

M-CAP2

A one-hour series

Pilot:
'When the Well's Dry'

Written by

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SHIMMERING DARKNESS.

A FLASHLIGHT BEAM swings around, unveiling a shiny, narrow ice cavern.

Heavy breathing, muffled.

INT. MARS GLACIER, DEEP BELOW THE SURFACE

Over the darkness, a face emerges inside a helmet, frightened. KIRKLAND BOYD (40s, academic) holds a flashlight in one hand, tethered by a string to his waist; in the other, he holds a HAND DRILL.

Kirkland stands on a small platform attached to a metal cable that leads high above. He drills into the ice.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
(via Kirkland's helmet)
How's it lookin' down there?

The drilling continues, then stops.

KIRKLAND
(into helmet mic)
Dark and cold.

MALE VOICE (O.S.).
I know, dude. One more sample and we can reel you up.

Kirkland stares at an open METAL CASE by his feet. Beneath his helmet: sweat on his brow.

A CRACKLING SOUND, coming from the ice.

Kirkland swings around, assessing the area around him. His breathing increases.

MALE VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Kirkland, buddy? You OK? Your bio readings are a bit high.

KIRKLAND
I heard a cracking noise.

Kirkland attempts to look down. His hands shake.

He shines his flashlight downward, between the platform and the ice -- the cavern expands deep below.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
You're totally safe. Stay focused.

Kirkland shines the flashlight up, still shaking. All ice until a speck at the top, where the cable disappears.

He replants his boots on the wobbly platform and drills farther into the ice core.

Another crackling sound.

Kirkland shifts, trembling, then stumbles on the platform. The drill slices through the string -- the flashlight slips between his fingers, escapes the string, and bounces off the platform into the cavern below.

KIRKLAND

No!

He drops the drill and grabs both arms around the cable, hugging it for dear life, as the light disappears below.

Kirkland HYPERVENTILATES -- sobbing, panting, whimpering.

KIRKLAND (CONT'D)

My light's gone. There's something... the ice...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Hold tight -- I'm pulling you up.

More crackling.

Kirkland SCREAMS.

SUPER:

"Six months later..."

EXT. DARKNESS OF SPACE (MOS)

Slowly giving way through...

An oval porthole window.

INT. TRANSPORT 7

Inside the window, a bunk, occupied. A WOMAN (late 20s, longish hair, determined -- even when dreaming) sleeps, a thin chain with a small RED CORAL PENDANT around her neck.

ALARM tone.

The Woman shakes off her blanket. Her lapel reads: "HALL."

She peeks out the window and sees...

EXT. SPACE

MARS -- in all its glory -- one ICECAP visible in the dim sunlight.

PHOBOS -- the larger of Mars's two asteroid-like moons -- hovers in the distance.

INT. TRANSPORT 7 - SLEEPING QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

The woman opens her mouth in awe.

AUTOMATED LOUD SPEAKER (O.S.)
Transport shuttle departs in T-
minus twenty minutes.

She continues to stare out the window, oblivious.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Kari -- come on.

The woman, KARI HALL -- somewhat naive, but always analytical -- turns to see her BFF, ZOE WASSERMAN (also late 20s, affable, immaculately dressed, plus make-up) standing -- courtesy simulated gravity -- above her. Kari looks her over.

KARI
Really, Zoe?

ZOE
You know what they say about first impressions.

Kari peers back out the window. She fiddles with her pendant.

ZOE (CONT'D)
No cold feet, ice girl. M-Cap One's new star hydrologist can't be late.

Kari still won't budge.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Hey, what is it?

KARI
It's... suddenly hitting me. How far away we are from everyone.

Kari turns to Zoe.

KARI (CONT'D)

What if we fail? What if there's not enough water to make the planet livable. Then what?

ZOE

This doesn't sound like you. Hey -- between the three stations, there are a lot of smart people here.

Zoe unwraps a pack of gum, offers a piece to Kari.

ZOE (CONT'D)

For your ears?

KARI

No thanks.

Zoe puts the gum in her mouth.

ZOE

Kari - I didn't leave anybody special behind, like you did. So I can't say I know what that feels like. But our mission matters.

Kari nods, as if maybe some of it got through to her.

ZOE (CONT'D)

See you up front.

She hops through the AIRLOCK toward the front of the ship.

INT. TRANSPORT 7 - CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER

Kari and fellow PASSENGERS (20s-40s) carry oversized backpacks toward the SHUTTLE AIRLOCK. Kari's PACK appears bulkier than most and unusually burdensome for her.

INT. TRANSPORT SHUTTLE

A cabin seating 12 passengers -- all seats occupied. Kari sits by the window, next to Zoe, strapped in.

AUTOMATED LOUD SPEAKER (O.S.)

Commencing landing procedure.
Gravitational systems disabled in
three...two...one...

The passengers' hair floats up and out.

Zoe blows a bubble -- watches it hover -- then POP.

Kari ties her hair into a knot, peers out the window.

KARI

Oh wow.

She closes her eyes. Zoe squeezes her hand.

EXT. TRANSPORT 7 - CONTINUOUS

The TRANSPORT SHUTTLE, a small craft, detaches from TRANSPORT 7, floating away as the ship continues to orbit the planet.

The ORBITAL MANEUVERING SYSTEM angles the shuttle toward Mars. It heads toward the planet as the Martian landscape expands, leaving the sun behind.

EXT. SPIRIT STATION - LANDING PAD - DAY

SPIRIT STATION, the largest outpost on the red planet -- dozens of connected modules built out of various compounds -- an impressive collection of technical architecture.

A rudimentary LANDING PAD resides on the outskirts.

The shuttle's REVERSE THRUSTERS FIRE as it descends onto the landing pad.

An automated connecting tube expands to meet the airlock.

INT. TRANSPORT SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Zoe wraps up her used gum, unclips, turns to Kari, wraps her in a big hug. Zoe stands up, wobbly.

ZOE

Whoa -- artificial gravity does not
prepare you for one-third Earth G.
I hope it works out for you.

Zoe squeezes Kari's hand, then lets go and pushes forward, following another PASSENGER into the AIRLOCK.

INT. TRANSPORT SHUTTLE - LATER

Kari adjusts her harness; she's the only passenger left.

AUTOMATED LOUD SPEAKER (O.S.)

Initiating lift-off. Estimated time
to M-Cap Two: three hours.

KARI
M-Cap Two?
(yelling)
Wait! There's been a mistake.

Kari reaches overhead for the COMMS button -- hits it. No response. She bangs on it again, furiously. Nothing.

INT./EXT. SHUTTLE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Kari observes the landing pad and station, surrounded by the GUSEV CRATER, as she ascends upwards. She watches out the window, tears streaming down her face.

The station fades into the distance, engulfed by the MARTIAN LANDSCAPE. A faint dust cloud approaches in the distance. Kari watches intently, glued to the window.

EXT. MARS - DAY

The shuttle navigates around the colossal MOUNTAINS of Mars.

EXT. SOUTHERN MARS - LATER

Shuttle approaches the SOUTHERN POLAR ICECAP of Mars.

INT. TRANSPORT SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Kari stares out the window at the ice, enamored.

EXT. M-CAP2 - DAY

A small outpost, the station resides in a flat area between rock formations, decorated with reddish pink dust.

A collection of ten can-shaped modules connected by one long tube, M-CAP2 is a log cabin compared to Spirit Station.

The shuttle lands on a patch of Martian dirt just outside the station's MAIN AIRLOCK.

INT. TRANSPORT SHUTTLE - DAY

As Kari unclasps her seatbelt and stands up, fuming. Forgets the change in gravity, wobbles, bumps into the overhead bin.

The cockpit door opens. CAPTAIN JAKE PARR (early 30s, intense, easy on the eyes) steps forward. Kari's speechless.

KARI

Jake -- you're piloting the shuttle now? What's going on?

She wavers, uneasy. JAKE grabs her, takes her in his arms.

JAKE

Easy there. It takes a beat to adjust.

He steadies her.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I had to see you made it to the surface okay. And selfishly, I wanted to be here for this big moment with you.

KARI

But we already said goodbye -- Jake -- why aren't we at M-Cap One?

She steadies herself, stands up, taking in the 1/3 G.

JAKE

It was a last minute thing. The hydrologist that was here -- something went wrong. And now the foundation says they need you here instead. That's all I know.

Kari's still adjusting, in her own world.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You okay?

KARI

I -- this is a lot to process at once. It's just -- the South Pole has barely one-third the ice of the North Pole. We can't prepare to colonize without better mapping -- I spent months preparing for that. I don't know what I'm doing here now. I need to get my bearings.

