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One Small Step

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First Draft
11th Oct 2010 – 16th Oct 2010
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INT. SPACECRAFT COCKPIT

Sasha, Ji and Matvei are all in a focused pilot mode as the ship begins its descent to mars.

MATVEI

Engines are normal, deceleration running smoothly.

Ji

We of our course by a deviation of zero, zero, two, one, four percent.

SASHA

That'll do.

(Over internal comm.)

Brace people our ride may get a little bumpy, we are approaching the Mars atmosphere.

MATVEI

Speed has reached that required for the de-orbiting manoeuvre.

SASHA

Ok here we go.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS ATMOSPHERE

The ship is seen to slow down in the mars atmosphere.

INT. SPACECRAFT COCKPIT

The cockpit is now shaking as the spacecraft experiences turbulence.

MATVEI

Easy does it.

Ji

Remaining on course.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS ATMOSPHERE

A light glow can now be seen from the front of the ship as the atmosphere starts to generate more heat.

INT. SPACECRAFT COCKPIT

Still shaking inside the crew is relatively calm.

Ji

Sixty thousand feet.

SASHA

Engaging cruising controls.

MATVEI

Generating thrust.

The turbulence subsides to minor occasional bumps.

SASHA

Easy girl, let's find a place to put her down. I don't want to crash this on the easy part.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS

The spacecraft is now seen flying much like a normal plane would above the dusty mars surface.

INT. SPACECRAFT COCKPIT

JI

Landing area two Charlie is over this ridge, sending you the co-ordinance.

SASHA

Ok I have them. Here we go.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS SURFACE

Approaching a long piece of flat land the spacecraft begins its descent and lands on the surface, much like an oversized airplane. A dust trail blows out from behind the craft before it finally comes to a standstill. As the dust settles around the ship it looks lost and isolated in the barren landscape.

INT. SPACECRAFT COCKPIT

Silence surrounds the pilots as the spacecraft is finally at a rest.

MATVEI

We have arrived.

INT. HOUSTON COMMAND

Almost everyone is standing up by their seats now. The large screen dominating the area shows a live feed from a camera on the outside of the spacecraft. With the sun barely penetrating the thick carbon atmosphere the air is seen whipping up dust clouds around.

OSLOW FENCHURN

They made it. (Beat) Are the media getting this feed?

MARTIN EPPS

Yeah, it's not encrypted. We can watch it on CNN if you want?

INT. SPACECRAFT AIRLOCK

All nine members wait patiently at an air lock dressed in their space suits. Duke is at the front fiddling with a camera on his helmet.

EMILY

When you turn the camera on it will transmit a signal to the ship which will bounce it back to earth. You should be live on T.V. just a few seconds later.

VSEVOLOD

And your mic will also transmit whatever you say. So make it good.

DUKE

I'll try.

SHENG LI

Good luck.

Duke steps into the airlock and is sealed inside. After the pressure is stabilised the outer door opens to reveal the mars landscape, and a set of steps leading from the ship to the ground.

DUKE

(Exhales)

Here goes.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS SURFACE

We can see Duke beginning his slow descent down the steps towards the surface. Moving a hand to his side, he switches his helmet camera on.

INT. HOUSTON COMMAND

The picture on the large screen is now that of the camera on the side of Dukes head.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS SURFACE

Duke is now standing on the last step with just the mars surface left now. He takes a long pause gathering his thoughts.

DUKE

In nineteen sixty nine one man took a small step for a single nation of our world. Now over forty years later, many nations began working together set upon taking the next giant leap forward that was asked for. This is no longer one small step for man; this is the world moving forward, together.

With that Duke takes the final step onto the mars surface. A small puff of dust surrounds his feet as he lands. Duke takes a long look around at all that he can see.

INT. HOUSTON COMMAND

The T.V. screen shows Duke as he takes the final step required and lands on the surface. This sparks huge cheers and celebrations in and around the office with everyone congratulating each other.

EXT. CITY CENTERS

Crowds of people gathered round screens in city centres around the globe start to cheer and celebrate.

INT. SPACECRAFT AILOCK

The other members of the crew are watching Duke.

VSEVOLOD

That was beautiful my friend.

SHENG LI

What are the rest of us waiting here for?

ANTHONY

He's right, let's get down there.

EXT. SPACECRAFT MARS SURFACE

Duke is still looking around fascinated by what he can see. Down the stairs the other crew members start to appear each taking great care walking down the steps, with each member appearing to pause slightly before stepping onto the surface.

HUAN-YUE

This is absolutely incredible.

MATVEI

It's like nothing I ever imagined.

EMILY

It's beautiful.

VSEVOLOD

Da. Beautiful.

The camera moves away to show them all capitulated by what they can see.

