

VENERA

written by

D. Ross Kellett

425-923-3923
mrkellett@hotmail.com

FADE IN:

SPACE

A vast, silent void.

VENUS stands alone. Yellow clouds beckon, shimmering in stark sunlight.

We descend, piercing through layers of dense clouds.

Lightning CRACKS across the atmosphere.

EXT. VENUS SURFACE - CONTINUOUS

A hostile wasteland emerges from the fog. Alien. Nightmarish.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

A hulking STRUCTURE of concrete sits amidst this hell. A testament to human persistence... or hubris.

VENERA RESEARCH STATION. CREW: 10

INT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - RILEY'S QUARTERS - DAY

DR. ELENA RILEY (30s) stares at the ceiling. Tired.

Relentless daylight filters through a narrow window.

She activates a monitor. The screen displays "RECORDING". She gathers herself then gives a weary smile.

RILEY

Hey, babe. I know I sent a message
just a few days ago-- fine, go
ahead, call me your clingy
girlfriend.

(rubs her eyes)

It's hard to sleep. The light never
changes. It just... hangs there,
laughing at me.

She stares out the window at the swirling clouds.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Venus rotates so slowly a day is
longer than its year. Crazy, right?
So the sun is always there...
glaring, behind the clouds.

She chuckles softly, with a twinge of insanity.

RILEY (CONT'D)
I miss you, Mark. Venus is... well,
it's everything they said it would
be. And more. But it's like the
planet doesn't want us here.

She's scared. Quickly hides it.

RILEY (CONT'D)
I love you. Have a beer at Mario's
for me. I'll be home soon, just a
few more months... I promise.

She smiles but it's just a show. The weight of her promise is
heavier than the atmosphere outside.

INT. WOMEN'S SHOWER - MINUTES LATER

Water cascades over Riley. A small moment of comfort.

INT. HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

Riley walks down the narrow corridor. She now wears a lab
coat and glasses. Tight ponytail.

The hallway is all concrete and support beams, muted gray.
Walls thick and reinforced.

Pipes and conduits run overhead, humming softly.

The occasional HISS of steam from a vent as she passes.

No decoration except a single picture of Earth. Someone has
written the word "HOME" with black marker.

She turns into a larger hallway.

Signs above each doorway label the sections of the station.

INT. LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

Riley enters the Lab, a cluttered but organized space with microscopes, and glass cases filled with rocks.

At a workstation, DR. OWEN GRAYSON (50s), the head geologist, is hunched over a rock sample.

RILEY

Morning, Dr. Grayson. How's the rock today?

GRAYSON

(doesn't look up)
Still a rock, Dr. Riley. But don't worry, I'll let you know if it starts talking.

RILEY

Today's the day Venus spills her secrets?

GRAYSON

Wouldn't count on it.

DR. SIERRA NAGAI (40s) works on a sample under a fume hood.

NAGAI

Elena! Want to see the latest in sulfur-breathing microbes?

RILEY

Maybe later. I haven't had breakfast yet.

NAGAI

Good call. This batch smells like a rotten egg.

RILEY

(ick face)
Guess I'll pass on the omelet.

Riley moves on, heading into--

INT. MESS HALL - CONTINUOUS

--a small, functional space with metal tables and chairs.

A coffee machine in the corner HISSES as DR. LEO SANTOS (30s), the station's medical officer, fills a mug.

Next to him, DR. ISABELLE VALDEZ (late 20s), a physicist, flips through a tablet.

SANTOS
(holding up his coffee)
Morning brew? Looks extra sludgy
today. Almost qualifies as a solid.

VALDEZ
Tempting, but I'll pass.

SANTOS
Did you get any sleep last night?

VALDEZ
Sleep? What's that? No one sleeps
unless the planet lets us.

Santos chuckles but he's clearly exhausted.

In a far corner of the Mess Hall is a makeshift gym:
treadmill, weights, and resistance bands on the walls.

SERGEANT NATALIA ROMANOVA (late 20s), the station's pilot,
punches a heavy bag, her movements sharp and precise.

Romanova notices Riley passing by.

ROMANOVA
(heavy Russian accent)
You join, Dr. Riley? We all need
exercise before planet crush us
like grape.

RILEY
I'm pacing the halls-- does that
count?

Natalia smirks, delivering a final powerful PUNCH.

One side of the Mess Hall has a large window.

Reinforced glass allows a view of the desolate landscape
outside.

DR. ETHAN CARVER (30s), a climatologist, gazes out at the clouds drifting over the rocky horizon.

From the corner of his eye he spots Riley walking past.

CARVER
Sergeant Romanova keeps her head down, punching things, and she misses this view. Beautiful.

RILEY
Beautiful, in a "planet wants to kill us" kind of way?

CARVER
Glass half full, Dr. Riley. Half full.

RILEY
I'm headed to see the Commander. Have a good morning, Dr. Carver.

Carver nods, keeping his eyes locked on the world outside.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Screens display temperature, pressure, and environmental stats.

Riley enters.

COMMANDER ALEX WISE (40s) stands in the center, arms crossed, monitoring the readings.

RILEY
Morning, Commander.

WISE
Riley. Everything quiet in the lab?

RILEY
As a rock.
(awkward beat)
Sorry. Geologist humor.

Wise stares, his face expressionless.

At another terminal, DR. GABRIEL CHO (early 30s), runs diagnostics on the station's air filtration system.

CHO
 Don't take it personal, Dr. Riley.
 The Commander never smiles.

WISE
 Sure I do. I smile when I shoot
 something.

Riley and Cho share a nervous glance.

WISE (CONT'D)
 Sorry. Military humor.

RILEY
 (deadpan)
 Hilarious.
 (to Cho)
 What's our contest this week?

CHO
 First person to find something
 interesting in the atmosphere wins
 an extra coffee ration for a week.

RILEY
 You'll need to up the ante, Dr.
 Cho. The coffee in the mess hall is
 more of a punishment.

Wise takes a big gulp from his coffee mug and shrugs.

WISE
 I love coffee I can chew.

LIAM THOMPSON (40s), the chief engineer, crawls out from a
 ventilation duct.

THOMPSON
 (to Riley)
 Any chance you brought a goddamn
 miracle with you?

RILEY
 Fresh out, Chief.

WISE
 What's busted this time?

THOMPSON
 Everything, probably. I think the
 cooling system has developed a mind
 of its own. Piece of shit...

Thompson BANGS his wrench against a pipe.

WISE

Mr. Thompson, please don't break the station's cooling system. It's a steamy nine hundred degrees outside. More importantly, it's keeping us alive... and being alive is one of my two favorite things-- crunchy coffee being the other.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

Sulfuric acid hits the scorched ground and sends up tiny tendrils of smoke like ghostly fingers.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - LATER

The crew gathers: Riley, Cho, Romanova, Carver and Valdez.

A 3D map of the surface rotates on a digital screen.

Geological charts, weather patterns, and mission plans are spread out across the table.

The crew MURMURS with conversation.

Wise points to a sector on the map.

The crew fall silent the moment he begins speaking.

WISE

Alright, listen up. Today, we're heading out to Sector 18-J. This area's uncharted and, from the satellite scans, looks like it might have a different mineral composition. We go in, gather samples, and get out before the next storm hits.

CARVER

(reading from the weather charts)

(MORE)

CARVER (CONT'D)

We've got a window of about four hours before those winds pick up again. It's going to be tight, but doable.

Cho shifts nervously, staring at the map with wide eyes.

CHO

So... how far out are we talking here? I mean, outside-outside. Like... Venus outside?

RILEY

The real thing, Dr. Cho. No more simulations.

ROMANOVA

Time to wear big boy pants, yes?

CHO

Yes. I will be wearing pants. Thank you for the reminder.

ROMANOVA

No worry. Rover is solid. Your suit, solid.

RILEY

We've been outside plenty of times and handled worse terrain than what we're seeing here.

WISE

Besides, you'll be with a full team. And we've got protocols for everything. Safety is top priority.

CHO

Right, right. Just... it's one thing to look out the windows, and another to be out there, with all... that.

He gestures vaguely, as if "that" could mean anything from the crushing pressure to the acid rain.

WISE

You'll be fine, Cho. First time is never easy, but after you've had a taste, it'll start to feel routine.

Valdez puts a gentle hand on Cho's shoulder.

VALDEZ

Look at it this way: you'll be the first person to lay eyes on that sector. Think of it as a story to tell when we're back on Earth.

ROMANOVA

(smirking)

Yes. Earth people love stories of rocks and stinky yellow clouds.

VALDEZ

We're just collecting rocks today. No surprises. We're not about to wrestle a volcano.

ROMANOVA

Volcano next week.

Cho laughs nervously.

CHO

Okay, okay. Rocks. I can handle rocks.

WISE

We do everything by the book, people. You collect your samples. No hot-dogging. Everyone suits up in fifteen. You'll check oxygen levels, run safety tests, and then move out. Sergeant Romanova has command. Clear?

The team nods, heads out. Cho leans close to Riley.

CHO

(whisper)

Tell me again why we don't use robots?

INT. ROVER BAY - LATER

The crew moves efficiently, pulling on heavy EVA suits and checking each other's gear.

Cho fumbles with his gloves, his nerves showing.

Riley steps up beside him, securing his suit's collar.

RILEY

Neil Armstrong... Sally Ride...
Gabriel Cho.

Cho manages a grateful smile as he steadies himself.

CHO

Thanks, Elena. One small step for
man... and all that other stuff.

The team begins to load into the Rover, helmets in hand.

The vehicle is a tank, as reinforced as the Station itself,
with tires bigger than a person.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The Rover RUMBLES out of the Bay and onto the Venusian
surface.

Thick doors close behind them.

Through the cockpit window, Romanova looks tiny in the
driver's seat.

INT. ROVER - DAY

The team sits strapped into their seats, helmets in laps.

The interior is well-equipped, with control panels,
monitoring screens, and small windows showing the rocky
landscape outside.

Romanova expertly steers the Rover through the rough terrain,
her hands steady on the controls.

Commander Wise comes over the RADIO.

WISE (OVER COMMS)

Sergeant, how's she handling? Over.

ROMANOVA (INTO COMMS)

Smooth. Like Sunday drive. Over.

Next to her, Riley keeps an eye on the monitors.

RILEY

We've got about half an hour before we hit the sector. Plenty of time for a round of "favorite memories of Earth." Who's got one?

CARVER

(annoyed)
Not again.

VALDEZ

Alright, I'll start. Back home in Argentina, we'd spend summers at this tiny cabin by a lake. No running water, no electricity-- just insects, stars, and my uncle's old guitar. I miss it.

RILEY

You call that roughing it? When I was an intern at NASA I lived on gas station sandwiches for a month straight. My stomach has never been the same.