JAKE

Kari, reassignment happens to everybody at some point. I'm sorry it's not what you wanted. But listen, I've been thinking... what if I take a post here on Mars? I could transfer to Spirit Station.

(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)

We could see each other more. I could help you adjust.

KARI

That's ridiculous. It takes weeks by rover to get here from Spirit.

JAKE

Yeah, but I'm a pilot.

Kari gives him a blank stare.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You think I'm crazy.

Jake grabs Kari, gives her a serious kiss on the lips. She pulls away.

KARI

Jake...
(straightening)
Captain Parr --

JAKE

Oh come on.

Kari stares at the AIRLOCK. Jake stares longingly at her.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Look, I know our timing is crap. I'll keep your secret, if that's what you're worried about.

KARI

I told you I can't deal with a relationship right now. Stepping off this shuttle, this place, the job -- I need to do it all myself. I have nothing left to say.

Jake steps back, rejected and resigned.

JAKE

Okay. Let's get you suited up.

Jake opens a compartment containing Martian suits. He pulls one out and helps Kari into the torso.

Kari pulls up the pants while Jake picks out a helmet. Jake puts the helmet on her, latches it. A green light on her sleeve flashes. Kari gives a thumbs up.

Jake walks her to the airlock, leading to a small entry space. He closes the airlock behind her, watching it latch.

He codes into a panel next to the airlock; Kari waits, pensive. OUTER AIRLOCK opens.

EXT. M-CAP2 - DAY

Without wind, the Martian air emits a subtle ROAR -- in extremely thin atmosphere, sound waves travel farther. It's an eerie, unsettling, constant sound on the surface.

Kari steps out onto Martian soil. One giant leap for her. Her eyes well up.

She surveys the landscape, soaking it all in: rocks, mountains, red dirt as far as she can see. She's in awe.

She turns, sees Jake through the window, raises a gloved arm in a subtle wave, then pivots to face the station.

Kari stares at the station in front of her. Takes a deep breath, then steps away from the shuttle. It takes off, kicking up a plume of red dust behind her.

Absorbing her surroundings, Kari slowly jumps off her left foot, lifting the right into the air, arms out, then lands on her right. She wobbles on the landing, back down on two legs. Through the visor, her eyes exhibit a new expression: hope.

She approaches the MAIN AIRLOCK. A sign reads: "Mars - Polar Icecap Station 2." A small hand written sign, affixed with duct tape, reads: "You must be fucking crazy to come here."

Kari turns the wheel, opening the EXTERNAL AIRLOCK. She walks inside and it closes behind her.

INT./EXT. AIRLOCK - CONTINUOUS

BEEP - the "Pressurized" button lights up on the wall.

Kari removes her helmet and takes a breath -- all good.

She presses the "Interior Access" button. Airlock opens.

INT. PREP MODULE

The module appears in disarray, with various types and sizes of planetary suits hanging on walls or draped on the floor along with Martian boots, strewn about the reddish dust.

Kari looks around.

KARI

Hello?

No response.

She places her helmet and gloves in an open cubby and wriggles her way out of the Martian suit. She opens her backpack, takes out her shoes, puts them on. She gently stretches -- back, legs, arms.

Kari steps forward, turns a corner and heads into...

INT. CONNECTING TUBE - CONTINUOUS

Corridor connecting all modules of the station.

No sign of anyone.

A CLEANING ROBOT rounds the corner from another module, sweeping up the Martian dust as it goes.

Kari scratches her head, sighs, starts forward.

As she moves through the tube, she passes several individual modules that have been attached on either side.

She passes...

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGINEERING MODULE: Banks of computer servers in cases secured to the walls, across from a row of WORKSTATIONS with headsets, speakers.

Then MESS MODULE: Embedded kiosks line one wall, food processing units, storage units, liquid dispensers, trays. On the opposite wall, two tables with seating for eight.

Still no one. She continues poking her head into modules as she walks down the tube.

OPERATIONS MODULE: A large lighted planning table for eight resides mid-module. On it: laminated SCHEMATICS, laptop computers, graph pads.

Kari frowns, starts to turn away -- then her eyes lock on one of the schematics, recognizes it.

She leans over, sees: "Water Reclaimer."

CLANG.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

(distant)

Shit.

Kari heads toward the sound at the rear of the station.

KARI
Hello?

She passes...

BIO MODULE: Two small bathrooms, barely visible.

LAB MODULE: Heaps of Martian rocks cover wall-to-wall tables.

CREW MODULE: Four pods of two bunks each.

Still nobody.

BOT LOUNGE: ROBOTS and robot parts strewn about.

And finally, almost to the end of the station, she turns --

MICHAEL (MIKE) LEE (30s, Asian American, jovial yet focused) enters, considering a ROBOT ARM he carries, yells behind him.

MIKE
I don't think this one will --

He nearly bumps into Kari. Looks her over.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Who --

Kari extends her hand.

KARI
Kari Hall. Hydrology.

Mike holds out the robot hand. Kari stares at it.

Mike shrugs, continues walking, as Kari follows...

INT. BOT LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Mike tosses the robot arm on the table full of parts, wipes grease off his hand, reaches out to shake Kari's.

MIKE
Mike Lee. Pilot and lackey.

KARI
Pilot? Here?

MIKE

Yeah well. They keep me around because I'm also an aerospace and mechanical engineer. If I play nice, they let me drive the rover.

He grabs a robotic part.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Wait. How'd you get here?

KARI

Transport shuttle.

He turns, yells --

MIKE

We missed the shuttle.

He grunts, sorts through the parts pile. Grabs another part.

In stomps RYAN BANKS (late 30s, very put-together, stiff).

RYAN

Would it kill Spirit Station to give us notice just once?

He stops, stares at Kari.

MIKE

What does that mean for the supplies, Ryan?

RYAN

I don't know.

Ryan assesses Kari, frowns, then lifts an eyebrow.

RYAN (CONT'D)

So, you're the new addition.

KARI

Yes, sir. Hydrology and water resources specialist. My dissertation was on planetary ice formations. I did my post-doc in Antarctica and I was slated for M-Cap One. I'm honored to be here.

RYAN

(unimpressed)

Uh-huh. I'm Station Ops Director. Ryan Banks. Hope you know your stuff.

He trudges out, leaving Kari stumped.

MIKE

So hydrology. What's your other D?

KARI

My other what?

MIKE

Ph.D. Everybody's got two here.
What's your other one?

KARI

Uhh -- I only have one -- in
hydrology and water resources.

MIKE

Oh, tricky twofer. Huh.

Kari stares at her feet, suddenly uncomfortable.

He taps his fingers on the part, then remembers his task.

MIKE (CONT'D)

'Scuse me.

He heads to the last module. Kari tries to keep up.

INT. MED MODULE - CONTINUOUS

In what should be a sterile environment, the medical module resembles a robot MASH unit.

Two PATIENT STATIONS -- one for evaluation and short-term use, one for surgeries -- contain ROBOTS on the beds. Robotic parts adorn surrounding tables and ledges.

At the first station, FLINT GIBSON (40ish, pasty, unfiltered nerd) tinkers with a large drilling robot, DRILL-BOT.

At the second station, DR. VALERIE (VAL) JOHNCK (mid 30s, no nonsense), works on a smaller habitat repair robot, HAB-BOT.

MIKE

Anybody call an ice expert?

The other three look up to see Kari, who waves sheepishly.

KARI

Hello.

Val gives Kari a once-over; Flint ogles her while Mike carries the parts over to the hab-bot.

MIKE

Try these.

FLINT

She's almost ready.

VAL

Why do you give them all feminine pronouns? It's creepy, Flint.

FLINT

What? It's a beaut. Gotta be a her.

MIKE

Seriously? Its entire function is to operate a drill. Doc Val's right. Call it an it.

Kari stands still, bewildered.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Oh - This is Kari. Flint's Robotics and electrical. Doc Val's our physician and biologist.

Flint grins awkwardly. Ryan joins them.

KARI

Is the commander around?

RYAN

She's at the drill.

Ryan squints at Kari. Checks his watch.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Suit up. You're coming with me.

FLINT

Wait -- take Drilla.

Ryan sighs, hoists the drill-bot off the table.

INT. M-CAP2 - LAB AIRLOCK - MINUTES LATER

Suited, Ryan and Kari latch the inner lock to the prep module. Ryan squeezes around, moves to the outer lock.

RYAN

First time on Mars?

Kari nods.

RYAN (CONT'D)

There's a reason this planet's
named after the god of war.

