

APOGEE

a
screenplay
by
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ICM

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FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT PROVING GROUND - DAWN

A vast, desolate wasteland stretches to the horizon. Inhospitable... Nothing lives out here. In the distance, a SHADOW races across the rocky terrain, followed by the muffled thrumming of helicopter blades.

An OSPREY aircraft glides into view, approaching fast. Its wing-tipped rotors tilt from horizontal to vertical as it settles in for a landing by a collection of pre-fab buildings. The aircraft carries the PRESIDENTIAL SEAL.

A GROUP OF UNIFORMS exits from the central building of the military compound and crosses to the Osprey. They are led by Air Force General EDWARD TURGESON, late fifties. The three stars on his shoulder acknowledge a lifetime of distinguished service. The morning sun, caught in the turning rotorblades, strobes across his weathered face.

The Osprey's door opens and the PRESIDENT emerges, followed by GENERAL WALLACE STONE, the imposing Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Various AIDES trail. Turgeson snaps to attention and throws the President a salute. The President half-heartedly returns it.

GEN. TURGESON

Mr. President. General. This way.

Turgeson leads the group to the central building.

INT. COMMAND POST - DAWN

Turgeson ushers all but the President and General Stone through a door. He closes the door, locking most of the group behind it.

GEN. TURGESON

Security precaution.

The President nods as he and Stone take seats in front of a large bay window overlooking the wasteland. A YOUNG SOLDIER hands them field glasses.

GEN. STONE

Sure as hell hope Project Zeus lives up to its billing.

GEN. TURGESON

I used to look at the numbers and wonder myself.

PRESIDENT

I've never been a fan of these black world projects. They always turn out to be a waste of time and money.

GEN. TURGESON
Not always. Activate remotes.

Another SOLDIER hits some buttons on a computer console. VIDEO SCREENS come alive.

GEN. TURGESON
Gentlemen, please direct your
attention due east.

The soldier nudges the joystick forward as Turgeson points. A series of dots can be seen cresting a small bluff, backlit by the rising sun.

The President raises the field glasses to his eyes. Through them he sees a column of sleek, deadly, heavily armored TANKS approaching at high speed. Remote drones.

Turgeson dons a headset.

GEN. TURGESON
(into headset)
Justice Targeting, this is Delta 1.
Stand by.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Shielded metallic walls. High tech equipment. Submarine claustrophobic. Signs warn: "RESTRICTED AREA" and "CLASSIFIED". Soldiers, dressed in jumpsuits, staff various electronic stations.

COLONEL HERSEY, 40's, at the command console.

HERSEY
Justice Targeting standing by.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)
Are you tracking?

HERSEY
Tracking. Gunnery Sergeant, do you
have a positive ID?

GUNNERY SERGEANT MAXWELL, late 20's, watches his monitor, tracking an enhanced satellite image of the column of tanks. Using a light-pen, he highlights the tanks.

MAXWELL
Affirmative. Targets acquired.

INT. COMMAND POST - DAWN

TURGESON peers through field glasses at the column of tanks easily maneuvering obstacles in the distant wasteland.

GEN. TURGESON
On my mark. Stand-by.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

MAXWELL
Standing by.

EXT. DESERT PROVING GROUND - DAWN

The relentless tanks roll over boulders, cacti and tumbleweed.
Dust billows behind their treads.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)
And... Mark!

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

The Gunnery Sergeant squeezes his trigger. A high-pitched
whine rips through the platform.

EXT. PROVING GROUND - DAWN

BLINDING FLASHES of lightning. One by one, the tanks EXPLODE,
sending BALLS OF FLAME shooting skyward.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

The aftermath of the tanks' destruction is captured by
satellite imaging on the monitor.

MAXWELL
Direct hit.
(checking numbers)
Sir, we recorded a 100 percent kill in
the target area.

EXT. PROVING GROUNDS - DAWN

Turgeson lowers his field glasses. The group quietly watches
the plumes of smoke rise into the misty redness of the morning
sky. The President is awed by the display.

PRESIDENT
God help us. It works.

INT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR - DAY

An elevator opens and Turgeson exits, flanked by the President
and General Stone. Turgeson slides his key card into the lock
and presses his thumb against the print ID scanner pad.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
General Turgeson, Director, Air Force
Strategic Space Command. Confirmed.
Good Morning General.

The revolving door activates and whisks Turgeson to the other side. The President tentatively steps up to the thumb ID pad.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Commander-in-chief, U.S. Military
Forces. Confirmed. Good morning Mr.
President.

The President joins Turgeson on the other side of the door.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND, OPERATIONS CENTER - DAY

Top secret and buried hundreds of feet underground, this military command center is Mission Control on steroids. Row after row of consoles, each manned by a uniformed soldier. Video screens display maps of the world, orbital trajectories, etc.

GEN. TURGESON
Gentleman, welcome to the Strategic
Space Command...

Turgeson motions toward the massive central six video monitors.

GEN. TURGESON
Operations Center for Justice Station,
the world's first nuclear powered
space-to-ground engagement weapon.
Operational crew of twenty.

On the video screens:
Displayed from different angles...

JUSTICE SPACE STATION

Like a spider web, long inter-connecting gossamer struts support SIX MODULAR NODES. At its center, a shaft bisects this rotating webwork, rising upward to a squat cylindrical NUCLEAR REACTOR mounted on its end.

GEN. STONE
Incredible.

PRESIDENT
Incredible it's still a secret. Who
knows about this?

GEN. TURGESON
No one. Not even NASA. And with
stealth technology... well, for all
intents and purposes, it's invisible.

GEN. STONE
But couldn't you see it with a
telescope?

GEN. TURGESON

You'd have to know exactly where to look. It's a one kilometer needle in a 21 billion square kilometer haystack. The sky's a big place in her orbit.

PRESIDENT

And you say it can target individuals?

GEN. TURGESON

People, airplanes, submarines.
Anything, anywhere, at the push of a button.

(beat)

War, as we know it, just became obsolete... sir.

SMASH CUT TO:

SUPER TITLE: "KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - CAPE CANAVERAL"

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - DAY

From high above, the blue of the ocean and the blue of the sky merge around the tongue of land that houses NASA's launch facilities.

ROCK MUSIC BLARES AS ...

... along the maze of access roads weaving in and out of the massive hangars and storage facilities, we find a motorcycle whipping past traffic, pedestrians and construction.

EXT. ORBITAL PROCESSING FACILITY - DAY

The motorcycle lays track as it slides into a 360 degree fishtail halt in front of the facility entrance. COL. ANGSTROM dismounts. Early fifties, he's a hotshot cowboy astronaut, an unrepentant Top Gun who got older but never grew up.

INT. ORBITAL PROCESSING FACILITY - DAY

A massive structure, hundreds of feet high and several football fields long.

A 30-ton bridge crane lowers the SPACELAB module into the awaiting and open bay of the SPACE SHUTTLE "HORIZON".

The CREW CHIEF waves Angstrom over. Hands him a hard hat.

CREW CHIEF

Taking your usual pre-launch walk around?

ANGSTROM

What can I say? I'm superstitious.

(eyes the shuttle)

Every time I see it, I feel like a kid again.

The Crew Chief smiles, makes some notes on his clipboard as Angstrom heads into the labyrinth of some of the largest machinery you'll ever see.

As he passes by a corridor, he notices something out of the corner of his eye. He stops... looks down the corridor.

Just in time to see a gloved hand pull a kit bag out of sight.

ANGSTROM

Hey. You there!

Angstrom trots down the side corridor to investigate. He looks around. Nothing. Then...

An arm darts down from the machinery above and encircles his neck. It pulls him up and off his feet. Choking him. He struggles, kicking the air wildly, clutching at his throat.

Then... the arm jerks, and we hear the twisted celery crunch of his neck snapping.

INT. VEHICLE ASSEMBLY BUILDING

Overhead CRANES raise the SHUTTLE to a vertical position and lift it up to the massive EXTERNAL TANK (ET) and SOLID ROCKET BOOSTERS (SRB). The shuttle clamps into position.

EXT. - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - DAY

AERIAL SHOT - The assembled Space Shuttle moves slowly on the Crawlerway between the Vehicle Assembly Building and the launch pad.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - SUNSET

Silhouetted against the greying pink of dusk, the shuttle horizon stands ready.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)

T-minus twelve hours, thirty minutes.

INT. NASA BOARDROOM - NIGHT

NASA's director, HARRY HALLIWELL, finishes his umpteenth cigarette of the evening and stuffs the butt into an overflowing ashtray. TANGO, the shuttle's mission commander, enters.

HALLIWELL

Any word?

TANGO

Not a one. It's as if he vanished into thin air.

Halliwel reaches for his cigarettes.

HALLIWELL

This fucking flight is cursed.

TANGO

We gonna scrub for the week?

HALLIWELL

Not this time. Call McNair.

TANGO

McNair? Are you serious?

HALLIWELL

He's the back-up. This is what he's paid for. Call 'em and tell him to prep.

TANGO

The congresslady's not gonna like this.

HALLIWELL

No one is.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

A MAN, half hidden in the corner shadows of the darkened room, pushes back the curtain. In the distance he sees the tiny figure of the Horizon poised for take-off, a shadow against the reddening sky.

Enough light leaks through the drawn curtains for us to get a good glimpse of JAKE MCNAIR. His lean, muscular figure is impressive for his forty odd years.

A knock at the door.

MCNAIR

Yes?

VOICE (O.S.)

Colonel... Colonel McNair? It's 0500.

MCNAIR

Yes, I know. Thank you.

McNair turns away from the window, fingering a FADED-YELLOW ENVELOPE. He stuffs it into a flightsuit pocket.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - MORNING

Halliwel sits at the top of the table, TANGO next to him. The other FOUR HORIZON ASTRONAUTS sit around the table, all wearing flightsuits.

HALLIWELL

This is a high profile mission. If we delay again, we're throwing the entire space program to the deficit vultures.

ASHLEY, the mission's co-pilot, shakes his head.

ASHLEY

That's not the point. The point is, I don't think he's ready.

TANGO

He's recorded 400 sim hours and maintained a perfect record.

ASHLEY

That doesn't mean a goddamn thing. In a simulator there's no risk but your reputation. No risk means no pressure.

KINGSLEY, mission's specialist, nods his head in agreement.

KINGSLEY

Face it. When it counted... McNair screwed the pooch.

HALLIWELL

Now wait a minute. Not one of you can say that. He made a command decision that saved lives.

KINGSLEY

And cost a few.

ASHLEY

Come on. We all know what happened. He panicked... He pushed the wrong button. The story about a hydraulics failure was to cover his ass.

TANGO

You are way out of line.

ASHLEY

Save your official accounts for the tour groups. Peck, what do you think?

PECK, payload specialist, looks up from his briefing papers.

PECK

About what?

KINGSLEY
About McNair.

PECK
I think he's a hell of an astronaut.

TAYLOR
Harry...

The last astronaut, REPRESENTATIVE SARAH TAYLOR rises. In her early thirties, this congresswoman is impressive: smart and tough.

TAYLOR
Is anyone else ready to pilot this mission?

HALLIWELL
No.

ASHLEY
Yeah... me.

KINGSLEY
You've only been up once... as a co-pilot. That hardly qualifies you.

TAYLOR
Listen boys, I'm your biggest fan on the Hill, but so far on this flight we've had five delays, we're eight weeks behind schedule, and our hot-shit pilot is probably drunk off his ass in some Tallahassee roadhouse. "Inept" is the word the press'll use.

KINGSLEY
The issue is safety.

TAYLOR
The issue is ego.

HALLIWELL
Here's the bottom line. We can either delay again and look like idiots, or we can go up today with McNair.

ASHLEY
Not with him. Not today.

McNAIR
Why not today?

Jake McNair, dressed in his flightsuit, enters the room.

McNAIR
Beautiful day for a launch.

Silence in the room. All eyes on McNair.

McNAIR
What's the problem?

They're not quite sure what to say.

HALLIWELL
Jake, there's been a question raised
about your qualifications.

TAYLOR
It's a valid question.

McNAIR
Uh-huh. I see.

TAYLOR
We trained with Angstrom, not you. All
I know about you is your voice on that
god-awful video footage the local news
aired over and over again.

McNAIR
Yes. I seem to remember that.

TAYLOR
Now, if I'm going to put my life in
someone's hands, I want to make damn
sure he knows what he's doing. I think
we all feel that way.