VALDEZ

(horrified)
Egg salad?

RILEY

You know it. Redefined both the word "egg" and "salad". Probably illegal in most countries.

Everyone laughs. Even Cho cracks a small smile, though his hands still grip his seat tightly.

CARVER

Relax, Cho. First trip out's always the hardest, but that suit's designed to make Venus your bitch. Double-layered poly-alloy, top-grade insulation. It'll keep you safe against anything the planet can throw at you.

CHO

Nine hundred degrees... atmospheric pressure like being a mile under water... sulfuric acid rain. You're telling me that a few centimeters of material are all that's keeping us from, you know...?

Cho makes a fist like he's crushing a soda can.

Valdez groans, looks away.

CARVER
You'll be fine. A walk in the park.

RILEY
(to Cho)
Look, my first time out I was shaking so hard I could barely hold the sample containers. But once you're out there... there's nothing else like it.

CHO
Point taken. Focus on the view. Focus on the acid clouds and crushing atmosphere.

ROMANOVA
That's the spirit!

Cho watches the alien terrain pass by. He grips the seat with all his strength.

RILEY
Carver, you're next. Favorite Earth memory?

CARVER
I hate this game.

RILEY
(shit-eating grin)
I know.

Carver SIGHS. The others aren't letting him off the hook.

CARVER
Alright. Fourth of July back in Colorado. Hiked up a mountain with my brother, trying to catch a better view of the fireworks. Chris lost his footing and nearly rolled halfway down-- still the best night of my life.

VALDEZ
I miss fireworks.

RILEY

Lightning storms and yellow clouds
are not the same vibe.

VALDEZ

Sergeant, what about you?

ROMANOVA

Easy. Moscow winters. Nothing like
stepping outside into first
snowfall. Snow is special.

CHO

I'd go for a snowstorm over this,
honestly.

The team nods in agreement. They're millions of miles from
home, but they're connected by the world they left behind.

EXT. VENUS SURFACE - SECTOR 18-J - DAY

The rover is parked on a barren plain under a yellow sky.

The crew steps out one by one, fully suited, moving carefully
in the oppressive atmosphere and searing heat.

Riley is out front, surveying the strange rock formations.

She crouches down to take samples, placing small chunks of
rock into a container on her suit.

NOTE: Everyone speaks over the helmet COMM system.

RILEY

Sector 18-J is showing signs of
high sulfur content. These
formations look more fragile than I
expected.

CARVER

Let's double-bag those samples. Try
and prevent as much breakage as we
can.

RILEY

Good idea, Carver.

A few yards away, Cho looks for samples.

He nervously looks back at the Rover.

CHO

Dr. Riley, we're good, right? This area feels strange.

RILEY

You're doing fine, Dr. Cho. Just watch your footing.

Just then, Riley spots something unusual: a dark green SUBSTANCE oozing across the ground.

It shimmers slightly with a texture that almost looks alive.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Hello... what do we have here?

She moves closer. The SLIME pulses, contracting and expanding with a rhythmic movement... like it's breathing.

CARVER

What have you got?

RILEY

There's some kind of... substance here. Like slime. It's moving.

CARVER

Careful.

She reaches out with a sample CONTAINER, trying to scrape a bit of the substance.

As soon as her container touches it, the SLIME reacts, snapping toward her with alarming speed!

It latches onto her glove, spreading rapidly over her suit.

RILEY

Whoa! What the--

She jerks her hand back, but the slime clings on, spreading across her arm.

Inside her helmet, her breathing quickens.

ROMANOVA (FROM ROVER)

Riley, report! What's happening?

RILEY
It's on my suit! It's... it's
moving on its own!

The slime seeps into the seams of her suit. Before she can react, it slips through, melting the suit as it goes.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Oh fuck-- it's eating through!

ROMANOVA (FROM ROVER)
Get her back to Rover, now!

CARVER
Cho, help me with her!

The crew stumbles back toward the Rover, Cho and Carver half-dragging, half-supporting Riley.

She's breathing heavily, her body shaking as the SLIME eats through but seals the suit breach at the same time.

Valdez joins them to help move Riley.

Romanova waits at the Rover's open hatch still so far away.

VALDEZ
Stay calm, Elena. Almost there.

RILEY
Oh God-- fuck-- it burns!

Suddenly, half the SLIME lurches off her arm with amazing speed and attaches itself to Cho's suit!

It eats, dissolving part of the outer layer!

CHO
Get it off! It's-- oh God, it's
inside--

CARVER
Cho!

ALARMS blare inside Cho's helmet.

CHO
No! Suit integrity failing!

The slime spreads inside his suit.

There's a loud CRACKING noise.

Cho GASPS, his face contorting in pain.

The exterior of his suit begins to buckle, caving in with violent force as the crushing atmosphere presses down on him.

His SCREAMS echo through the comms, cutting off as the suit collapses, crumpling him beneath the impossible weight.

The inside of his helmet is sprayed red.

VALDEZ

No! Oh God!

Everyone freezes, horrified, as Cho's body hits the ground in the twisted remnants of his suit.

Valdez backs away, her breathing rapid.

CARVER

Jesus... what was that thing?!

VALDEZ

It's still moving! Look!

The SLIMES slides away from Cho's suit and creeps slowly across the ground.

It moves as if searching, reaching out, almost intelligently.

The team step back, keeping their distance.

ROMANOVA

Back to Rover, now! Stay clear of that thing!

The team rushes back to the Rover. Riley, still weak and shaken, leans against Carver for support.

RILEY

It-- it got inside my suit. Moved with purpose... like it wanted in.

CARVER

Then let's get as far from it as we can. Right now!

They hurry to the Rover, leaving the strange, writhing slime behind.

INT. ROVER - CONTINUOUS

The outer hatch closes shut. Lights turn green to indicate a breathable, pressurized atmosphere.

Everyone rips off their helmets.

Valdez tends to Riley, holding her injured arm but not getting too close.

Riley winces in pain, delirious.

As Romanova straps herself into the driver's seat--

ROMANOVA

Valdez?

VALDEZ

It's bad. Real fucking bad. She needs to see Dr. Santos, now!

ROMANOVA (INTO COMMS)

Venera, this is Rover. There has been accident. Headed back to base. Alert medical. Over.

WISE (OVER COMMS)

Understood, Rover. Give me a sitrep. Over.

ROMANOVA (INTO COMMS)

Dr. Riley has been injured. Dr. Cho is... Cho didn't make it. Over

A long terrible beat. Radio STATIC.

WISE (OVER COMMS)

Understood. Medical will be standing by. Over.

Carver PUNCHES a nearby screen, cracking it.

CARVER
GODDAMMIT!

CUT TO:

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

The Rover Bay doors GRIND open as the massive vehicle rumbles inside and comes to a stop.

INT. ROVER BAY - MOMENTS LATER

Carver and Romanova help Riley climb out of the Rover, her breathing shallow and skin pale.

INT. CORRIDOR / MED BAY - CONTINUOUS

Carver and Romanova drag her down the corridor toward the Med Bay, their own movements clumsy in their bulky suits.

Valdez follows behind, full of concern.

Dr. Santos is already waiting, along with Grayson and Nagai.

SANTOS
(pulling his gloves on)
Get her on the table, now!

They lay Riley on the metal examination table. Santos begins unsealing her suit, working quickly but with precision.

Riley stares blankly at the ceiling, seconds from passing out.

NAGAI
God in heaven--

SANTOS
--Come on, Elena. Stay with me.
(to Carver)
How the hell did Cho's suit fail
and hers didn't?

CARVER
The substance must have sealed the
suit to her skin, maintaining
integrity.
(MORE)

CARVER (CONT'D)

(somber)

Cho wasn't so lucky.

SANTOS

Dr. Nagai, I need you to help me get this arm exposed. I need to see the extent of the contamination.

Nagai nods, and together they gently remove the torso of Riley's suit.

Her arm is bruised and discolored, with the faint greenish residue of the slime staining her skin.

GRAYSON

(alarmed)

What is that? Infection?

SANTOS

Too early to tell. But we can't let it spread.

(to Nagai)

Get me the quarantine kit and an oxygen mask, now!

Nagai digs through a cabinet and retrieves a sleek QUARANTINE KIT with antiseptic sprays and a small medical scanner.

Santos douses the greenish area with the antiseptic, wiping away as much residue as he can.

The skin underneath looks raw and blistered.

Santos straps the oxygen mask over Riley's face and sets the scanner to her chest, his eyes darting to the screen.

The scanner's display shows her heartbeat: weak, erratic.

SANTOS (CONT'D)

Come on, Elena. Breathe for me.

Nagai takes Riley's hand and squeezes it tight.

Riley's eyes flutter open, glazed and distant.

NAGAI

Breathing is shallow.

SANTOS
You're not giving up on me yet.

The scanner BEEPS again, showing Riley's heart rate stabilizing slightly.

Santos sets up an IV line to give her fluids and attaches a monitor to her wrist.

VALDEZ
(about to break)
Is she... is she going to make it?

Carver meets Valdez's gaze, his own eyes dark but determined.

CARVER
She's tough, Izzy. Give her a moment.

Riley's breathing evens out, her face relaxing as the oxygen mask delivers a steady flow.

She starts to come around, blinking and focusing on the crew gathered around her.

RILEY
(weakly)
What happened? I... I felt it, inside my skin...

SANTOS
You're safe now, Elena. You're back at the station.

CARVER
Just rest, okay?

Riley grips Carver's hand weakly, her fingers trembling.

RILEY
(whispers)
Cho... I saw him fall. Did he...?

Carver's face falls.

CARVER
Just rest. We'll talk more when you're better.

Riley's eyes close again, tears slipping down her face as she falls into unconsciousness.

The room falls silent.

Wise enters and takes a moment to process the looks on everyone's faces.

WISE

Dr. Santos, report.

SANTOS

She's stable for now. I've neutralized most of the contamination, but we need to isolate and study whatever that substance was. There's residue on her skin and the suit; hopefully enough to analyze.

WISE

Good work. All of you.

(to Santos and Nagai)

I want a full analysis as soon as possible. Until we know more I'm putting all Rover missions on hold.

The mood is grim. Carver steps forward.

CARVER

Commander? Dr. Cho--

WISE

--died a hero. We will honor his sacrifice at the appropriate time.

(hits him hard)

I need to send a message to his family.

Total silence. Only the steady BEEPING of the equipment.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

Lightning CRACKS on the horizon.

INT. MED BAY - DAY

Quiet. The lights have been dimmed to a soft glow.

A clock on the wall reads "4:00 AM" despite the golden light outside.

Riley lies in one of the medical beds. Arm bandaged, half-asleep. Her head spins.

The door slides open, and Commander Wise enters.