He spins the wheel, opening the airlock.

EXT. M-CAP2 - DAY

Outside, one ROVER and Two TRAILERS collect Martian dust.
Ryan lifts the robot onto the trailer. Air roars around them.

EXT. ROVER - DAY

Ryan drives the rover across the dust, Kari in the passenger
seat, drill-bot in the trailer bed.

INT. ROVER - SAME

Kari takes in the surroundings. Ryan checks the comms gauge.

RYAN

This is where we lose contact with
the station. From here on out,
we're on our own. Just suit comms.

KARI

Roger that. So you've been here
since the project started?

RYAN

Yep. Six hundred and fifty-three
sols. Almost one Martian year.
Maggie -- Commander Reed --
requested me to run station ops.

He navigates around some rocks.

RYAN (CONT'D)

We worked together remote managing
Phobos Station while her husband
was sick... and after he died, she
needed a distraction and wouldn't
take no for an answer. She's
particular about how she runs
things. Solid crew though. Tough.

He gives Kari another passive once-over.

RYAN (CONT'D)

You might watch out for Flint -- he
can get a bit handsy.

EXT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

They crest over a small hill. Suddenly -- white fills the expanse. The SOUTH POLE OF MARS.

The rover turns, away from the icecap, toward another large area of ice, several kilometers across.

INT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

Kari's eyes fill with wonder.

EXT. GLACIER EDGE - CONTINUOUS

The rover drives onto the glacier.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - CONTINUOUS

The rover approaches the DRILL SITE, ice on all sides.

The DRILLING MACHINE spans outward with a circumference roughly 30 meters. The mechanism, centered above the hole (approx. 5 meters wide) is bolstered by five metal beams, anchored into the ground.

Another rover is parked nearby.

EXT. DRILL SITE - CONTINUOUS

Ryan's rover parks near the drill site.

COMMANDER MAGGIE REED (40s, Black, always in control, and in top condition) manually operates the drill controller. She sees the rover and stops.

Ryan and Kari get out, unload the robot. Maggie approaches.

RYAN
Special delivery.

He nods at Kari. Maggie steps closer.

KARI
It's an honor to meet you,
Commander Reed.

No noticeable expression on the commander's face. Hard to see much through the helmets.

MAGGIE
Doctor Hall, is it?

KARI
Kari.

MAGGIE
Good. We don't waste time with formalities here. Ever seen a drill like this?

KARI
Similar -- in Antarctica.

MAGGIE
I know you weren't scheduled for this project and I'll be straight with you: this is not a job for somebody green. That said, our last hydrologist was fairly senior and that didn't work out.

Maggie stares at the drill hole for a moment. The drill creaks. She furrows her brow, then turns back to Kari.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
We should've hit the sub-glacial lake by now. Hicks and the science directors have been breathing down our necks to get results. I know I don't have to explain to you that reaching water is our number one priority.

Kari nods.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Winter set us back more than expected and we don't have the supplies we need for spring drilling. Plus the drill bot keeps breaking from how dry it gets. So we do a lot of improvising. You won't last long unless you're a creative thinker. Book smarts don't go far here.

RYAN
Where do you want the bot?

MAGGIE
Plug it in, but don't turn it on yet. Hank's still down there.

Kari's eyes widen.

KARI
Someone's beneath the surface?

MAGGIE
We don't do this every day, but
it's more accurate to obtain core
samples ourselves.

Maggie heads to the edge.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Hank: bringing you up. Hold on.

Maggie plugs the robot into the mechanism, punches in a code.

The robot controls the drill release; the drill cable pulls up. A manual hand drill rests at the foot of the apparatus.

After a minute, HANK PERKINS (30ish, easy-going) arrives on a PLATFORM, his face obscured by the sun shining on his helmet.

Maggie packs up TOOLS into the other rover.

RYAN
I want to take Kari to check out
the reclaimer on our way back.

MAGGIE
Why don't you come back with me,
and Hank can show her?

RYAN
All right.

Hank approaches, carrying a metal case.

MAGGIE
Hank -- this is Kari Hall, our new
hydrology specialist. Kari --
Hank's areas are planetary geology
and chemistry. You two will be
running the lab together.

HANK
Oh -- sorry. It's kind of a mess.

He kneels in front of the metal case.

HANK (CONT'D)
Wanna see something cool?

He opens the case: a perfect ICE CORE SAMPLE.

Kari's eyes water. She kneels on the Martian dirt, takes a close peek at the ice core, sparkling in the sunlight.

KARI
It's exquisite.

INT. ROVER - LATER

Hank drives while Kari observes the landscape. Through his helmet, she can see he has kind eyes.

HANK
So, what brings you to this part of
the solar system?

Kari laughs.

KARI
I grew up on a lake, skated there,
and always found ice fascinating.

HANK
But you could study ice anywhere.

KARI
My dad worked at NASA. He was one
of the first scientists to identify
hidden water on Mars from the probe
studies. But he wasn't able to
complete his research.

Kari stares out the window.

HANK
Layoffs?

KARI
No... he and my mom died in a car
accident.

HANK
Oh, shit. I'm sorry.

KARI
It's okay. My aunt took me in.
Anyway, then some other stuff
happened and it all led me to the
conclusion that this was where I
needed to be.

Hank nods.

HANK

So, now that you're here... got any big plans?

KARI

I was going to map the Northern icecap. Now -- I'm still figuring that out.

She can't hide the wonder in her voice.

KARI (CONT'D)

What about you?

HANK

Nothing too interesting. I like rocks. And new places. They picked me for my psych profile. I get along with everybody. Well -- almost everybody.

EXT. M-CAP2 - SUNSET

Kari follows Hank around the top of the station. Through the med module window, she sees Val dusting off the hab-bot.

They approach the rear of the bio module, where the water reclaimer attaches to two massive tanks.

HANK

I call her Bertha. Been sluggish for a while. Then started getting unusual readings this morning.

KARI

What's with everybody naming the machines?

Hank shrugs.

HANK

It's a stressful environment. I guess naming things is an attempt to make it feel homier.

KARI

Is it working?

HANK

Truthfully? No. Most of the time I wanna beat the crap out of 'em.

He pries open the outer PANEL DOOR, wiping dust off.

Kari leans into the door and squints. Hank holds up a flashlight, illuminating the control panel.

Kari runs a gloved finger down the panel, checking switches.

KARI
Settings seem fine. Smaller than
what I've worked on, but newer.

She scrutinizes the WATER GAUGE.

KARI (CONT'D)
That can't be right.

She taps it, wipes off the glass, takes a closer look.

KARI (CONT'D)
It shows water at fifty percent.

HANK
What?

She shows Hank.

HANK (CONT'D)
Last time I checked, it was holding
at ninety. And the reserve tank's
already in use. Gotta be a leak.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
(through helmet audio)
Hank -- get inside. Reclaimer
alarm's going nuts.

INT. M-CAP2 - PREP2 MODULE - MINUTES LATER

Alarm blaring, Kari struggles to take off her helmet.

HANK
One sec -- I'll help you.

He removes his helmet, then unlatches and removes hers.

They can see each other clearly: instant attraction.

Hank holds onto Kari's helmet for a moment too long, gazing at her. A hint of blush on each of their faces.

HANK (CONT'D)
Oh -- sorry.

He hands her the helmet.

In the awkward silence, they remove their suits, quickly tossing them into cubbies.

Maggie sticks her head in the module door.

MAGGIE
Tell me we're not fucked.

BIO MODULE

Maggie, Hank, and Kari rush across the plastic bathroom flooring, past stalls and sinks to the WATER RECLAIMER INTERNAL PANELS adjacent to the showers. Maggie pushes Ryan and Mike aside.

MAGGIE
Out. Let them through.

Kari hits the alarm switch. All quiet.

She checks the internal readings.

KARI
Forty-seven. Still dropping.

She studies the structure of the module.

KARI (CONT'D)
What's under the floor?

HANK
Shower pipes.

KARI
If there's a leak below, the intake pump can't pull the water up.

MIKE
But nobody's been using the shower.

RYAN
Kitchen?

MESS MODULE

The five stare at the sink. Kari touches the basin -- dry.

MAGGIE
Damn. Med sink?

MED MODULE

The five of them enter, stop as they see Val, cleaning instruments in a small sink, listening to music on a headset.

MAGGIE

Val -- turn off the water. Now.

Val, shocked, turns off the water, removes her headphones.

VAL

What's going on?

MAGGIE

We're losing water, fast.

(to Mike)

How do we get this floor open?

Mike rushes out.

