. Not Monte.

STRESSED WOMAN
This is Monte’s daughter Stephanie. Is this Ray Fern?

RAY (V.O.)
This is Ray. Where’s Monte?

She closes her red eyes and puts a hand to her dark hair.

STEPHANIE (STRESSED WOMAN)
My dad was attacked last night in his office. I’m at the hospital with him now.

RAY (V.O.)
Is he...

STEPHANIE
He’s not doing well, Ray. He’s in ICU with severe head trauma and...
(sighs)
...a lot of other bad stuff.

RAY (V.O.)
Oh my God, Monte.

Over her shoulder, through a window, we see a hurting Monte.

STEPHANIE
When the EMTs found him he had an urgent message for you in his hand.
(pulls out note)
Let me just get through it, so I can get back to him. It says: got you good deal, call SE for instructions, wire money ASAP. See you up there.

INT. BMW - CONTINUOUS

An ashen Ray casts a worried glance at Audrey.

RAY
Stephanie, I --

STEPHANIE (V.O.)
(getting emotional)
Don’t -- look, I know you were friends with my dad. But if you know anything about this, call the police, now. And Ray, if you’re involving him in anything dangerous, stop it! I gotta go.

She hangs up and Ray falls back into his seat.

AUDREY
How bad?

RAY
Real bad. He’s in the ICU.

AUDREY
Oh my god.

On his phone, Ray looks at the picture of Wes that Dom sent.

RAY
We’re gonna have to do something about this guy. ‘Cause he’s coming.

He puts the phone away and checks the rearview. It’s empty.

For now.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 25 DAYS

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - PRIVATE TESTING LAB - DAWN

Longstretch sits speaking into a conference phone.

LONGSTRETCH
How did you hear?

MALE VOICE
(from device throughout)
We can’t have this.

LONGSTRETCH
It’s only been a few days, I’ll get him back.

MALE VOICE
You said you could handle this.

LONGSTRETCH
I’m sorry. He caught us off-guard. He never showed any inclination toward this kind of behavior.

A ticking clock can be heard in the quiet.

MALE VOICE
You understand a lot of important people want this merger to happen, don't you, James?

LONGSTRETCH
I do.

MALE VOICE
We don't have a problem, do we James?

LONGSTRETCH
No, no problem and I understand --

Dial tone cuts Longstretch off as he glares into the empty bed where Ray should be.

EXT. PARKING LOT (TYLER, TX) - MORNING

The BMW sits in a lonely strip mall, consisting of a fireworks store, a Taco Bell and a copy place.

INT. COPY XPRESS - MORNING

As a custom 'Wanted' poster rolls off a printer, a pale, hunched-over Ray manages some excitement.

RAY
Oh yeah, that's nice.

AUDREY
I like it. Covers a lot of bases.

INSERT -- THE POSTER

Above Wes' picture is the headline: WANTED FOR THE RAPE OF ELDERLY MEN, WOMEN AND WHITE BABIES.

BACK TO SCENE

He turns to the FAT MAN, 40s, behind the counter.

RAY
We'll take a thousand.

FAT MAN
(examining poster)
Just making sure he's not from my congregation.

RAY
Congregation? You a preacher as well as a printer?

FAT MAN
I am. Right down the road at St. Francis of Lost Souls. Would you like to sit in on a service? You look like you need some guidance.

RAY
I'm afraid I need more than that, Preacher.

The man nods and starts the order as Ray ponders it.

RAY (CONT'D)
But -- if you and your congregation can help me spread the word about this sinner along the interstate, I'd gladly make a sizeable donation to your flock.

FAT MAN
(lighting up)
Spreading the word is what we do best, my son.

EXT. WESTERN UNION - MORNING

Ray hustles out of the rickety building with two suitcases.

He checks the tumbleweeds around him, then pops the trunk.

IN THE TRUNK

He consolidates the significantly smaller stack of remaining cash into one suitcase and tosses the empty one.

Before closing the trunk, he pulls something from his pocket.

CLOSE-UP on Western Union receipt. He scans the thin paper, until he sees "Russia" and the amount he sent, "9,850,000.00".

EXT. GUN TOWN - DAY

Right beside a neon Texas state flag, a neon gun fires the words 'Open 24 Hours' on top of a warehouse-sized store.

INT. GUN TOWN - DAY

Ray aims a .45 handgun at a mannequin dressed like a hunter.

AUDREY
This is such a bad idea.

RAY
This is strictly for self-protect--

Audrey's phone RINGS and Ray drops the gun -- causing them and the salesman to INSTANTLY take cover.

After a 'thank-you-very-much-for-that' glare at Audrey, Ray puts it back on the counter.

RAY (CONT'D)
Wrap it up, I'll take it.

INT./EXT. HIGHWAY GAS STATION - DAY

An upbeat Wes hops off his bike and enters the store, talking on his phone.

WES
(into phone throughout)
God-damn! I love the fact that y'all are such a nosy bunch!

He waves to the register girl and heads to the men's room.

WES (CONT'D)
I'll come see you soon. Just gotta go round up that runaway.

IN THE MEN'S ROOM

WES
Yeah, I --

He abruptly stops as he sees Ray's custom 'Wanted' poster taped above the urinal.

INT. BMW - DAY

As they roll through the dry, dusty landscape, Audrey ignores her ringing phone as she writes on her palm.

RAY
Sounds like someone is missing you.

AUDREY
Missing someone to clean or do dishes, yes. Missing me? Doubt it.

RAY
You should just talk to him, get it over with.

AUDREY
I'm actually writing ideas of what to say to him. So far, all I got is 'hey dick nose' and 'fuck you, you motherfucking fucker.'

He laughs as she flashes her palm to him.

RAY
So what did it?

AUDREY
What did what?

RAY
What made you want to come with me? You could've figured out some way to stay.

AUDREY
It wasn't just one incident, okay? It's not like I got my feelings hurt and left in a huff over some trivial event.

RAY
So?

AUDREY
He forgot my birthday.

A long stare from Ray.

RAY
No seriously, tell me.

AUDREY
He did forget my birthday, which itself is inexcusable, but that's not it.
(sigh)
I found a pair of panties in the car. Gross, way-too-big panties that weren't mine.

RAY
(shocked)
Seriously, he was cheating on you? Has he seen his face? You're so out of his league!

AUDREY
I know! If anyone should be cheating, it should be me cheating on him.

RAY
Well...

AUDREY
Hey, he cheated first. And this isn't the first time I caught him. I never said anything before either. I should have but as you can tell, I prefer avoidance.

RAY
What? Why not?

AUDREY
I couldn't understand it. I've done exactly what everyone says you're supposed to do to be happy. I had a safe career by twenty two. I was married by twenty five. I had a house by thirty. But none of it made me happy or mattered to me, not like this matters to you.

Instinctively, Ray checks the rearview as he listens.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
In the parking lot that night, I was so jealous of you. You weren't just checking items off a list, you were following your heart. Guess I wanted to do the same.

RAY
Even *I* remembered your birthday.

AUDREY
I know!

RAY
And most of the times I saw you, I was doped up on experimental drugs.

AUDREY
Running away with you, just felt much better than staying with anyone else.

Ray basks in the rare praise.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
And I always knew there was something more going on with you.

RAY
We've wasted a lot of time, huh?

They share the regret, as another second melts away.

RAY (CONT'D)
This is gonna sound scary, but...

His eyes go from Audrey back to the rearview --

AUDREY
It's okay, just say it.

-- where he sees a black motorcycle trailing them.

RAY
I think we're being followed.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

Ray slows down to what seems like a forty-five mph crawl.

The motorcycle keeps its distance behind.

Ray puts the hammer down and races past a herd of cars.

The motorcycle responds and stays within sight.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ray pulls into a spot, waits for the motorcycle to do so as well -- then abruptly pulls out.

The motorcycle does the same, rather obviously.

INT. BMW - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ray glances into the rearview, then to a concerned Audrey.

RAY
Yep, we're being followed.

Scanning for anything, a suddenly damp Ray picks up the neon of a roadhouse bar up ahead.

Immediately, he guns it and swerves into the left hand lane.

Waiting for a truck on his right to get closer, Ray CUTS in front of it -- across three lanes and onto the exit ramp.

The bike's brake lights go on as he temporarily passes by.

AUDREY
What are you doing?

RAY
It's time we get that drink.

EXT. DUANE'S (LUBBOCK, TX) - NIGHT

Wes lingers near Ray's BMW, parked amongst the trucks and motorcycles at the crowded roadhouse bar.

He impatiently checks his watch and stomps around.

Noticing flyers stuffed on every windshield, he grabs one.

It's Ray's custom 'Wanted' poster. Again.

WES
Okay, time to go home guinea pig.