He pauses, taking in the sight of Riley: pale, exhausted, a haunted look in her eyes.

She notices him and sits up slowly, grimacing.

WISE
Don't sit up.

RILEY
Couldn't sleep either, huh?

WISE
(frustrated)
This planet...

RILEY
I know.

Riley's gaze drops to the floor, heavy with guilt.

RILEY (CONT'D)
If I hadn't gone after the
substance... let my curiosity
override my common sense, none of
this would have happened.

Wise pulls up a small stool to sit beside her.

WISE
Elena, look at me.

She hesitates but finally meets his eyes. Her face is tight, holding back a wave of emotion.

WISE (CONT'D)
You did everything you could out
there.

(MORE)

WISE (CONT'D)

None of us knew what we were dealing with. Cho's death... it wasn't your fault.

RILEY

(voice cracking)

I was the one who touched that stuff, Commander. I didn't know what it was, and I didn't think, and... it breached his suit. If I'd just been more careful--

WISE

--You're a scientist. We're out here to discover, to learn. Sometimes that means risking more than we can predict. None of us could have known the substance would react the way it did.

Riley's fists clench as she tries to keep her composure.

RILEY

He trusted me.

(small, trembling)

I couldn't even keep him safe.

Wise places a hand on her shoulder. It's an unusual gesture for him and he's not sure he's doing it right.

WISE

You're here because you have the courage to go into the unknown, even when the risks are high. That's why he trusted you. Why I trust you.

She swallows hard, his words easing the guilt but not erasing it.

Her gaze drifts toward the med bay window, out into the station's dimly lit hallways.

She brushes a tear from her cheek and looks at him with a faint glimmer of determination.

RILEY

I want to study the residue, Commander. I need to know what it is, what we're really dealing with here. Put me on the team.

Wise nods, his expression shifting to one of respect.

WISE
Work with Santos and Nagai. Figure
it out, together.

RILEY
For Cho.

He stands, the soldier returns.

WISE
Rest up, Dr. Riley. I need you at
your best.

With one last reassuring look, Wise heads for the door.

RILEY
Thank you, sir.

WISE
For what?

RILEY
For pulling me back.

He exits with a smile.

She watches him go, her face full of determination.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

The Station stands resolute against the toxic planet.

INT. MESS HALL - DAY

Some of the crew gather in the exercise area.

Carver is on a treadmill, jogging with earbuds in.

Thompson fumbles with a set of dumbbells, showing off for Romanova rather than doing any actual exercise.

Romanova does pull-ups, because of course she does.

Riley approaches, her arm sporting a fresh bandage. She stretches it, testing her range of motion.

THOMPSON

Hey, Dr. Riley. Didn't expect to see you up and about so soon.

CARVER

Thought Santos would have ordered bed rest.

RILEY

He tried. But I feel... fine.

Romanova raises an eyebrow, giving her a once-over.

ROMANOVA

Back from dead. The amazing Dr. Riley.

Riley picks up a dumbbell, testing its weight. It feels light in her hand, like it's made of foam rather than metal.

She starts doing curls, her movements easy and steady.

CARVER

(impressed)

Careful. That's... heavy. Don't want to pull a muscle.

Riley gives him a shrug, focusing on the dumbbell in her hand.

RILEY

The pain is gone. My arm feels strong. Stronger than before, in fact.

THOMPSON

Those painkillers Doc put you on must have gone to your head.

(beat)

Can I have some?

She sets down the dumbbell and moves to a nearby RESISTANCE MACHINE.

Setting the weight to a challenging level, she pushes with one arm, expecting a struggle.

Instead, the weight glides effortlessly.

Romanova, noticing this, crosses her arms.

ROMANOVA

Alright. That is challenge, even for me.

RILEY

My arm was nearly destroyed, and now it feels like nothing happened.

THOMPSON

Maybe that slime gave you powers or something. Like a radioactive spider.

Riley ignores him.

CARVER

I'm glad to see you bounce back so quickly. Impressive.

ROMANOVA

I think "terrifying" is word you were looking for.

Riley moves to the pull-up bar next to Romanova.

She pulls herself up with surprising ease.

THOMPSON

Fucking show off.

Riley drops down, feeling exhilarated by the surge of strength coursing through her.

She meets Carver's eyes, her grin fading.

RILEY

I don't get it. I was hurt, badly, and now it's like I'm stronger than I've ever been.

The room falls silent for a beat, the team exchanging uncertain looks.

Romanova gives her an appraising glance, up and down.

ROMANOVA

Maybe it's just excitement. You went through hell out there. Sometimes that can make you feel different.

Riley nods, though her hand unconsciously touches her arm where the slime had invaded.

RILEY

I still feel it on my skin. It's tingling.

CARVER

Does it hurt?

RILEY

No. The opposite.

She looks around at her friends, their expressions impressed but worried.

She makes a fist, feeling the power surging within. But clearly there's a nagging question in the back of her mind.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

A large counter is covered with petri dishes, vials, and microscopes.

Dr. Nagai is at a microscope, carefully examining a slide of the slime residue taken from Riley's suit.

Her brow furrows as she adjusts the lens.

Beside her, a large DNA sequencer HUMS softly, its readouts flickering with data.

A GENOME ANALYZER screen displays genetic sequences that look far too complex to be from any known Earth organism.

NAGAI

(to herself)

That doesn't make sense.

Santos enters carrying a TABLET. Wise is right behind him.

SANTOS

What doesn't make sense?

Nagai doesn't look up at first. She's absorbed in the data, her fingers rapidly typing commands into the console.

WISE

Dr. Nagai?

Nagai looks up, startled to see the Commander standing there. She quickly composes herself.

NAGAI

The substance-- it's alien to life
as we know it.

SANTOS

Did you run the genetic sequence
through the database?

NAGAI

Every one I have access to. But
none of the markers match anything
we've cataloged on Earth or
anywhere else.

Nagai clicks a few keys, pulling up a 3D STRUCTURE of the
slime's genetic makeup.

It's like a twisting, ever-changing helix, constantly
shifting, alive in its design.

NAGAI (CONT'D)

What's even stranger is the rate of
genetic adaptation.

SANTOS

Like it's learning from its
environment? Adapting to different
pressures, temperatures... even
chemical compositions?

NAGAI

From what I'm seeing, it has a
level of intelligence we haven't
even begun to understand.

WISE

Intelligence? You're saying this
thing can think?

SANTOS

Not like us, Commander.

NAGAI

It's clear this organism is capable of reacting in highly specific ways. And its DNA... well, that's the real kicker.

Nagai slides a new vial under the microscope.

The image magnifies a SYNTHETIC FIBER she extracted from the slime's residue on Riley's suit.

The fibers seem to move even under the glass.

WISE

What am I looking at, Dr. Nagai?

NAGAI

An impossibility, Commander Wise. I found human genetic markers mixed in with its own.

Wise stares at Santos, his face filled with disbelief.

WISE

I agree... that is impossible.

SANTOS

How could it have human DNA?

Nagai leans back in her chair, running her fingers through her hair in frustration.

NAGAI

I thought the same thing. But when I cross-referenced the data, I found sequences-- very, very small ones-- that match Dr. Riley's genome.

WISE

You must have analyzed one of her skin cells by mistake.

NAGAI

Not this time.

Wise's heart skips a beat. He steps closer to the microscope, looking at the fiber under the glass.

WISE

This thing somehow has Dr. Riley's DNA in it?

NAGAI

More importantly, Dr. Riley has the substance's alien DNA attached to her own. And I have no idea how to remove it.

RILEY (O.S.)

Attached?!

They all turn as one, startled to find RILEY standing at the lab's entrance.

She's frozen, her mind racing. She looks down at her arm, gently touching the bandage.

WISE

Elena--

RILEY

--What's it doing to me?

NAGAI

It's reacting to you. As if you're connected somehow. The substance is learning from you. Mimicking your biology. But in ways that make no sense.

SANTOS

We're going to figure it out.

NAGAI

I promise you.

A long silence hangs in the room as Riley processes this information, the weight of it sinking in.

RILEY

What does this mean?

(small)

Am I going to die?

Santos works his tablet.

SANTOS

I've seen nothing in your health markers to suggest a long-term infection.

(MORE)

SANTOS (CONT'D)

But I can't rule out the possibility that this substance has changed you on a genetic level.

Riley makes a fist and stares at it.

RILEY

I just lifted more weight than Sergeant Romanova and I barely broken a sweat.

WISE

Christ...

SANTOS

Increased strength. Maybe that's a side effect. Maybe it's trying to... merge with you.

Santos regrets saying that.

Riley recoils, her eyes wide with shock.

RILEY

Merge with me? What the hell does that mean?

Santos works the tablet, bringing up a chart showing interactions between human cells and the slime's cells.

SANTOS

The substance wants to evolve into something new. Your body is reacting to it, almost like it's trying to become a part of you.

NAGAI

But we don't know what that would mean.

Riley staggers backward, her breath coming faster now. .

Wise grabs her under the arm to prevent her from falling.

WISE

How do we stop it?

SANTOS

I'm not sure we can.

NAGAI

Everything we've done, everything
we're going to do, is rewriting the
biology textbooks from page one.

Riley glances at the lab monitors, watching the DNA patterns
flicker.

There's a deep, unsettling sense of something happening
inside her, something she can't control.

INT. RILEY'S QUARTERS - LATER

Riley sits on the edge of her bed, her body tense and
trembling. A faint sheen of sweat glistens on her face.

She's alone and confused, the events of the last few hours
replaying in her mind.

Her breathing is shallow as she stands and approaches a small
mirror mounted on the wall.

The buzzing light above casts eerie shadows across her face.

She leans in, her palms flat against the countertop, her face
inches from her reflection.

At first, everything seems normal. Her cheeks are pale, her
lips slightly chapped.

But her eyes... something about her eyes isn't right.

She narrows them, tilting her head to get a better look.

Suddenly, MOVEMENT catches her attention.

Her pupils dilate.

Behind the surface of her left eye, something RIPPLES, like
dark smoke swirling in water.

It's subtle, like a trick of light, but then it happens
again-- an undeniable PULSE of movement, alien. Alive.

RILEY

No... no, no, no.

Her fingers instinctively trace the edges of her eye, careful not to touch it directly.

The RIPPLE grows more defined. Now she can see it clearly: tiny veins of black and green, branching across her eye.

They TWIST and WRITHE, as if aware of her gaze.

Her breath quickens. Panic rises. She reaches to the counter nearby and grabs her makeshift weapon: a PEN.

RILEY (CONT'D)
What's happening to me?

She holds the pen to her eye. Inches away.

Now closer, her expression resolute.

She's going to cut out the fucking infection by herself.

The veins shift again, this time EXPANDING.