McNair considers her words. Looks at each person at the table.
A beat -

McNAIR
I understand your concerns. Hell, I'd
feel exactly the same way if I were in
your shoes. But think about this... I
am in your shoes. And I'm not stupid
enough to be here if I didn't think I
was qualified, because frankly, it's
my ass up there too.

Silence again. McNair stares down each astronaut a moment.

McNAIR
Part of this job are the risks. I'm
willing to take them. So if you scrub,
it's because of you, not me.

(beat)
Harry, let 'em vote on it. I'll wait
out in the hall.

McNair exits, closing the door behind him.

EXT. PREP ROOM - DAY

The astronauts, led by a solemn McNair, exit the building. Cameras flash and whir as the group makes its way to the Airstream Van. Reporters yell out the usual questions. But the astronauts ignore them, waving at the photographers as they enters the Airstream.

INT. AIRSTREAM VAN - DAY

Taylor sits near to McNair in the back.

McNAIR
Thanks for the confidence.

TAYLOR
How do you know I voted for you?

Taylor leans back and stares out the window, then looks back at McNair.

TAYLOR
I'm curious. After what happened, why would you want to come back?

A thoughtful beat.

McNAIR
Every retiring ball player likes to go out on a win.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - DAY

The shuttle Horizon. Regal in the shining sun. The group exits the Airstream and crosses to the elevator...

McNair lags behind. Stops.

He looks up the length of the immense rocket... an ant next to a skyscraper. From the elevator, Ashley throws a distrustful glance at McNair.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK - DAY

McNair in the pilot's seat. Ashley at co-pilot. McNair flicks switches and checks gauges. The smooth moves of a competent professional.

McNAIR
Our cargo seems awfully young for this kind of choice plum. What's her story?

ASHLEY
Some of the senior congressional committee members lobbied to go, but she was the only one who passed the physical. And the press loves her.

McNAIR
I feel like I'm driving a tour bus.

ASHLEY
Well, we need something to jump start
the program.

McNair hits his com button.

McNAIR
L.D., Horizon. Pre-flight confirmed.
Horizon stands ready. Over.

LAUNCH DIRECTOR (O.S.)
Roger that. Stand by.

Ashley notices a black rubber band around McNair's ring
finger.

ASHLEY
What's that?

McNAIR
My lucky O-Ring... You like?

ASHLEY
You're a morbid son-of-a-bitch, aren't
you McNair.

For the first time, McNair smiles.

McNAIR
Relax. I'll try not to kill anybody
this time.

LAUNCH DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Horizon, L.D.

McNAIR
Go L.D.

LAUNCH DIRECTOR (V.O.)
Good to have you back in the saddle,
McNair.

McNAIR
Roger that. Thanks, boys.

MISSION CONTROL
Horizon, Mission Control.

McNAIR
Go Houston.

MISSION CONTROL
All systems go for nominal launch.

INT. MID-DECK

Where Taylor, Tango, Peck, and Kingsley are strapped in.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O. cont'd)
.. and Representative Taylor, the good
people of Houston wish you godspeed.

TAYLOR

They have my undying thanks and
gratitude for making two of my dreams
come true... serving them in congress
and going into space.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)

Roger that. We are restarting the
count at T-minus thirty, twenty nine,
twenty eight...

PECK

(smirking)

Nice sound bite.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Winnebagos and station wagons. Families look through
binoculars at the shuttle, tiny in the distance.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)

T minus twelve... eleven... ten...

INT. FIRING ROOM ONE - DAY

Faces glued to video screens.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)

nine... eight... seven... six...
five... four... three...

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK - DAY

A trickle of sweat appears on McNair's brow.

McNAIR

Main engine power up... Main engine
ignition... Here we go.

Ashley studies the gauges. The cockpit begins to rumble.

INT. HORIZON MID-DECK - DAY

Taylor holds a open LOCKET in her hands. The smiling picture
of a ten year old girl looks up at her.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD - DAY

Horizon struggles against gravity. Rising slowly. Trailing fire and smoke.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)
We have lift-off. Lift-off of STS-175
for its geological surveying
mission... Horizon has cleared the
tower.

The rising craft picks up momentum.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK - DAY

McNair gets comfortable in his seat as the G-forces shove him backward. Rumbling... Rumbling.

McNAIR
Goddamn. I forgot how much I enjoy
this.

Some of the others aren't enjoying it as much. Noticeably Rep. Taylor, now clutching the locket for dear life.

INT. FIRING ROOM ONE - DAY

Monitors alive. Long range video lens track Horizon's ascent.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The Shuttle powers upward, a river of flames flowing behind it. The Solid Rocket Boosters shift from a roar to a trickle.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - DAY

McNAIR
We have SRB burnout, Preparing SRB
separation.

MISSION CONTROL (O.S.)
Go for separation.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The flaming streak of metal screams through the upper atmosphere. The two spent boosters detach and fall away.

McNAIR (V.O.)
We have SRB separation.

Horizon continues to roar on its main engine.

McNAIR (V.O.)
Standing by for main engine cutoff,
over.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Shaking and rumbling.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)
Go for main engine cutoff.

McNair activates main engine cutoff. No response. He tries again, but the engines continue to rumble.

WARNING BUZZERS AND FLASHING LIGHTS.

McNAIR
Houston we have a cutoff failure. Main engine is not responding. Switching to back-up.

Ashley looks petrified as he switches to the backup system.

McNAIR
Trying again, Houston.
(beat)
No response. No response by main engine. We're still accelerating.

ASHLEY
We have to abort.

McNAIR
No.

ASHLEY
Abort!

Ashley reaches over to the abort button. McNair physically stops him.

McNAIR
We abort now, we'll burn up. Either in the atmosphere or under the ET's flames.

HORIZON MID-DECK - DAY

Fear on the faces of the crew. Tense.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The shuttle breaks from the hazy blue atmosphere into the blackness of space.

FLIGHT DECK - DAY

McNAIR

Okay, we've cleared the atmosphere.
Where's Houston? Houston, Horizon.
Please advise.... Houston, Horizon.
Please advise.

No response. The thunderous rumble continues.

ASHLEY

The box is dead. We've lost
communication.

McNAIR

I say we ride her till she burns out.

Suddenly SILENCE. No more rumbling. The ENGINE HAS STOPPED
COLD. McNair spots a gauge flying into the red zone.

McNAIR

We have an internal pressure buildup.
The main engine's gonna blow.

McNair grabs a lever.

McNAIR

Manual ET separation. Now!

He pulls down hard. Sudden jolt, snapping, as the shuttle
breaks loose.

EXT. SPACE.

The Horizon detaches, her aft thrusters ABLAZE, accelerating
away from the massive external tank. Moments later, the
external tank EXPLODES into a billion bits.

The shock wave hits the shuttle, sending it tumbling every
which way.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK.

The cabin tumbles and shakes. EMERGENCY LIGHTS. McNair
struggles with the joystick.

EXT. SPACE.

The Shuttle spins away from us on all her axes until she's
swallowed up by the distant darkness.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

Stunned onlookers. Almost all the video screens are static,
except for long range video of the aftermath of an explosion.
The room is silent, with the exception of one lonely, pleading
voice.

CAPCOM

Horizon, this is Houston. Come in,
over.

(beat)

Horizon, this is Houston. Come in,
over.

(beat)

Horizon, this is Houston. Come in,
over... I think she's gone.

Around the Mission control trench, tears stream down the faces
of NASA employees.

EXT. SPACE.

Horizon tumbles through blackness. Tiny THRUSTS shoot out of
her engines. She slowly stabilizes and rights herself.

INT. FLIGHT DECK.

McNair skillfully brings the shuttle under control.

McNAIR

Everybody okay down there?

TANGO (V.O. COM)

We're still here. What happened?

McNAIR

Not sure. Stand by. I'm going to put
us into a temporary orbit.

ASHLEY

Nice flying. I owe you an apology. I
lost my head.

McNAIR

Save it. Find Houston.

ASHLEY

Com check.

(beat)

Houston, com check. Com check.

Nothing. Ashley checks the communications system.

ASHLEY

All the downlinks are dead, video and
audio. And half the computers are
off-line. Where are we?

McNAIR

Up shit creek.

McNair checks Navigation.

McNAIR (cont'd)

They won't even know where to look for us.

ASHLEY

Can we find a contingency landing site?

McNAIR

The TACANs not working. I'll have to take her in manually. Unless...

(beat - thinking)

Is that amateur radio equipment still in the Spacelab?

ASHLEY

The Ham system. Sure. The congress lady was gonna pull P.R. calls on day three.

McNAIR

Get it. Maybe we can use that to patch through to Houston. We'll feed 'em coordinates and they can talk us down.

INT. MID-DECK.

Zero gravity.

Ashley climbs down, as Tango, Peck and Kingsley unstrap themselves.

TANGO

Where do we stand?

ASHLEY

Total system malf. And to top it off, our com's fried. We need the radio from Spacelab.

Tango nods and swims to the airlock door and wheels it open.

TAYLOR

Stranded?

PECK

Lost. Lost in fucking space.

TANGO

Keep your heads.

ASHLEY

Meantime, pull the computers and find out what the hell went wrong.

TAYLOR

I take it we're in trouble?

No one answers. No one needs to. Tango enters into the Spacelab access tunnel.

INT. SPACELAB ACCESSWAY.

Tango propels down the tube. He opens the far airlock door.

His eyes open wide. Several HANDS grab him and pull him forward into Spacelab.

INT. SPACELAB.

In the cramped research cylinder, FIVE FIGURES dressed in black spacesuits spring their ambush. HIJACKERS.

Tango screams as he's thrown through the air like a clay pigeon. One of the figures whips out a gun. SHOTS Tango in the head.

But not with a bullet... An intense microwave beam.

Tango's FACE MELTS, flesh dissolving. BLOOD BOILS away from his skin, collecting in tiny beads which hang in mid-air. He floats across the chamber.

The hijacker removes his helmet. WALKER. Lean, muscular, bald. 40s. He checks Tango's limp floating dead body.

WALKER

The Mission Commander. Excellent.

Walker leads his team into the accessway.

INT. MID-DECK.

The airlock door opens and Walker emerges, followed by the other four terrorists. Ashley, Taylor, Peck and Kingsley are caught completely off guard. Like they're seeing ghosts.

WALKER

Sit down in your flight chairs.

Walker raises his gun.

WALKER

Now.

PECK

Where... where did you come from?

Walker shoots Peck in the chest. Peck screams in agony, clutching at his heart. There is no entrance hole through his flightsuit, but he claws, struggles for air and gurgles blood. The astronauts catch their colleague. Try to help him.

KINGSLEY

Peck? Peck! Breathe... Breathe!

TAYLOR

What's wrong? What have you done to him?

WALKER

Concentrated microwaves. Fairly useful in spaces where a ricocheting bullet would prove dangerous.

A death rattle escapes Peck's mouth. He's gone.

KINGSLEY

You killed him.

WALKER

Yes.

TAYLOR

Why?

WALKER

Effective lessons demand examples. You now know that I'm willing to kill each and every one of you...

ASHLEY

This can't be real.

WALKER

... not that it matters. Since I blew the external tank, everyone on earth assumes you went with it.

TAYLOR

What do you want? If it's me you're after...

WALKER

Representative Taylor, your presence aboard this shuttle is, for my purposes, merely coincidental. What I want is full cooperation. Do what I say, or die. Do you understand?

Walker aims his pistol toward each one of them.

ASHLEY

Yes.

TAYLOR

Yes.

KINGSLEY

Yes.

WALKER

Good. You... Ashley, right? Take me to the flight deck. Stay in front of me. Make no sudden moves, and remember, you're in space. There's nowhere to run.

(to Taylor and Kingsley)

You two sit down. Be comfortable.

INT. FLIGHT DECK.

Ashley comes up the ladder.

McNAIR

Did you get the radio?

ASHLEY

We got a problem, Jake.

McNair turns round to see Walker holding a gun to Ashley's head.

WALKER

Col. McNair, my name is Malcolm Walker.

McNAIR

How did you get on board?

WALKER

Not your business. Your business is keeping the remaining members of your crew alive.

McNair looks to Ashley.

ASHLEY

We lost Tango and Peck.

The pain of it registers on McNair's face.

McNAIR

The malfunction...