MIKE (O.S.)

Flint!

Kari gets down on her knees, assesses the floor by the sink. Small screws line the edges of the plastic flooring.

Flint enters, pulls the hab-bot off the table, turns it on.

FLINT

Hab-bot: remove floor screws.

The hab-bot UNSCREWS floor screws.

Mike comes back with a small crow bar and two screwdrivers.

MIKE

Here.

He shoves one screwdriver at Hank and works on the sink with the other.

Kari grabs the crowbar.

The robot finishes unscrewing floor bolts.

Hank and Kari pry up the plastic floor, uncovering a single pipe running along the wall to the edge of the module.

Mike removes the front of the sink compartment.

HANK

Anybody have a flashlight?

Maggie pulls one out of her pocket, gives it to Hank. He aims the flashlight under the sink.

KARI
I can't see a thing.

HANK
Me neither.

Kari puts her hand on the pipe, tracing along, to the edge of the wall. She stops short one inch from the wall.

KARI
Wait a minute...

She grabs the flashlight, returning to the spot she found. She runs her hand along the pipe again, underneath.

She stops and shines the light.

There, under the pipe, in the substructure: a small puddle.

KARI (CONT'D)
Water evaporates quickly on Mars.
We're lucky we found it.

She scoots out of the way, letting the others access the leak. As she stands, she winces.

INT. M-CAP2 - MED MODULE - NIGHT

Mike screws in the new pipe. Ryan duct tapes the edge.

BIO MODULE

Kari, Hank, and Maggie check the reclaimer panel.

KARI
Holding at forty-five percent.

MAGGIE
We'll need serious rationing. Time
to inventory all the liquids.

Her face turns ashen.

INT. MESS MODULE - NIGHT

Cartons of drinks, jugs of distilled water, various cooling liquids, other materials stacked about the module. Kari, Hank, Maggie, Val, Mike, Flint sit at the tables.

Ryan enters with one more small bottle of water.

RYAN
Here's the last one.

Kari finishes calculations on a laptop computer.

KARI
I need to run these again, but the reclaimer system won't be able to replenish at a sustainable rate. We'll run out of drinkable fluids in less than three days.

FLINT
Well, what are we waiting for? We have to call Spirit.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
You can't. They're in a comms blackout, remember?

AVERY CHANG (late 20s, petite, Asian American, perky) stands in the doorway.

AVERY
That's why I'm on the night shift.

She sees Kari and grins.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Hi, I'm Avery.

MAGGIE
Avery, we've lost half our water. Kari's our new hydrologist. She's working the problem.

Avery takes a seat next to Val.

Maggie stands, addressing the group.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Listen up -- Val will determine how much water each of us gets. Kari will work up a plan to stretch it as far as possible.

INT. MESS MODULE - LATER

Ryan finishes composting dinners. Kari remains at the table with a graph pad and the laptop. Avery sits with her.

RYAN

Wake me if you hear from Spirit.

Ryan leaves.

Kari does another calculation.

KARI

Crap.

AVERY

Same numbers?

Kari nods yes.

AVERY (CONT'D)

It'll be okay. Spirit Station should be able to fly an emergency shuttle here with water for us when they get comms back up.

KARI

If it's a couple days, we might be okay. A week... we'll all be dead. What happened to Earth comms?

AVERY

We never got set up. Supply rocket went off course. Every transport, Ryan hopes we'll get a shuttle delivery with parts for comms and the drill, but so far -- nothing. Maggie thinks they're stalling.

KARI

But that doesn't make sense. There's so much riding on this.

AVERY

I've been here five months and I'm still trying to figure it all out.

The module shakes. Kari braces herself. Avery seems unfazed.

KARI

What was that?

AVERY

Settling. Happens every few days.

KARI

Seriously? I've never heard anything about that.

AVERY

Yeah... robot missions didn't witness it. There wasn't much exploration down here before we arrived. It's kinda mysterious.

KARI

What does Hank say about it?

Avery shrugs, fidgeting with her hair. Kari goes back to her calculations.

AVERY

So I don't get it. The reclaimer isn't broken. Won't the remaining water still be recycled?

KARI

This reclaimer doesn't store much, since there are eight of us who need fluids. It will only work for the whole crew if it's above ninety percent. So I'm trying to figure out how -- or if -- we could make water out of the ice.

AVERY

From the glacier? I thought that was all dry ice.

KARI

The carbon dioxide comprises the top layer. That's why you get gas geysers in the spring. Problem is... I don't know how far down that goes. And once it becomes water-based ice, most of that is heavy water.

AVERY

Huh? I thought we were digging for salt water.

KARI

In the lake, yeah. The glacier above it contains mostly heavy water, made out of deuterium, a different type of hydrogen atom. It'll kill us if we drink too much.

Avery gulps.

INT. CREW MODULE - LATER

Kari sifts through her backpack on her bunk, across from Avery's empty bunk. Their pod door is ajar.

She pulls out a small mobile DEVICE, sits down on the bunk, scrolls the device, selects a video file, and presses play.

ON VIDEO

VIDEOMAIL ASSISTANT

News Alert: Report of the day, from Earth to Mars.

A somber NEWS ANCHOR reports.

NEWS ANCHOR

More uprisings this week in China, where resources are dwindling and the population has reached an all-time high. Recent negotiations between China and Russia regarding Siberian territory have failed. Coastal cities all over the planet have lost ground from erosion with sea level rise. The number of displaced families in the U.S. now reaches beyond five million --

Kari hits a button to skip forward.

VIDEOMAIL ASSISTANT

New messages. First Message: from Janet Hall.

AUNT JANET (late 50s) in a cozy house by a lake.

AUNT JANET

Hi hun. So glad you made it. Not a minute goes by I'm not thinking of you. Please let me know how you're doing... (in a quiet tone) with the gravity adjustment. I hope this was the right choice. Love you.

Kari fingers the pendant on her neck.

VIDEOMAIL ASSISTANT

Next Message: from Zoe Wasserman.

Zoe waves from her office on Spirit Station.

ZOE

Hey Kari -- it's so sophisticated here. Spirit Station facilities are immaculate. I'm still learning my way around. I heard about your reassignment. Such a bummer, but the mission there sounds so radical. Oh -- I ran into that Kirkland guy. He's like shell-shocked. Doesn't seem all there. Word is he heard something strange under the ice and lost it. Do you know what happened? Crap -- gotta run. Comms blackout.

Kari toggles to another recording.

VIDEOMAIL ASSISTANT

Next Message: from Captain Jake Parr.

Jake reclines in a transport ship cabin, hair tousled.

JAKE

I can't sleep. God, Kari... I know it's over and I won't see you for at least a year... but I miss you. And I'm worried. Be safe, okay?

BACK TO KARI

Kari wipes a tear from her eye.

A knock by Kari's door -- Hank. Kari shuts off the video.

HANK

I got out that ice core sample.

A tiny smile forms on Kari's face.

INT. LAB MODULE - LATE NIGHT

One table has been cleared off, making room for Kari's work. Hank's rocks are piled up on tarps on his side of the lab.

A crew photo, now visible on the clean table, shows 8 crew members: Maggie, Ryan, Val, Mike, Kirkland, Hank, and an UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN.

The metal case -- open on the lab table, under the light -- holds the pristine ice core. Kari and Hank, wearing gloves, huddle over it together.

Kari takes the laser, cuts into the ice core while Hank steadies it.

HANK
That's it -- nice and easy.

He beams at Kari.

She removes the slice, inserts it under an ELECTRON MICROSCOPE. She peers into the scope.

KARI
I've never seen anything like this.

Her necklace dangles from her neck. Hank notices.

HANK
Red coral?

Kari looks up.

KARI
Huh?

Hank points at the pendant.

KARI (CONT'D)
Oh. Yes. A gift from my parents.

HANK
It suits you.

Kari notices his gaze, then composes herself.

KARI
And here I thought you were going to tell me what it's made of.

She returns to the microscope.

HANK
Calcium deposits and iron oxide.

He plops into a chair, removes his gloves.

HANK (CONT'D)
Supposedly brings you courage. And good fortune with love.

Kari steadies herself. Then pivots.

KARI
Hey Hank?

HANK

Hmm.

KARI

What's the story with the settling?
I'm worried that could cause more
pipe leaks. And I was told that
Kirkland heard something... in the
ice. What do you think it was?

Hank leans forward.

HANK

Look, I've been down there a dozen
times and didn't hear a thing. And
the settling seems minor. It's
unnerving, I know, but we don't
have any equipment to monitor
tremors, so all we can do is hold
tight when it happens. Still,
you're right about the leaks. I'm
not sure what to do there. We take
one problem at a time, I guess.