A sharp flash of pain shoots through her eye, causing her to jerk back with a GASP and drop the pen.

She clutches the sink for support, her knees threatening to give out.

She forces herself to look again. This time, the infection seems almost... aware.

It PULSES in rhythm with her heartbeat, spreading further across her eye.

And then the infection RETRACTS, pulling back into the iris, leaving her eye looking almost normal again.

Riley stares at her reflection, horrified.

Her fingers tremble as she touches her face, as though testing if she's still herself.

The reflection doesn't feel familiar anymore.

RILEY (CONT'D)
I'm still me. I'm still me.

But deep down, she knows something is wrong.

She grips the countertop tightly, her knuckles white. Tears build.

The infection within her eye PULSES faintly one last time, as though mocking her denial.

She stares at her reflection as something powerful overtakes her... and it causes her to smile.

INT. CARVER'S QUARTERS - LATER

Carver sits on the edge of his bed reading from a TABLET.

Glass of scotch in one hand. Casual wear, like he's getting ready for bed.

The door to his quarters is open.

A shadow falls across the open door.

RILEY (O.S.)
Ethan Carver.

Carver looks up, surprised to see Riley at his door. He meets her eyes with a hint of curiosity.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Penny for your thoughts.

CARVER
Elena Riley, miracle patient. I should ask you the same thing.

Riley enters the room pulling the hatch closed with a CLICK. Her movements are fluid, confident.

She methodically checks out Carver's numerous personal pictures taped to his walls.

He watches her, puzzled.

CARVER (CONT'D)
Did you do something with your hair?

RILEY
I wear it down when I'm not on
duty.

CARVER
I like it.

She pretends to ignore his comment but a sly smile gives her away.

She points at a picture of Carver and another young man in ski gear.

RILEY
Your brother?

CARVER
That's him.

RILEY
He's cute. Like you.

CARVER
(confused)
Thanks.

RILEY
I feel alive, Carver. Full of
energy. I've been trapped in here
too long. God, what I wouldn't give
to go dancing! You like dancing?

She does a little Samba to close the distance between them.

Carver looks taken aback but intrigued.

He gives her a cautious smile, his usual stuffy demeanor slipping a little.

She looks hot as hell and he can't deny it.

CARVER
Never been much of a dancer.

RILEY
Alien planet: perfect time to try
new things. Explore the unknown!

She moves a little closer, her fingers brushing his arm.

Carver hesitates for a moment. He senses something is off, but he's drawn to her powerful new confidence.

RILEY (CONT'D)
 Right now, I feel like planting my flag. Don't you want to plant your flag, Dr. Carver?

Her hand nudges his crotch.

CARVER
 Don't you have someone back home?

RILEY
 (sing-song)
 I won't tell if you don't!

CARVER
 Are you sure this is what you want?
 I mean, it's been a rough few days...

Riley leans in close, her lips grazing his ear.

RILEY
 (whispering)
 I'm sure. I know you are, too.

Carver breathes in sharply, the tension between them palpable.

There's a long, quiet moment. Only the heavy THRUM of their hearts and the strange pull in the air.

She climbs in his lap, her legs wrapped around him.

He drops his tablet and drink to the floor but doesn't give a shit.

RILEY (CONT'D)
 (slowly, seductively)
 I've been through a lot. We all have. And now, I just want a release.

Carver locks eyes with her, uncertain but intrigued, his breath quickening as she runs her fingers through his hair.

Something about her has shifted. There's a hunger in her eyes, something raw and untamed.

CARVER
Is this really you?

She kisses him, deep and passionate.

RILEY
I'm whomever I need to be.

Before Carver can respond, she pulls him in, their lips meeting urgently.

The kiss is intense, almost desperate, as though both of them are trying to fill a void.

They make love under the golden glow of the clouds outside.

CUT TO:

INT. CARVER'S QUARTERS - LATER

The room is silent, save for the soft HUM of the station's ventilation system. The bed is disheveled.

Carver sleeps next to Riley who lies on her back staring at the ceiling.

Her expression is distant and contemplative. There's a flicker of regret on her face.

Riley sits up, tying her hair back and putting on her shirt.

Carver opens his eyes and studies her.

CARVER
Stay.

RILEY
I have work to do.

CARVER
Duty doesn't start for a couple of hours.

He goes to touch her back but she's already standing and going for the door.

RILEY
I'll see you at breakfast.

CARVER
Save me a seat?

She abruptly leaves the room.

The door closes behind her, leaving him alone, his thoughts swirling, unsure of what just transpired.

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S SHOWERS - LATER

Carver stands under a cascade of water as he rubs shampoo into his hair.

He exhales, trying to wash away the lingering tension of the night.

Suddenly, his eyes widen as he feels an odd sensation.

He stops, blinking in confusion. Something feels... wrong.

CARVER
What the hell?

He looks down at his groin, his expression shifting from confusion to horror.

The skin around his groin is INFLAMED like a burn.

He winces as he touches it, small blisters forming on his skin, expanding like tiny pustules.

CARVER (CONT'D)
Oh fuck, oh no...

His breathing quickens as the sensation grows worse.

The bubbles burst, and a SIZZLING sound fills the air.

He stumbles backward, his hands fumbling at the wall.

The skin around his groin begins to disintegrate, as though someone had poured acid on it.

The tissue melts, the flesh turning a sickly, black color and sloughing off in chunks to reveal raw, red muscle beneath.

His face twists in agony as he stumbles, trying to escape the agony.

CARVER (CONT'D)
Help! Oh God, fuck, HELP! HELP ME!

His body shakes as the burns spread.

The damage continues to eat away at him, consuming the muscle and tissue at a terrifying rate.

The pain is unbearable, a burning sensation that shoots through every nerve in his body.

He SCREAMS, his voice strangled.

His legs give out beneath him. He falls to the floor.

He desperately clutches at his groin but the skin is no longer there to grasp. Only raw, exposed muscle remains.

He grabs at the burns, trying to salvage whatever's left.

In a final desperate move, he grabs his testicles and pulls them free from his body with a horrifying SQUELCH...

...before he passes out.

CUT TO:

INT. MED BAY - MOMENTS LATER

The lights are harsh, the sterile white walls a contrast to the horror unfolding.

Santos works over Carver who lies unconscious on the examination table.

His groin area is bandaged, but it's clear that horrific damage has been done.

Santos's face is tight with stress, his eyes flicking to the monitors above Carver's head, watching his vitals.

Nagai works a computer in the background.

Wise rushes in. The sight of Carver nearly drops him.

WISE

My God-- what happened to him?

SANTOS

I don't know. This isn't just a burn. It's something else. I've never seen anything like it. It's like the slime on Dr. Riley's arm, but worse.

NAGAI

Much worse.

WISE

So Carver had some on him? Brought it inside without him knowing?

SANTOS

It's the only explanation.

WISE

Is anyone else in danger?

Santos glances at the medical monitors again, his brow furrowed with concern.

WISE (CONT'D)

Doctor?

SANTOS

Uh...

WISE

(louder)

Dr. Santos!?

SANTOS

I don't know! We're running tests. We need to figure out how this is spreading, and why.

He reaches for a nearby syringe filled with a stabilizing agent, injecting it into Carver's IV line.

His vitals stabilize, but they're weak. He's not going to make it, and they know it.

WISE

Be honest. Is it too late for him?

SANTOS

Whatever this is, we're going to need a lot more time and a lot more research. I'm not sure we have either.

Wise's eyes narrow at Carver's unconscious form.

CUT TO:

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

The lab is quiet, bathed in the eerie glow of daylight streaming through the station's reinforced windows.

Riley moves through the shadows of the lab, careful not to disturb the delicate instruments or set off any alarms.

Her eyes are predatory as she glances around.

Her fingers gently trail across the countertops, stopping at a vial labeled "H2SO4-- SULFURIC ACID".

Riley looks around once more, ensuring that no one is nearby. She uncorks the vial.

A faint hiss escapes as the liquid bubbles at the top.

Her heart races in a mixture of fear and anticipation.

RILEY

If I'm still me... then what have I become?

With trembling fingers, Riley drips a small amount of the acid onto the exposed skin of her forearm.

She grits her teeth, waiting for the burn--

But to her shock, NOTHING HAPPENS.

No burning. No searing agony. The acid simply rests on her skin, like water on glass, without any damage.

Riley's breath catches as she leans closer, looking at the drop as if it were some sort of puzzle.

The acid, which should have melted her skin off in seconds, seems to linger harmlessly.

RILEY (CONT'D)
Harmless as water.

Her fingers swipe over the drop, smearing it across her arm, but still-- nothing. Her skin remains unscathed.

She seductively licks her finger, tasting the final drop of acid. Her eyebrows rise. She likes it.

Her body is immune to the very thing that nearly killed her.

She looks at the vial in her hand, her fingers tightening around it as realization begins to dawn.

RILEY (CONT'D)
No burns.

She stands still for a moment, eyes wide as she processes what this means.

She touches the acid-covered skin again, still stunned by the lack of pain.

Then, as if the weight of the discovery is too much to bear, Riley's face hardens.

Her gaze shifts from the vial to the monitors around the room.

She looks at herself in the reflective glass of the station's instruments, her face growing colder, more distant.

RILEY (CONT'D)
What are you?

She steps back from the counter and allows herself a slow, knowing smile.

RILEY (CONT'D)
You know what you are... don't you?

INT. MED BAY - DAY

The BEEPING of the heart monitor is steady, but it's slower now, like a fading heartbeat.

Carver lies on the examination table, pale and still. His breathing is shallow, labored.

There's a faint tremor in his fingers, but his eyes are closed, and his face is locked in a grimace of pain.

Santos studies the monitors, his brow furrowed.

Wise paces at the foot of the table, his eyes darting from Carver's face to the steady decline of his vitals.

WISE

Come on, Doc. This can't be it!
He's healthy. He'll pull through.

Santos doesn't respond right away, his hands clenching around a vial of stabilizing agent he's been reluctant to use.

Every second feels like an eternity.

He looks at Carver's deteriorating body, the blackened tissue on his groin, the slow spread of infection.

SANTOS

The acid is eating through his
vascular system. His blood's not
circulating properly anymore.

Wise stops pacing and looks at Carver. He reaches out to grasp his hand, squeezing it gently.

SANTOS (CONT'D)

Even if he survives, what kind of
life will he have? Below the waist,
he's...

Wise nods. They know.

WISE

(softly)
You're not alone, Ethan. We're
still here.

Carver's eyelids flutter, his body tensing for a moment before he weakly opens his eyes. His pupils are dilated, unfocused, but there's a flicker of recognition when he looks at Wise

CARVER
Commander?

WISE
Hey, you're going to be fine. We'll figure this out.