INT. DUANE'S - NIGHT

Wes moseys past two massive doormen and into the smoky scene.

Honky tonk plays and Lone Star Beer dominates, as he wades through crowd of denim, tattoos and greasy long hair.

AT THE BAR

He calls over DUANE, 50s, the ZZ Top-bearded bartender who runs the joint, and shows him Ray's picture.

DUANE
What are you drinking fella?

WES
You seen this dude tonight?

DUANE
I seen a lot of people tonight.

As he answers, Wes spots Ray and Audrey on the other side of the bar, pretending not to notice him.

WES
(to Duane)
Thanks for the help, Chief.

Duane watches as Wes swaggers off.

OTHER SIDE OF THE BAR

Standing directly behind Ray and Audrey, Wes reaches into his jacket and pulls out a pouch of chewing tobacco.

He bites into a wad, then yanks Ray around by the shoulder.

WES
Longstretch sent me. I hear you're smart, so don't do anything stupid.

Ray doesn't move --

WES (CONT'D)
Like your friend, Monte.

-- and does his best to stay cool.

RAY
I don't know what a Longstretch is. And sorry Tex, you're not my type.

Wes grabs Ray's arm and Ray snaps it away.

AUDREY
(turning around)
I saw some cute boys over by the jukebox, maybe you should go try your luck with them?

Not amused, Wes spits on the floor between them.

WES
You're lucky Longstretch wants you back alive. You...
(to Audrey)
...ain't so lucky.

As Wes makes his move, Duane, now right across from them, interrupts by pointing a baseball bat at Wes.

DUANE
You best move on.

WES
Mind your business Chief, this ain't your concern.

Duane takes a step back and SLAMS the bat on the bar, getting everyone's attention.

DUANE
It's my god-damn place, so guess what? It is my business.

Before Wes gets any further, three massive doormen muscle between him and Ray and Audrey.

Duane parts the bouncers with his bat, so Wes can clearly hear this part.

DUANE (CONT'D)
Do you know who the most popular guy in the bar is?

Wes ignores the question and focuses on Ray.

DUANE (CONT'D)
The guy buying people drinks, that's who. And Ray here just bought drinks for the whole bar, for the whole night. Not to mention generously paying this month's mortgage on the bar. In times like these, you could see how he and his girl there are pretty popular.

Reinforcement doormen and 'customers' surround Wes.

DUANE (CONT'D)
Which makes you, Chief, not very popular.

Wes goes to spit, thinks better of it -- and swallows.

DUANE (CONT'D)
Here's what's gonna happen. They --
(to Ray and Audrey)
-- are going to leave and you --
(to Wes)
-- are going to sit your ass down, have a drink and hang for a while.

Steam rises off Wes as he watches Ray and Audrey slip away.

DUANE (CONT'D)
Or we can make other arrangements.

The crowd around Wes circles, ready.

DUANE (CONT'D)
What's it gonna be?

And after a tense moment of calculation, Wes takes a seat.

Duane puts the bat away and pushes back his hair.

DUANE (CONT'D)
Now, what are you drinking, fella?

EXT. DUANE'S - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Running to the car, Audrey stops and turns around.

Ray is behind, grabbing his chest and breathing heavily.

ON RAY

Dennis Tito is standing with him.

DENNIS TITO
That was totally cool. Very Buzz Aldrin.

RAY
Aldrin? You really think so?

Dennis Tito nods as Audrey comes running back.

AUDREY
Who are you talking to?

RAY
No one. My heart, is, just racing. Too much excitement for the guinea pig, I guess.
(forced smile)
I'll be okay, right?

Audrey gently walks Ray to the car.

AUDREY
Just take it slow. Take it slow.

Almost there, Ray spots Wes' black motorcycle parked nearby.

RAY
Oh, hold up one second.

EXT. SMALL GAS STATION - NIGHT

Turning at an old muscle car with a 'For Sale' sign on it, the BMW stops in a cloud of dust.

INT. SMALL GAS STATION - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Facing each other, Audrey and Ray take off their shirts.

AUDREY
You really think this is necessary?

RAY
We gotta change it up.
(coughs, winces)
Me first.

Audrey pulls out a new set of electric clippers, plugs them in and goes right down the middle of Ray's bushy mane.

And again, as large chunks of hair cover the floor.

INT. SMALL GAS STATION - NIGHT

A newly brunette Audrey and clean-cut Ray approach the counter. Ray's hair looks good. The rest of him, not so much.

A RAIL THIN KID, 18, working the store greets them. Sort of.

RAIL THIN KID
Help you?

RAY
You know who owns that Chevelle out there?

Ray motions to the burgundy muscle car in front.

RAIL THIN KID
Yes sir, it's mine.

RAY
Is it as fast as it looks?

RAIL THIN KID
My dad and I rebuilt the 454 ourselves.

Ray notices the kid's grimy fingernails on the white counter.

RAIL THIN KID (CONT'D)
You want to buy it or something?

RAY
I was thinking maybe a trade.

The Kid's eyes pinwheel as he catches Ray's brand new BMW.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING

A tow truck carries Wes' out of commission motorcycle.

INT. TOW TRUCK - MORNING

Wes turns down the religious talk radio without asking and makes a call.

As it rings, a car drives by with a bumper sticker made out of Ray's 'Wanted' poster. Grrr.

WES
(into phone)
Yeah, we got a problem.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 24 DAYS

INT. CHEVELLE - DAY

Open windows blow Audrey's new dark hair as she keeps turning around to check on Ray, laid out in the backseat.

His condition is worsening and she knows it.

RAY
The more you turn around the worse you're making me feel.

AUDREY
I can't help it. I'm a nurse.

RAY
How are we doing, are we there yet?

AUDREY
We're making good time. But by my calculations, we're still a good fourteen, fifteen hours out.

RAY
Damn. I thought if I went to sleep, I'd wake up and we'd be there.
(MORE)

RAY (CONT'D)
You know, like coming home from Grandmom’s house as a kid.

AUDREY
If we don’t get you some meds, you’re not gonna make it.

RAY
We’re not waiting nine hours in some hospital or doctor’s office.

AUDREY
Ray, your atrial fib is going wild right now. I know, I heard it last night. The next step is a stroke.

RAY
We gotta keep going Audrey, please.

AUDREY
I know what you need. Beta Blockers, ACE Inhibitors, Digoxin will control the arrythmia. We control the arrythmia and your BP goes down.

RAY
But...

AUDREY
But we can’t get it without a prescription.

RAY
Can’t I just buy the freaking stuff? Or bribe the pharmacist? Seems to work with everyone else.

AUDREY
We could try to fake a script but we get caught, we get arrested. It’s really easy to spot.

Ray sits up. The air feels good on his sweaty face.

RAY
So, this medication, you think it’ll work?

AUDREY
In the short term, yeah, I do.

EXT. MOUNTAIN REST STOP - DAY

As Audrey fights a thieving snack machine, a cold and clammy Ray reaches for his vibrating phone on a picnic table.

He takes a look and turns it off. But doesn't stop there.

He pops off the back plate and takes out the main battery.

After that, he removes the plastic frame, reaches into the corner and takes out what looks like a watch battery with a wire connected to it -- and chucks it.

After reassembly, the phone rings again. Now, he answers.

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
I thought I could count on you, Ray.

RAY
Strange, I thought the same thing about you, Doc.

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
How are you feeling, any symptoms?

RAY
Your concern sounds very heartfelt.

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
Ray, you have a very serious condition. And you need more than a nurse to look after you.

Ray looks up and sees Audrey still fighting with the machine.

RAY
(smirking)
What nurse?

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
We still have a chance here, but time is running out. On both of us.

RAY
Don't worry, I'm not kidding myself anymore. You should do the same.

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
I'm very concerned about you.

RAY
Me or your stock price? I couldn't hear what you said there.

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
Tell you what Ray, you tell me where you are and I'll forget about the money. We'll get you comfortable and get you treated immediately. No questions asked.

He pauses. As he does, Audrey comes over celebrating her bag of Combos.

LONGSTRETCH (V.O.)
You refuse and there will be, well, serious repercussions.

RAY
Oh yeah, what are you gonna do to me?

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - LONGSTRETCH'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Crowded by two grim men in dark suits, Longstretch grimaces as he watches a device wired to his phone.

RAY (V.O.)
By the way, I took out the GPS tracking battery, so don't bother.

LONGSTRETCH
I know, I can tell.

Click.

EXT. MAIN STREET (HELPER, UT) - NIGHT

The Chevelle faces an old pharmacy on a quaint street.

It's a two-stoplight, old mining town, where unfortunately, the pharmacy is situated next door to the Police Station.

INSERT - IPHONE GPS SCREEN

A little blue dot blinks in a sea of map-nothingness.

