

Meanwhile, On Earth

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EXT./INT. AUTONOMOUS VAN - EARLY EVENING

It's Christmas. An unmarked autonomous van drives through a neighborhood somewhere in a borough of New York.

Sitting in the back is a lone passenger wearing a suit that looks like a cross between a hazmat suit and a space suit. This is MAX (40s), an American engineer who has been on the moon building the first lunar base. The suit protects every inch of his body. On the floor next to him are two bags of Christmas gifts.

The van pulls up in front of

HIS CHILDHOOD HOME

It's modest and lightly adorned with decorations.

VAN A.I. (V.O.)

Arrived.

Max exits with his bags and the van silently drives away. He looks at the house like he's been tasked to climb it then trudges up the walkway.

His steps are slow - he's still getting his earth legs after living in low gravity for twelve months. Before he reaches the door he stops to look up...at the moon.

He rings the door bell. It feels like forever until it's opened by his father, PAUL (70s), a slender man with a kind face. Max's suit startles him. It's flexible enough for maximum mobility, but still bulky enough to be imposing.

PAUL

Oh, Max. Come in. Come in.

MAX

Hi Pop.

INT. HOME, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max enters.

PAUL

Let me take these.

He relieves Max of the bags. The house is warm, cozy and festive. It's as far from life on the moon as it gets.

The Christmas tree lights reflect on Max's face shield like diodes in a spaceship. The dining room table is set for many more guests.

ALICE (O.S.)

Max.

Max turns to see his mother, ALICE (70s), a frail-looking woman entering from the kitchen. She's a year younger than her husband but looks ten years older.

She takes a cautious step toward him, but he closes the distance to save her from walking. The suit makes the embrace awkward.

MAX

How are you mom?

ALICE

I'm good. Happy to see my son. Can you breathe in there?

MAX

Yes, I have plenty of O2.

ALICE

And you can't take it off?

MAX

Not while I'm here. Sorry.

ALICE

How will you eat? I made all your favorites.

MAX

It's all built into the suit.

He demonstrates by pressing a button on the suit's arm controller. A straw raises inside his helmet and he slurps a thick brown liquid substance.

MAX (cont'd)

It's chocolate. Has all the calories and nutrients I need.

PAUL

Damn viruses.

ALICE

I don't understand. We never had so many in our day.

MAX

In your day they were called plagues.

The front door opens and in walks Max's younger sister AMY (30s).

AMY

Hey.

Trailing behind is her husband ANDREW (30s), their twins JULIA and TESSA (10), and their foster child, a boy of a different race named LOGAN (8). He looks lost.

TESSA

Uncle Max!

The girls rush to hug their uncle.

AMY

Girls, be careful!

They slam into Max like two little love magnets. He bends to one knee to hug them.

MAX

It's okay. It's puncture proof. How are my favorite little space girls?

ANDREW

(re: the suit)

Man, you are not taking any chances.

JULIA

Merry Christmas, Uncle Max.

TESSA

Why are you wearing this suit?

MAX

Well--

He notices Logan now standing near them and chooses his words carefully.

MAX (cont'd)

NASA doesn't want me catching a cold and bringing it back to the moon.

TESSA

You're going back?

MAX

Uh-huh. In the Summer.

TESSA  
For how long?

MAX  
A long time.

It makes her sad. She's smart enough to know he means forever.

JULIA  
Can I come?

TESSA  
I want to go too.

MAX  
What about your mommy and daddy?  
Won't you miss them?

The girls shrug.

AMY  
Gee, thanks.

Logan moves a step closer.

MAX  
You must be Logan.

JULIA  
He's our new brother.

TESSA  
He's a foster.

AMY  
Tessa! We talked about that.

MAX  
Hey pal, can I get a high five?

Quietly, the boy does as asked.

JULIA  
Can he come to the moon with us?

MAX  
I'm afraid you're still too young.  
But, maybe one day you can go to  
Mars. Remember? That's one of the  
reasons I'll be living on the moon.

AMY

Girls, let's put our coats in Nana and Pop Pop's room. And we need to wash our hands.

She leads the girls and Logan upstairs. Max rises.

ANDREW

Welcome back. That was some re-entry.

MAX

A little bumpier than they promised.

ALICE

I couldn't watch. And I didn't watch when he went up there. My nerves can't handle it.

PAUL

Why don't we sit? Come on. Max, sit in my chair.