Carver's lips crack into a half-smile, his voice barely a whisper.

CARVER
(weakly)
It's too late... and that's okay.

Santos watches quietly.

Carver looks past Wise, his gaze turning toward the ceiling as if he's searching for something.

CARVER (CONT'D)
I didn't want it to end like this.
Not here. Not on this...
(weak laugh)
...fucking planet.

Carver's breathing becomes more ragged, his chest rising and falling in desperate, shallow gasps.

WISE
Come on, you gotta fight it!

A faint, almost imperceptible laugh escapes Carver's lips. It's not a joyful laugh-- it's bitter, resigned.

CARVER
Tell Elena she gave me one hell of an STD.

His statement gives Wise and Santos pause. They glance at each other with concern.

SANTOS
Dr. Carver-- Ethan-- were you intimate with Dr. Riley?

CARVER

It was fun. Though she was a little cold the morning after.

WISE

When? When were you and Elena together?

(beat)

Carver!

Carver shakes his head, his expression growing distant.

CARVER

(softly, almost a whisper)

I was going to sit with her at breakfast.

Santos and Wise share a look.

Suddenly, the heart monitor lets out a sudden, sharp BEEP-- and then a long, sustained FLATLINE.

The sound fills the room like a thunderclap, echoing in the sterile space.

Santos's face falls as he watches the monitor. He presses a button to try to resuscitate, but there's no change.

Carver's heart has given out.

Wise doesn't move. He simply stares at the screen, his hand still holding Carver's.

WISE

(voice thick with grief)

Ethan...

For a long moment, the room is silent.

SANTOS

I couldn't save him.

Wise finally looks up at him, his eyes full of anger and sorrow. He says nothing, but the pain is evident.

Carver is gone.

He slowly releases Carver's hand and stands up, stepping away from the table.

WISE
How many more?

Santos doesn't reply.

The med bay around them seems colder now, and the weight of the station's isolation presses down on their shoulders.

INT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - AIRLOCK - DAY

The airlock is smaller than the massive doors on the Rover Bay. The single door is just big enough for one person.

The door opens with a soft HISS to reveal the violent, oppressive atmosphere of Venus.

Thick clouds swirl in a dense fog of yellow and orange, the sky a swirling storm of sulfuric acid rain.

The temperature is a blistering 900 degrees.

The atmospheric pressure is like being a mile under water. The air is toxic, corrosive, and suffocating.

It's a hostile world, far beyond human survival.

Riley steps forward to the threshold of the airlock, staring into the storm, her body radiating with a strange confidence.

The airlock behind her closes with a low mechanical thrum, sealing off the station.

She's not wearing a suit.

RILEY
One small step for a woman...

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

Without hesitation, Riley steps forward onto the surface of Venus.

The rain immediately begins to fall on her, sharp and acidic, SIZZLING as it hits her exposed skin.

Her clothing melts away, fabric dissolving as if it were nothing more than tissue paper in a fire.

But Riley doesn't flinch.

She doesn't burn. Her skin remains pristine, glowing with an otherworldly resilience.

The acid rain seems to evaporate before it can reach her, as if she were absorbing the impact.

She stands tall, her face calm, eyes focused on the storm.

The landscape around her is barren and alien-- no signs of life, only vast plains of blistered rock and raging winds.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

Most of the crew are gathered around the monitors. Station alarms BLARE. No one knows what the fuck is happening.

Wise and Santos rush in.

WISE

Report!

VALDEZ

Someone left the station.
 Unscheduled EVA.

Wise looks around, counting in his head.

WISE

Who's outside? Who's not here?

Wise's eyes snap to the monitor, his face going pale as he sees Riley-- alone and unprotected-- outside the airlock and completely unharmed.

WISE (CONT'D)

What. The. Fuck.

NAGAI

My God... it's Dr. Riley.

THOMPSON

And she's not wearing a suit.

The others crowd around, their eyes wide in disbelief.

ROMANOVA

Someone go get her! She will melt!

Wise grabs the comm panel, his fingers trembling as he presses the button.

WISE (INTO COMMS)

Dr. Riley! What are you doing? Get back inside!

But Riley doesn't respond. She doesn't even seem to hear him.

Instead, tilts her head back, letting the acid rain pour down on her face as if it's nothing.

GRAYSON

This is insane! No way she's still alive.

THOMPSON

(gesturing to the monitor)
You got eyes, don't ya?

NAGAI

We've got to pull her in, now!

SANTOS

No! No. We can't.

VALDEZ

What do you mean we can't?! That's Elena out there. My friend!

The room falls silent.

They watch the monitor, still tracking Riley outside, standing alone against the savage weather of Venus.

The crew exchange confused, worried glances.

THOMPSON

That ain't your friend.

VALDEZ
 (angry, mocking)
 You got eyes, don't ya?

WISE
 He's right.

VALDEZ
 Commander--

WISE
 --that WAS your friend, but that
 person out there... that thing...
 she's barely human anymore.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - SAME

Riley walks calmly, her steps light on the uneven ground.

The rain keeps falling, but she remains unaffected.

Her clothing is gone now, completely melted off, leaving her
 naked in the heart of the planet's fury.

She raises her hands toward the sky in her best "Tim Robbins
 in The Shawshank Redemption" impression, allowing the rain to
 pour over her bare skin.

RILEY
 It doesn't hurt. Nothing can hurt
 me.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

Everyone keeps their eyes glued to the monitors.

Valdez breaks away to address Wise directly.

VALDEZ
 Commander, look at her. She's out
 there... alone. And whatever is
 wrong with her, forget all that.
 Underneath she's still Elena Riley.

Wise studies the pain on Valdez's face. Santos overhears.

SANTOS

She poses a danger to this station... this crew. We both saw what she did to Dr. Carver.

VALDEZ

(confused)

What the hell happened to Carver?

Wise ignores Valdez and keeps his eyes locked on Santos.

WISE

Cargo Bay Three. Solid steel. It could hold her.

SANTOS

You can't be serious.

WISE

We bring her in. Lock her up. Contact Earth. Maybe their best eggheads can come up with a cure.

(off Santos's look)

We owe it to her to try. She would do the same for us.

VALDEZ

Where's Carver?!

WISE

(ignoring Valdez)

Dr. Santos, do you want to leave her out there to die? Or do you want to try and help her? Don't you doctors have an oath about that?!

Wise SLAMS his fist down on the main console. The crew jumps, startled.

SANTOS

We also have protocols for infectious diseases but I have a feeling you're not interested in hearing about that.

WISE

(to everyone)

I need two volunteers to suit up and go get her.

The crew turns to Wise, no one willing to meet his gaze.

THOMPSON

Fuck that.
 (off Wise's look)
 Sir.

Valdez steps forward.

VALDEZ

Like you said, sir: Riley would do
 the same for us.

Grayson steps forward.

GRAYSON

I'm with you.

No one else moves. Wise nods.

WISE

Alright then. Valdez, Grayson,
 you're with me.

GRAYSON

Should we bring something? You
 know, for...

Grayson mimics hitting someone over the head.

WISE

The suits have built-in stun guns
 in case she goes wildcat.

VALDEZ

Jesus... this is Elena we're
 talking about.

WISE

Hope for the best. Prepare for the
 worst.

They nod and follow Wise to the exit.

VALDEZ

Sir, what happened to Carver?

WISE

He didn't make it.
 (looks at Santos)
 He must have brought some of the
 slime back without knowing.

(MORE)

WISE (CONT'D)

The infection spread during the night; there was nothing we could do.

GRAYSON

Goddammit...

VALDEZ

Can we see him?

WISE

That would be... a bad idea.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - MINUTES LATER

The airlock opens.

Wise, Valdez and Grayson step outside, their suits WHIRRING as they move through the heavy atmosphere.

The storm howls around them as they move forward, determined but clearly frightened.

Riley stands ahead of them, motionless, staring into the distance as if waiting for them to come.

GRAYSON

This will make for one hell of a story back home.

WISE

Keep chatter to a minimum.

GRAYSON

Yes, sir.

They continue forward, their steps slow but deliberate.

Riley remains still, her eyes slowly shifting to follow them.

VALDEZ

We need to get close, talk to her.
Make her see reason.

GRAYSON

(under his breath)
Can't reason with the devil.

They stop a few meters away from Riley. The rain pours, stinging their suits, but she doesn't seem to care.

It's like she's embraced Venus and all its hostility.

WISE

Dr. Riley! We can't leave you out here. Please come back inside.

GRAYSON

We can fix this!

VALDEZ

Whatever's happening to you, we can find a way to reverse it!

Riley's expression doesn't change.

There's no sign of recognition in her eyes, just a coldness, a vacancy that chills the others to their core.

She tilts her head slightly, studying them, her posture unnervingly calm.

VALDEZ (CONT'D)

Don't you want to go home? Back to Earth? Back to Mark?

Mark. The name triggers something in Riley. Recognition?

Oh shit.

Without warning, she moves-- faster than any of them can react!

She charges Valdez, grabbing her by the helmet and breaking the seal with inhuman strength.

WISE

Elena, NO!

With a horrifying SNAP, Riley tears Valdez's helmet clean from her suit.

The atmosphere CRUSHES her skull in less than a second. Her body crumples to the ground.

GRAYSON

Izzy!

WISE
Shoot her!

Grayson fumbles with his wrist stun device.

Riley is already focused on him. She stalks him with a strange, predatory calm.

GRAYSON
No! You're not Riley!

RILEY
(low, almost a growl)
I am more than Elena Riley.

WISE
Grayson! RUN!

Grayson backs away, raising his stunner, but Riley is on him like a lion! She claws at his suit, ripping it to shreds.

GRAYSON
Stop! Please! We just want to help
you!

Riley doesn't hear. The alien power inside her is too strong.

She flays his suit open to expose his chest underneath.

The atmosphere rushes in, crushing his chest like a cardboard box.

Blood EXPLODES from his mouth, painting the inside of his helmet.

WISE
NO!!!

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

The crew watch the horror unfold on the monitors in stunned silence.

Nagai begins SOBBING while Santos comforts her.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - SAME

Wise slowly backs up, his eyes locked on Riley, wrist stunner aimed and ready.

She stands triumphant over Grayson's body, proud of her kill.

RILEY
(cold)
Commander.

She advances with slow, methodical steps. Her head cocks, studying him.

WISE
(to himself)
This better fucking work...

POP! A charged wire shoots out from Wise's wrist and lands in Riley's chest.

She SCREECHES in pain as the blue electricity surges through her.

But it's not enough. She keeps coming.

WISE (CONT'D)
Son of a--

POP! Another shot, this one in her leg.

Riley SCREAMS in pain and falls to her knees.

She struggles, arcs of electricity all over her body.

But she rises to her feet once again and keeps advancing.