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

Audrey puts her iPhone away as a worsening Ray stews behind.

RAY
Right next to a police station. Yeah, thanks iPhone. Good work.

AUDREY
Smaller the town, smaller the police force, right?

Ray checks his gun as, *appearing next to him --*

DENNIS TITO
This is not a quality idea, Ray.

Ray rolls his eyes, like yeah, 'no shit Sherlock.' In fact, he says that.

RAY
Yeah, no shit Sherlock.

Audrey turns around to Ray, alone in the backseat.

AUDREY
What'd you just say?

RAY
Nothing, just talking to myself.

AUDREY
You know, neurological disability is a symptom of Danon.

RAY
My brain isn't disabled yet.
(sigh)
Look, this could be a really stupid thing to do for someone who has more than three weeks to live. You don't have to do this.

AUDREY
I know I don't have to.

RAY
(coughing)
You've done more than your fair share as it is.

AUDREY
I gave you that fatal dose. I feel partially responsible for this or at least fully guilty.

RAY
If you didn't someone else would've. I volunteered, which just sounds ridiculous right now.

AUDREY
Either way, I need to do this.

RAY
No, you don't.

AUDREY
I don't know if you're up on current events, but I'm in a dark place right now. I need to know that dreams like yours can still happen. And yes, I know I sound like a Disney movie but I don't care. I fucking love Disney movies!

RAY
Come on, get real.

AUDREY
I did. But before I got real, got married and went to nursing school, I had my own stupid dream. I wanted to be a classical cellist. I was good but I'll never know if I was good enough. Because slowly and surely, I let sensible numbers and statistics creep in until there was no room for anything else. Nobody stood up for my dream Ray, so I'm gonna stand up for yours.

Audrey gets emotional.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
The sensible thing just makes no sense to me anymore.

Ray nods. Good answer.

RAY
Don't tell anyone, but I like Disney movies too.

EXT. MAIN STREET (HELPER, UT) - NIGHT

Street lamps illuminate the main street area.

Everything is closed. For most, it's just another weeknight.

A nervous Audrey strolls around a corner onto the street.

She plays it cool as she pretends to window shop.

She lingers past a jewelry shop, a sporting goods store, a local real estate office, a...

Right before the pharmacy, she bends down to tie her shoelace-less shoe and the pharmacy window SHATTERS.

Across the street, Ray aims the gun and FIRES again --

At the store next to the pharmacy and --

The store next to that. And the next.

He runs, as best he can, down the sidewalk SHOOTING out darkened store windows on BOTH sides of the street.

Audrey hops into the dark pharmacy as ALL the store alarms go nuts, ALL at once.

At the end of the second block, he turns back to the alley.

EXT. POLICE STATION -NIGHT

A cop races out of the station as another cop car arrives.

They don’t know where to start first.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The Chevelle idles with the headlights off.

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

Sweaty and slumped behind the wheel, Ray watches the clock and his rearview, aimed at the back of the stores.

He waits and reminds himself every minute counts. Again.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The two Policeman split up: one to the bank at the end of the street, the other heads to his first option, the pharmacy.

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

Ray overhears commotion from the street. Where is she?

His phone vibrates. The display reads: INTERNATIONAL CALL.

He shuts it off. And he waits.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

With the alarm still screaming, Audrey frantically fills her bag by the light of her phone.

She stumbles around, checking her list as she does.

When she sees a flashlight approaching, she dives for cover.

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

The second hand on Ray's watch sweeps and sweeps.

He looks back at the pharmacy back door. Something's wrong.

He reaches for the car door *when Dennis Tito stops him.*

DENNIS TITO
Don't do it Ray. Remember, pursuing a dream is a singular, selfish endeavor. We can make it without the meds and Audrey. You get locked up, we're not making anything.

Ray hesitates.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
Come on, let's get out of here.

He grits his teeth, eyes the mirror, then forces himself out.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

The store alarm finally cuts off.

The MUSTACHIOED COP stops in front of the pharmacy counter --

As Audrey sweats it out behind that SAME counter.

His light leads his gun slowly back and forth through the area she was just rooting through -- and that's how it looks.

About to explode with anxiety, she covers her mouth as --

He moves down to the counter door when --

RAY (O.S.)
Officer, I need help. Officer!

The Cop turns and sees a sickly, ghost-faced Ray staggering to him, holding his stomach.

MUSTACHIOED COP
Sir, you shouldn't be in here!

The Cop's eyes bounce between the counter and Ray, still approaching.

RAY
I'm sorry but I think I got shot...

Ray topples into a shelf of aspirin and crashes to the floor.

Cursing, the Cop holsters his weapon and rushes over to him.

MUSTACHIOED COP
(into shoulder walkie)
I need an ambulance at Crowley's Pharmacy now!

Reacting quickly, he turns Ray over, searching for a wound.

MUSTACHIOED COP (CONT'D)
Are you shot? Where are you hit? Sir, are you okay? Are you okay?

As he does, Ray opens his eyes and pulls his gun on the Cop.

RAY
Actually, I'm dying.

The Cop backs up as Audrey rises from behind the counter, open-mouthed and stunned.

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

A still-shocked Audrey drives and checks the mirrors as Ray dumps the stash on the big bench seat.

RAY
You alright?

AUDREY
(slowly)
Yes? I think so? You?

RAY
Other than realizing I just pulled a gun on a cop and left him handcuffed to a pipe, fine. Thanks.

AUDREY
You rescued me. No one's ever rescued me before, from anything.

RAY
I did. But only because I like you -- and the drugs of course.

Audrey feels herself blushing as she glances over at Ray.

AUDREY
That's the sweetest thing anyone has ever done for me.

Ray glances back, his heart momentarily feeling better than ever -- then back to the pill bottles on the seat.

RAY
Alright, what should I take?

AUDREY
Look for the Verapmil and Metroprolol. Start with that.

He grabs a bottle and inspects it in the moonlight.

RAY
Where would we be without pharmaceuticals?

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 23 DAYS

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - MORNING

A very fucking angry Wes steams on his repaired bike.

Behind him, is a Utah State Police car with flashing lights.

In front of him, looking dead at him, is his own face -- on a billboard of Ray's viral-spreading 'Wanted' poster.

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT (ELKO, NV) - MORNING

With Ray zonked and recovering in the backseat, Audrey's phone starts ringing again.

Walking away from the parked car, she answers.

AUDREY
(to herself)
Just get it over with.
(unenthused)
Hello Max.

INT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM (FLORIDA) - MORNING

Max sits at the coffee table with a beer and a box of Lucky Charms. The place is a mess.

MAX
Auds! You finally picked up.

AUDREY (V.O.)
Please don't call me 'Auds'.

MAX
Where the hell are you? I've been worried sick about you.

AUDREY (V.O.)
I'm fine and since when are you worried about me anyway?

MAX
So, what? You're just gonna leave me for some sick dude?

AUDREY (V.O.)
How did you know that?

MAX
People been asking questions.

AUDREY (V.O.)
Wha -- I don't even care. Our problems have nothing to do with him anyway.

Max stands up and paces in a worn terry cloth robe.

MAX
What is it then? 'Cause we've had a good run for what, ten years now?

AUDREY (V.O.)
It's eight years and --

MAX
Don't worry, my real estate business is starting to pick up and the band is --

EXT. CHURCH - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Audrey finally cracks.

AUDREY
Stop. I can't do it anymore. I can't! I know you've been cheating on me. And I know it's not the first time.

MAX (V.O.)
What? Come on Auds, that's crazy.

AUDREY
(getting upset)
I saw the panties in the car. And before that, I saw a bunch of emails I wasn't supposed to.

Dead quiet from the other end of the phone.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
First off, what the fuck is your problem cheating on me? Dick nose!

MAX (V.O.)
Somebody must've thrown those panties on stage or something.

AUDREY
At Smitty's Pub? Who do you think you are, Tom Jones?

She looks at her hand but there's nothing written on it.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
It doesn't matter. In fact, those gross panties probably saved me another ten years. I don't love you, I'm not sure I ever did.

There's a long pause on the other end.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Hello? You there?

MAX (V.O.)
Well...what are you gonna tell your mother? She loves me you know.

AUDREY
I don't know what I'm gonna tell anyone. I just needed to tell you.

MAX (V.O.)
Tell me where you are and I'll come out and we'll talk. That's all I want, just a talk.

AUDREY
Oh right, the guy who left me sitting at work for hours because of a softball game is going to fly to friggin' Elko, Nevada, just to talk?

MAX (V.O.)
That was a playoff game and you know it.
(beat)
Do you love him?

AUDREY
None of your business. I just know I'm not coming home.

Nearby, still in the backseat, Ray is awake and listening.