WALKER

It was no malfunction. We're right on course.

Walker shoves Ashley toward the co-pilot seat. Motions for him to sit down.

WALKER

If you want your colleagues to live you will take us to these coordinates.

Walker hands the slip of paper to McNair. McNair studies the numbers.

McNAIR
You looking to retrieve a satellite or something?

WALKER
No questions.

McNair studies Walker's face a moment. No options yet.
He turns back to the controls.

McNAIR
Raising altitude and changing orbital inclination.

WALKER
Good. Oh by the way, before... nice flying.

McNAIR
(under his breath)
Fuck you.

EXT. SPACE.

EARTH. As the SUN breaks, it catches a glimmer of metal in the darkness...

JUSTICE STATION emerges from the Earth's inky shadow into the light of a new day.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

CLOSE ON: A TELEVISION -

A Reporter stands with the NASA launchpad in the background.

REPORTER
... massive explosion which may have claimed the lives of five astronauts and civilian observer Congresswoman Sarah Taylor, the highly respected Democrat from Texas and House Committee member for NASA appropriations. Tight-lipped officials have offered no comment. Let's go to Capitol Hill for reactions...

PULL BACK - We recognize the cramped high-tech from the opening scene.

NOTE: There is rotational gravity on the station.

Colonel Hersey is on the Vid-Com.

HERSEY

That's a negative, sir. Targeting shows no signs of NASA's bird, over.

GEN. TURGESON (VIDEO SCREEN)

Acknowledged. You are ordered to maintain security protocol Alpha Alpha Zulu until further notice. Over.

HERSEY

Justice, acknowledged. Out.

Maxwell crosses through the targeting platform.

MAXWELL

What's up, sir?

HERSEY

Oh, those fucks at NASA lost another shuttle. Blew in the upper A.

Maxwell seats himself at the Targeting Station.
Covers a slight smile.

MAXWELL

Civilians can't do a goddamn thing.

HERSEY

Real pity. Lost that congresswoman too.

He surreptitiously slides a computer disk into a drive.

MAXWELL

Should've turned the entire program over to us years ago.

Maxwell uploads something from the disk to the computer, then checks his watch.

MAXWELL (Cont'd)

I'm gonna jog up to the Mess for a coffee. You want one, sir?

HERSEY

Cream, two sugars.

Maxwell pulls himself out of his chair, and descends the access ladder.

INT. TARGETING MODULE, LOWER LEVEL.

The whole Module is eighty yards long and sixty feet high. With metal ribs ringing its interior, it feels like the belly of a whale. Catwalks, conduits, machinery snake through all of the station's modules.

Maxwell crosses to one end of the module and enters a hatchway. The hatchway offers entry into the long access tubes which connect the modules.

INT. ACCESS CORRIDOR.

As he enters the corridor, he leaves both sides of the hatchway open.

Like a hamster in a Habitrail, Maxwell pads down the tube. Halfway between modules, he stops at a porthole, and ensures he's alone.

He pulls out a pack of chewing gum and removes a stick, massaging it into a wad. He fashions it to the glass of the porthole, then removes his wrist watch. From his watch he pulls two wire leads, attaching them to the "gum". Maxwell sets the timer on the watch for SIXTY SECONDS.

His finger lingers by the activation button. The view through the porthole catches his eye. A blanket of stars floats above the misty atmosphere of Earth. A sea of tranquillity.

Maxwell ACTIVATES THE TIMER, then hurries down the corridor.

INT. JUSTICE MESS.

Maxwell nods to a couple of SOLDIERS shoved into a booth. Calls over to the COOK.

MAXWELL

Hey Cookie. Couple of coffees, one black, one light two sugars.

INT. ACCESS CORRIDOR.

The timer on the explosive counts down.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

ON MAXWELL'S COMPUTER.

A timer counts down on his screen as well.

The two timers are in sync.

CROSS CUT:

Maxwell gets his coffee.
The timers count down.
Three... two... one....

EXT. SPACE STATION.

AN EXPLOSION

...rips through the access corridor airlock sending a fireball and metal debris flying in all directions.

INT. ACCESSWAY.

A ball of fire rolls down the corridor.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

ON MAXWELL'S COMPUTER -

As his computer virus program activates, shutting down all systems.

"Communications - Disengaged... Transponder - Disengaged
Video - Disengaged... Telemetry - Disengaged" Etc.

ACROSS THE STATION -

MILITARY STAFF topples, smashing against the inner hull, tossed and battered unmercifully as the Station tumbles.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Col. HERSEY is pulled out of his chair. Desperately, he grabs at any handhold. But the force is too much. He's sucked through the air, across the room and down to the lower level. Screaming the entire way.

Like a swimmer battling a current he fights the overwhelming force, flailing to no avail as he's sucked through the hatchway airlock left open by Maxwell.

Hersey slides into the access corridor, his body ping-pong down the tube as his SCREAMS echo off the metallic walls. But the screams are cut short as he's sucked out the hole and into space.

EXT. JUSTICE STATION.

Col. Hersey lives a horrifying second or two. Long enough to feel his unprotected body boil in the sunlight, while oxygen bubbles burst through his skin.

EXT. SPACE.

Like a yacht hitting an iceberg, the force of the blast throws the station askew, and it tumbles lopsided, falling toward earth.

INT. MILITARY STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND, EARTH - DAY

EMERGENCY KLAXONS WAIL. RED LIGHTS FLASH. Every high-tech piece of equipment that the twentieth century has to offer on full alert.

Exteriors and interiors of the space station are displayed on wall sized VIDEO MONITORS, as technicians rush to their posts.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)

Attention, all personnel. Code seven.
This is not a drill.

One video monitor shows station personnel struggling down a corridor filling with smoke and fire. Another shows debris floating around a charred hole in the station's skin.

But one by one the video screens become static.

COL. COOPER, 40's, Head Engineer for Justice, surveys readouts.

COOPER

We've had an explosion in access corridor two.

TECHNICIAN

Justice's lost her orbit. Jesus! She's falling.

GEN. TURGESON

Get her back up, goddamnit.

The technician pounds away on his keyboard.

TECHNICIAN

Emergency stabilization is still active.

COOPER

We've lost telemetry.

The last of the monitors goes down. All the computers go black.

COOPER

Oh christ... She's gone.

GEN. TURGESON

She can't be gone.

COOPER

We are receiving no signals from Justice.

GEN. TURGESON

Did she hit the atmosphere?

COOPER

Not possible. She's too far up.

GEN. TURGESON
How can a hunk of metal the size of a shopping center just disappear?

COOPER
We designed the station to be invisible... now it is. We can't find her unless she transmitting to us.

EXT. SPACE.

Tiny jets mounted across the station ignite in a patterned series of thrusts as Justice rights herself.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Now deserted. Objects floating through mid-air.

ON MAXWELL'S COMPUTER - "Rotational Gravity - Engaged"

EXT. SPACE.

Justice begins to rotate once again.

INT. MESS HALL.

Bathed in emergency lighting. Warning bells continue as suddenly GRAVITY RETURNS. Everything slams into the floor.

Maxwell struggles up and rushes to a readout panel.

MAXWELL
(feigning surprise)
We've had an explosion in accessway two. Emergency rendezvous is the Operations module. Get going!

Cookie and the soldiers clamber to the far access hatchway.

Left alone, Maxwell pulls out a pen. He twists its top. At its nub, a tiny L.E.D. flashes.

EXT. SPACE.

Shuttle Horizon's engines rumble as it passes overhead on its way to Justice Station.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

Walker removes a miniature signal beacon. It flashes.

WALKER
Excellent.

McNAIR
We're almost at the coordinates.

WALKER

The station should be just visible.

ASHLEY

Space station? You're crazy.

McNAIR

He's not crazy. Look.

Justice is visible through the cockpit windows.

ASHLEY

But NASA's been trying to...

WALKER

NASA's a public relations puppet at the mercy of congress. But the Pentagon, now there's efficiency. They wanted a station, so they just went out and built one.

McNAIR

What does the military need with a space station?

Walker leans in close to McNair.

WALKER

A compelling question, hm?

(beat)

Get up. You're going below with the others now.

McNAIR

Who's going to pilot the shuttle?

WALKER

Chang!

A terrorist, CHANG, 30's, emerges through the hatch.

WALKER

Chang, Take the controls... Most people underestimate the Chinese space program, but their pilots are exceptional.

EXT. SPACE.

The shuttle begins to slow, its retros firing. She assumes a slow orbit around the station, matching the rotation.

INT. MID-DECK

Taylor, Kingsley, Peck and the Terrorists.
McNair and Ashley descend the ladder. Walker behind.

WALKER
Stewart, the manipulator arm.

STEWART, female terrorist, late 20s with a weightlifter's build, nods and propels herself to the arm's controls.

WALKER
(motioning with gun)
Everyone else, into the SpaceLab module.

Terrorist CUZMAN, mid-thirties, wheels opens the airlock. The captive astronauts pass by. Taylor, Ashley, Kingsley, McNair.

As Kingsley passes, he eyes the situation. He acts, lunging for Cuzman's microwave pistol.

KINGSLEY
Bastards.

Kingsley and Cuzman struggle momentarily in zero gravity as Walker whips out his pistol and lines up a shot.

McNair dives toward Walker.

McNAIR
No!

Too late. Walker SHOOTs Kingsley in the head, point blank. Kingsley's body convulses, floats to the ceiling.

WALKER
(training gun on McNair)
He chose death. Understand? On my ship, heroes die.

Eye to eye. It takes every bit of self restraint McNair has not to attack.

Cuzman shoves McNair into the airlock.

WALKER
Brace the door so they can't escape.

Cuzman nods, follows into the airlock.

INT. SPACELAB.

Ashley, McNair and Taylor cramped together. The airlock shuts behind them. Finality. TANGO's body still floating.

INT. AIRLOCK TUNNEL.

Cuzman wheels the SpaceLab airlock shut. He slides a metal rod through the wheel spokes, preventing the lock from opening.

EXT. SPACE.

The Horizon's bay doors are open. The shuttle's mechanical arm unfurls and stretches out toward the struts of the station.

INT. MID-DECK.

Walker watches the video feed from the manipulator arm.

WALKER

Easy. Easy.

Stewart deftly glides the arm into place.

EXT. SPACE.

The pincers at the end of the mechanical arm grabs hold of the station's strut. Horizon's open bay is now directly across from the damaged Intermodular Accessway.

INT. SPACELAB.

The sound of one arm clamping resonates through the cylinder.

EXT. SPACE.

Held by the manipulator arm, Horizon rotates along with the station.

INT. HORIZON MID-DECK.

Walker smiles at the video screens.

WALKER

Excellent.

INT. SPACELAB MODULE.

The trio slowly float to the back of SpaceLab.

TAYLOR

What's happening?

McNAIR

The station. It was rotating. It must have centrifugal gravity.

ASHLEY

And now that we're attached...

Weightlessness disappears. The three astronauts land on top of each other and the corpse. They're trapped at the bottom of the cylinder... insects in a jar. The closed airlock fifteen feet above them.

ASHLEY

Just keeps getting worse.

Air vents stop blowing. The lights go off. Pitch black.

McNAIR
They've shut off life support.

TAYLOR
What does that mean?

ASHLEY
It means we only have a few hours of
air left.

INT. FLIGHT DECK, COCKPIT.

Walker finishes wiring a C-4 explosives package to Horizon's cockpit controls.

He inserts a KEY into the detonation box. Turns it. The explosive package ARMS. Walker clips the key to his belt.

INT. HORIZON AIRLOCK.

Walker and his team putting on spacesuits.

WALKER
Again, I'll take the tether across the arm to the accessway. Once it's tied off, each of you cross. Don't lose your grip because we won't have time to come back for you. Understood?

His team nods.

WALKER
No mistakes. Today we succeed where the politicians and diplomats have failed.

Walker pulls his helmet on, clicks it into place. Gives the thumbs up.

CUZMAN
De-pressurizing lock.

Thwoosh.

EXT. CARGO BAY.

Walker emerges through the outer airlock. He clips a tether onto a metal rung, then propels himself up to the manipulator arm and begins his climb across to the Space Station.

INT. SPACELAB.

Still dark.

McNAIR
Almost got it. There.

The RED EMERGENCY LIGHTS activate. It's hot in the cylinder.
The trio is bathed in sweat.