WISE (CONT'D)
Last one!

POP! The third and final wire lands square in Riley's belly.

She drops, doubled over in pain.

WISE (CONT'D)
(laughs)
Got you bitch!

Riley's head snaps to Wise and she SNARLS.

RILEY
Not enough... bitch!

Wise retreats as all the color drains from his face.

Suddenly: POP! POP! POP! Three more wires hit Riley from out of nowhere.

This time, it's enough.

She goes rigid, then limp, her strength completely drained.

She falls to the ground, unconscious.

Wise follows the three new wires to find Romanova standing there in a suit!

WISE
(ecstatic)
Sergeant!

ROMANOVA
You need help? I help.

WISE
I could kiss you!

ROMANOVA
That would be bad... for you.

Wise collapses from relief, unable to stop LAUGHING.

CUT TO:

INT. CARGO BAY 3 - LATER

Riley is now secured inside the cargo bay. Her body is slumped against the cold metal wall, unconscious.

Someone has put her back in clothes.

Wise, Nagai and Santos watch from behind thick glass, their faces grim.

Two more crew members are dead, and they know there's no going back. The woman they knew is gone.

Wise presses his hand to the glass.

WISE
I'm sorry, Elena.

The mention of her name wakes her up.

Riley tilts her head, yellow eyes locking onto Wise with a mix of curiosity and something darker, more predatory.

NAGAI
She's awake.

RILEY
(calmly)
You're scared of me now, aren't you?

Wise takes a deep breath and musters up all the courage he can.

WISE
We had no choice.

SANTOS
You were out of control.

RILEY
I'm not the one who's out of control.

Her smile is small but cold, like she knows something they don't.

She's different now, and she's not afraid to show it.

WISE
What's happening to you? Tell me.
Why didn't the pressure, the heat,
the rain... why did none of it hurt
you?

RILEY
I know what I am now. The
substance... it changed me. Altered
my DNA. It's the reason I can
survive here. The planet's
atmosphere doesn't hurt me anymore.
(MORE)

RILEY (CONT'D)

In fact, I like breathing it more than the stale air in here.

NAGAI

Changed you? What do you mean? What are you changing into?

RILEY

A survivor.

She chuckles softly, as if she's explaining something obvious, something that the others still don't understand.

RILEY (CONT'D)

You don't get it. The planet is alive. It's not just the storm or the rain-- it's everything. It's in the ground. The air. The substance. And now... it's in me.

Wise looks at her, eyes wide with disbelief. There's a sickening realization starting to creep in.

WISE

The substance... it changed your DNA. You're infected.

RILEY

No. NO! I'm transformed. I'm more than human now. I can feel the planet. I can hear it... pulsing inside me. Venus chose me.

She stands and approaches the glass, her eyes darting around for a way out.

RILEY (CONT'D)

I'm not afraid of it anymore. I understand it.

WISE

What happens now? What do we do with you?

She looks at him directly, her gaze piercing.

The room feels colder now, the walls closing in.

RILEY

I am Venus. And I'm the only one who can survive here.

Wise's heart pounds.

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

The control room is tense, lit by the faint yellow glow of the planet outside.

The crew huddles around the central console, their faces pale and drawn.

Riley's horrifying transformation and attacks on Valdez and Grayson hang over them like a storm cloud.

Wise stands at the head of the group, rubbing his temples as the others argue. The room buzzes with fear and adrenaline.

ROMANOVA

Why do we argue? We can't stay. We shove her outside and lock the station. Then we launch rocket and get the hell off this planet!

NAGAI

You want to just dump her outside like trash? She's not a monster-- she's infected. There could still be a cure!

ROMANOVA

Cure!? You see what she did to Valdez? Grayson? No way to come back from that.

SANTOS

(to Romanova)

Sergeant, think about what she's become. She's surviving heat, pressure, acid rain. If we study her, we might unlock something that could change humanity forever.

THOMPSON

And while you're playing scientist, she's killing us off one by one! No fucking way! Romanova's right... we need to get the hell out of here. Venus: 1 out of 5 stars. Would NOT recommend!

SANTOS

I'm not saying we sit here and die.
I'm saying we don't throw away the
one chance we have to understand
this!

THOMPSON

And what if we all die before your
"understanding" pays off?

The argument grows louder, voices overlapping.

ROMANOVA

We not equipped for thing like her.
Should have called it moment Riley
saw the slime.

THOMPSON

(to Wise)

Commander, you're not seriously
considering their plan, are you? We
should abandon the station, leave
her here. It's the only way.

NAGAI

We'll stop her here. Not by
abandoning her-- by curing her!

The room goes silent as all eyes turn to Wise, who has
remained quiet, staring at the console.

After a painful beat:

WISE

I don't know.

THOMPSON

Well, that's fucking dandy. Isn't
it your job to know?!

WISE

(snapping)

You think I don't know that, Chief?
You think I haven't been weighing
every goddamn option since this
started?

He SLAMS a fist on the console, silencing the room again.

WISE (CONT'D)

We're stuck in the middle of nowhere on the deadliest planet in the solar system, and the one person I'd trust to figure this out is locked in the cargo bay, and she ain't in the mood to help.

His voice softens, more to himself now.

WISE (CONT'D)

If I make the wrong call, none of us make it back to Earth.

The crew waits, tension thick in the air.

WISE (CONT'D)

I'll contact Command. They need to know what's happening here, and they'll help us decide.

NAGAI

That's the right call, Commander.

ROMANOVA

What if they tell us stay? Or worse, bring her back?

WISE

At the end of the day, it's my call.

He gestures to the console.

WISE (CONT'D)

Chief Thompson, help me establish a link to Earth. Santos, Nagai: prep the station logs and any data we've collected on Elena. If Command's going to help us, they need to know everything.

The crew hesitates, exchanging uneasy glances.

WISE (CONT'D)

Now.

They move reluctantly to their tasks.

Wise watches them for a moment before turning to the darkened console.

He exhales slowly, his face grim as he mutters under his breath.

WISE (CONT'D)
God help us.

CUT TO:

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

Yellow fog circles the station. The weather is strangely quiet.

INT. CARGO BAY 3 - DAY

The cargo bay is quiet, the dim lights casting long shadows across the metallic walls.

Riley paces like a caged predator. Her movements are tense, her breathing short and sharp.

Her alien features more pronounced now-- veins like black roots spiderwebbing beneath her skin.

Riley studies the reinforced steel walls surrounding her.

She SLAMS her fists against the walls and SCREAMS, the sound reverberating through the container.

The metal doesn't budge.

She exhales sharply, her lips curling into a snarl as her alien instincts begin to surface.

RILEY
You can't keep me in here! You hear
me, Commander?

Her gaze drops to her hand. Her nails, once human, are now thicker, sharper, almost claw-like.

Her eyes narrow as an idea forms.

Slowly, deliberately, she raises a hand to her mouth.

She bites down hard on her own index finger.

There's a sickening CRUNCH, followed by a HISS as her acidic blood begins to ooze from the wound.

The pain registers briefly on her face, but it's fleeting-- her alien physiology seems to dull it.

The blood drips onto the metal floor, SIZZLING and SMOKING where it lands.

A feral grin spreads across her face as the acid eats into the surface.

She moves quickly now, pressing her bleeding finger against the wall of the container. The steel HISSES and melts.

Riley's expression is one of grim satisfaction as she traces a line with her blood, carving a path through the thick wall.

The acid works faster than expected. Metal GROANS as the structural integrity gives way.

Riley steps back, watching as the carved-out section of the wall begins to sag.

With a sudden, violent KICK, she forces the weakened section outward, the metal breaking free with a deafening CLANG.

Riley steps out of the container, her bare feet padding on the cold floor.

She looks down at her bleeding finger, watching as the wound closes itself in seconds.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Well well well.

She turns toward the exit, her eyes narrowing as she sets her sights on the rest of the station.

She vanishes into the shadows, the sound of her footsteps fading as she moves deeper into the station.

INT. MAIN POWER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is vast and industrial, filled with rows of humming generators and conduits glowing faintly with energy.

The sound of machinery fills the air, steady and rhythmic like a heartbeat.

A shadow moves among the machinery, swift and silent. It's Riley, her movements predatory and precise.

She slips between the towering equipment, her eyes scanning the room.

She stops in front of the main power junction, a massive, reinforced panel lined with switches and cables.

A warning label reads: DANGER - HIGH VOLTAGE.

RILEY

What will you do without power? How long can you hold the planet back?

She holds up her hand, flexing her fingers. Her nails are sharp like blades.

With a quick motion, she slices open her palm, and her acidic blood begins to drip onto the base of the junction box.

The reaction is immediate.

The blood hits the metal with a violent HISS, eating through the protective casing and exposing the wiring beneath.

SPARKS fly as the acid spreads, corroding the cables and connections.

The hum of machinery begins to falter, replaced by the rising WHINE of overstressed circuits.

Riley watches, fascinated, as the acid works its way deeper into the system.

She crouches down, running her bleeding hand along a cluster of wires to ensure maximum damage.

Smoke rises, and the lights in the room begin to flicker erratically.

Suddenly, a warning alarm BLARES, loud and shrill.

Riley grins, unfazed by the noise.

RILEY (CONT'D)

Oops.

With one final press of her palm, she melts through the main power conduit, severing the station's energy source entirely.

The room is plunged into darkness, the only illumination coming from the red glow of the emergency lights.

She turns and disappears into the shadows, leaving the power room in smoldering ruin.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - SAME

Lights flicker and go dark across the station.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

The emergency lights bathe the room in a pulsating red glow.

Wise stands at the central console, sweat dripping from his brow as he stares at the lifeless monitors.

The hum of the station has been replaced by an eerie silence, broken only by the occasional CREAK of stressed metal.

Thompson, Romanova, Santos and Nagai stand nearby, their faces pale with fear.

WISE

Chief, get to the main power room and check it out.

THOMPSON

Are you serious? You want me to go down there alone?

WISE

We don't have a choice! How long do you think life support will last on emergency power?

THOMPSON

Six hours, thirty minutes.
(off his look)
I wrote the tech manual.

WISE
So unless you feel like breathing
the planet's air--

THOMPSON
--I'm going, I'm going.

He heads for the exit, then pauses.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)
What about... her?

ROMANOVA
Cargo container not need power. Rat
still locked in cage.

Thompson grabs a wrench from a nearby console and holds it
against his chest like a weapon. Off Romanova's look:

THOMPSON
For the rat. Just in case.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MAIN POWER ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Thompson's footsteps ECHO as he moves cautiously, the wrench
clutched tightly in his hand.

Emergency lights glow red.

The air feels heavier, the silence oppressive.

He glances nervously at the shadows, every CREAK of the
station making him flinch.