He helps his wife to the couch as the men make themselves comfortable.

ANDREW

Summer, huh? I bet you can't wait to get back up there.

MAX

Well it's kind of a mess at the moment. Every day we lose feels like a year.

The girls come clomping down the stairs with Amy and Logan several steps behind.

AMY

Everything smells wonderful Mom.

JULIA

We could smell the turkey from up there!

TESSA

I'm hungry!

She runs toward the kitchen. Her sister is right behind her.

PAUL

Maybe we should eat.

Everyone gets up and heads toward the dining room. The door bell rings.

INT. HOME, DINING ROOM - SOMETIME LATER

Everyone is crammed around the table. Max is book-ended by his nieces. Food covers every available surface. Also there is Max's AUNT JENNY (60s), UNCLE STEVE (60s) and COUSIN JOHN (30s). All their attention is focused on Max.

AUNT JENNY

So is it true that you get hit by meteorites?

MAX

Actually, they're micrometeorites. They can be an occasional nuisance, but not like the regolith. That's a constant problem.

JULIA

What's regolith?

MAX

It's sort of like moon sand. It's everywhere and it gets into everything.

ANDREW

I heard it's nasty stuff. I also heard the moon has huge temperature swings. Is that true?

MAX

...From plus two hundred degrees Fahrenheit to minus three hundred in a single day.

JOHN

That's crazy.

UNCLE STEVE

I feel so bad you can't eat any of this. Your mother outdid herself.

AUNT JENNY

How are things with you Amy?

Amy perks up, happy to finally get some attention.

AMY

Oh, um, good. Things at the practice are going quite well. In fact--

AUNTIE

Max, do they have lawyers on the moon?

Amy feels slighted. So much for attention.

MAX

Uh, no, that's not really in the plans. At least not now. Maybe once the base transitions into a colony. Obviously there are some logistical challenges...

UNCLE STEVE

I think living on the moon would be great. It'd be a hell of a lot safer than earth.

Max sips some of his space smoothie.

JOHN

That is just so cool.

Everyone but Amy and Logan chimes in, talking over each other about Max and his life on the moon.

EXT. HOME, BACK PORCH - SOMETIME LATER

Max is alone. We can hear him peeing into his suit's Maximum Absorption Garment (MAG). Amy opens the back door and steps onto the porch. She's come to make her case.

AMY

Well, if I didn't live in your shadow before...

MAX

Oh please...

AMY

You have no idea. Every night before bed Tessa blows a kiss to the moon and says, "Good night uncle Max." I'm lucky if I get a peck on the cheek.

MAX

Logan seems like a nice kid...quiet.



AMY  
He lost everything. His entire world  
is upside down.

(a beat)  
...Thanks for not saying virus in  
there.

MAX  
(nods, then)  
It's a good thing you're doing.

AMY  
I just feel bad we only took one. The  
system is so overwhelmed.

MAX  
Are you going to adopt?

AMY  
Maybe. Andrew loves having a boy.

Max looks through a window. He can see his mother in the  
kitchen. So small and fragile. Amy notices.

AMY (cont'd)  
She's aged.

MAX  
We all age.

AMY  
I'm serious. There's such a thing as  
worrying yourself to death and  
there's Exhibit A.

MAX  
That's not fair.

AMY  
Neither is this. All she thinks about  
is meteorites and radiation exposure.  
Then you come back here dressed like  
this so she can't even touch you, and  
you're going to leave again--for good  
this time. You should've just stayed  
up there.

MAX  
...Mandatory respite after the first  
twelve months. You know that. I  
couldn't have stayed even if I wanted  
to.

AMY  
But you wanted to.

She knows she has him.

AMY (cont'd)  
I don't want to see them grow old and die anymore than you do. But I'm not doing anything to accelerate the process. You go back up there and she'll die. They both will. And you won't be here to say goodbye.

MAX  
What I'm doing is important. We're trying to save mankind.

AMY  
...More like saving yourself by running away to the moon.

MAX  
They knew when I signed up for this that it was all or nothing.

AMY  
And your family is nothing.

MAX  
...Always a prosecutor.

They stare at each other. Not much more to say.

AMY  
I should check on my kids.

She opens the door. From inside we can hear people happily welcoming a woman named "Callista." Max is not thrilled.

MAX  
(sotto)  
Really?

INT. HOME, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CALLISTA (30s) is a DUMBO hipster with caramel skin and eyes as bright as a thousand stars. She is being greeted like a daughter.