TAYLOR
Mood lighting? Well this is
enchanting.

McNair climbs back down to the bottom of the cylinder, as
Ashley and Taylor strap off Tango's body with wall restraints.

McNAIR
You knew the risks when you signed up.

TAYLOR
Yeah, but I always assumed that if
something happened it would be quick.
You know... ka-boom.

McNAIR
It's quick if you're lucky, Senator.
Ashley, find that Ham radio.

Ashley climbs up. Rummages through storage containers.

Taylor opens her LOCKET, looks at the young girl's picture.

McNAIR
Your daughter?

Taylor nods.

TAYLOR
Her fifth grade class was going to
watch the launch this morning. I even
baked them brownies... She must think
I'm dead.

McNair puts his hand on her shoulder.

McNAIR
Come on, Ash. What's taking so long?

ASHLEY
Someone moved all the equipment
around.

Ashley opens another container door.

A HEAD POPS OUT at him... then ARMS dangling....

Ashley yelps and falls backward. Taylor stifles a gasp.
Above, ANGSTROM's body dangles from the storage bin. Stuffed
in for transport.

McNair climbs up, checks the body.

McNAIR
His neck was broken.

Reaching around the body, McNair retrieves the HAM radio.
Turns the battery powered unit on.

ASHLEY
What's our operating number?

McNAIR
I don't think we need to stand on
protocol.
(keys mike)
Mayday, mayday, please respond. This
is the shuttle Horizon. Mayday,
Mayday please respond.

INT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER, PRESS ROOM - DAY

Reporters shoot questions at Halliwell, who half-hides behind
the podium.

HALLIWELL
... we have no more information at
this time. Yes?

REPORTER
What do you think the chances are that
they survived the explosion?

HALLIWELL
Small... but significant.

REPORTER
Do you blame the incident on Colonel
McNair? This is the second mission
he's piloted that ended in disaster.

HALLIWELL
No. Our tapes indicate computer
malfunction. I'll be sorry if that's
his epitaph, because he did everything
by the book.

An AIDE rushes in, whispers something in Halliwell's ear.
Halliwell rushes out of the room behind the Aide.

Murmurs and shouts run through the press corp. "What going
on?" "What's happening?" Etc.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Halliwell half-runs. The aide's right behind him.

AIDE

He's a Ham radio operator in Seattle.
Said someone from the Horizon was
calling a Mayday. He returned the hail
but lost them.

HALLIWELL

Find the frequency they were on and
give it to all the listening stations.
And set up a relay to the trench.

AIDE

Yes, sir.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

Halliwell paces nervously behind the control booths.

CAPCOM

We're getting something.

Flicks a switch. The message broadcasts over loudspeakers.

McNAIR (V.O.)

(distorted and broken)

Mayday... Ma... Horizon. ...body read
us? Over.

HALLIWELL

They're alive!

Cheers flood the room.

HALLIWELL

Boost the gain! Boost the gain!

CAPCOM

Horizon, this is Houston. We read you.
What is your status? Over.

McNAIR (V.O.)

Not good. We... ...help. We've been,
uh, hijacked by terrorists.... Tango,
Kingsley, and are dead.
They're... ... space station.

HALLIWELL

Terrorists? Did he say terrorists?
(into com)
Horizon, please repeat.

INT. SPACELAB.

McNair shakes his head.

McNAIR

Please repeat? Gee, I thought that was pretty clear.

(into mike)

Houston, Horizon has been hijacked. I repeat... hijacked. Their objective...

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

General Turgeson listens to the incoming message.

McNAIR (V.O.)

...is a military space station. We've been sealed in the SpaceLab and we're running out of oxygen, so please fucking advise. Over.

SOLDIER

It's from NASA's bird, sir.

GEN. TURGESON

Son-of-a-bitch. Jam that frequency... pump it full of white noise. We can't have some crazy astronauts telling the world what we've got up there.

INT. MISSION CONTROL TRENCH, J.S.C. - DAY

HALLIWELL

Horizon, this is Houston. Can we have your coordinates.

Static.

HALLIWELL

Horizon, can we have your coordinates.
(static still)
What happened to the signal?

CAPCOM

I'm not getting a goddamn thing anymore... They're gone.

The Red Telephone rings. A technician picks up.

TECHNICIAN

M.C. Ops.
(beat - to Halliwell)
Sir. It's the President.

HALLIWELL

The President?

TECHNICIAN

Of the United States.

Halliwell takes the phone.

HALLIWELL

Halliwell.

He listens for a long moment, then stiffens.

HALLIWELL

Yes sir... Yes sir... Damn...

He looks behind him as he hangs up the phone and sees the press cameras focused on him from the rear of the room.

HALLIWELL

GET THE PRESS OUT OF HERE!... We're
live on fucking CNN.... CLEAR OUT THE
PRESS!

Security herds the reporters from the trench.

HALLIWELL

Turn off the radio.

CAPCOM

Turn it off? Why?

HALLIWELL

You heard me. Turn it off and make no
attempt to communicate with Horizon.

(beat)

Apparently this just became a national
security issue.

CAPCOM

What does that mean?

HALLIWELL

I'm about to find out.

A SOLDIER makes his way across the room.

SOLDIER

Dr. Halliwell. There's a chopper
waiting for you.

EXT. SPACE.

Walker secures the tether to a metal rung inside the damaged
accessway, making a taut tightrope for the others to traverse.

THE HORIZON BAY -- as the other terrorists emerge from the
airlock. They grab hold of the wire and pull themselves
across. Like spiders on a skein of thread.

INT. SPACELAB.

McNair, Taylor, and Ashley huddle around the radio. Nothing
but static.

McNAIR
Houston, Houston, come in. Over.
(static - beat)
Houston, Houston, come in. Over.
Nothing, no one.

TAYLOR
Why don't they respond?

ASHLEY
Because they think we're crazy. I'd
think we're crazy. No one's ever
hijacked a spacecraft before.

TAYLOR
Well, I'm tired of waiting.

She grabs a handhold and climbs up the panels to the airlock hatch. Braces herself against the cylinder walls.

McNAIR
What are you doing?

TAYLOR
Seeing if I can't get this hatch open.

ASHLEY
But the indicator's dead. We have no
way of knowing if the T-lock's exposed
to space. That hatch might be all
that's keeping us alive.

TAYLOR
Well, the sure bet pay-off is waiting
for death and I've got too much to
live for.

ASHLEY
Let's vote on this course of action,
shall we?

McNAIR
I don't see you offering any
solutions.

Taylor, ignoring Ashley, tries to wheel open the lock.
It jams. The bar holding it in place.

TAYLOR
Something's stuck there. Holding it
back.

McNAIR
Rock it. See if you can work it out.

McNair admires her bravery. She wheels it back and forth, her
sweat drips onto the other two.

INT. TUNNEL.

The metal bar slips slightly. Then slightly again.

INT/EXT. JUSTICE STATION ACCESSWAY.

Walker team assembles inside the exposed accessway.

WALKER (V.O. COM)

Biggs, Chang. Re-pressurize the
targeting module and juice up the
weapon.

Chang nods. He and terrorist BIGGS head toward the Targeting platform.

WITH BIGGS AND CHANG -

They enter the hatchway Maxwell left open. Close one side.
Then the other.

INT. TARGETING MODULE.

Chang activates the Module pressurization. Air hisses into the mighty chamber.

EXT. MILITARY COMPOUND - DAY

Halliwell exits the military helicopter and is met by Turgeson.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

Halliwell enters the control room. Looks at the billions of dollars worth of defense equipment in wide-eyed wonder.

HALLIWELL

Holy shit. No wonder we couldn't get
funding.

GEN. TURGESON

This way please.

Turgeson leads Halliwell into a side conference room.

INT. JUSTICE STATION, OPERATIONS MODULE, LOWER DECK - DAY

The nineteen remaining men and women of the crew huddle around a tabletop schematic. Maxwell near the back of the group.

LT. COLONEL MILLER analyzes the readouts. Barks commands.

LT. COL. MILLER

Our primary concern is communications. Cally, see what you can do. Franklin, you and your people shut down all computer systems affected by the virus. Doherty, take a team on EVA to assess the damage. Maxwell, take Mitchell and get back to the targeting platform.

ENGINEER

Should I take the reactor off-line, in case?

WALKER (O.S.)

Please don't. It's essential that Zeus have power.

LT. COL. MILLER

Who the hell are you?

WALKER

The man in charge.

The soldiers turn to see Walker and his team with weapons trained on them. Walker shoots Miller several times with the microwave pistol. Miller convulses and collapses.

WALKER

Nobody moves.

No one does.

WALKER (cont'd)

Stewart, take inventory.

STEWART

Nineteen. Where's number twenty?

MAXWELL

Bought it in the explosion.

Traitor Maxwell crosses to join his group.

WALKER

Please put your hands on your head and walk single file out the far hatchway.

INT. SPACELAB.

McNair is braced ten feet above the other two, rocking the wheel back and forth. Taylor continues the Mayday hail on the Ham radio. Ashley looks pale, sweating heavily and leaning against the bulkhead.

ASHLEY

Must be two hundred degrees in here.

INT. SPACELAB TUNNEL.

The bar has almost been worked free. The wheel spins and jars the bar, then turns back and spins again. This time the bar is knocked away.

INT. SPACELAB.

McNAIR

Got it.

He begins to turn the wheel.

ASHLEY

WAIT!

McNair stops, looks down. Pleading eyes from Ashley.

ASHLEY

If the outer lock is open, we'll lose the rest of the air. We'll die.

TAYLOR

Yes, we will. But there's no other way out... Open it.

McNair nods in agreement and turns the wheel.

HISSING. AIR ESCAPING. Like a soda can slowly opening.

ASHLEY

Oh shit. Close it. Close it!

McNair tries to close the lock, but loses his grip. Tumbles down on top of the other two.

The hissing continues. Air leaks. They resign themselves to death.

Then the hissing stops.

ASHLEY

It's stopped.

McNAIR

(putting it together)

The lock was de-pressurized... but it wasn't open to space.

Ashley laughs. Relief.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The table is ringed with top Brass. Halliwell sits, head in hand, listening as a taped message plays.

McNAIR (V.O. TAPE)
Not good. We need help. We've been,
uh, hijacked by terrorists. Tango,
Kingsley, and Peck are dead. They're
after some kind of space station.

General Stone stops the tape.

GEN. STONE
The transmission was verified
authentic by NSA.

HALLIWELL
You built a space station without
NASA's knowledge?

GEN. TURGESON
Without anyone's knowledge... we
thought.

GEN. STONE
Gentlemen, we have to act swiftly to
prevent a catastrophe.

HALLIWELL
It's a bit late for that.

GEN. STONE
You don't understand. That station
houses a weapon more precise and
powerful than any armament in history.

HALLIWELL
What is it? The Death Star?

GEN. STONE
Close. And we must assume it's the
terrorists target.

GEN. TURGESON
As I see it we can send up a strike
force. We triangulated McNair's
transmission and have approximate
coordinates.

HALLIWELL
Send them up in what? It'll take weeks
to prep another shuttle.

GEN. TURGESON
We can be there in twenty minutes.

HALLIWELL
How?

GEN. TURGESON
That's classified.

GEN. STONE
Nothing's classified in this room, Ed.

Turgeson takes a deep breath.

GEN. TURGESON
Two years ago, when Justice construction commenced, we began training a special attachment to the 82nd Airborne for space combat. They can be scrambled and launched within ten minutes... It's our only chance to retake the station and save her crew.

GEN. STONE
What are their chances?

GEN. TURGESON
That all depends on the competency of these terrorists. It should take them hours to bypass weapon's security, so I think we have a good shot.

GEN. STONE
If we fail, I see no choice but to target and destroy Justice. Proceed, and maintain the press blackout.

HALLIWELL
General, what about my astronauts? What should I tell them.

GEN. STONE
Nothing. No communications.
(apologetic)
They are a priority, but national security comes first. Right now, they're on their own.

INT. HORIZON, FLIGHT DECK.

The floor hatch inches up. A pair of eyes survey the room. Empty. McNair throws open the hatch. Pulls himself through.

McNAIR
It's clear. They're gone.

TAYLOR (O.S.)
Then we can get out of here.

McNAIR
I don't think so.

McNair pulls himself uphill into the flight chair and examines Walker's bomb, while Ashley and Taylor enter the flight deck.