Kari shifts her gaze, sees the photo, grabs it -- quickly
changing the subject.

KARI

Is that Kirkland?

She points accordingly.

HANK

Yeah. Our first crew photo.

Kari points at the other woman.

KARI

Who's this?

Hank stiffens up, opens his mouth, but can't quite figure out
how to respond.

HANK

She was the comms director before
Avery. She --

Avery rushes in.

AVERY

I got a message -- from M-Cap One.
You know that dust storm? The
reason Spirit's on comms blackout?

HANK

Yeah.

AVERY

It's massive. It's gonna hit them soon. There's no way Spirit's gonna get comms back for at least a week.

Kari panics.

KARI

We don't have a week.

HANK

Shit.

Hank gets up, follows Avery out.

LAB MODULE - LATER

Kari scans, scribbles notes as she observes the molecules under the scope. She's working fast.

Val appears at the door.

VAL

Heavy water?

She startles Kari.

KARI

Oh -- yes. So far.

Val saunters in.

KARI (CONT'D)

Are you on the night shift too?

VAL

I get three hours most nights. Not that any of us can sleep right now.

She leans on the lab table.

VAL (CONT'D)

After Kirkland left, I worked with Hank on some of the ice research.

KARI

Why did Kirkland leave?

VAL

As his doctor, there's a lot I can't disclose. But as a crew member... best I can say is this wasn't the place for him. He uhh -- didn't handle certain kinds of pressure well.

She regards the ice core.

KARI

Did you ever try to separate it?

VAL

The heavy water? No.

Val opens drawers, rummages, finds KIRKLAND'S NOTEBOOK -- brown, leather-bound. She rubs off a thin layer of red dust.

VAL (CONT'D)

If Kirkland did, his findings would be in here.

KARI

Doctor --

VAL

Val.

KARI

Val -- how long can we really survive with the water rationing?

Val shifts.

VAL

Two, maybe three days. If we could limit our activity, maybe we could stretch it out to four. But there's zero humidity here. We don't have any wiggle room. The station's redundant systems haven't been adequately supported. If anything else fails, we're done for.

KARI

So this ice is our only shot?

VAL

Call me a skeptic, but I've always thought getting anything tangible from this ice was a pipe dream.

At this, Kari goes on defense.

KARI

Then why are you here?

VAL

I'm studying how living in extreme conditions impacts the human body. I didn't figure death by dehydration into that equation.

She turns, heads back into the tube.

MED MODULE

Val makes a beeline to a cabinet. Pulls out a jar. Shakes a pill onto her hand. Swallows it.

She takes a deep breath. Slides down to the floor, where she pulls her knees to her chest.

She crouches, fixated on the patient stations, as if she's waiting for bodies to appear.

A tapping on the door -- it's Avery.

AVERY

Val? What's wrong?

She joins Val on the floor and grabs her hand.

VAL

I don't know. Sometimes I still see their frightened faces. They were both... changed.

AVERY

Kirkland and Laura?

Val nods.

AVERY (CONT'D)

You did what you could, getting them out of here.

VAL

None of it will matter if we can't find a way to stay hydrated.

Avery shudders and puts her head on Val's shoulder. For a moment, Val's stiffness dissolves.

INT. LAB MODULE - MORNING

The distant sun peeks into the window. Multiple slides litter the tabletop, with traces of melted ice.

Hank, sleeping in his chair in the corner, turns his head.

Kari, oblivious, stares at yet another slide, scribbles a number on her graph paper.

Maggie enters.

MAGGIE

Status?

KARI

As expected, after the CO2 layer comes the heavy water, then as we go farther on down, the lighter salt water gets mixed in. So we should be able to use deep core samples to separate the water molecules.

Kari shows the paper to Maggie.

KARI (CONT'D)

It's a fairly simple process -- alternating freezing and melting. Heavy water takes longer to freeze the light water. So we melt the ice, then we re-freeze it, and we should be able to skim off the light ice that's frozen first, repeating the process until we separate all the water.

MAGGIE

Sounds doable.

KARI

Problem is: it'll freeze too fast outside, so we have to do it in our freezer -- and that will take at least two days to get through the samples we have. In the mean time, we'll use up our water rations.

Maggie nods, pivots, nudges Hank.

MAGGIE

Hank -- get up. Got a job for you.

He opens an eye.

EXT. DRILL SITE - MORNING

Hank attaches to the cable with a carabiner and adjusts several core cases on the platform.

MIKE

You ready?

Hank puts a thumb up.

Mike lowers Hank down.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS MODULE - MIDDAY

Avery, headset on, adjust dials. Kari types furiously at one of the workstations nearby.

AVERY

Spirit Station -- come in. Spirit?

EXT. DRILL SITE - LATE AFTERNOON

Hank hefts the last core case up onto the trailer.

BOOM.

They turn toward the sound. A massive GAS GEYSER erupts not far from the drill site.

MIKE

Shit.

HANK

Where the hell did that come from?
Dry ice shouldn't be blowing this
early in spring.

MIKE

Let's get out of here.

He secures the cases.

INT. OPS MODULE - SAME

Maggie, glasses on, stares at a monitor, scans digitized maps of the glacier. Ryan pulls away from his workstation.

RYAN

I've gone over the inventory two
more times and I can't find any
other liquids we could use.

Maggie takes off her glasses, rubs her eyes.

MAGGIE

I'm out of ideas. And if we somehow manage to make it through this, Hicks will most likely send someone from Spirit Station to take over.

Ryan scratches his head.

RYAN

I know you don't trust him, but he's got to realize this has been out of our control.

MAGGIE

He prioritizes politics, not science. If he truly believes our mission here is critical, we should have the supplies we need. There's something else going on. I just hope we live long enough to find out what.

She puts her glasses back on, goes back to her computer.

EXT. MARS - SUNSET

The rover heads across the glacier.

INT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

Mike drives; Hank checks comms signal.

HANK

We're back in range.

Hank hits the comms button.

AVERY (O.S.)

Headed back already?

HANK

Geysers. Near the drill site. We got what we could.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS MODULE - SAME

Avery takes off the headset, bites her nails, turns to Kari.

AVERY

Times like these I'm really glad my
meds are implanted.

KARI

Meds?

AVERY

I'm bipolar. Funny, right? Here we
are at the South Pole?

She laughs nervously.

AVERY (CONT'D)

I'm fine -- as long as the implant
works.

Kari opens her mouth as if to ask a question, but instead
returns to her monitor, running fingers through her hair.

AVERY (CONT'D)

It's okay. Maggie and Val are cool
with it. What about you? Any
roommate secrets I should know?

Kari swallows, hesitates.

AVERY (CONT'D)

Okay, I get it. Maybe later.

KARI

Let's just say I'm not planning on
going back to Earth. It's not
really in the cards for me.

Avery leans in.

AVERY

Okay. Mysterious! But you might
reconsider after a winter here.
It's nothing I ever want to
experience again.

Avery resumes chewing her nails.

INT./EXT. ROVER - SAME

The rover traverses the ice. Another geyser erupts.

Hank and Mike exchange a tense look.

BOOM.

A geyser erupts below them, tossing rover and trailer onto their sides. Part of the rover dashboard dislodges, breaking the door. Hank, trapped, writhes underneath.

Mike climbs out the driver side door and over the rover, sees it teetering on the edge of a geyser hole.

MIKE

Hold on.

Mike attempts to pull the rover back upright. No use.

He climbs back into the rover, hits the comms button.

MIKE (CONT'D)

We need a med evac mid glacier.

Mike yanks on the dash, dislodging Hank. Then he drags Hank out into the clear -- blood trickling under his helmet.

INT. PREP2 MODULE - MINUTES LATER

Maggie and Val suit up; Ryan and Flint assist.

Maggie hands Val her medical bag.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - LATER

The working rover makes its way toward the geyser hole.

Another geyser blows in the distance.

VAL

Damnit.

Maggie floors it.

INT. MED MODULE - SAME

Kari and Avery clean the module while Flint, frantic, lugs remaining robot parts out.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - SUNSET

Maggie's rover reaches the other one. Maggie, Val rush out.

Val attends to Hank. Maggie rushes to Mike and the cases.

MIKE

All intact, minus one.

They each pick up two, carrying them toward the trailer.

VAL
(to Hank)
Your leg's broken. I'm going to
have to stabilize it. Okay?

Hank nods.

Val adjusts Hank's leg. Hank screams.