MAX (V.O.)
I'm sorry Audrey. I never wanted to hurt you, honest. If you come back and give me another shot I know I can do better. I know it.

AUDREY
Goodbye Max.
(to herself)
Didn't hear a word I said.

INT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max hangs up and picks up a business card.

MAX
I heard you just fine Darling.

INT. CHEVELLE - DAY

It's quiet in the car. Ray is back at the wheel looking better, while Audrey naps next to him.

As the speeding road slows, he gazes over at her.

Her souvenir clothes and sunglasses. Her dyed hair. The Wes posters at her feet. The bag of stolen meds in her lap.

He shakes his head, what have I gotten her into?

UP AHEAD

He sees a rest stop icon at the next exit and signals.

EXT. DESOLATE REST STOP - DAY

At a tiny brick building, somewhere in Nevada, Ray parks.

Next to them, a rickety bus sign bends in the wind.

INT. CHEVELLE - DAY

Before turning the car off, Ray marvels at how beautiful Audrey is -- and maybe how lucky he is after all.

He puts something unseen in her purse, just as she wakes.

AUDREY
What's wrong? Why did we stop?

RAY
Nothing. Just gotta go. You?

Audrey collects herself and her bag.

AUDREY
Might as well.

EXT. DESOLATE REST STOP - DAY

As they walk up, Ray spontaneously grabs and kisses Audrey.

The world goes silent. Pink and azure skies whirl overhead.

They are the only two people on earth and for a moment --

Time stops.

RAY
Sorry, just had to do that.

Charmed, Audrey doesn't seem to mind.

AUDREY
I'm just going to the ladies room.
I'll be right back, you know.

RAY
Yeah, okay. See you soon.

They hold hands up the walkway, then split at the doors.

Another second ticks by.

And Ray walks right back out. Alone.

Quickly, he gets back in the car and takes off.

EXT. DESOLATE REST STOP - LATER

An old woman walking a yappy dog, watches Audrey's rising anxiety. There's two cars in the lot, neither are Ray's.

She hurries down the walkway and sees a plastic bag where the car was parked.

It doesn't make any sense. It just...

She runs over. Inside the bag are her scrubs and other personal items.

Riffling through her purse for her phone, she cringes at the sight of a big wad of cash. Her eyes well up as she dials.

INT. CHEVELLE - DAY

An upset Ray pushes on as his phone rings and rings --

-- until Dennis Tito, sitting beside him, turns it off.

DENNIS TITO
You did the right thing, buddy. We can take it from here.

He puts a comforting hand on Ray's shoulder.

EXT. CITY PARK (FLORIDA) - DAY

Max sits on a park bench with an edgy Longstretch as Longstretch finishes a phone call.

LONGSTRETCH
My man is on it.
(stands to leave)
We'll let you know.

MAX
So, when do you think you'll have her back? I really need to see her.

LONGSTRETCH
Her who?

MAX
My wife, that's who. Come on dude, keep up.

LONGSTRETCH
Your wife is not my problem and I'm certainly not bringing her back.

MAX
What do you mean? I thought that was part of our deal?

LONGSTRETCH
I need to find Ray, not play marriage counselor to you and that crazy wife of yours.

Max stands and leans in to Longstretch.

MAX
Hey man, I didn't tell you that stuff for you to act like a dick.

LONGSTRETCH
Too late now, isn't it?

Longstretch turns to leave and Max grabs his arm.

MAX
By the way, you gonna pay me or not?

LONGSTRETCH
Pay you too? I don't think so.

Longstretch yanks his arm out of Max's grasp and faces him.

MAX
We had a deal.

LONGSTRETCH
And now we don't. What are you gonna do about it?

A suddenly speechless Max backs away, and down.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
That's what I thought. We're done here.

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

Ray finishes off a huge coffee and tosses the empty into the backseat. His chest and breathing feel fine.

But his eyes are anvil heavy.

He opens a window and turns up the radio to sharpen up, just like he did in the van. It still doesn't work.

What gives? He hasn't a drop of booze -- oh, shit -- he grabs a half-empty medicine bottle and flicks on the dome light.

CLOSE UP on label: MAY CAUSE DROWSINESS...

He checks a handful of the other bottles. They all say the same thing. God-damn it. He checks the clock and presses on.

INT. 24-HOUR CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Ray slaps a six pack of Red Bull and ten packs of gum on the counter. He's gonna fight this thing.

EXT. ROAD TOLL (STAR PEAK, NV) - NIGHT

The toll booth lanes are wide open on the dark, quiet night.

INT. TOLL BOOTH - NIGHT

LEANNE, 23, leans out of her fluorescent-lit booth.

LEANNE
Hey, Doris, when's your big, hairy trucker man coming through?

DORIS, 25, puts down a compact in the next booth over.

DORIS
Oh my god, any minute now!
(to her face)
What do you think Leanne? Good?

INT. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

Gum falls from Ray's mouth and Red Bull spills over the gear shift as Ray's head and body slump.

An uncharacteristically flustered Dennis Tito screams at Ray.

DENNIS TITO
Ray! Wake up NOW!!!

Through the windshield, a sign: 'Reduce Speed. Toll Ahead'.

INT. TOLL BOOTH - NIGHT

The two cute toll booth workers continue their chat.

LEANNE
Oh, you look so beautiful Doris. He ain't gonna know what hit --

As she speaks, she turns and spots Ray's unsteady ship. He is all over the road and barrelling right AT THEM!

Leanne screeches and hits the deck.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Doris, and the other toll booth workers see Ray as well.

They all SCREAM and duck in unison, like Whack-a-Moles.

A full-speed-ahead-Ray swerves hard left --

JUMPS a concrete divider and RATTLES into Doris' lane!

INSIDE THE CHEVELLE - CONTINUOUS

Ray wakes HOWLING and digs his fingers into the wheel as the exit gate BREAKS on his windshield.

SPARKS FLY as he fights and FIRES out the other side.

Suddenly WIDE awake, he turns back to the toll booth to see if that really just happened. It sure did.

INT. TOLL BOOTH - NIGHT

A shaken Leanne sees Doris slowly rise out of her smashed-up booth with tears in her eyes, looking totally out of sorts.

IN. CHEVELLE - NIGHT

Ray silently turns to a stressed-out Dennis Tito next to him.

DENNIS TITO
You're gonna give me the heart attack, you know that?

He pops a Red Bull to further shake off the cobwebs, when familiar red and blue lights whirl behind him.

RAY
Oh Christ.

He checks the clock as he slows down.

EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER - NIGHT

A Nevada State Police TROOPER walks from his car to Ray's.

He has Ray's driver's license and a clipboard.

AT RAY'S WINDOW

TROOPER
Okay, here's what we got, Mr. Fern. In addition to that total goat fuck at the toll, you got no insurance on this vehicle and an outstanding warrant from Titusville, Florida for drunk driving.

Ray's head falls back to the headrest.

RAY
Of course I do.
(sighs, thinks)
Officer, may I check for my paperwork again?

TROOPER
Hurry up.

Ray reaches and grabs a chunk of money. He folds it in his hand and offers it.

RAY
Is this what you're looking for?

The Trooper sees the green sticking out of Ray's hand.

TROOPER
Sir, I'm gonna need to take you into custody and impound this vehicle. Please step out.

Ray reaches for some more cash.

RAY
Oh sorry, I grabbed the wrong thing. Here we go, how about that?

He sticks his hand out the window with more cash.

TROOPER
Sir, put the money away and step out of the vehicle. Now.

The Trooper murmurs police jargon into his walkie as Ray gives up the bribe.

TROOPER (CONT'D)
You need to step out of the car.

Ray keeps his eyes straight ahead.

TROOPER (CONT'D)
(forcefully)
I am asking you one more time, step out of the vehicle.

RAY
Officer, I apologize. Normally, I wouldn't act like such a tool.

He pulls his gun on Ray and points it at him.

TROOPER
Out of the vehicle, now!

RAY
But I can't. I just can't.

Deciding to go all in, Ray ducks down, starts the car and slams it into gear!

The Trooper reaches in for the keys but Ray's already moving.

He fights and pushes the Trooper out as he guns the engine.

The Trooper quickly bails and runs back to his car.

And the chase is on.

INT./EXT. CHEVELLE - CONTINUOUS

It's late and the road is empty, which is good. But not real good, since he's being chased by a cop.

He leans on it and the Chevelle flexes its Detroit muscle.

He gets a gap between he and the cop. And his phone rings.

He picks up.

RAY
(into phone throughout)
You know whoever this is, you have really shitty timing.

We stay on Ray as he talks while driving like a madman.

RAY (CONT'D)
Oh Space Endeavors! Yeah, what's up? Your Russian accent is kinda tough there.