ASHLEY

What is it?

McNAIR

An explosive package, the terrorist version of The Club...

He checks the wires.

McNAIR

... and only the guy with the key to fit this hole can disarm it. Touch the controls right now and we'll all be blown to bits.

TAYLOR

Can't we disarm it?

McNAIR

Not unless you happen to be a bomb expert, Senator...

(beat)

Well apparently we aren't going anywhere, but I don't feel like waiting for our friends to return.

TAYLOR

I agree.

He looks out the shuttle window at the Space Station.

McNAIR

Here are our options.

(points to C-4 detonator)

We could go after this key, which means catching up to our friends.

TAYLOR

I'm not anxious for their company.

ASHLEY

Ditto.

McNAIR

Or... see that?

(points out the window)

Antenna dishes... A communications array.

ASHLEY

We already tried calling for help.

McNAIR

On amateur radio and my guess is we were being jammed.

(beat)

So what'll it be, Senator?

TAYLOR

I'm a congresswoman, not a Senator,
okay?

(beat)

I say we get the hell out of here and
get some help.

McNAIR

Ashley?

ASHLEY

Right now they don't know we're loose
ends. I say we wait for them to come
back. Surprise them.

McNAIR

And what makes you think they're ever
coming back?

Ashley shakes his head.

ASHLEY

No. I'll stay here. This ship is our
ride home. I'm not going to risk being
stranded.

McNAIR

Fine, stay. But put on your suit in
case they do come back. It'll protect
you against their microwaves.

ASHLEY

No, don't you see. You can't leave
either. If they see you, they'll know
we've escaped. We'll lose the
surprise.

McNAIR

In case you haven't noticed, we're
running out of air. The only plan
that's going to work is getting us
some help, and that com array's our
best bet.

ASHLEY

Well good fucking luck, McNair. You're
gonna get us all killed. But then
again, you're good at that.

McNAIR

If he's staying, maybe you should stay
too. I can do this solo.

TAYLOR

No. Every instinct tells me to keep
moving.

McNAIR

But Ashley's right. They might come after us. You'd be safer here.

TAYLOR

There are three dead bodies here. Here is not safe. I'm going with you. No discussion.

She pulls suits from the equipment locker. McNair looks over at Ashley and shrugs.

MEANWHILE:

EXT. MILITARY LAUNCHPORT, EARTH - DAY

Launch sirens wail. Workers scramble.

SQUAWK BOX

Emergency launch. Emergency launch. You have two minutes to clear the area. T-minus four minutes and counting.

On the launchpad: a two stage ROCKET, with side boosters, capped by a detachable shuttle shaped nose cone. Steam rises from the pad.

INT. LAUNCHPAD ELEVATOR - DAY

When the lift comes to a halt, TWO DOZEN bereted SPECIAL FORCES, decked out in flight suits and armed with assault rifles, exit onto the access arm and march double time into the space craft.

INT. MILITARY SHUTTLE - DAY

The soldiers take their seats, strapping in with Swiss watch precision.

EXT. LAUNCHPAD - DAY

The main rocket engines ignite, pouring out flame and smoke. The booster rockets catch, and the flame engulfs the entire rocket as it slowly rumbles off the pad. The cavalry.

INT. JUSTICE STATION TARGETING MODULE.

Justice's captured crew members walk single file through the lower platform of the targeting module. Hands still on heads. They're flanked by Walker's team. Biggs and Chang descend the ladders from the upper platform.

BIGGS

Zeus is powered up, but we need the access code from Maxwell.

MAXWELL

Alpha 6 Delta 4 2 5 Romeo Tango 3. Got it?

Biggs flashes the peace symbol and ascends to the upper platform.

Walker opens the far hatchway and motions the crew inside.

WALKER

I am not leading you people to a slaughter. Just a safe place for the time being. If you cooperate, you'll live. If not, you'll die.

The crew of Justice steps into the hatchway. Cramped together.

WALKER

You will be released from here in one hour, at which point my objectives will have been met and the station will be returned to your control. Until then, the only way out is through the far side of the lock, and, as you can see, it's fully exposed and would mean certain death. So I would wait.

The last of the crew enters.

WALKER

Be good.

Walker shuts the door, cramming the last of the crew in like sardines.

WALKER

Cuzman, if you please.

Cuzman nods, removes a welder from his kit bag and begins to seal a metal plate over the hatchway door.

BIGGS

"You will be released in one hour at which point the station will be returned to your control"?

WALKER

If I told them that they were going to suffocate to death, do you think they'd've been nearly so cooperative?

Walker climbs the ladder to the targeting platform.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker emerges to find Biggs and Chang at the Zeus controls. Maxwell takes over at the targeting station.

WALKER

Where are we?

BIGGS

Over the Eastern U.S.

WALKER

Punch up Washington, D.C.. It's about time to redistribute the political power in the western hemisphere.

Using a lightpen, Biggs highlights D.C.. The area enlarges and a map grid overlay enhances the satellite image.

WALKER

Excellent. Okay, now punch up the White House.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE LAWN - AFTERNOON

Stone faced Marines stand at attention in front of the Presidential helicopter. A tranquil patriotic sight.

Without warning, the helicopter EXPLODES, blowing itself a hundred feet in the air.

The Marines go into full combat mode. They hit the ground, rifles at the ready. The ball of flame extends high over Pennsylvania Ave.

ANGLE ON - WHITE HOUSE BALCONY

The President, pushing away protective Secret Service agents, emerges onto the balcony and takes in the destruction.

INT. JUSTICE TARGETING MODULE.

Satellite image of the White House lawn.

MAXWELL

Sir.

Maxwell motions to the video, enlarges and enhances on the President on the balcony.

The President looks up to the sky, seemingly at them. His computer enhanced features, clearly recognizable.

The Zeus crosshair locks on the President.

WALKER
And with a single well placed stone,
David smote the Philistine.

Walker places his hand on the trigger. Finger on the button.

WALKER
But not yet. Not yet. Pawns are more
useful than martyrs.

Walker slides his hand away from the trigger.

The video pans out. Smoke and fire rise from the White House lawn. Walker turns to Stewart.

WALKER
Go back to operations and take this
station down. I want an orbital period
of 1.5 hours.

Stewart nods and exits through the far hatchway.

EXT. HORIZON BAY, EXTERNAL AIRLOCK HATCH.

McNair and Taylor emerge from the airlock. McNair looks up at the communications array - a grouping of satellite dishes.

McNAIR (COM)
We'll have to climb.

Taylor motions to the jetpacks, the Manned Mobile Units, strapped into the bay.

TAYLOR (COM)
Aren't we using the MMU's.

McNAIR (COM)
They don't have enough thrust to keep
up with the station's rotation. Just
don't let go. Ashley, com check.

ASHLEY (V.O. COM)
Yeah, I'm here.

McNAIR (COM)
Keep your line open and watch our
backs. Copy?

ASHLEY (V.O. COM)
Yeah. Okay. Roger.

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE.

Alone in the deserted module, Stewart works the control panel.

STEWART
 (into com)
 Stand by to change orbital
 inclination.

VARIOUS SHOTS -

Members of Walker's team bracing themselves.

STEWART
 Firing maneuvering thrusters.

EXT. SPACE, JUSTICE STATION.

Flames shoot from thrusters located across the station.

VARIOUS SHOTS -

Rumbling. Shaking. Walker's team holds on.

EXT. HORIZON, MANIPULATOR ARM.

McNair and Taylor, hanging onto the manipulator arm. The sudden acceleration catches them off-guard.

McNAIR
 What the...

The metal rung Taylor clings to jerks out of her hand.

TAYLOR
 McNair!

She FREE FLOATS away, but at the last possible moment her fingertips are caught by McNair's gloved hand.

Straining, McNair clings to a hand-hold on the manipulator arm. The acceleration of the station creates a force stronger than gravity.

McNAIR
 HANG ON! DON'T LET GO.

Taylor's gloves start to slip through his fingers. She looks down. It's a long, long, long fucking way to earth.

TAYLOR
 I'm slipping.

Fingertips, interlocked.

McNAIR
 (straining)
 Must be pulling two G's!

Her metal mesh fingers keep slipping.

INT. HORIZON MID-DECK.

Ashley in his spacesuit. Watches and listens.

TAYLOR (V.O.)

Oh god. No! NO!

Ashley panics. Turns off the monitor. Shuts off his APU com link. Silence in the Mid-Deck.

ASHLEY

I told them...

EXT. SPACE, MANIPULATOR ARM.

McNair can't hold her anymore. Two fingers, one finger. Then, the MANEUVERING THRUSTERS STOP. McNair breathes a sigh of relief as he easily pulls the once again weightless Taylor back to the safety of the manipulator arm. With one finger.

McNAIR

You okay?

TAYLOR

No. But I'm not hurt.

A beat, she begins to climb again. McNair admires her a moment before following.

TAYLOR

Hey, McNair...

McNAIR

Yeah?

TAYLOR

Nice catch.

EXT. UPPER ATMOSPHERE.

The boosters on the combat shuttle disengage as it speeds toward Justice.

GOLDWING PILOT (V.O.)

Goldwing to Delta One. We have booster separation. ETA 18 minutes.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker and Biggs survey vid-maps of Europe. Chang huddled over a targeting screen notices something.

CHANG

Hey, I'm tracking a surface launch from SigMat. Looks like a Goldwing headed toward our old position.

Walker stands, crossing to Chang's station.

WALKER

Something's wrong. They shouldn't be able to find us. Unless...

(beat)

Okay. target it and... stand by. Let's see if they're bluffing.

Walker paces. Thinks a moment.

WALKER

Biggs, punch up a video feed. I want to see the shuttle.

The others look surprised.

CHANG

There's no way they could get out.

WALKER

Just do it.

Biggs nods. Punches through the station's external video signals.

WALKER

Stop.

Stops at a view of the Horizon Bay. Nothing.

CHANG

Go back two.

The video indexes back two images. The communications array.

WALKER

Zoom in.

The image grows larger and grainier. Two spacesuits scale the gridwork pyramid toward the radio tower.

WALKER

Shit. Biggs?

BIGGS

The downlinks are shut down from in here, not out there. If they're smart, they could patch through.

WALKER

Letting them live was a mistake. Cuzman. Chang. Suit up, and use the conventionals... Wait, there's only two. There should be a third.

They index through the security video again. No sign of anyone else.

WALKER

Check the shuttle. But don't let them reach the com grid.

Chang and Cuzman nod. Pull out 9mm semi-automatic handguns. So much for the safety of spacesuits.

INT/EXT. BLOWN ACCESSWAY.

Cuzman motions that he's going for McNair and Taylor. Signals for Chang to head for the shuttle.

EXT. JUSTICE STATION, SPOKE STRUTS.

Like rock climbers scaling a ledge, McNair and Taylor pick their way up Justice's skeletal framework.

They do not see Cuzman, suited in his black spacesuit, pursuing.

INT. MID-DECK, HORIZON.

Ashley hears a metallic scratching. He sees the airlock wheel turning. He bolts up, in a panic.

ASHLEY

Is that you McNair?

Searches his suit for his APU com switch. Finds it.

ASHLEY

McNair! McNair is that you?

MCNAIR (V.O. COM)

Ashley, we read. What's up? Over.

ASHLEY

You're alive! Where are you?

MCNAIR (V.O. COM)

We're about ten meters from the communications grid.

ASHLEY

Shit.

Panic stations. Ashley rushes the airlock wheel and tries to stop it from turning... a struggle that Ashley loses. The lock pushes open. Ashley backs away from the lock, as Chang appears. Menacing.

EXT. JUSTICE STATION, COM GRID.

McNair and Taylor pull themselves over the lip and into the bowl of a large antenna.

ASHLEY (V.O. COM)

Oh God! It's them! I'm in my suit,
right? I'm safe, right?...
McNair, you bastard. You said I was
safe! McNAIR!

BAM! Both Taylor and McNair hear the gunshot.
They look at each other. They both know what happened.

McNAIR

Ashley. Com check. Ashley, you there?

No response. Back to business.

McNAIR

We should be able to patch our APU's
in at the junction box.

Taylor's dazed.

McNAIR

Stay with me now. You with me?

TAYLOR

Christ. I'm not cut out for this.

McNAIR

Counter-terrorism isn't exactly in my
job description either. We just have
to keep going and stay alive.