Max enters the room. She sees him in the suit. Everyone watches their interaction. Who will speak first? The moon man, or the lover he left behind?

She busts out laughing.

CALLISTA  
It's more ridiculous than I imagined.

MAX  
Had I known you were coming I would  
have worn a tie.

They approach each other.

MAX (cont'd)  
Hi, Cali.

CALLISTA  
Merry Christmas. I hope you don't  
mind. I just wanted to see how you're  
doing.

MAX  
You just want my mother's food.

CALLISTA  
I can have that whenever I want.

Max is confused.

ALICE  
She comes over every Friday.

MAX  
You do?

PAUL  
We play cards.

EXT. HOME, FRONT PORCH - SOMETIME LATER

Max and Callista sit on the steps looking at the moon in the  
clear night sky.

MAX  
...Sure you're not cold?

CALLISTA  
I'm good. How are you doing in there?

MAX  
I feel like an idiot.

CALLISTA  
You look like one. But a smart one.

They return their gaze to the moon.

CALLISTA (cont'd)  
Two-hundred thirty-eight thousand  
nine-hundred miles.

MAX  
Well, you know what they say,  
"Location, location, location."

CALLISTA  
I follow the progress online. It's  
big.

MAX  
It's massive.

CALLISTA  
No, I mean what you're doing.  
Especially now. This last one was  
really scary. They're like  
hurricanes. They're just getting more  
intense.

MAX  
I'm glad you're okay. I was worried.

CALLISTA  
Me too.

MAX  
Thanks for checking in on my parents.  
You don't have to do that.

CALLISTA  
I love them.  
(off his look)  
I really do. I kind of feel like  
they're my parents too.

This hits Max. A sense of what could have been.

MAX  
Are you seeing anyone?

CALLISTA  
...A few blind dates. They either  
show up wearing masks or they're  
survivalists looking for someone to  
breed with so we can "preserve the  
species."

MAX

Sorry.

CALLISTA

Blame the dating sites.

MAX

No, really. I'm sorry for leaving you here.

CALLISTA

Don't. We've been over this. I would've made the same choice if I was a genius in geomechanical engineering. The world needs you up there.

MAX

But what do you need?

They search each others' eyes, uncertain to go down this road again.

CALLISTA

I need some of your dad's bourbon.

She gets up, takes his hand and helps him up, bringing them just about face to shield. The spark is still there.

MAX

I'm here until Spring.

CALLISTA

You're untouchable.

MAX

But a lot closer than the moon.

EXT. SECURE FACILITY - EVENING

The autonomous van pulls into a secure compound and stops in front of a small warehouse-style building. This is Max's quarantine home until he returns to the moon.

INT. SECURE FACILITY, STERILIZATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Max enters, pushes a button on the wall and is completely sprayed with a fine mist.

He then carefully removes the suit and the MAG and places the MAG in a disposal bin. Now nearly naked, he pushes the button again so his body can be sprayed.

INT. SECURE FACILITY, SHOWER - MOMENTS LATER

Max showers vigorously.

INT. SECURE FACILITY, MAX'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Max sits at a table in his sterile-looking room and takes his own vitals. All of the results are automatically fed into a computer, likely to be sent instantly to NASA. He checks:

- His height, weight, BMI, etc.
- His heart rate
- His blood pressure
- His temperature
- His blood (his least favorite part)

He looks at a monitor. All results are NORMAL.

He gets up, walks over to a small galley and selects something in a foil bag to eat.

INT. SECURE FACILITY, MAX'S ROOM - SOMETIME LATER

Max works out on an elliptical while listening to Christmas music. His strides are long and smooth. It looks like he's running on the moon.

We hear the song continue to play as we begin a

MONTAGE

- Max celebrates New Year's Eve with his family, Callista and some other RELATIVES. They've managed to put a New Year's Eve top hat on the top of his suit. At midnight, the women--including Callista--kiss Max on the face shield, successfully leaving lipstick.

- Max and Callista in Amy's backyard. Max is playing "robot" with his nieces and Logan.

- Max and Callista in a movie theater. People sit at safe distances. Some wear protective masks. One person looks over her shoulder at Max. Seeing him in his suit is unsettling.

- Max watches Callista ice skate. He waves as she glides by.

- Max and Callista playing cards with his parents. His mother looks happier than we've seen her.