THOMPSON
Okay... get in, check the power,
get out. Fucking cake.

He reaches the door to the main power room.

It's slightly ajar, smoke curling out from the edges.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Great. Fucking peachy.

He pushes the door open slowly and steps inside.

INT. MAIN POWER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is a wreck. Wires hang loose, sparking faintly.

Thompson moves toward the damaged power junction, scanning the destruction.

THOMPSON
What the hell happened?

He kneels to inspect the severed cables, but something in the shadows moves.

It's subtle, just a faint ripple at the edge of his vision.

Thompson freezes.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Hello?

No response. He slowly stands, gripping the wrench tighter.

The faint glow of the emergency lights catches on something wet and slick near the ceiling.

Thompson's eyes dart upward, and his breath catches in his throat.

It's RILEY, or what's left of her.

She's clinging to the ceiling, her body fully transformed.

Her skin is now rippled with black-green veins, her limbs elongated and twisted.

Her mouth twists into a horrific, toothy grin.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)
Oh, hell no!

She HISSES, the sound low and guttural, like a predator cornering its prey.

In a flash, she drops from the ceiling, landing in front of him with inhuman speed.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)

Stay back!

He swings the wrench, but Riley catches it effortlessly in her clawed hand. She tosses it like garbage.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)

HELP!

Thompson stumbles backward, tripping over a fallen cable.

Riley lunges, pinning him to the floor with terrifying strength.

THOMPSON (CONT'D)

No! No, please--

Riley leans in close, her eyes locking onto his.

RILEY

You never should have come to my planet.

She stares at his outstretched right hand now pinned to the deck beneath her feet.

Before he can react she opens her mouth and VOMITS horrible yellow liquid onto his hand.

The acid DISSOLVES his hand with lightning speed.

He SCREAMS, the flesh bubbling and disintegrating before his eyes.

Riley takes a moment, enjoying the sound of his pain, before vomiting again directly on his face.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

The faint glow of emergency lights gives the command room an eerie hellish ambience.

The crew sits in tense silence. Wise stares at the console, his jaw tight.

WISE

He's been gone too long.

ROMANOVA

Maybe require bigger repair than just flipping switch.

NAGAI

Yeah... maybe he's just being thorough.

SANTOS

Thompson? Thorough? The guy rushes through everything. Something's wrong.

Wise stands, determined.

WISE

We're going to find him. Gear up. Everyone grab a stun gun.

Romanova opens a small arms locker on the wall. She grabs a stun gun then hands one to the others.

SANTOS

You don't have any real guns?

WISE

Command decided the stun guns were strong enough. They were designed to bring down the strongest in our unit.

SANTOS

He must have been as big as a bear.

Wise looks at Romanova and winks.

WISE

Yeah... she was as tough as they come.

Santos looks at Romanova and figures it out.

SANTOS

Holy shit.

Nagai and Santos handle the stun guns like they're alien artifacts.

ROMANOVA

Just point and shoot, like gun.

NAGAI
I've never handled a gun.

WISE
You'll have three shots. Make them
count. Center mass.

ROMANOVA
Bang bang bang... like cowboy.

Nagai laughs nervously.

WISE
(to Nagai)
Stay close to me. Don't separate,
no matter what.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MAIN POWER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The hallway is dark and silent except for the SPRITZ of
damaged wiring.

The crew moves in formation, their footsteps echoing in the
confined space.

NAGAI
(whispering)
You think he's okay?

ROMANOVA
If he's not, we in trouble.

WISE
(holding up a fist)
Quiet.

They stop in their tracks, listening.

The faint CRACKLE of electricity is the only sound.

WISE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
We're close.

The group rounds a corner and spots the door to the main
power room partially open. Eerie quiet.

WISE (CONT'D)
 (gesturing)
 Sergeant, with me. Nagai, Santos,
 watch the hallway.

Santos and Nagai take up positions near the door as Wise and Romanova step inside.

INT. MAIN POWER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The power room is a mess. Cables dangle from the ceiling, some sparking.

In the center of the room, Thompson's body lies dead, his hand and face melted through.

ROMANOVA
 My God...

Wise moves closer, his jaw tightening as he takes in the grisly scene.

WISE
 (realizing)
 She's out of her cage.

A low, wet noise echoes from above. Both of them freeze.

WISE (CONT'D)
 (whispering)
 Move. Now.

Romanova takes a step back, but her boot brushes against Thompson's wrench, SCRAPING it across the floor.

The noise echoes.

On the ceiling, something moves.

Riley slithers into view. Horrifyingly alien. Terrifying.

ROMANOVA
 Is that--?

WISE
 RUN!!!

Riley lunges at them with unnatural speed.

Wise fires his stun gun, the electric bolt hitting her shoulder.

She snarls, momentarily stunned, giving Wise and Romanova just enough time to sprint out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MAIN POWER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wise and Romanova haul ass.

NAGAI
What happened?

SANTOS
Where's the Chief?

WISE
Go go go! She's out! She's--

A metallic SCREECH fills the air.

Riley smashes through the door, her body twisting in unnatural ways as she crawls into the hallway ceiling!

Nagai SCREAMS.

ROMANOVA
Please go faster!

The crew retreats, firing their stun guns wildly.

Sparks fly as some shots hit Riley, causing her to SCREAM in rage, but it only slows her down.

WISE
Back to Control! Now!

The crew sprints down the hallway. Riley's SHRIEKS follow them, echoing through the station.

INT. HALLWAY TO CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The crew sprints down the dimly lit corridor, footsteps pounding on the metal floor.

Behind them, Riley, twisted and feral, skitters along the walls and ceiling like a predator.

Her sharp claws scrape against metal as she closes in.

ROMANOVA
She's gaining!

NAGAI
On the ceiling now!

WISE
Keep going! Don't look back!

The hallway twists and turns, emergency lights flickering ominously red.

Sparks BURST from a loose cable as Riley tears past it, her body a terrifying blur in the shadows.

SANTOS
We're not gonna make it!

WISE
Yes, we are!

They round the final corner, the Control Room hatch just ahead.

Romanova reaches it first, slamming into the control panel and frantically inputting the override code.

ROMANOVA
(typing, panicked)
Come on, come on...

Riley lets out a PIERCING SHRIEK, her inhuman voice reverberating through the hallway.

Nagai stumbles and nearly falls, but Santos grabs her arm, dragging her forward.

WISE
Move! Get inside!

The hatch slides open and Romanova dives through. Santos and Nagai scramble in after her, followed closely by Wise.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Wise turns back to the door just as Riley lunges down the hallway, her claws outstretched.

WISE
(through gritted teeth)
Closed for business!

Wise smashes the close button on the control panel.

The door begins to slide shut, but Riley is too fast-- she jams her claw into the gap, forcing it open.

NAGAI
She's coming through!

Riley's face appears in the gap, twisted with rage, eyes locked on Wise.

She forces the door wider, her strength overwhelming the mechanism.

WISE
Help me!

Riley rears back, opens her mouth, and spits horrible yellow liquid right at Wise--

--who dodges the projectile at the last moment! The acid flies to the floor and begins eating the metal.

Santos grabs a nearby metal pipe and swings it at Riley's claw, striking with all his strength.

The blow causes her to recoil slightly, but it's not enough.

ROMANOVA
(aiming her stun gun)
Back up!

Wise and Santos jump back as Romanova fires her stun gun.

The BOLT strikes Riley in the face, sending a surge of electricity through her.

She SCREECHES in pain, her body spasming violently.

The door finally slams shut.

The crew collapses against the walls, panting and shaking.

NAGAI

Oh my God... I can't believe that
was her.

SANTOS

It wasn't. Dr. Riley is dead.

Nagai holds Santos's hand.

NAGAI

I know.

Riley's muffled SNARLS and SCRAPING can be heard on the other
side of the door, growing louder as she pounds against it.

The door rattles, but it holds-- for now.

Wise stares at the pool of acid on the floor. The bubbling
has stopped. Only steam rises from the liquid.

WISE

She's spitting acid now? Explain
that one.

NAGAI

Her physical body has adapted to
the planet. In fact, her biology--

WISE

--On second thought, never mind.

Outside the door, Riley TEARS and BANGS, trying to get in.

ROMANOVA

She will rip station apart, piece
by piece.

Nagai wipes sweat from her forehead.

NAGAI

The emergency power is already
overwhelmed keeping the air cool in
here. I can feel it getting warmer.

SANTOS

What do we do?

Wise stares at the door, his expression hardening as the sound of Riley's relentless attack continues.

WISE
(determined)
We're leaving.

The crew looks up, startled.

ROMANOVA
With what power? Rocket cannot launch on station's emergency power.

WISE
The annex.

NAGAI
I don't understand.

WISE
The annex is separate from the main station. It's a life raft, designed as a last resort if something catastrophic happens.

NAGAI
Define catastrophic.

SANTOS
Member of crew is infected by alien slime. Decides to kill us all.

NAGAI
Textbook.

WISE
We can reroute power from the backup generators in the annex. It's connected by some of the original piping.

SANTOS
There's no tunnel between here and there. To get there... you have to go outside.

The crew understands the grim realization. Wise already knows.

WISE
We've got one suit left in here.

He points to the single EVA suit propped against the wall, its visor scratched and oxygen gauge glowing faintly.

NAGAI

How do we get outside with her at the door?

Wise points to a panel on the floor.

WISE

Emergency hatch. Every compartment has two ways out. This one drops you right inside Airlock 2.

Santos is reading the oxygen gauge on the suit.

SANTOS

There's maybe three minutes of oxygen left.

A heavy silence falls over the group. Santos and Nagai exchange uneasy glances.

SANTOS (CONT'D)

Three minutes isn't enough to get there and back.

ROMANOVA

(stepping forward)

Then you don't come back.

All eyes snap to her.

NAGAI

Are you crazy?

ROMANOVA

We don't have choice. You want to stay here until she kills you? I do not.

SANTOS

There's got to be another way.

WISE

There isn't.

Romanova steps closer to the suit, running her hand over its scratched helmet.

ROMANOVA
Three minutes... I run fast.

NAGAI
No, Natalia. You don't have to--

ROMANOVA
--Yes, I do.

She turns to Wise, her expression resolute.

Wise hesitates. He looks at the others, but no one speaks.

WISE
You're sure, Sergeant?

ROMANOVA
It's me or no one, Commander. Big
Russian hero.

Wise nods, eyes filled with respect.

WISE
The biggest.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRLOCK 2 - DAY

Romanova stands by the outer doors, now fully suited up.

WISE (OVER COMMS)
You've got three minutes. Move
fast.

ROMANOVA (INTO COMMS)
Three minutes, understood.

WISE (OVER COMMS)
Opening outer door... now.