TAYLOR

Sounds like my divorce.

McNAIR

Made it through that, right?

TAYLOR

Barely.

But CUZMAN's black gloved hand appears from under the lip of the dish and grabs McNair's leg. He yanks, launching McNair into a forward somersault.

Holding onto the lip of the dish, Taylor tries to catch him. Misses. McNair free floats while the station rotates under and away from him. Like a twisting high diver, McNair wrestles his body's momentum toward the station.

He slams against the dish hard but grabs the far edge...
Fifteen meters away from where he started.

McNAIR (COM)

Forget me. Get to the junction box.

But Cuzman crests the lip. Right behind Taylor. Taylor clambers away from him, across the struts like a kid on a jungle gym. She turns behind her to see him reaching for her.

She dives forward to a strut, grabs it, and swings herself into a full rotation. She swings up behind Cuzman and nails him in the ass, knocking him off the beam.

As Cuzman floats away, he withdraws the pistol from his suit holster. He fires repeatedly at Taylor. She ducks behind the gridirons. The recoil from his own gunshots sends Cuzman tumbling away through space.

Taylor pauses, looks around.

TAYLOR (COM)

McNair? You out there?

Silence a beat, then...

McNAIR (COM)

Nice move, Senator.

McNair watches from struts 40 meters away. Taylor swings herself over a precipice and grabs a utility cable, pulling herself up to the communication antennae.

TAYLOR (COM)

And Mother said gymnastics was a waste of time.

EXT. SPACE.

The nose cone of the Goldwing combat shuttle detaches from the top of its rocket. The sleek machine cuts in its maneuvering thrusters.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

All eyes on the video image of the Goldwing.

MAXWELL

It's not adjusting course. It's heading to intercept on our previous orbit.

WALKER

Then ignore it. Tell me when we reach the Netherlands.

Walker heads back toward the vid-maps.

EXT. STATION COMMUNICATION ARRAY.

Taylor scans the service panels, finds the one she wants and pries it open. The panel pops off into space, spiraling toward earth.

She watches the panel float gently downward and grips the utility cable tighter.

TAYLOR

Now what?

McNAIR

Hang on. I'll be there in a minute.

She stands on the bottom of the station, and leans over the mass of wiring beneath the service panel.

A SHADOW falls across her work. Taylor turns. Sees...

CUZMAN, back for round two. He's braced against the antenna mounting brackets, pointing his pistol at Taylor. Before she can react, HE FIRES. The bullets whiz by Taylor as she ducks around the junction box.

Cuzman stalks to her position. Corners her. Taylor looks around. Nowhere for her to go. Cuzman, reflected in her helmet glass, raises his weapon again.

He has her dead to rights and in his crosshairs. As he squeezes the trigger...

McNair dives in from nowhere, knocks Cuzman's hand aside as he fires. The momentum sends Cuzman flipping over McNair. Cuzman smashes into the junction box.

McNair and Cuzman struggle in weightlessness. McNair gains the upper hand. He pulls Cuzman's head back, and smashes it full force into the junction box, repeatedly. The GLASS on Cuzman's helmet SHATTERS.

Cuzman screams, but there is NO SOUND. His terrified eyes meet McNair's as his suit depressurizes. His skin boils and sizzles, then splits wide open.

McNair turns away and heaves the lifeless body up. It floats away gently, like a poppyseed in the wind.

McNAIR (COM)

Hell of a way to die.

Hauling himself over to the exposed service hatch, he sorts through the wires and cabling, finding the one he wants.

McNAIR (COM)

Good. It's a standard configuration. A real Radio Shack special.

Unhooking it from its terminal, he patches the cable into her ATU box.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

Soldiers and technicians man stations. Stone storms in. Angrier than a pit bull.

GEN. STONE

They have the codes. The sons-of-bitches took a pot shot at the President. Where do we stand?

GEN. TURGESON

The Goldwing's approaching their last known coordinates now.

Most of the video screens still broadcast static. A few broadcast angles of the Gold Wing combat shuttle.

GOLDWING PILOT (video)

Sir, we have negative visual at this time.

GEN. TURGESON

Goddamnit. They've left their orbit. Okay, begin a search pattern.

(beat)

Not that that'll do a goddamn thing.

TAYLOR (V.O.)

Hello. Anyone out there?

HALLIWELL

That's Taylor's voice.

GEN. STONE

The Congresswoman?

GEN. TURGESON

How the hell did she get on our transmitter?

Halliwell grabs the mike.

HALLIWELL

Taylor, it's Harry. How are you? How's the crew?

TAYLOR (V.O.)

It's only me and McNair now. We're on some sort of space station. What the hell's going on?

GEN. STONE

(to Turgeson)

They're on a secure channel now. Brief and debrief her, get a fix on the signal and send the Goldwing to the new coordinates.

EXT. SPACE.

GOLDWING PILOT (V.O.)

New coordinates acknowledged.

The Goldwing slides into a space-born equivalent of a fishtail, THRUSTERS BLARING.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

A red light flashes on Maxwell's panel.

MAXWELL

Walker, trouble. The Goldwing's changing course. Heading toward us.

WALKER

Goddamnit. Those two must have reached the Com grid.

(keys his com)

Cuzman, what's your status.

EXT. SPACE.

A thousand miles away, Cuzman's charred body floats. His radio crackles.

WALKER (V.O.)

Cuzman. Cuzman. Status please.

A moment later...

The Goldwing rumbles over the corpse on its way to Justice.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker slams his fist against the bulkhead.

WALKER

I don't like being tracked. Find the frequency of their transmission and jam it.

Biggs hops from one chair to the next.

BIGGS

I'm on it.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

McNair's voice hisses over the loudspeaker.

McNAIR (V.O. COM)
Jesus. Given that sort of military
power, I can see the motivation.

GEN. TURGESON
Can you give us any information on the
identity or affiliation of the
terrorists.

McNAIR (V.O. COM)
The leader identified himself as
Malcolm Walker.

General Turgeson cocks his head at the name.

GEN. TURGESON
(to himself)
Malcolm Walker? I thought he was dead.

TAYLOR (V.O. COM)
General. What should we do?

GEN. TURGESON
Stay safe. We have a rescue craft on
route.

TAYLOR (V.O. COM)
Harry, you still there?

HALLIWELL
Yes. I'm right here.

TAYLOR (V.O. COM)
If something happens, there's an
envelope on my bedstand in the crew
quarters. A letter I wrote yesterday
to my daughter. Could you... could you
make sure she gets it?

HALLIWELL
You have my word.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker stares down at Earth through a porthole... his new
fiefdom.

WALKER
Now let's show the bastards how
hopeless it is. Target the combat
shuttle...

Maxwell activates the targeting system and begins scanning --
finds the incoming combat shuttle on the monitor.

MAXWELL

Damn they're moving fast. Estimating five minutes until intercept.

WALKER

That's plenty of time. Do you have a lock on it?

MAXWELL

Establishing now. Uh-oh.

WALKER

Uh-oh what? What uh-oh?

MAXWELL

They're coming in from a higher altitude. We can't get off a shot.

Walker rushes to the video screen. Assesses the options.

WALKER

(into com)

Stewart, I need a negative 40 degree adjustment on the x-axis.

STEWART (COM V.O.)

Stand by.

WALKER

No. NOW!

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE.

Stewart hits the thrusters button.

EXT. JUSTICE.

The boosters fire inching the station's angle slowly upward.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Watching the targeting video of the approaching Goldwing.

WALKER

We're almost out of time.

BIGGS

We're almost there.

MAXWELL

Establishing a lock. Stand by.

WALKER

We can't wait. If they get too close, the blast'll destroy us in the process.

EXT. SPACE.

The Combat Shuttle FIRES its RETROROCKETS as it nears Justice.

INT. COMBAT SHUTTLE.

SPECIAL FORCE LEADER
(barking orders)
Gentlemen, let's get ready to rumble.

The special forces lock and load their weapons.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

The main monitor displays a video image transmitted from the tail of the Combat Shuttle as it approaches Justice.

GEN. STONE
What's your gut saying?

GEN. TURGESON
If we're already this close, it says
we stand a pretty good chance.

HALLIWELL
(into com)
Hang on, Jake. You'll be back on Earth
by dinner.

EXT. COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY.

McNair and Taylor see a pinprick of white approaching on the horizon.

McNAIR
We see it.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Maxwell's targeting screen tracks the incoming Combat Shuttle.

WALKER
Do you have a positive lock?

MAXWELL
Stand by.

WALKER
Do you have a positive lock?

The screen indicates a positive lock.

MAXWELL
Positive lock.

WALKER
Fire.

MAXWELL
They're too close.

WALKER
Risk it.

Maxwell pulls the trigger. A whine rips through the Platform.
All the lights dim.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY.

McNair and Taylor, lit by starlight. They watch with hope.

Then... A BALL OF LIGHTNING from the station. Their faces glow red with a sudden flash. The rear of the Goldwing EXPLODES in flames. It spins out of control, speeding helter-skelter toward the station.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

The combat shuttle's video feed shows flames and tumbling.
Turgeson collapses into his chair.

EXT. SPACE.

The Goldwing catapults sideways, its rear a mass of flames.
Headed straight for the station. A COLLISION seems imminent.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

The terrorists track the shuttle tumbling at the station.

MAXWELL
We're gonna collide!

WALKER
Hit it again.

MAXWELL
She can't get a shot off this close
from this angle.

WALKER (COM)
Stewart. Get us out of the way.

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE.

Stewart fires maneuvering thrusters.

STEWART
Firing thrusters.

EXT. COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY.

McNair and Taylor are jolted, as Justice's rockets fire. From their pained eyes they see the flaming combat shuttle coming straight at them.

McNAIR

Get Down!

Instinct... McNair wraps himself around Taylor.

EXT. SPACE.

The shuttle somersaults closer. Right toward the com array. It's almost on top of our heroes. McNair looks away. The massive hull passes not more than twenty feet above them. As near as a near miss can be in space.

McNair and Taylor slowly rises from their hunched position. Turn to see...

The combat shuttle succumb to a massive EXPLOSION. Billions of glowing bits. The shock wave knocks the two backwards. McNair grabs onto Taylor, who's held in place by the APU cable patched to the junction box. They're whipped around on the end of the cable as they weather the explosive wind and debris flying by. Then the shock wave subsides

McNAIR

So much for the cavalry.

McNair notices a red blinking light on Taylor's suit.

McNAIR

Taylor.

She looks down.

TAYLOR

My breather's malfunctioning.

McNAIR

Something must've hit it. We've got to get you inside before you run out of air.

TAYLOR

(covering her fear)

Roger that.

McNAIR

Leave your APU attached so I can stay in touch with Halliwell. We'll use hand signals till we're in.

TAYLOR

Roger that.

She detaches her com box from her suit. They begin their rapid descent.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND, CONFERENCE ROOM.

The weary group take their seats. Turgeson throws down a file.

GEN. TURGESON
Malcolm Walker. Chief designer of the Zeus project until his death two years ago. And the smartest man I ever knew.

GEN. STONE
How did he supposedly die?

GEN. TURGESON
Radiation poisoning. I was at the funeral.

GEN. STONE
But what does he want?

HALLIWELL
Seems like he's in a position to receive whatever the fuck he wants.

GEN. STONE
We can't have some lunatic holding the world hostage. We'll have to destroy the station.

Cooper enters, shaking his head.

COOPER
I'm afraid that's no longer an option, sir.

GEN. STONE
And why's that?

COOPER
He's too close. He's changed his orbital altitude from 35,000 kilometers to 275. If we destroy the station in her current orbit, there's a good chance the nuclear reactor would lose containment during re-entry. The fallout could kill millions.

GEN. TURGESON
Walker must know that. He's using his orbit as a defense.

GEN. STONE
If we don't do anything, we're begging disaster. Is there any way to minimize the risk?

A moment of silence. Then...

HALLIWELL

Apogee.

GEN. STONE

Apogee. What's Apogee?

Halliwell rises and crosses to a blackboard.

HALLIWELL

Considering the high orbit he's just come out of, he could hardly have settled into a circular flight path. Most likely it's egg shaped, like this.

Halliwell draws an orbital ellipse.

HALLIWELL

Elliptical orbits have a low point, perigee, and a high point, apogee. At apogee, the station is at its furthest possible point from Earth. It won't buy you much, but it'll buy you something.