Police lights pop back up in the rearview and Ray notices.

RAY (CONT'D)
Yep, me too. Really looking forward to seeing you guys tomorrow morning. You have no idea.

Ray whistles through a turn and blows by a lone truck.

RAY (CONT'D)
No, now is an okay time. What's up?

The Trooper closes in as Ray slows a bit.

RAY (CONT'D)
What?! We're leaving tomorrow and now you tell me you need an extra 250k? I don't have it!

Ray's eyes dart to the mirror, the Trooper is on his ass.

RAY (CONT'D)
(losing it)
What the fuck man, this is so uncool! I just wired you over NINE MILLION bucks! Monte warned me about you dirty Russians.

Ray jerks forward as the Trooper RAMS his bumper. And again.

RAY (CONT'D)
Nothing. Look, maybe this isn't a good time to talk...

His eyes stay on the rearview, then jump back to the road where he sees a DEER(!) just standing there -- almost like he was waiting for him.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

Ray SCREAMS and SLAMS the brakes on.

The deer BOLTS and the TROOPER --

SMASHES into the back of Ray as BOTH CARS WRECK.

They spin off the road and roll down the embankment, ending up in a tangled, metal heap.

EXT. HIGHWAY EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

Smoke and the smell of gasoline permeate the air.

Both cars creak and moan in the aftershock. Ripped-up pieces of grass and car are everywhere. No one is moving.

Off in the distance, sirens are approaching when --

A blue shimmering light appears next to Ray's wrecked car.

Dennis Tito gets on the ground to see Ray in the wreck.

DENNIS TITO
Ray, can you hear me? Ray?

He stretches and smacks the knocked-out Ray.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
Come on Raymond, wake up.

Desperately he tries to work Ray free but he's stuck.

The sirens get closer.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
(louder)
Ray! Come on kid, you gotta help me out here. You have to do this!

Ray's eyes flutter, and open. He's in real bad shape but somehow, he's awake. He sees Mr. Tito.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
Yeah, there he is. Okay, give me your hands. Come on, hurry!

It takes Ray a minute, but he winces and reaches.

Dennis Tito SQUEEZES his hands. They both PULL and FREE Ray from the twisted steel.

On the grass, staring up at the stars, Ray checks his watch.

Still ticking.

The sirens get him to his feet, as a truck driver finds him.

Ray notices him while scavenging around his wreck.

The HIPPIE TRUCKER, 60s, who looks like he just walked out of Woodstock, gasps as he sees the remains of the cars.

HIPPIE TRUCKER
Hold up there brother, you okay?

At the top of the embankment his big rig idles.

A battered Ray bends down slowly and picks up what he's looking for: the money suitcase, just as battered as he is.

HIPPIE TRUCKER (CONT'D)
Why don't you take it easy till the docs get here?

Ray staggers to the Trucker, who tries to care for him.

RAY
I'll give you a thousand bucks to get me out of here.

The Trucker surveys a demolished muscle car and a cop car on its roof. A lifetime on the road helps him put it together.

HIPPIE TRUCKER
Make it five.

Ray reaches out a bloody hand.

RAY
Done. Now help me out of here. Please.

The Trucker takes his hand and hauls him up to the truck.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 22 DAYS

EXT. TRUCK STOP (RENO, NV) - MORNING

The eighteen-wheeler screeches to a halt as the sun rises.

INT. EIGHTEEN-WHEELER - MORNING

The air brakes wake Ray and he immediately starts coughing.

Overhead is a mounted TV playing a DVD of *The Sopranos*.

In the light of day, Ray is a mess.

With bruises, dried blood and ripped clothing, he looks like he just changed into Bruce Banner from a night as The Hulk.

HIPPIE TRUCKER
Hey! You're alive. For a minute there, I thought I was gonna have to dump you in the Pine Barrens!

Ray coughs and grabs his side as he does. Pain is everywhere.

RAY
(croaks)
Where are we?

HIPPIE TRUCKER
Reno.

From the tall truck, he sees hints of Vegas' little brother.

HIPPIE TRUCKER (CONT'D)
I'm gonna get a cup of Joe, you need anything?

RAY
You don't have any heart medication, do you?

HIPPIE TRUCKER
No, but there's a freshly packed bowl in the dash if you want!

Ray shakes 'no' as the Trucker jumps down to the ground.

Grimacing as he searches himself for his phone, he realizes it's gone. But the last call comes back to him.

Even compared to everything else, it hurts.

RAY
God damn Russians.

He eyes the abused case of remaining money in front of him -- then Reno in the distance.

EXT. CASINO - PARKING LOT (RENO, NV) - DAY

As the big rig roars away, Ray scuffles like a lonely zombie across the empty, acres-long parking lot.

INT. CASINO - CHANGE WINDOW - DAY

An expressionless male employee, 40s, with a bad COMB-OVER, pushes a large stack of chips to Ray, who can't stop swaying.

COMB-OVER
Good luck Pilgrim.

AT THE ROULETTE TABLE

The hopping marble ball comes into focus as Ray approaches.

A morning crowd of old heads and weirdos stare at Ray's altered state, as the ball falls into place on the wheel.

On the cleaned off-table, Ray dumps all the chips out of his suitcase and moves them to black.

Then, he moves them to red.

No, black. Definitely black.

The cocky CROUPIER, 20s, ices Ray as he readies the roll.

CROUPIER
Are we ready?

Ray tries to concentrate as an OLD ASIAN GUY, 70s, puts one chip next to his huge stack on black.

OLD ASIAN GUY
All or nothing. I like your style.

The ball is spun into play.

CROUPIER
No more bets!

The wheel whirls into motion and Ray panics! He reaches for his money and the Croupier stops him.

CROUPIER (CONT'D)
No more bets!

The ball dances as the wheel and Ray SPIN with possibilities.

POV: RAY

IMAGES OF SPACE, AUDREY, HIS PARENTS, LONGSTRETCH, HIS DEATH, HIS LIFE, FLICKER TO THE SOUND OF THE ROULETTE WHEEL.

BACK TO SCENE

A trickle of blood runs down the side of Ray's face.

The ball skitters and skips, looking for a home.

He feels his head and sees his hand full of blood.

He staggers.

The clickety-clack of the wheel eases.

The ball jumps around, refusing to decide.

His eyes close.

The crowd stands to get a better view.

The ball slows and --

Ray COLLAPSES into a heap, just as the ball...

MONTAGE - DREAM

In the dark vastness of space, a tiny white spec falls.

It's an untethered astronaut plummeting to Earth.

The astronaut keeps descending, harder, faster, further.

Into and through Earth's atmosphere --

Ending in a dusty THUD on a city sidewalk.

Laying there in a smoldering heap, no one bothers to help.

They simply funnel around him, like ants on their busy way.

Even Ray's friends, Dom and Kurt, walk by giggling.

As the sun sets, the woman on the motorcycle reappears.

She parks the bike and approaches the fallen astronaut.

She takes off her helmet, and of course it's Audrey -- looking good by the way, in full biker leathers.

She kneels down, brushes him off and sits him up.

Against his protests, she undoes one of the latches on his helmet. Then, the other.

Air WHOOSHES as she removes the helmet. Underneath is Ray.

His eyes beam at her but he can't breathe without the helmet.

He hyperventilates. Struggling for air he desperately looks to Audrey -- and she kisses him. Long and hard. True.

As she pulls away, strangely, mystically, he breathes --

INT. RENO HOSPITAL ROOM - MORNING

And awakens in a dated hospital bed as MARILYN, 40s, a motherly, heavyset nurse tends to him.

RAY
Audrey? Where --

MARILYN
My name is Marilyn, I'm a nurse.
You're in a hospital, Mr. Fern.

He warily glances at an ancient man in the next bed over.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
You passed out in a casino, remember?

Gradually, it comes back and when it does he FREAKS!

He SPRINGS up and is YANKED down by his aching body and a CLANKING handcuffed wrist.

RAY
What time is it?

He looks to his other wrist but his watch his gone.

MARILYN
It's almost nine thirty.

RAY
(totally confused)
Nine thirty? Wait, what day is it?

MARILYN
Today is Thursday, your fourth day with us actually.

RAY
What?! That's impossible!

MARILYN
(checks chart, nods)
Yep, you've been here since Monday.

Ray sags into the bed as his body goes limp.

RAY
Oh, no, no, no.

MARILYN
We thought this was all from the car accident when you showed up.

He uses his free arm to cover his eyes.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
That's the Trooper's bracelet, by the by. Here, take a drink, Hon.

She hands a full cup to Ray.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
But then we called your doctor. Longstretch, right?

Ray spits up the water and Marilyn gets it without blinking.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
He told us about your condition. In fact, he and his team are already here. You're lucky to have a doctor who cares so much.