Mike and Val carry Hank to the rover. (Thanks to Mars's gravity, this is much easier than it would be on Earth.)

Val, Maggie hop on back of the rover. Mike starts it up.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - CONTINUOUS

The rover heads back in the same path.

Another geyser erupts nearby.

EXT. GLACIER EDGE - LATER

The rover reaches the edge of the ice, driving onto the red dirt. They made it.

INT. PREP2 MODULE - EVENING

Hank, leaning on Val, enters, hobbling.

Kari helps Hank remove his suit.

KARI
Where are Maggie and Mike?

VAL
They're taking the trailer around
to the main airlock. They'll bring
the cores in that way.

HANK
They recovered all but one.

INT. MESS MODULE - EVENING

A make-shift water lab -- Kari has turned the tables in the mess module into a space for freezing / melting.

A tarp hangs between the table area and the kitchen side. On one table: a metal basin. On the other: a plastic bin.

Maggie brings in one of the core cases.

MAGGIE
What's next?

KARI
I think that's it. Ryan moved the frozen food to the airlock.

Maggie leaves as Flint returns.

FLINT
Need anything? I got great hands.

He holds out his hands, a devious gleam in his eye.

Kari's unsure what to make of his comment, so she ignores it.

FLINT (CONT'D)
How're you gonna heat that?

Flint comes over, assesses the bin, invading Kari's space. He reaches out to put an arm on Kari's shoulder.

She evades, scoots over, opens the bin, holds up a small bag.

KARI
Hot packs.

FLINT
Hold up. I can do better.

He pulls out a step stool, climbs on, opens an upper cabinet. Pulls out an electric PANCAKE GRIDDLE.

KARI
What in the world...

FLINT
This was the one big personal item I chose to bring.

KARI
Of everything you could bring from Earth, you picked this?

FLINT
I love pancakes.

He winks, plops it on the table.

INT. MESS MODULE - NIGHT

Kari uses tongs to insert the first halved ice core into the metal basin on top of the pancake griddle. Flint observes.

The ice begins to melt.

INT. MESS MODULE - LATER

Kari pours the melted ice into a large pyrex-like container. Flint attempts to make conversation.

FLINT

So what's your personal thing?

KARI

Pardon?

Flint helps her carry the container to the freezer.

FLINT

The personal item you brought.

They open the freezer and slide the container inside.

KARI

I used to be a pretty serious figure skater. I had this thing about skating wherever I traveled.

FLINT

But you can't wear skates here -- your feet would freeze.

They close the freezer door; Kari steps away from him.

KARI

Not skates. I brought blades I can attach to Martian boots. Like old-fashioned skates, but bigger.

Flint crosses his arms, nods in approval.

INT. MED MODULE - LATER

Val cleans up. Kari finds Hank asleep on the surgical bed.

VAL

I had to go in to reset the leg.
Not an easy break.

Hank grunts and opens his eyes.

HANK

Hey.

Kari approaches his bedside.

KARI

How do you feel?

HANK

Really glad Mars has low gravity.

Kari laughs, a little.

HANK (CONT'D)

Seriously... if I'd been in a car on Earth, my leg would be trashed.

KARI

I'm so sorry, Hank...

Hank grabs her hand.

HANK

Hey now. It was our only option.

KARI

I had no idea the geysers would start so soon --

Val notices the intimate moment, quietly takes her leave.

HANK

None of us did. Science can only take us so far. How's the testing?

Kari perks up, pulls her hand away.

KARI

We put the first sample in the freezer. Should be able to see if it separates in a half hour or so.

INT. MESS MODULE - NIGHT

All crew but Hank are present, waiting. Everyone's haggard, with bags under their eyes. Nobody's slept in days.

Kari and Flint pull the container out of the freezer. There's a thick layer of ice on top of water.

VAL

Would you look at that. It worked.

KARI
Now to test it.

They move the container to the table. Kari uses tongs to peel the ice sheet off the top and put it into a pan.

She carries the pan to...

LAB MODULE

Kari slices off a small chunk of the new ice and places it under the microscope.

The rest of the crew watch from the doorway.

Kari switches the scope to more views, makes a note.

Mike coughs. The others stare at him.

MIKE
What?

Kari makes one more switch. Does a calculation.

KARI
The test worked. Two-thirds light water. We need to repeat the process at least once more.

RYAN
But will that be enough?

KARI
No. We still need another load of core samples to reach nominal.

MAGGIE
It's a big risk sending any of you out on the ice with active geysers.

For a moment, nobody speaks. Then --

MIKE
What if we do it at night, when it's colder?

KARI
Cuts the chances, maybe by half.

Sleep deprivation catching up to Kari, she wobbles.

VAL

You're all overdue on rest.
Mistakes will be made.

MAGGIE

Right. Let's try to sleep and
reconvene in a couple hours.

INT. CREW MODULE - LATE NIGHT

Kari pulls items out of her backpack. She unwraps a photo of her with her aunt, places it next to her bunk.

She removes the large BUNDLE in the back and opens it, unveiling the BLADES. She smiles slightly.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS MODULE - SAME

Avery's asleep at her desk. Val enters, closes the door, locks it.

She places her arm at the small of Avery's back, rubs it. Avery wakes, sees Val, checks the door.

VAL

I thought you could use company.

AVERY

Is this gonna work? Are we all
gonna die?

Val runs her fingers through Avery's hair.

VAL

Let's not think about it right now.

She lifts Avery up, pulls her head towards her, kisses her.

They hold onto each other in a tense embrace.

INT. CREW MODULE - MORNING

Kari wakes, disheveled, in pajamas adorned with bright colored planets. She checks her watch.

Getting out of bed, she steps on the pouch of blades.

KARI

Ow --

She pulls out the pouch, realigns the blades to fit better under the bunk. But then she stops and stares at them.

COMMAND MODULE

Kari arrives, still in her pajamas. Maggie and Ryan look up from a laminated map of the ice cap.

RYAN
Nice PJs.

Kari blushes.

KARI
Any word from Spirit Station?

RYAN
Nothing.

Kari frowns, but stands tall, with a newfound confidence.

KARI
I had an idea. How far is the drill site from the glacier edge?

MAGGIE
About eight kilometers. Why?

KARI
How heavy is the trailer?

RYAN
On Mars... maybe fifteen kilos.

KARI
And the robot can run the drill on its own?

MAGGIE
When it works.

KARI
Is Flint still up?

RYAN
I think so.

Kari turns and leaves.

INT. MESS MODULE - MINUTES LATER

Flint wanders in, yawning.

FLINT

I got four more core halves done on first separation. Figured you should do the secondary ones.

KARI

Perfect.

FLINT

So what do you want with Habbie?

KARI

Can she use a manual drill?

He grins.

INT. COMMAND MODULE - LATE MORNING

Kari addresses all seven other crew members. Hank's in a leg brace, leaning on the wall, a cane at his side.

KARI

...It's the only way.

MIKE

It's doggone brilliant.

RYAN

I think it's nuts.

AVERY

But it might work, right?

MAGGIE

Might. That's the key here.

(to Kari)

It might also kill you.

KARI

We don't have any other choice.

Maggie turns her attention to Hank.

MAGGIE

Hank, what do you think? You've put the most hours in on that drill.

HANK

It's dangerous. A lot of things could go wrong.

Kari frowns.

HANK (CONT'D)
But it's our best shot.

Maggie takes a moment...

VAL
I don't feel comfortable with this.
She has the least time with the
drill of anyone here. She's never
been down there. All kinds of
things could go wrong. And it's
ludicrous to just send one person
when all our lives are at stake.

MAGGIE
Feel free to propose something
better.

Val shifts, speechless.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
Okay, let's do it.

Kari brightens.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)
One condition: we need a recovery
plan in case this thing goes South.

MIKE
I hate to break it to you, chief,
but we can't go much farther South.

INT. PREP2 MODULE - LATE AFTERNOON

Maggie secures Kari's suit. Avery hangs out nearby. Mike's
ready, with the hab-bot.

AVERY
Be safe, 'kay roomie?

Avery gives Kari a big hug; Kari squirms. She puts on her
helmet. Avery attaches a head lamp on top.

AVERY (CONT'D)
Extra battery.

She hands a battery to Kari, who pockets it.

INT./EXT. ROVER - SUNSET

The sun sets as the rover crests the hill, approaching the glacier, hab-bot and core cases on the trailer.

MIKE
You sure about this?

KARI
No. I've never been so scared.

EXT. GLACIER EDGE - SUNSET

Mike detaches the trailer, pulls it over onto the ice.

He re-secures the hab-bot and cases.