GEN. STONE

Confirm his orbit with tracking.

(Cooper nods, picks up the phone)

If Dr. Halliwell is right, this might be our only shot. Extrapolate the station's apogee and get the coordinates to NORAD.

The Chairman stands.

GEN. TURGESON

Where are you going?

GEN. STONE

To inform the President that we see no other option then to incinerate 1.2 trillion tax dollars and endanger the lives of millions of people.

PRESIDENT (O.S.)

Don't bother. I'm right here.

Stone turns, the President enters the room.

GEN. STONE

Sir.

PRESIDENT

I want this fucker dealt with. You have a course of action?

GEN. STONE

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

Brief me.

HALLIWELL

General Stone, what about McNair and Representative Taylor?

Stone shakes his head.

HALLIWELL (cont'd)

Maybe they can help.

Cooper puts down the phone.

COOPER

On its current orbit, the station will reach apogee in forty seven minutes. Her flight path'll buy us another 40 kilometers, which might be just enough.

GEN. STONE

Halliwell. I've never believed in miracles. Tell McNair and Taylor what you wish, but in my mind, they are not part of the equation.

EXT. JUSTICE ACCESS CORRIDOR.

Taylor and McNair pull themselves down to the blown accessway.

McNAIR

Forty five minutes? Can't they give us a little more time?

HALLIWELL (V.O.)

You don't understand. When the station hits apogee, she'll be bombarded with missiles. No one here is waiting for you... fail or succeed.

The words sink in. A few beats.

McNAIR

I'm not quite ready to die.

HALLIWELL (V.O.)

Well, you're going to if you can't secure the station...

McNAIR

What exactly does "secure" mean?

HALLIWELL (V.O.)

It means... capture or kill the terrorists.

McNAIR

Yeah, I thought so.

HALLIWELL (V.O.)

Jake... Good luck.

McNAIR

Harry, I'm going to need it. McNair out.

McNair looks back toward Taylor. She clings to a strut, frozen. McNair signals to her - the diver's thumbs up. She does not respond. He moves to her. Sees through her visor that she's gulping for air.

Her eyes go pale. She lets go her hold and is pushed out by the station's rotation. McNair grabs her.

McNAIR

I got you. Come on. Almost there.

FROM THE HORIZON'S BAY -

Chang watches the two enter the accessway.

CHANG (COM)

McNair and Taylor have entered the station.

WALKER (V.O. COM)

They've done too much damage already. You and Stewart. Get them.

Chang nods and grabs Walker's tether tightrope.

INT. JUSTICE ACCESSWAY.

McNair pulls Taylor into the exposed corridor. He looks down one direction and through the far hatchway window he sees the faces of the station's crew pressed against the glass, watching him, pleadingly. Banging on the glass.

McNAIR

God almighty...

McNair heads for the opposite airlock. Taylor's oxygen gauge is well below redline.

TAYLOR

(mouths)

McNair.

She looks up at him. Then passes out. McNair pulls her along the catwalk. Makes it to the hatchway. With heavy effort, he pulls her in. He closes the door behind him, then hits the pressurize button. Hissing. Air enters. He grabs Taylor's helmet, ready to release it.

He waits for the red light to turn green. It seems like forever.

McNAIR

Come on. Come on.

Finally - green light. He pulls off Taylor's helmet, then his. He puts his face close to hers. Listens for breathing. Nothing. He pinches her nose and begins mouth-to-mouth. Still nothing after a few breaths. She's lifeless.

Then she starts coughing in air by the lungful. After a moment, she opens her eyes.

McNAIR

I thought you died.

She sits up, coughing.

TAYLOR

What and miss all the excitement?

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker in the command chair, Maxwell at the targeting station, and Biggs at instrumentation.

BIGGS

I've located their signal. Do you want me to power down the transmitter?

WALKER

Not yet...

MAXWELL

We're five minutes away from the Netherland target. And right on schedule.

WALKER

Excellent. Biggs, patch me into that transmission. Give them a visual.

Walker's video screen fades from static to an image of the Military Strategic Space Command room.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

Gasps from several soldiers. Turgeson and Halliwell look up. Walker on the video screen.

WALKER

Ed Turgeson. It's been ages.

GEN. TURGESON

Malcolm Walker. It is you.

WALKER

I'm surprised you underestimated me, General. Thought you'd get away with canceling my clearances and kicking me off the project? I preferred death with dignity.

GEN. TURGESON

I warned you, Malcolm. I told you to leave your fascist politics at home.

WALKER

Used to be a free country, Ed. I guess I shouldn't complain, though. Same thing happened to Oppenheimer.

GEN. TURGESON

But Oppy was never a traitor. He never stole an A-bomb.

WALKER

Maybe he should have. Couldn't've done worse than you bastards. Personally I think it shows a lack of insight on his part.

INT. CREW MODULE.

McNair hears the conversation (V.O. COM) as he helps Taylor up the ladder to the Mess Hall. McNair switches off his APU transmit button.

McNAIR

Walker found the frequency.

TAYLOR

And it's only a matter of time before he finds us.

McNAIR

We need some kind of weapon.

The V.O. conversation continues as McNair hops over to the cooking station, rifles through drawers.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)

Don't sacrifice yourself this way, Walker. Don't destroy everything you've worked for.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

WALKER

Ah, but this is what I've worked for. You're a student of warfare, General. Do you recall this date -- October 15th, in the year 1415?

INT. MESS HALL.

McNair and Taylor frantically root around in the mess. Discards a series of butterknives, spatulas, frying pans, etc.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)

Agincourt. The battle of Agincourt. English against the French.

WALKER (V.O.)

I applaud you, General.

McNair notices the kitchen stove. Grins.

McNAIR

Get me my oxygen tank.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - CONTINUOUS.

The President and Gen. Stone enter the room.

WALKER (VIDEO)

Think what it must've been like at dawn on that cool fall morning ...witnessing the death of the age of chivalry. God, it must have been glorious. To those poor noble knights of France, the English longbow must've seemed like project Zeus. Imagine it, being felled by an arrow at two hundred yards without even seeing the face of your enemy and thinking, before you die, that you hadn't even unsheathed your sword. With every new weapon, there emerge new leaders. The paradigm of power shifts... and right now it's just shifted toward me.

GEN. TURGESON

So you want to conquer.

WALKER

No. I want Justice.

PRESIDENT

Listen, you bastard, you've committed an act of treason. You've committed an act of war. Don't think we won't retaliate.

WALKER

Save your sabre rattling, Mr.
President. You owe me your life...
Turn on CNN... Go ahead, for a little
demonstration of what's to come.

Gen. Stone nods. A soldier keys up CNN on video.

CNN feed:

A reporter jabbars outside The Hague. Limousines are
arriving.

WALKER

What you're watching is the start of
the Eastern European Economic summit.
In about a minute Colonel Ozukian, the
man who gassed 400,000 of his own
people for the crime of being
literate, will arrive to receive
favored nations trading status. Why?
Because, Mr. President, you found it
expedient. Well the world may be mired
in hypocrisy, but I am not.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker looks over to Maxwell.

WALKER

Do you have a positive I.D?

MAXWELL

I.D. confirmed.

On Maxwell's monitor. A satellite image of a limousine
traveling up to The Hague. Infrared tinge.

WALKER

Watch, gentlemen.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

CNN video: A limo pulls up in front of The Hague. Reporters
press in. Bodyguards emerge from the limo, clearing a path for
COL. OZUKIAN, a pig of a man who's fashion tips comes from
Kaddafi. He steps out, waving to the crowd like a rock star.

WALKER (V.O.)

Fire.

An explosion knocks everyone around Ozukian to the ground. But
Ozukian himself, well... he no longer exists.

WALKER (VIDEO)

Justice... Napoleon said a revolution is an opinion which has found its bayonets. You've seen my bayonet, now my opinion: There's a higher law than the law of government and that's the law of conscience.

McNAIR (V.O.)

You're a common murderer, Walker. I don't care what flag you wrap yourself in, you killed my crew.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM

Close on Walker.

WALKER

Col. McNair, welcome to the panel. Tell me, what are a handful of lives in the service of millions? Hmm? If you could give your life to prevent a war, to stop a genocide, to keep your family safe... would you? I'm a realist. Lives have been lost. More lives will be lost... but to save the lives of millions. Shall I be poetic?

(beat)

This is one small death for a man, one giant leap for mankind.

GEN. TURGESON

How can this madness save lives?

WALKER

By imposing consequences, General. You take away consequences and men can commit horrifying acts. Look at Hitler, the Khmer Rouge, Idi Amin. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. But now... now there will be consequences. For example...

(beat)

Mr. President, I'd very much like you to declare uni-lateral nuclear disarmament within the hour.

PRESIDENT

I will not jeopardize the security of this nation for your misguided vision of utopia.

WALKER

Then Mr. President, there will be consequences. And every time you refuse me, the consequences will become more severe.

INT. MESS HALL.

McNair talks into his headset as Taylor hauls his OXYGEN TANK up from the lower level.

McNAIR

One question Walker. Who died and made you god?

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

WALKER

Why, God did.

(beat)

Shut it off.

Biggs nods. Hits a few keys.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

COOPER

We've lost the signal. We can't track her anymore, but the Naval Observatory believes it has a visual.

The graphic of Justice Station on the main viewer moves closer and closer to its orbital zenith.

TECHNICIAN

Thirty-nine minutes, sir.

GEN. TURGESON

Extrapolate the coordinates, with updates from Naval if necessary.

PRESIDENT

But once that fucker's clear, blow him out of the fucking sky.

TECHNICIAN

Yes, sir.

INT. MESS HALL.

McNair slams the oxygen tank onto a mess hall table. Begins to make modifications on its regulator valve.

TAYLOR

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes.

McNAIR

What does that mean?

TAYLOR

Who watches the watchers. What are you doing?

McNAIR

Making a few minor adjustments to try and even the odds.

He takes his contraption over to the stove. Turns on a burner. The electric stove instantly glows red. He turns the knob on the regulator, but the stove is not hot enough to ignite the gas mixture.

McNAIR

I need a flame. Paper. Do you see any paper?

They look around. No paper. Then McNair remembers. He pats down his pockets and withdraws the faded yellow envelope. From it, he pulls out a tattered newspaper clipping. Unfolds it, the headline, big print.

"Three Astronauts killed in shuttle abort."

TAYLOR

What's that?

McNAIR

A cross I've borne too long.

McNair places the corner of the clipping on the hot metal burner. It ignites. He holds the flame in front of the O2 regulator. It in turn ignites.

A BURST of FIRE shoots across the kitchen, then dies down to a small flame.

McNAIR

You're under no obligation to go with me.

TAYLOR

Yeah, I am. I swore an oath to defend the constitution and... I want to see my little girl again.

(an afterthought)

Maybe someday I can tell her about the time Mom once saved the world.

McNAIR

Okay, here's the situation. If we can't single-handedly regain control of this station in...

(MORE)

McNAIR (cont'd)

(checks watch)

... thirty seven minutes, it will be destroyed. And us along with it. Do you understand?

Silence. She nods.

McNAIR

This station has six modules. According to the wall map, we're in the crew quarters, next is operations, then life support, storage, and engineering. Then targeting. That's where Walker....

McNair SCREAMS.

TAYLOR

What's wrong?

He lunges at Taylor, knocking her behind the table. Sparks rain from above them.

McNair pulls the collar of his flight suit aside. A DEEP SEAR cuts across his shoulder. Burned flesh still smoldering. McNair fights through the enormous pain.

ACROSS THE ROOM...

Chang squats. He aims the microwave pistol again. McNair and Taylor tumble out of the way. Another rain of sparks. Chang shifts his position for a clearer shot.

McNair scampers toward his homemade flame thrower. He rolls into a forward somersault behind the kitchen partition.

Chang shifts his attention to Taylor, hiding behind a chair.

He shoots. The microwave hits the chair frame in front of Taylor, erupting into a firework of sparks, which hits Taylor squarely in the face. She yelps, covering her eyes.

Momentarily blinded, she twists back into the open.

Chang lines her up in his sights. Easy shot. As he's about to fire...

McNAIR

HEY!

Chang turns. THHOOOOSH.

A jet streak of FLAME shoots across the Mess Hall. A BALL OF FIRE engulfs Chang. He screams. Drops and rolls.