Ray cranes around her in horror at the window in the door -- and sees Wes' dark eyes glaring back.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
And don't worry, I called your wife and left a message. Audrey, right?

RAY
My wife? How?

MARILYN
The ER staff said you gave them all her contact info. Even told them she was a nurse, which means you can't be all that bad.

RAY
I don't remember that.

MARILYN
Well, she hasn't showed up yet. So, we still have time to make up a good story...
(winks)
Right?

Ray's eyes shut.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 18 DAYS

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - RAY'S ROOM - DAY

VOICE (O.S.)
Wake up, come on wakey, wakey!

A callused hand slaps Ray's eyes open and the first thing he sees is the 'Wanted' poster he made of Wes.

Then he sees the real Wes standing over him.

Ray points to the poster and has a pained chuckle.

Wes checks out the poster again and he nods, good one.

WES
Before you get any more ideas, I'm gonna be out there every second until we crate you up tomorrow.

A weary Ray motions back to the poster.

RAY
Come on, it's kinda funny, right?

Wes nods 'sure,' still smiling as he crumples up the poster.

WES
You know what's not funny?

RAY
(hopeful)
No?

Wes spits as the good times stop.

WES
What it cost to fix my bike.

WHAM! He punches Ray in the face and knocks him OUT.

INT. RENO BAR - NIGHT

Amongst the regulars, Audrey nurses a fishbowl-sized drink while writing on a cocktail napkin.

She pushes her ringing phone away, *when a shimmering blue light -- and then Dennis Tito appear behind her.*

He puts a gentle, imaginary hand on her shoulder.

She picks her head up and in the dusty mirror behind the bar, for a moment, sees...an astronaut.

DENNIS TITO
Hello, Audrey, I'm Dennis Tito. I was a jet propulsion scientist at NASA and then I became the world's first space tourist.

Audrey pushes her drink away, like she's had way too much.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
(clears his throat)
Okay, enough of that shit. Look, this usually never happens but I was wrong. And I'm sorry.

She subtly checks if anyone else is seeing this. They aren't.

DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
We needed you out there and Ray needs you now. Please. Before it's too late.

Suddenly, she WHIRLS around and no one's there.

Her phone, now right next to her, rings again. Now, she answers.

AUDREY
(into phone)
Hello?

A weak, raspy --

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
Hello Audrey, my name is Monte Manischewitz. Do you know how to get in touch with Raymond Fern?

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hat over his eyes, Wes rests his legs across the door.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - RAY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The ancient neighbor's blasting TV wakes Ray.

Trying to get the man's attention, Ray doesn't even see Longstretch sitting next to his bed in the dark room.

Longstretch gets up, turns the TV down and sits back down.

LONGSTRETCH
Do you know what you've done here?

Ray stares straight ahead, avoiding eye contact.

RAY
I sure hope I haven't disrupted the big merger. That would be awful.

LONGSTRETCH
I don't care about the merger. I have enough money.

RAY
What?

LONGSTRETCH
Don't misunderstand, Synthetica holds me responsible for you and I will bring you back to ensure the merger happens. But no, you've done something worse to me. Personally.

RAY
I should've been more thoughtful to the guy who poisoned me. Sorry.

LONGSTRETCH
Early in my career I did some things I'm not proud of. Clinical trials involving prison inmates that ruined my reputation. Ever since, I've been stuck with Synthetica running the guinea pig farm. I'm tired of it. It stinks and I want out. I have more to offer and I was going to finally prove that with you. All you had to do was the same thing you've always done, nothing.

Longstretch stands and faces the dark night.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT'D)
But now, after all this, that chance -- my chance -- is gone. For what? So you could run after some childish dream?

RAY
It’s not childish.

Now, Ray glares at Longstretch.

LONGSTRETCH
Training to be an astronaut is not. You, thinking you could be one of those people, is.

Longstretch glares right back.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT’D)
This is who you are. A guinea pig. And no one cares what a guinea pig’s dreams are. Especially me.

RAY
I care.

LONGSTRETCH
If you cared so much, you wouldn’t have waited so long to do something about it.

The dagger goes right into Ray’s sick heart.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT’D)
Maybe when we get you home we can salvage something for our ten million, who knows?

Ray covers up, unable to defend himself.

LONGSTRETCH (CONT’D)
It was never gonna end well for you Ray but it could’ve ended with distinction. Now, like so many others, it’s just gonna end.

On his way out, Longstretch turns the neighbor’s TV back up.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 17 DAYS

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - RAY’S ROOM - DAWN

Ray lays awake in bed as sunlight creeps into the dark.

He reaches to his bed table until the cuffs stop him. Using his other hand, he painstakingly grabs the phone.

It rings and rings.

AUDREY'S VOICE
Hey, this is Audrey. Leave a message or whatever. BEEP.

RAY
(into phone throughout)
Hey Audrey, it's me. I didn't make it to San Francisco, I'm at a hospital in Reno.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

POV:

The front door of the hospital swings open.

RAY (V.O.)
Longstretch is here too and he's taking me back home in a few hours...
(sigh)
Long story.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

POV:

Doctors and Nurses nod as we rush by, into an elevator.

RAY (V.O.)
I just wanted to call and say sorry for ditching you at a rest stop. So not cool.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - CONTINUOUS

POV:

The elevator doors open and we move to the nurses station.

RAY (V.O.)
I know you don't want to hear it, but I did it for your own good.
Your whole life is ahead of you and I -- well, it's too late for me.

INSIDE THE NURSES STATION

POV:

Behind a door, Marilyn is holding a tray with cups on it.

RAY (V.O.)
Thanks for everything, I...I'll never forget you. This is Ray, by the way, Ray Fern. Bye Audrey.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAWN

A NURSE taps Wes's boot with her foot, waking him.

WES
(groggy)
Yep, what's up?

NURSE
I need to get him ready to go. Would you like some coffee?

Wes doesn't even tip his hat before taking a cup.

WES
Yes, M'am. Thank you very much.

INSIDE RAY'S ROOM

Ray stares out the window, as the Nurse sets the tray down.

She takes off her glasses.

Then lets down her dyed, long brown hair.

NURSE
I can't believe you ditched me at a rest stop, so not cool.

Ray turns and sees AUDREY (!) in her original nurse uniform.

RAY
Audrey! What are you doing here?

AUDREY
I just heard your message. Such a load of crap.

RAY
No, it's not. I heard you talking to what's-his-name back there. I know your life back home is blowing up because of me.

AUDREY
My life back home needed to be blown up. And you know why I'm here.

She throws Ray a bobby pin from her hair.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Get those cuffs off, hurry.

RAY
Audrey, look around! I missed my meeting with the Russians, I'm chained to a bed, Wes is right out in the hall -- I'm over.

AUDREY
You want me to go, I'll go. But answer me this: do you still believe?

RAY
Believe in what?

AUDREY
Your dream. Going to space in one of those launches you and your parents would watch together. The dream that you've had since you were six years old. Well, do you?

DOWN THE HALLWAY

Wes grimaces at his empty cup and tosses it.

He doesn't look so good...and he starts running.

INSIDE RAY'S ROOM

RAY
Why? What does it matter anymore?

AUDREY
Doing something great is never easy Ray and no matter what Dennis Tito whispered in your ear, it's never done alone.

She waves off Ray's surprised expression.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
NASA jet propulsion scientist turned world's first space tourist. Come on, every idiot knows him.
(MORE)

AUDREY (CONT'D)
(snaps her fingers)
So, do you still believe or not?

Ray pauses as the wall clock loudly ticks forward when --

The DOOR FLIES OPEN and Wes bursts in.

His face is sweaty and his eyes are clouded, muddled.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
More coffee?

WES
You in big trouble little lady.

He staggers and teeters into the Ancient Man's bed.

RAY
What the hell is going on?

AUDREY
I drugged him. Horse tranquilizers.
How those cuffs coming?

Ray starts working the bobby pin, as Audrey leans in.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Ray, Monte called me -- he's getting
better by the way -- but he called to
say that the weather in Kazakhstan
has been nasty.

RAY
Kazakhstan?

AUDREY
Seems Kazakhstan is where the Bake-o-
nore station --

Wes gets up and LUNGES at Audrey, who easily sidesteps him.

RAY
The Baikonur Cosmodrome, that's the
Space Endeavor's launch site.

AUDREY
They had to scrub and postpone your
original mission. They're holding
your spot, if you want it.

They pause, as something inside Ray reignites.

Behind them, Wes wobbles to his feet for one last charge --

In bed, Ray finally unlocks the cuffs --

As Audrey turns and faces Wes.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Ugh, so fucking sick of this guy.