Next, he attaches a make-shift harness -- ropes and carabiners -- to the trailer.

Kari opens her backpack, revealing the pouch with the blades inside. She unzips the pouch and lifts up a boot.

She pulls out one blade, with a plastic skate guard attached. She fastens the blade to the boot, SNAPS it on.

Mike approaches.

MIKE
All set.

Kari secures the other blade on the boot. She takes a deep breath and her eyes well up.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Hey there -- you okay? No crying in helmets. That's the rule.

KARI
I --

She stands up and walks to the edge of the ice, removing one guard at a time as she steps onto the ice, gliding forward.

Her eyes well up again and she shrugs it off.

MIKE
Wait a sec.

He pulls a mobile device from his pocket, holds it up.

MIKE (CONT'D)
Say cheese.

Mike takes a photo.

KARI
I can't believe you did that.

Mike shrugs.

MIKE
Needed proof. First person to ice
skate on Mars. Think of the
publicity we'll get if this works.

KARI
Think of our corpses if it doesn't.

The sun disappears behind the horizon.

Kari, wobbly, skates in a circle.

MIKE
What is this, competition practice?
We're on a timeline here.

Kari stops in front of Mike, takes a deep breath.

KARI
Can I tell you something that you
can't repeat to anyone?

MIKE
Always.

KARI
There's a thing I have... I was
told I would never skate again.

MIKE
Oh shit.

KARI
Connective tissue disorder. I was
getting all these injuries and my
back -- it couldn't take the
pressure. Doctors were saying
things about steel rods and
wheelchairs. But Mars' gravity...

Mike's eyes light up.

MIKE
Game changer.

KARI

I've never used these. I haven't been on the ice in five years. I have to get a feel for them or I could fall and get run over. Not to mention that this is dry ice.

MIKE

'Nuff said. I'll give you a minute.

Kari skates a bit farther, attempts to stop, slips, falls forward, lands on her knees. Mike cringes.

Kari gets up, straightens her pants, skates to the trailer.

She makes a wobbly stop in front of the trailer, hooks the harness over her shoulders, carabiner attached at her waist.

MIKE (CONT'D)

You sure about this?

She gives Mike the thumbs-up.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Comms should work maybe two kilometers. Then you're on your own. I have to go recharge the rover at the station, but I'll be back here before first light.

Kari nods, holds up her wrist nav device.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Don't take chances. Get the samples and get out of there.

Kari attempts to dislodge the trailer; it won't budge.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Need a push?

KARI

I got it.

She tries again. This time, the trailer loosens up, starts moving. Kari digs into the ice, picking up momentum.

She slowly pulls the trailer away from the glacier's edge.

Mike holds up his device and takes another photo.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - EVENING

Kari checks her watch again, continues on her trajectory.

POP.

A faint geyser in the distance, but Kari can't see it.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - LATER

Twilight. Kari continues to skate. The faint light of the trailer illuminates her legs.

She turns on her head lamp for guidance, checks her watch.

KARI
Half way there.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - NIGHT

Kari approaches the drill site.

She coasts toward the drill, stops. Unclasps blades.

She removes the harness and takes the bot from the trailer.

EXT. DRILL SITE - NIGHT

Hab-bot waits on the platform with the core cases.

Kari steps over to the drill-bot, sets the program.

After a few seconds, the drill cable kicks into gear, lowering the drill platform down into the ice cavern.

EXT. DRILL SITE - NIGHT

Kari watches the drill console light up in the darkness.

Indicator reading: 1.18km.

The cable stops. Kari picks up the hab-bot remote.

KARI
Okay Habbie, work your magic.

She punches a button.

INT. MARS GLACIER - NIGHT

The hab-bot lights up, lifts the manual electric drill.

It drills into the ice next to it, gradually making way to collect a sample.

EXT. DRILL SITE - NIGHT

Kari attends the hab-bot remote, awaiting a reading.

ON REMOTE

KARI (O.S.)

Come on...

Bot reading: "1"

BACK TO KARI

Kari jumps up and down.

INT. COMMAND MODULE - SAME

Mike shuffles a deck of cards. Hank checks his watch.

HANK

Should be drilling by now.

Mike continues to shuffle.

MIKE

So, what do you think of her?

HANK

Kari? She seems smart. Competent.
Why? You don't like her?

MIKE

She's cool. This isn't about me.

Mike gives Hank a concerned look.

HANK

That's not happening again. She's
my lab mate. I'm not... Just deal.

Hank bristles at an uncomfortable memory.

EXT. DRILL SITE - LATE NIGHT

Kari checks the hab-bot remote again.

ON REMOTE

Bot reading: "4"

BACK TO KARI

She lets out a sigh of relief.

The remote lets out an unpleasant buzz.

ON REMOTE

"Process Malfunction"

KARI (O.S.)

What?

Kari taps a "Diagnostics" button.

A BLUE LINE moves across the screen.

Bot alert: "Process Malfunction"

KARI (CONT'D)

Shit.

EXT. DRILL SITE - LATE NIGHT

The cable churns. Kari stands at the edge of the drill mechanism, peering down. Nothing yet.

The platform slowly emerges, hab-bot intact, with four cases.

Kari removes the cases and the bot from the platform.

KARI

Well you look fine, Habbie. What's the trouble?

She grabs the drill from the robot and pushes the power button. No juice.

KARI (CONT'D)

No. No. No.

Kari opens the drill battery compartment, sees the old battery, the size of a mobile phone. She opens her pocket: batteries the size of her thumb.

KARI (CONT'D)
Seriously? Extras for the helmet,
but not the auto-drill?

Kari runs to the main drill control center, searches.

No batteries. What she finds: hand drill and a head lamp.

Kari loads the remaining core cases onto the trailer and attaches the hab-bot.

She heads back to the drill-bot, preps it to run.

KARI (CONT'D)
This is it, Drilla.

She pushes the "Initiate" button, runs toward the platform, clips onto the cable with a carabiner.

The drill lowers her into the cavern. Kari holds the drill-bot communicator, adjusts the head lamp.

INT. MESS MODULE - SAME

Avery paces. Ryan leans against the counter, checks his watch, folds his arms. Flint opens the freezer, tests the ice, continues his work.

Val joins them. Flint sneers.

VAL
What's your issue?

FLINT
Did you have to point out how
inexperienced Kari is?

VAL
Somebody had to. It's a huge risk
putting all our lives in her hands.

He steps toward her.

FLINT
What would you do? Kill half of us
and recycle the blood?

VAL
You her B.F.F. now? Got a crush?

FLINT
Hey I didn't sign up for celibacy.
Clearly neither did you.

Flint glances at Avery.

AVERY
At least Kari has a chance.

Ryan puts a hand on Flint's arm.

RYAN
Hey. This isn't helping.

Flint shrugs Ryan away.

Val walks out. Nobody says a word.

INT. MARS GLACIER - MINUTES LATER

The platform slows to a halt. Kari attempts to balance herself, opens one of the cases.

KARI
Here goes nothing.

She sets up the drill at a smooth spot, begins to crank.

INT. COMMAND MODULE - SAME

Evidence of many card games. Hank puts his head on his arm.

HANK
I can't do this any more.

MIKE
I'm going.

He gets up.

INT. MARS GLACIER - NIGHT

It's eerily quiet inside the glacier.

Kari pulls a core out of the glacier and gingerly places it into one of the cases. She latches the case, places it next to three others. Ponders for a moment.

KARI
This should do the trick...

She pauses, analyzing.

KARI (CONT'D)
Screw it. One more.

She opens another case and starts drilling into the ice.

EXT. GLACIER EDGE - LATE NIGHT / EARLY MORNING

The rover pulls up at the same spot where Mike dropped off Kari. A hint of light caresses the horizon.

INT. MARS GLACIER - SAME

Kari slides out the last core sample and places it inside the case. She heaves a sigh of relief. Head lamp FLICKERS.

KARI
No.

She removes the lamp from the helmet and gets onto her knees. She taps her watch for a faint light, pulls the dying battery from the lamp. Then reaches into her pocket.

She places the new battery into the lamp, pushes and - TWANG - the battery bounces off, onto the platform, into the abyss.

KARI (CONT'D)
No!

She's in near complete darkness. Her breathing picks up, bordering on hyperventilating.

KARI (CONT'D)
This can't be happening.

Fumbling in darkness. Strained breaths.

A CRACKLING SOUND.

Her breathing gets faster.

RUMMAGING. CLICK. Finally -- a dim stream of LIGHT from a small flashlight.

On her face: pure fear.