THREE MONTHS LATER

EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTRE

The Spacecraft has landed at Kennedy space centre and is sitting on the runway. A set of steps are slowly raised up to the exterior of the ship. Oslow Fenchurn walks up the steps to the door of the spacecraft. He opens the door and ventures inside.

INT. SPACECRAFT COCKPIT

All nine members are in their seats, none are moving. The realisation of what they have done is now dawning on them. Oslow enters the room.

OSLOW FENCHURN

I wanted to be the first person to meet you when you finally got back home. You all must be exhausted. But for now we've got to get moving. Despite procedure the first thing we have to do is get all of you on a plane over to Washington. Your respected leaders want to see you right away, whereas I'm just glad to have you back.

(Smiling to them)

Welcome home people.

Oslow exits.

ANTHONY

Well let's go face the music.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE

A glimpse of the exterior of the white house shows a crowd formed at an exterior gate.

INT. OVAL OFFICE

The nine members are all standing. The Russian and Chinese leaders are seated either side of the President who is looking down at his desk. The other leaders are staring at the crew and an uneasy silence fills the room before the President looks up.

PRESIDENT

You broke protocol for this mission.

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG

All of you.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN

It is unacceptable.

(Beat)

PRESIDENT
(To Duke)
And you. You misled our countries.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN
Had us waste billions.

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG
Made us look foolish.

(Beat)

PRESIDENT
And for what?

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG
Fame and Fortune?

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN
Pride?

(Beat)

PRESIDENT
In normal circumstances we could have you all killed
for treason.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN
Disregarding a direct order.

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG
Crimes against the state!

(Beat)

PRESIDENT
But it would appear that there are certain
influences out of our control.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN
The people.

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG
Always the people.

(Beat)

PRESIDENT
To them you're heroes. And what kind of leaders
would we appear as if we were to lock you up, or
have you killed upon hours of your return.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN
It would mean the end.

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG
For all of us.

PRESIDENT
So between us three, you nine and a selected and a selection of other people who are now sworn to secrecy, the truth shall stop there.

The President stands up and looks out the window where the large prosperous crowd has gathered to welcome home the astronauts.

PRESIDENT
As for everyone else, you went on our authority, but were unable to recover any oil because of equipment malfunction.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT BENIN
But the people won't care about that.

PRESIDENT
And neither shall we.

CHINESE CHAIRMAN CONG
And no-one shall ever need to know anything other than that.

PRESIDENT
(Turning back to face them)
And that is how it shall stay. (Beat) Any questions?

A general consensus of no's and shaken heads goes around.

PRESIDENT
Then you are all dismissed. I'm certain the media has a few questions for you they would like answered, I suggest you answer them.

The crew starts to leave.

PRESIDENT
Not you Duke. I want a quick word.

The president mentions towards the other leaders who also make their exit leaving the president and Duke alone.

PRESIDENT
Please, sit.

Duke sits.

PRESIDENT

When I first found out what you had done I was a little angry. Not by what you had done, but that you had managed to get all the way out there by it. How far I let it go without even the slightest realisation that something might be wrong. Tell me, did you ever see yourself becoming the first person on mars when you made that switch?

DUKE

No sir.

PRESIDENT

It takes a certain type of man to carry on the way you did. If I'm truthful I'm jealous of how you carried on with all this on your mind. Tell me Duke what was it like? Mars?

DUKE

Silently peaceful sir.

PRESIDENT

Do you think we'll ever go back?

DUKE

I'd like to think so sir.

PRESIDENT

So would I Duke. So would I.

INT. DUKES APPARTMENT

Duke, Emily, Steve and Felicity are enjoying a joint celebration of their return home and Steve and Felicity's engagement.

DUKE

I can't believe it. We were only gone a couple of months and you have got engaged.

STEVE

A couple? It was over half a year.

DUKE

(To Flick)

I thought you didn't like him?

FLICK

He's growing on me.

STEVE

I still can't believe you've been to mars.

EMILY

I can't believe no one went to prison.

FLICK

Would you two do it again?

STEVE

If it meant getting another date with you. Of course.

FLICK

Ok Romeo, besides that?

EMILY

Yeah. Did you achieve what you wanted to?

STEVE

We'll it got us out the lab for a while.

STEVE

Yeah, and I don't think anyone really got hurt or suffered too much.

INT. OIL EXECUTIVES OFFICE

Kent Hampshire is sitting behind his desk on a computer. His Secretary enters delivering him his morning mail.

KENT HAMPSHIRE

Thanks Carol.

He looks through the post to find a letter addressed as urgent from the U.S. Government. Intrigued he puts the rest of the mail to one side and opens this letter. Scanning through he takes a sip of coffee before reading the final few lines;

Therefore your contribution to the mars mission is commissioned at \$25,000,000,000.00 USD.

After he reads this line he sprays the coffee in his mouth out in shock.

End Credits.