But before she can make her move, Ray jumps in front of her --

Closes his eyes and CLOCKS Wes!

Wes hits the deck and *Dennis Tito shows up, cheering!*

DENNIS TITO
That's my boy right there!

An amazed Ray turns to an equally amazed Audrey.

RAY
I still believe.

AUDREY
I know.

RAY
It's not too late to tell you I love you, is it?

AUDREY
It's never too late for that either.

They kiss, as the cuffs fall and clank to the floor.

EXT./INT. RENO HOSPITAL - MAIN ENTRANCE - MORNING

Longstretch, on his phone, walks up the steps and enters.

LONGSTRETCH
(into phone)
Don't worry, will have him back home today. Promise.
(listening)
I'll call you when I'm up there.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - MORNING

Audrey jogs behind a sheet-covered gurney, when she meets up with Nurse Marilyn carrying a plastic bag.

MARILYN
The good news: you won that roulette roll you passed out at.

Directing Audrey to the service elevator, Marilyn pulls out Ray's hell-and-back case and slides it under the sheet.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
The bad news: Veronica at the front desk just saw Longstretch.

As they wait for the elevator, a hand comes out from under the sheet, offering a stack of cash to Marilyn.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
(pushing it away)
Not necessary.

The hand goes back under.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Who hasn't wanted to take one last crack at their dream? I know I do.

As the elevator opens, the hand comes back looking to shake.

Nurse Marilyn takes the hand and puts Ray's watch in it.

MARILYN (CONT'D)
Keep an eye on this. Now go!

INT. ELEVATOR - MORNING

As the doors part, Longstretch checks the time and steps out.

INT. SERVICE ELEVATOR - MORNING

Ray flings the sheet off as he and Audrey go into action.

Audrey strips off her scrubs while a creaky Ray checks his battered suitcase --

RAY
We have enough left for the extra 250, barely.

AUDREY
The Russians leave in four hours with or without us.

-- and his NASA watch, now back on his wrist.

RAY
No stopping for lunch on the way to San Fran I guess.

AUDREY
What about Longstretch?

RAY
Didn't you say Max is gonna help with that?

AUDREY
Max is willing but not very able.

RAY
Give me your phone. It's time to put Longstretch under the microscope, see how he likes it.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Longstretch picks up his pace as he sees Wes' empty chair.

INT. MAIN FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Audrey steps out of the elevator, now dressed in leather boots and pants, as Ray discreetly talks on her phone.

She comes back for one more thing.

AUDREY
And oh, we might need a distraction, just in case.

Ray nods, holding his gaze on Audrey as she takes off.

INSIDE RAY'S ROOM

Longstretch barges in and sees the curtain pulled around Ray's bed.

The other bed, where the ancient man was, is empty.

From behind the curtain, he hears a groaning.

He reaches for the curtain --

MAIN FLOOR

Walking gingerly, with his head down, Ray blends into the hospital hustle bustle.

Everyone funnels around him, like ants on their busy way.

No one even notices him pull the fire alarm.

INSIDE RAY'S ROOM

Longstretch SWOOSHES the curtain back.

No Ray.

In his place is an unconscious Wes handcuffed on top of the ANCIENT MAN and the uncrumpled 'Wanted' poster on top of Wes.

ANCIENT MAN
(wheezing)
Get this dickhead off me.

Staggered, Longstretch examines the poster as alarm bells in his head and in the hospital DETONATE.

EXT. RENO HOSPITAL - SIDE PARKING LOT - MORNING

As all hell breaks loose in and around the hospital, a motorcycle rumbles up and stops in front of Ray.

Wes' black motorcycle.

The rider motions him to get on but he hesitates.

Off comes the rider's helmet and of course, it's Audrey -- yes, looking good in now full biker leathers.

RAY
You know how to drive this thing?

AUDREY
When your husband has a bike and your husband is always drunk, you learn how to ride.

Ray can't tell if this is a dream or reality -- and at this point he doesn't care.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Well get on already, we got somewhere to be.

Ray gets on, puts his arms around Audrey and away they go.

INT. RENO HOSPITAL - RAY'S ROOM

With a great view of the chaos in front of the hospital, the Ancient Man still wheezing and that infernal alarm still ringing, Longstretch grabs his phone.

LONGSTRETCH
(loudly)
Get me the Nevada State Police.

EXT. RENO STREET - MORNING

Turning the headlight on and falling right in line with a funeral procession, Ray and Audrey buzz through a red light.

Right past Dennis Tito observing off to the side. He pulls up his spacesuit to check the time.

DENNIS TITO
This is gonna be close.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

Ray clings to Audrey as they ZOOM onto the Interstate.

They pass a disabled van with a parking boot on it.

A couple with a cranky baby sees them fly past them.

As does a younger, playful couple.

As does an old man calmly enjoying a cigar in a fancy car.

They pass by a billboard of a man proposing with a diamond. A man, who with the haircut, looks like Ray.

A deer stands safely to the side, turning as they blow past.

As the opposite side of the highway sits in congestion, it's clear sailing for Ray and Audrey.

INT. AUDREY'S HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM (FLORIDA) - DAY

A knock at the door gets Max up and stumbling to answer it.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Max opens it and in full UPS gear is Ray's friend Kurt.

KURT
Ray said you had something for me?

Max pulls a small flash drive out of his robe pocket.

MAX
Make sure your boy gets this out as far and as wide as possible. This Longstretch scumbag deserves it.

Kurt takes it from him.

KURT
So does Ray.

MAX
What do I owe you?

KURT
Don’t sweat it, it’s on the house.

Max likes that. He steps back and gestures inside.

MAX
You want a beer? I just put two in the freezer.

KURT
Maybe next time.

MAX
Cool. Oh, hey do me a favor.

KURT
What’s that?

MAX
If you talk to Audrey, tell her I’m sorry. I should’ve done better.

Kurt nods ‘okay’ and takes off.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

Ripping away at the road, Ray checks the time.

Doubt and fear keep him scanning for trouble. He finds it.

Sirens and lights of two Nevada State Police cruisers are coming up strong behind them.

Ray points them out to Audrey, who leans on the throttle.

The Police keep gaining.

Up ahead is a massive construction back-up with red brake lights everywhere.

Audrey cuts across three lanes and onto the slim shoulder.

The Police take to the grassy median strip and try to stay with them through the traffic.

They can't keep up.

Audrey snakes through as they separate from the Police.

INT. OFFICE - SERVER ROOM (FLORIDA) - DAY

Amongst the massive humming server towers, Kurt hovers over Ray's other buddy, Dom, at work on a computer.

KURT
So what is all this?

Dom keeps his eyes on his screen.

DOM
Ray's complete clinical testing history with Synthetica.

KURT
Everything, even the recent ones?

DOM
Especially the recent ones. Audrey wrote it all down and kept copies on her home computer. I see why Ray likes her.

KURT
And what are you gonna do with it?

Eyes still on the screen, Dom hands Kurt a stack of papers.

DOM
That is a Google generated list of every newspaper, news website, medical, legal and business journalist in the world.

Running across several pages, it's a monster.

DOM (CONT'D)
After I set up a few dummy email addresses, we're gonna send Ray's file to them. All of them.

KURT
Fucked up what that doctor did to Ray, right?

DOM
Trust me, that dude is gonna wish he was the one who got poisoned when I get done with him.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

The minutes keep melting away as they are forced to carefully weave through construction traffic.

They've fallen behind and they know it.

TICK.

Ray keeps checking over his shoulder. No sign of Police.

TOCK.

Finally, he sees the end of construction up ahead.

TICK.

And just beyond that, a sign for the airport.

TOCK.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AIRPORT - HANGAR (SAN FRANCISCO) - DAY

A group of men in black suits shrug and board a private jet.

TICK.

EXT. HIGHWAY - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

The motorcycle careens off the highway onto the airport exit.

TOCK.

And soon thereafter, Nevada AND California Police follow.

TICK.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AIRPORT - HANGAR - DAY

The ground crew pull up the wheel chokes and open the hangar doors for a private jet with Russian markings.

TOCK.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A teenage Ray stands proudly by an incredibly detailed science project replicating space shuttle energy tiles.

A FLASH goes off as he shakes the hand of a NASA official.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AIRPORT - HANGAR - PRESENT

Following signs, the motorcycle heads to the private hangars.

TICK.

A guard comes out of a security shack and moves toward them --

TOCK.

But, they zip right around him and the gate.

TICK.

He yells after them, then turns to see --

Four Police cars busting right through the gate, after them.

TOCK.

AT THE PRIVATE HANGARS

They push around a corner and down a row of numbered hangars.

TICK.

The Police cars swing around the corner, closer.

TOCK.

Ray points to a hangar where the doors are wide open but there’s no plane inside.

TICK.