Another crackling.

Kari turns in the direction of the noise, shines the flashlight at the ice. Sees nothing.

KARI (CONT'D)
I gotta get out of here.

She fumbles for the drill-bot remote.

Holding the flashlight over the remote, she finds the "Retract" button.

KARI (CONT'D)
Oh please let this work.

She hits the button. Nothing.

KARI (CONT'D)
Come on... come on.

The platform JOLTS, starts the ascent. She grabs on, both arms hugging the cable, shaking.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - EARLY MORNING

Mike paces by the edge of the glacier as the sky lightens.

MIKE
Come on Kari... where are you?

INT. MARS GLACIER - SAME

Still kneeling on the platform, holding onto the cable with both hands, Kari looks up. She sees a tiny speck of light.

Light expands as she approaches the top. The platform clicks.

EXT. DRILL SITE - CONTINUOUS

Kari stumbles off the platform, onto the ice above.

She kisses the ice, gets up, goes to the platform, pulls the core cases off.

BOOM.

A geyser erupts nearby, jostling an external drill support.

KARI
Shit.

Kari grabs two cases, rushes to the trailer, hoists them on.

Goes back, gets three more, one under her arm. Runs to the trailer, attaches the remainder. Secures them all on top.

Pausing briefly, she glimpses the hab-bot and drill-bot.

POP.

A smaller geyser erupts in the distance.

The drill CREAKS.

Kari races to the front, puts on the harness, bends down, attaches her blades.

KARI (CONT'D)
Sorry Drilla.

Kari digs in, pushes off the ice, with the trailer in tow.

Kari speeds up, grimacing under the pressure.

The trailer reaches the edge of the drill site.

Another creak. Kari turns, checks behind her.

One more support releases from the ice. The drill leans over and the platform lunges into the side of the ice with a THUD.

Kari stares at the wreckage for a moment, then keeps skating.

EXT. GLACIER EDGE - MORNING

Mike paces, checks his watch. Stops. Squints at the horizon.

Checks the position of the sun. Resumes pacing.

A faint sound from his communicator. He turns up the volume.

KARI (O.S.)
Mi - almost -

MIKE
(into communicator)
Kari, I'm here. You okay? Kari?

No response.

EXT. MARS GLACIER - MORNING

Kari huffs, scans the area, towing the trailer behind her.

POP. A remote explosion.

She keeps skating.

BOOM.

A huge PLUME of ice and gas explodes right in front of her.

She veers right in an attempt to miss it. The trailer catches air, causing Kari to stumble...

EXT. GLACIER EDGE - SAME

Mike tries again.

MIKE

Kari. Kari.

Nothing.

He goes to the rover, pulls out a set of binoculars, attempts to see through his helmet and the binoculars.

BINOCULAR VIEW

A moving speck. Coming closer. It's Kari.

BACK TO MIKE

Mike raises his arms in celebration.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Woohoo!

Mike runs onto the ice while Kari and the trailer slow down. She almost overshoots the edge, and stumbles to stop.

She removes the harness and crawls onto the dirt.

KARI

I've never been so happy to see dirt.

INT. PREP2 MODULE - LATER

Kari removes her helmet; Mike stacks the last case in a pile.

Ryan rushes in.

KARI

Let's get these to the mess mod.

Kari unclasps her suit while Mike and Ryan carry cases out.

Hank hobbles in and sees Kari, alone. Their eyes lock.
Hank drops his cane and steps toward Kari. They embrace.
He pulls back, clears his throat. The awkwardness returns.

HANK

First skater on Mars, huh?

Kari blushes.

HANK (CONT'D)

Mike would've wallpapered your bunk
with photos, but paper's scarce.
Oh by the way... while you were
gone, we got the second batch into
the reclaimer. You were right:
sixty-five percent.

KARI

It worked?

Hank grins, picks up his cane, follows her into the tube.

INT. BIO MODULE - DAY

Kari pours the last pitcher of water into the RECLAIMER TANK
while the rest of the crew watch.

She sets the pitcher down on the floor, closes up the panel.

Resets water gauge, reads it, turns back toward the group.

KARI

Ninety-one percent.

A chorus of cheers. Kari leans against the wall in relief.

Avery wraps Kari in a bear hug. Mike picks them both up and
spins them around. (Mars gravity.)

Ryan turns on a sink, fills a cup with water, takes a sip.

RYAN

Tastes like water.

More cheers.

Val sighs in relief, disappears into the connecting tube.

INT. MESS MODULE - LATER

Maggie guzzles water while Ryan sips.

RYAN

You didn't drink your share while
we were rationing, did you?

No response from Maggie. Ryan sighs.

RYAN (CONT'D)

How many times do I have to tell
you -- this crew is no good without
their commander?

Central ALARM goes off.

AVERY (O.S.)

(over loud speaker)

Incoming message.

Ryan and Maggie drop their cups and rush out.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS MODULE - MOMENTS LATER

Maggie picks up the headset.

MAGGIE

This is M-Cap Two. Who is this?

STANLEY (O.S.)

(a Southern twang)

This is Spirit Station, over.
Stanley here. We got your distress
call. What's your status?

The rest of the crew has gathered in the mod.

MAGGIE

Nice to hear from you, Spirit. We
nearly ran out of fluids, but we
can report we were able to make
drinkable water from the glacier.

A significant pause.

STANLEY (O.S.)

Did y'all say you made drinkable
water out of Martian ice?

MAGGIE

That's right. Please update Hicks.
We'll send a full report tomorrow.

STANLEY (O.S.)
Yes, ma'am. Well, I'll be damned.

Ryan picks up a headset.

RYAN
Hey Stanley -- we could really use those spring supplies. Oh and by the way, the drill collapsed, so we're gonna need new support tethers and additional robot parts.

STANLEY (O.S.)
The drill what?

RYAN
And we need another rover. Ours blew up.

STANLEY (O.S.)
Come again?

MAGGIE
Just tell him the new hydrologist saved our skins.

STANLEY
Y'all can tell him yourselves. He'll be wantin' to authorize this in person.

Maggie's face tightens.

MAGGIE
It's been months on the supplies. If our mission is so critical, why the continued red tape?

STANLEY
I'm just doin' m'job, ma'am.

Maggie yanks off her headset and storms out.

INT. COMMAND MODULE - NIGHT

The crew sits around the table holding mugs of wine. Ryan fills up his mug last, raising it for a toast.

RYAN
A bit overdue, but let's welcome our newest crew member, Kari Hall.

MAGGIE

To Kari.

They clink mugs and drink. Kari smiles, seeing looks of respect on the faces of Maggie and Ryan for the first time.

She notices Hank admiring her; he shifts his eyes away. Mike sees the exchange.

INT. CREW MODULE - NIGHT

Kari, in her pajamas, exhausted, settles onto her bunk. As she repositions her back, her necklace catches her hair. She untangles it and a tear appears in her eye.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

It'll get easier.

Kari turns, startled. Maggie enters, sits down by Kari.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry we weren't able to give you a proper orientation -- turned out to be more of a hazing ritual.

Kari smiles faintly.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Not sure what we would've done without you here. Thank you.

KARI

I uhh... just glad I could help.

MAGGIE

I'm serious. It takes quite an effort to earn the respect of this crew. They've been through a lot -- long hours and a year in the dark together -- hasn't been easy. Mars changes people.

KARI

How did you survive all that darkness for so long?

MAGGIE

We have to choose our battles carefully. And we try to make it so none of us are ever truly alone.

Maggie puts a hand on Kari's shoulder.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Tomorrow we have to defend our actions to my boss and figure out how to get the drill repaired.

She stands up.

KARI

That reminds me -- I was thinking about the behavior of the ice... Even with recent high temps, that doesn't explain the geyser bursts. And I heard crackling sounds in the ice inside the glacier. That shouldn't happen. Unless --

MAGGIE

Seismic activity?

KARI

Maybe. It would make sense with the settling we've been having here.

MAGGIE

Well, whatever it is, we won't figure it out tonight. If there's anything I've learned about this planet, it's that when we have a chance to sleep, we take it. Each new day brings fresh hell, usually without a warning.

Maggie heads toward the door.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

Welcome to M-Cap Two.

She leaves.

Kari pulls a blanket over herself. Tears start to flow, as her face shows a mix of exhaustion and blessed relief.

INT./EXT. MARS GLACIER - NIGHT

A faint cracking noise from inside... RUMBLING louder, shakes the foundation of the drill site.

The remaining metal structure collapses, blocking the drill hole. Shards of ice and Martian dust waft upward.

END OF EPISODE