The outer door opens...

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - CONTINUOUS

...revealing the infernal surface of Venus.

Acid rain hisses as it strikes the metal of the station, and the atmosphere churns with a dense orange glow.

Romanova steps out cautiously, the soles of her boots crunching against the brittle rock.

Her oxygen gauge begins ticking down.

She starts toward the annex, the heavy atmosphere pressing against her suit.

The ROAR of distant wind drowns out all other sounds.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

The crew watches her progress through the window.

WISE
She's making good time.

NAGAI
Come on, come on...

EXT. ANNEX ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

The annex is a smaller structure built apart from the main station. A series of pipes connect the two.

Romanova reaches the entrance, her oxygen gauge now at 1:45.

She pulls a panel open and begins working, her gloved hands moving quickly as she reroutes the power.

ROMANOVA
(breathing hard)
Almost... got it...

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

The crew lets out a collective sigh of relief as the station systems begin rebooting. The lights change from emergency red back to their normal brightness.

WISE (INTO COMMS)
Way to go, Sergeant.

NAGAI
She did it!

Santos hugs Nagai. They quickly pull apart with awkward embarrassment.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

Romanova turns away from the annex panel, her oxygen gauge flashing red with 1:00 left.

She starts running back toward the station, her breaths coming fast.

ROMANOVA (INTO COMMS)
Heading back to airlock now.

Suddenly, a low GROWL echoes through the storm.

Romanova freezes, turning to see Riley standing on a nearby rock. Naked again, as her clothes have melted away.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

They watch from the window. Nagai GASPS.

WISE
(pissed)
Riley.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - SAME

Riley lets out a feral SCREAM and lunges toward Romanova.

The Russian stands her ground, fighting stance.

ROMANOVA
Let's go, little girl!

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME

The crew can't believe what they're seeing.

NAGAI

What's she doing?! She doesn't have
enough air!

Wise gives a knowing smile.

WISE

She's buying us time.
(to the others)
The rocket. Go!

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - DAY

Riley slowly walks back to the station.

Romanova's crumpled body lies on the ground. The torso of her
suit has been ripped open and she's been disemboweled.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Wise, Nagai and Santos sprint toward the escape rocket.
Alarms BLARE. Steam hisses from pipes overhead.

In a distant part of the station, Riley SCREECHES, claws
scraping against metal as she pursues.

NAGAI

She's back inside!

WISE

Don't stop! Keep moving!

Santos stumbles. Wise catches him by the arm.

SANTOS

Thanks.

WISE

Buy me a beer when we're back on
Earth.

They round a corner, the rocket bay hatch just ahead.

Wise sprints ahead, mashing the open button.

WISE (CONT'D)

Inside, now!

The hatch hisses and begins to slide open, but SPARKS fly as it jams halfway.

It GROANS loudly, stuck in place-- not wide enough for anyone to get through.

WISE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

Nagai crouches, desperately pulling at the lower edge of the hatch.

Santos grabs a nearby crowbar and wedges it into the gap.

SANTOS

We can force it open-- come on!

Behind them, Riley's guttural GROWLS grow louder. A shadow looms at the far end of the hallway.

NAGAI

She's coming!

WISE

Just a little wider!

Riley skitters along the walls and ceiling, her grotesque form moving unnaturally fast.

Santos wrenches the crowbar, forcing the hatch open just wide enough for a person to slip through.

WISE (CONT'D)

Nagai, you first!

Nagai scrambles through the gap, tumbling into the rocket bay.

Santos strains against the weight of the door.

SANTOS

Commander, go!

Wise squeezes through. He glances back, seeing Santos still forcing the hatch open with the crowbar.

WISE

Doctor, come on!

Santos looks back at the narrowing hallway where Riley charges toward him.

Her claws rake the walls, sparks flying as she lets out a blood-curdling SHRIEK.

SANTOS
(resigned)
She'll get through if I don't shut
the door.

NAGAI
Santos! No!

WISE
We don't leave anyone behind!

SANTOS
You do this time.

Before Wise can protest, Santos yanks the crowbar free, slamming the hatch shut as best he can.

The door doesn't fully seal, leaving a narrow opening.

Santos faces Riley, his eyes wide but resolute. He grips the crowbar tightly as she closes in.

Riley pauses, tilting her head, her alien features almost curious.

Then, with terrifying speed, she lunges!

Santos swings the crowbar, but she dodges effortlessly, her claws slashing into his shoulder.

He SCREAMS in pain but doesn't quit.

SANTOS (CONT'D)
(through gritted teeth)
Come on! What are you waiting for!?

Riley charges forward, her claws raking Santos across the chest, flaying him wide open.

He collapses to the floor, blood pooling beneath him.

Riley shrieks triumphantly, but her head snaps toward the hatch as she hears the ROAR of engines starting.

INT. ROCKET - SAME

Wise and Nagai climb into their seats, the rocket's interior strangely empty without the rest of the crew.

Systems are powered and ready.

NAGAI
(in tears)
Santos...

WISE
He bought us the extra time we
needed.
(throws a switch)
Hang on... here we go!

Nagai tightens her restraints. The rocket's engines fully ignite with a deafening BLAST.

EXT. VENERA RESEARCH STATION - SAME

Heavy doors above the bay open as the escape rocket blasts upward.

Slowly, then faster and faster, it climbs into Venus's dense clouds.

EXT. ABOVE VENUS - CONTINUOUS

The rocket climbs higher and higher. Lightning flashes in the distance.

Toxic storms churn far below, but the rocket is clear of the worst.

INT. ROCKET - SAME

Wise and Nagai endure the turbulent acceleration in silence, both exhausted from the chaos they've just escaped.

WISE
Ten thousand feet and climbing.
Engines are five-by-five.

NAGAI
I'm picking up some wind shear
abnormalities on the left side.

WISE
Any effect on our speed?

NAGAI
Minimal. Nothing to worry about.

Suddenly, a loud BANG shakes the rocket.

WISE
You were saying?

ALARMS go off. Nagai tries to read her console.

NAGAI
Engines are fine. It's something
else.

Wise looks out the window.

WISE
It's her.

The sight freezes his blood: Riley is clinging to the outside
of the rocket!

EXT. ROCKET - SAME

Riley's clawed hands scrape against metal, tearing at the
seams as she climbs along the hull.

INT. ROCKET - SAME

Nagai works her console.

NAGAI
She's trying to destroy the wiring!
Anymore and we'll lose navigation.

WISE
Great. Engines are fine but we'll
miss Earth entirely.

NAGAI

Can we roll the ship? Knock her off somehow?

WISE

No, not during ascent. We're on auto-pilot, course locked in.

They both know what needs to be done and share a look.

WISE (CONT'D)

This day just gets better and better.

NAGAI

Commander, no--

WISE

--If there was any other way...

He unbuckles and rushes to the airlock, struggling to stand at the rocket continues climbing.

He's tossed around like socks in a dryer.

The sound of scraping claws against the rocket's metal surface continues, growing louder and more desperate.

Wise climbs into a space suit, the helmet hissing as it seals shut.

His fingers tremble as he locks the suit's gloves, preparing for the battle that could be his last.

He CLICKS the safety line to his suit before opening the airlock hatch.

EXT. ROCKET - CONTINUOUS

Wise puts one leg outside the rocket. The atmosphere is thin but it still throws him off-balance.

His suit CREAKS as he adjusts his stance against the violent acceleration.

Riley crawls along the outside of the ship, her claws leaving deep gouges as she tears at the metal.

She spots Wise and moves toward him. She's completely alien now-- her face twisted and grotesque

WISE

Riley! It's over. We're leaving...
the planet is yours.

She pauses, eyeing Wise with curiosity. Her expression softens... as if the old Riley is resurfacing.

RILEY

She has me. She won't let me leave.

She looks back at the soft yellow clouds falling distant behind them.

RILEY (CONT'D)

I'm part of her now...

Her mouth turns into a vicious terrifying grin. The monster returns.

RILEY (CONT'D)

You can be part of her too!

With inhuman speed, Riley flies at him, her claws cutting the air with deadly precision.

Wise barely manages to dodge, but the force knocks him back.

He spins in the air with only the safety line stopping him from plummeting back to the planet below.

The rocket continues to climb, the wind pushing against them both.

Riley grabs the safety line, trying to cut it free.

WISE

No!

Wise pulls himself back along the safety line. He reaches Riley, grabs hold of her, and tears her away from the ship.

She claws at him, both of them dangling at the end of his safety line.

RILEY

You're mine! You belong to me!

He strains and pulls a stun gun from his suit pocket. He aims over his shoulder and--

POP!

The shot goes wide, Riley weaving out of the way.

She SCREECHES, slashing at his helmet.

Her claw hits his visor, cracking it!

He twists, aims the stun gun--

POP!

Close but no cigar. She's too fast.

Riley brings her face close to Wise's helmet and HOWLS at him. Her hands grip the shoulders of his suit.

Suddenly, she vomits yellow liquid, hitting Wise square in the helmet. It begins to eat through the glass!

INSIDE THE HELMET: Wise can't see anything. Yellow acid covers his visor, seconds from eating through.

Wise turns the stun gun on himself and FIRES!

ZAP!

The electric current courses through Wise's suit and Riley's body, shocking her. She convulses in pain.

With a final burst of strength, Wise shoves her off, sending her tumbling into the void.

She reaches for him with her vicious claws but it's too late.

WISE
Go back to Hell!

Riley's SCREAMS fade in the distance, her body disappearing into the stormy clouds of Venus far below.

INT. ROCKET - MOMENTS LATER

Wise collapses, out of breath.

He yanks off his helmet-- the acid still bubbling on his visor but starting to slow.

He kicks the helmet to the far end of the airlock.

He lies back, eyes on the airlock ceiling. The rocket's internal radio CRACKLES to life.

NAGAI (OVER COMMS)
Commander? You okay?

WISE
Never been better.

NAGAI (OVER COMMS)
Dr. Riley?

WISE
She is... one with the planet. What she always wanted.
(beat)
Take us home, Dr. Nagai.

NAGAI (OVER COMMS)
Yes, sir.

Wise starts LAUGHING and can't stop.

EXT. ROCKET - SAME

The craft ascends, higher and higher, until Venus itself is a small swirling orb far below, the last remnants of the hellish world disappearing behind them.

They break free-- the harsh, toxic planet now a distant memory.

EXT. VENUS SURFACE - DAY

We descend slowly through layers of dense, churning clouds. Electric veins of lightning CRACK across the sky.

The surface is a hostile wasteland, harsh and alien, emerging from the fog in jagged, rocky stretches.

Elena Riley stands defiant against the toxic atmosphere. Alone, but stronger than ever. Finally at peace.

Finally home.

FADE OUT.

THE END