He quickly spots the plane rolling to the runway.

RAY
(pointing)
There! We can still catch it!

Audrey buries the gas and they go after it.

TOCK.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

With a trophy next to him, a young Ray shows a mock-up of an astronaut breathing apparatus to a few fellow students.

They all turn at once and smile as a FLASH seals the moment.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AIRPORT - RUNWAY - PRESENT

Screaming sirens turn Ray around to Police cars GLUED to their tail.

TICK.

The jet turbines CYCLE and the plane starts to pull away.

TOCK.

Ray stands up on the bike, holding up the case.

RAY
Wait, I got your money! I got your money!

Audrey red-lines the bike. It's just not enough.

TICK.

Ray stands on the bike calling out at the plane.

RAY (CONT'D)
This is my chance! This is my chance!

TOCK...

INT. GRADE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Standing in front of a functioning model rocket and launch pad, a very young, very small Ray beams as he shows off the medal around his neck to his parents.

His DAD scoops him up in his arms.

DAD
What do you want to do when you grow up, Ray?

His Mom's camera FLASH captures the knowing expression.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AIRPORT - RUNWAY - PRESENT

Ray desperately waves at the plane, as the Police circle.

Audrey eases up, she knows there's no way they'll catch it.

As another relentless second clicks off the clock...

...something crazy and wonderful and awesome happens.

The plane slows down.

The Police ease up for a second, equally surprised.

The aircraft door flies opens and the gangway stairs extend.

A Russian in a black suit, sticks his head out and motions them forward, 'Come on!'

Audrey doesn't wait.

She gets the bike right up to the plane, almost touching ---

Ray stands, the Russian holds out his arms --

As the slow reacting Police try to catch up --

Ray LEAPS!

The Russian catches him but Ray DROPS the CASE!

It jumps and hops on the gangways like a ROULETTE BALL -- until another Russian dives and snatches it out of the air!

Never get between a Russian and his money, indeed.

ON THE JET

The two Russians fight to pull Ray in, but he won't go. Not without Audrey.

He leans off the gangway. The Russians secure him.

Audrey shakes him off. He looks at the shrinking runway and reaches out for her, 'come on, come on.'

The Russians scream something important in Russian.

He reaches.

She veers hard right, right under the RISING gangway.

For the first time in hours, she lets go of the handlebars, stands and REACHES UP, UP, UP --

It's not too late.

Ray GRABS HER HANDS and the RUSSIANS YANK THEM ONBOARD.

The motorcycle runs out of steam and spirals to a stop --

-- just as the door is sealed and the jet takes flight.

EXT. COMMERCIAL AIRPORT - DAY

Surveying the take-off and the angry swarm of police left behind, Dennis Tito grins and drops his binoculars.

DENNIS TITO
Told you it was gonna be close.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 3 DAYS

INT. COSMONAUT QUARTERS (KAZAKHSTAN) - NIGHT

Audrey glances at a clock in the humble apartment and puts down the Russian WALL STREET JOURNAL she's reading.

INSERT -- WALL STREET JOURNAL

The picture of Longstretch being led out of the hospital in cuffs is satisfying to her in any language.

BACK TO SCENE

She hears the door and scurries off to another room.

Ray enters, looking lean and wearing an incredibly cool official mission jumpsuit.

AUDREY (O.S.)
Hello Comrade.

RAY
Privyet Tovarish.

Audrey returns, holding a camera and FLASHES a picture.

AUDREY
That one's for me.

RAY
(to jumpsuit)
What do you think?

AUDREY
Like it was made for you.

Ray is exhausted but sparkles when he kisses her.

RAY
Nice camera you got there.

AUDREY
Thanks, my boyfriend got it for me.
(smile)
Yeah, he's an astronaut.

He sets down a huge binder and falls into the couch.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
What's that, homework?

RAY
This is tomorrow's round of legal releases. Let's just say they're covering themselves.

Audrey joins him on the couch.

AUDREY
How are you doing?

RAY
Still dying.

AUDREY
Looks like you're finally living to me.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 36 HOURS

INT. BAIKONUR COSMODROME (KAZAKHSTAN) - DUSK

In a glass tunnel linking one part of the world's largest space complex to another, Audrey and Ray gaze out into a vast desert landscape.

In the distance a white Soyuz rocket stands, surrounded by retractable green scaffolding.

AUDREY
How did your medical go?

RAY
They're worried about my heart.

AUDREY
Any chance they don't let you go?

RAY
There's always a chance but it's unlikely. In addition to all the releases, they're not putting my name on the official flight manifest. Outside of these walls, no one will know.

AUDREY
You'll know. That's what matters, doesn't it?

RAY
(nods)
It does, but I'm worried too.

AUDREY
Remember, no disease has a 100% fatality rate. A lot of times terminal patients die of unrelated emotional causes, like suicide.

RAY
Oh wait, I feel better now.

She playfully punches him.

AUDREY
You know what I mean. And don't forget it goes the other way too. MRIs come back clean. Blood tests come back negative. Strange things happen. I've seen it. Not everything can be explained by numbers and statistics, trust me.

RAY
But what if something does --

AUDREY
Ray, you -- we -- have come too far for ‘what ifs.’ At this point, we just have to, you know, believe.

RAY
Audrey, if something does happen to me up there --

She holds her hand up, stopping him right there.

AUDREY
The only thing that’s gonna happen is what you’ve waited your whole life to happen.

RAY
But if I don’t make it back --

AUDREY
You will.

RAY
How can you be so sure?

Audrey gets close and puts her hand on Ray’s chest.

AUDREY
Because I know there’s nothing wrong with your heart.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 6 HOURS

INT. COSMONAUT QUARTERS - MORNING

A wide-awake Ray reaches over and shuts off his alarm before it goes off.

IN THE BATHROOM - MORNING

A dressed Ray takes a full, deep breath in the mirror.

He looks over his shoulder for the world’s first space tourist, but sadly, he doesn’t show.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 5 HOURS

INT. COSMONAUT QUARTERS - MORNING

Facing the door, Ray sits on the edge of the bed, ready.

He holds Audrey's hand, who sits in bed, still covered up.

A firm KNOCK at the door SHIVERS through them both.

He turns to her.

AUDREY
Say Hi to your Mom and Dad for me.

INT. COSMONAUT HOUSING - HALLWAY - MORNING

Portraits of former astronauts observe as Ray and two Russian officials stride down the corridor, into an open elevator.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 90 MINUTES

EXT. BAIKONUR COSMODROME - LAUNCH PAD (KAZAKHSTAN) - DAY

In full spacesuit, Ray and five other cosmonauts step out of the train shuttle and into the shadow of the one hundred ninety five foot Soyuz rocket.

Wind and engine exhaust whip through the barren landscape, as they approach a select group at the tower elevator.

Getting closer, Ray sees a Russian General, two senior engineers and in a sharp suit and tie, Dennis Tito.

THE REAL DENNIS TITO.

As the others discuss final details, Ray shakes what feels like an old friend's hand.

THE REAL DENNIS TITO
I'm so proud of you, Ray.

RAY
Thank you, Mr. Tito.

THE REAL DENNIS TITO
Please, call me Dennis.

RAY
Dennis.
(nervous laugh)
Who knew I had it in me?

A gleam in Dennis Tito's eyes.

THE REAL DENNIS TITO
We did.

As the others file into the elevator, Dennis Tito chokes up as he puts his hand on Ray's shoulder.

THE REAL DENNIS TITO (CONT'D)
It's time kid.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 30 MINUTES

INT. ROCKET - COCKPIT

The close-out crew stand on the chests of the cosmonauts and strap them in as computers and radios buzz with activity.

In the rear of the tight cabin, Ray winces as a crewman pulls hard on his four-point shoulder harness. Thumbs up?

Ray replies, thumbs up.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 1 MINUTE

EXT. BAIKONUR COSMODROME - VIEWING AREA

On an elevated platform two and half miles away, Audrey and the other officials and families gather.

She readies her camera.

Images FLASH between titles as classical cello music plays.

CUT TO: BLACK

TITLE: 10

Smoke engulfs the launch pad.

TITLE: 9

Sweat beads on Ray’s face inside his space helmet.

TITLE: 8

Audrey clicks one last picture.

TITLE: 7

Flames THUNDER out of the rocket.

TITLE: 6

Ray flips down the clear visor over his closed eyes.

TITLE: 5

The viewing crowd stands and grabs their binoculars.

TITLE: 4

The scaffold towers detach from the rocket.

TITLE: 3

Audrey looks down at the old NASA watch, now on her wrist.

TITLE: 2

Ray’s eyes open wide.

TITLE: 1

Blast off.

CUT TO: WHITE

TITLE: THE LAST DAYS OF RAY