- Max and Callista in an elevator, her bare hand holding his covered hand.

It leads to the END OF MONTAGE

INT. CALLISTA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Callista flirtatiously chases Max around the couch.

CALLISTA  
Come on, one kiss.

MAX  
No way.

CALLISTA  
Who's going to know?

MAX  
*They* will. Believe me. I breach and this thing goes off like it's an air raid.

CALLISTA  
Kiss me.

She's no longer being flirty. She's serious.

MAX  
Cali...

CALLISTA  
I want to show you something.

She runs into her bedroom, which makes him nervous. She returns with a small jewelry box and hands it to him.

MAX  
What is this?

CALLISTA  
Open it.

He opens it. It's a key. He doesn't understand.

CALLISTA (cont'd)  
Remember the cabin we rented before  
you left? I bought it. For us.

She reveals a matching key on a necklace she's wearing.

He looks at her then at the key in the box. It unlocks his  
memories of their time at the cabin as we begin a

MONTAGE OF THEM

- Eating a romantic dinner
- Dancing by the fire
- Chasing each other around a couch
- Making love
- Sharing a chair and blanket outside as they look up at the moon

...Two lovers doing the things lovers do.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. CALLISTA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max removes his gaze from the key.

MAX  
I can't.

CALLISTA  
You can't? Or you won't?

MAX  
I have to complete the mission.

CALLISTA  
Why does it have to be you? You've  
done enough. Why can't somebody else  
do it?

MAX  
Because I'm the only one who can!

CALLISTA  
Oh, right. I forgot. You're the only  
geomechanical engineer on earth.



MAX  
The moon needs me!

CALLISTA  
I need you!

MAX  
What do you want me to do?! Stay here  
with you and die like everyone else?!

She looks at him. Can't believe he said it. Neither can he.  
Her eyes begin to well up.

MAX (cont'd)  
Cali...

CALLISTA  
Go.

MAX  
I'm sorry.

CALLISTA  
Leave. Have a good life.

She walks into her bedroom and closes the door. He leaves.

INT. SECURE FACILITY, MAX'S ROOM - DAY

Max sits on his bed, alone with his thoughts. He gets up,  
walks over to his desk, opens his laptop and begins to bury  
himself in his work.

We see the passage of time, from Winter to Summer, as a  
newly-focused Max prepares for his return trip to the moon.

EXT. HOME - DAY

Max, in his protective suit, says goodbye to his family and  
relatives. Everyone is sad. They will never see him in  
person again. His mother can't take it. She goes inside.

Max gets in the van and it pulls away.

INT. CALLISTA'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY - DAY

Max knocks on Callista's door. There is no answer.

An ELDERLY NEIGHBOR named GEORGE sees Max as he exits his  
apartment. He's wearing a mask.

GEORGE  
Is there an outbreak?

MAX  
What?

GEORGE  
The suit. Do I need to vacate?

MAX  
No. You're safe.

Max knocks again.

GEORGE  
Nobody's there. It's vacant.

Max looks at the door then back to George, who is approaching.

MAX  
I was looking for Callista.

GEORGE  
She moved.

MAX  
Do you know where?

GEORGE  
Think she said upstate. They have a cabin up there.

MAX  
They?

GEORGE  
She and her boyfriend. Nice guy. An artist or something. Always had paint on his pants.

Max is silent for a moment as it sinks in. He turns to leave.

GEORGE (cont'd)  
Say, what's with the suit?

MAX  
It's for protection.

George pulls down his mask and takes a step closer.

GEORGE

You know, we spend so much time trying to keep the bad stuff out. Pretty soon, we're gonna forget how to let the good stuff in.

He shakes his head at the sadness of it all.

GEORGE (cont'd)

Well, stay safe.

George turns and walks away. We focus tight on Max's face as he watches George get smaller as he walks down the long hallway.

MATCH CUT to his face, now looking at Earth in the night sky through a porthole window in his

MOON-BASE BEDROOM

He is wearing a t-shirt and pants and rubbing the key between his finger and thumb.

ANJU (O.C.)

Max.

her voice snaps him out of the memory. He turns to see ANJU (30s) a fellow engineer at his door.

ANJU

You coming to breakfast?

MAX

Be there in a sec.

ANJU

Okay. Hey, Merry Christmas.

MAX

Merry Christmas.

She leaves. He turns to gaze at Earth one more time before leaving for Christmas breakfast on the moon.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END