McNair, holding the home-made flame thrower.

McNAIR
(to Taylor)
Let's go! Let's go!

Taylor pulls herself to her feet. Runs past Chang. His fiery body lunges out, TACKLING HER. She tumbles. Chang, still screaming, still burning, grabs her ankle and pulls her closer to his burning body.

A vision of hell, his hair on fire, his face smoldering.

His eyes locked on hers. Taylor's petrified. She summons all her courage. Closes her eyes and kicks him in the face with all her might. Chang's head snaps back. He lets go of her ankle... dead.

Still nursing his bad shoulder, McNair grabs Taylor by the scruff of her collar and pulls her away. Taylor cannot look away from Chang's dead flaming face, until McNair pulls her to his chest.

McNAIR
Stay with me, Senator. We don't have time.

Taylor pulls herself together as McNair checks his watch.

McNAIR
Thirty five minutes.

McNair straps the tank on his back.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Biggs, Maxwell, and Walker. Walker has a map unfolded on a console. Checking coordinates. Biggs gets off his headset.

BIGGS
Our intelligence source have confirmed the location of the Hamas training camps.

WALKER
Then... at your leisure, Maxwell.

Maxwell smiles. Squeezes the trigger, repeatedly. Several high pitch whines reverberate through the module.

MAXWELL
Primary targets destroyed.

WALKER
We should be getting paid for this. When will we be back in range of Washington.

MAXWELL
Half an hour...

WALKER
Excellent.

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE, LOWER LEVEL.

With cautious haste, McNair and Taylor exit the hatchway into the operations module.

Above them on the catwalk, STEWART eyes the two astronauts passing beneath her under the metal walkway. She eases her hand down to her utility belt, and quietly unlatches the holster holding the microwave pistol.

McNair pauses a moment at the body of Col. Miller. He checks the pulse. Shakes his head "no" to Taylor.

On the catwalk, Stewart takes a few cautious steps. She leans over the railing to get a clear shot.

McNair pauses. Did he hear something?

McNAIR
MOVE!

He nudges the valve of the oxygen regulator as he spins. An ARC of FLAME sprays with his turn. Stewart whips out the pistol, but doesn't have time to shoot. The stream of flame flows up through the catwalk grating.

Stewart loses the microwave pistol as she tucks and rolls down the catwalk ahead of the fire. The microwave pistol melts in the stream of flames that follows her.

As she reaches the end of the catwalk, Stewart leaps the railing. She arches over the flame like a circus tiger, and plummets fifteen feet, crashing down on McNair.

The two collapse to the ground. McNair's homemade flame thrower SPRAYS FIRE helter-skelter across the floor at Taylor, sending her diving for cover.

McNair edges his thumb off the regulator valve and the flame dies down.

But Stewart snags the airhose and wraps it around McNair's neck twice. She pulls back tight. The rubber hose squeezes into McNair's neck. He struggles for breath.

Stewart withdraws her 9mm automatic pistol.

STEWART
Stop struggling. It'll be less painful.

She points the gun at his temple, pulling back on the hose like reigns.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

No!

Stewart smiles and, following the voice, she retracts the gun on Taylor, who crouches between two pieces of machinery. McNair twists violently under Stewart's strangle grasp.

STEWART

This isn't up for vote, Representative Taylor. And besides...

Stewart lets loose several rounds. They clang and ping off machinery.

STEWART (cont'd)

I don't like politicians.

Stewart's gun hand is right in front of McNair's face. With one last effort, he snaps his head forward and BITES down on Stewart's hand. To the bone. BLOOD comes trickling out his mouth as Stewart clenches her teeth in pain. The gun drops.

McNair's hand finds its way to Stewart's face. He presses his fingers to her eye socket.

Stewart grabs his hand with her bitten hand. She pulls at his finger, bending it back.

McNair's FINGER SNAPS, broken. McNair screams, but he doesn't stop pressing against her eye.

Seizing the opportunity, Taylor rushes in and slams her body full force into the pair, knocking Stewart backward. Stewart releases her grip on the air hose. The exhausted McNair manages to pull the hose off his neck.

Taylor springs for the gun, but is met by a kick in the face from Stewart, slamming her against a bank of controls. Including the controls to the station's ROTATIONAL THRUSTERS.

EXT. JUSTICE STATION.

The rotational thrusters FIRE. The station begins to rotate faster... and faster...

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker, Maxwell and Biggs hold on to their chairs. Walker hits the com button.

WALKER

Stewart. What's going on!

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE.

Stewart recovers the gun. McNair, slowly regaining strength, tries to knock it from her hand. But the station's violent rotation sends them both tumbling.

Taylor crosses to assist McNair, but the centrifugal force of the rotation forces her to her knees.

EXT. STATION.

The thrusters continue to fire, the station rotates faster.

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE.

Stewart and McNair wrestle on the floor, as if in molasses. The centrifugal force presses them down.

Stewart elbows McNair's windpipe and wrests the gun away. She rolls herself away from McNair over to the control panel.

With enormous effort, Stewart raises her hand to the control panel. Her fingers feel across the lights and switches, find the right switch, flick it off.

EXT. STATION.

The rotational thrusters RETROFIRE, slowing the station down.

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE.

Stewart struggles to her knees, crawls toward the far hatchway.

As the rotation slows and centrifugal gravity returns to normal, McNair and Taylor manage to struggle to their feet.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker pulls himself out of his chair.

WALKER

Have we stabilized?

BIGGS

Yes. Gravity returning to normal.

Yells into his com set.

WALKER

Stewart. Chang. Status. Give me your status.

INT. ACCESS CORRIDOR.

Stewart trots down the corridor, looking over her shoulder.

STEWART

McNair and the woman are right here.
They got by Chang.

WALKER (V.O. Com)

What happened in operations?

STEWART

The rotational thrusters were
accidentally activated. I shut them
down.

WALKER (V.O. Com)

And McNair and Taylor?

Stewart passes into the hatchway between accessway and the
next module.

STEWART

I'll shut them down next.

WALKER (V.O.)

Don't mess this up, Stewart. I can't
spare you.

STEWART

Acknowledged.

Stewart exits into the next module, Life Support.

INT. LIFE SUPPORT MODULE.

This module is actually a massive greenhouse which supplies
the station with breathable air. A path carves through
well-tended plants and trees.

Stewart refreshes her clip, then positions herself by the
hatchway.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker paces, pissed off.

WALKER

I should've killed them when I had the
chance.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - EVENING

General Stone hangs up a red telephone.

GEN. STONE

The Hammas just lost a training camp
and they're blaming it on a covert
U.S. airstrike... Can't say I'll cry
about it.

The main video screen shows a computer graphic of Justice in relationship to Earth. The elliptical line representing her extrapolated orbit is overlaid on the screen.

COOPER

Apogee in twenty four minutes.

INT. OPERATIONS MODULE HATCHWAY.

As McNair and Taylor pass through the hatchway, a rain of bullets comes ripping down the accessway toward them. They both duck back into the hatchway. Bullets slap metal and ricochet around the hatchway entrance, pinning them down.

TAYLOR

What'll we do now?

McNAIR

Wait for her to run out of bullets.

McNair sends a burst of fire down the accessway.

From the opposing hatchway Stewart watches the ball of fire roll toward her. It evaporates long before it nears her. She keeps up her volley of bullets.

On McNair and Taylor. The lead keeps flying. Until silence.

McNAIR

That's it... Go.

McNair and Taylor charge into the accessway.

Down at the far end, Stewart coughs out her spent clip and slams a new one in. She draws a bead on the pair, but McNair lets out another fire burst.

Stewart fires blindly into the cloud of flames. The fire rolls toward her, only this time it's closing fast. Finally she ducks and rolls out of the hatchway and into the Life Support module.

INT. LIFE SUPPORT MODULE.

Shafts of sunlight from overhead portholes sway across the greenery like klieg lights as the station slowly rotates.

Taylor and McNair pause at the hatchway. In front of them are several bulky mechanisms, whirring and humming.

McNAIR

Oxygen processors. They must use the plants to turn CO2 into breathable air.

They survey the foliage. Hundreds of places to hide.

McNAIR

She's somewhere out there. Just keep your eyes open and keep running toward the next hatchway. Got it?

TAYLOR

Yeah.

McNAIR

See you there.

The two take off across the module, over rocks and through bushes. A series of POPPING SOUNDS rise above the mechanical whirring and groaning. Gunshots strafe their feet.

McNair shoves Taylor into the underbrush, diving in behind her.

STEWART jumps into the open and squeezes off a few rounds from her pistol.

The bullets whiz overhead, ricochet off the oxygen processors and thud harmlessly into the trees.

McNAIR

Stay down.

McNair moves cautiously through the underbrush, the oxygen tank strapped to his back. He glances sideways through the wall of leaves. Sees Stewart and let's out a BURST of FLAME.

Stewart flips into a mid-air backward somersault, narrowly avoiding the flame which instead hits the plants. The leaves of the trees, however, burst into flame.

McNair has started a FOREST FIRE. The flames activate a sprinkler system. Water rains down from overhead.

McNAIR

Get to the hatchway!

Wet and coughing, he and Taylor dash for the far exit. But Stewart appears before the hatchway door, gun drawn. She fires. McNair and Taylor dive in opposite directions.

McNair unleashes another ball of fire at Stewart as she disappears into the shrubbery. McNair rises, edges back to the path. Listening.

McNAIR

Sarah?

WATER rains down. FIRE all around him. STEAM.

TAYLOR

Jake.

McNair spins around. Stewart has Taylor in a headlock and holds the gun to her temple.

McNAIR

You kill her, I kill you.

STEWART

That's not the way it works. I've got the gun and the hostage, so you unstrap that tank and put it down.

McNair and Taylor lock eyes. A long beat. Stewart tightens her grip on the trigger.

McNAIR

It's your call, Senator. We're probably a lost cause anyway.

McNair sees the fear in her eyes. He reaches up and undoes the buckle on his oxygen tank and lets the tank slide to the ground. He still grasps the regulator.

TAYLOR

Lost causes.

(smiles)

They're the only ones worth fighting for.

With sudden determination, Taylor elbows Stewart... she spins, grabbing at Stewart's gun, shoving it up in the air. The gun FIRES REPEATEDLY. Bullets plink off an overhead porthole, starring it.

THE PORTHOLE GLASS CRACKS.

Stewart nails Taylor in the solar plexus with her knee. Taylor doubles over and Stewart brings the butt of the gun down on the back of her head. The congresswoman falls to the ground.

McNair rushes Stewart, tackles her. But she recovers, kicking him in the face and scrambling to her feet. She backpedals a few steps and looks down the gunsight at her two victims.

McNair's now about ten feet away from his homemade flamethrower. Both he and Taylor are helpless.

Stewart smiles and SHOOTs once, hitting Taylor in the leg. Taylor SCREAMS as BLOOD BLOSSOMS through her flightsuit.

McNAIR

Just kill us and get it over with.

Stewart retracts her gun.

STEWART

You surprise me. I expected you to play for time.

Without warning, THE PORTHOLE GLASS CAVES OUT. Atmosphere gushes from the platform. The rushing air whips into a frenzied MINI-TORNADO. Steam and fire swirling around, up and out the hole.

The sudden tempest yanks Stewart into mid-air, along with McNair and Taylor.

But McNair manages to grab onto an oxygen processor with his good hand. Taylor latches onto his ankle.

WARNING SIRENS AND LIGHTS

Stewart swirls around in the center of the room, caught in the tornado's powerful grasp.

MCNAIR

Climb over me! Get to the hatchway!
Hurry!

Taylor pulls herself along McNair's body. She grabs a pipe leading from the processor to the bulkhead and pulls herself across it. McNair follows, his broken finger slowing him down. The escaping atmosphere sucks both of their legs into the air.

STEWART

Caught in the maelstrom swirls closer to the hole. She manages to grab a support strut as trees and bushes tear past her, pushing through the porthole and into space.

Along the insides of the room, massive SHIELDING BLINDS begin to rise, covering the portholes one by one.

Taylor reaches the bulkhead. The hatchway is only a few feet away. She reaches out. Grabs the door handle. Pulls.

The lock door SWINGS OUT and open, whipping Taylor's body from one side to the other SMASHING her against the far bulkhead. She manages to hang on.

As the storm rages, Stewart keeps a firm grip on the support strut. But the shielding blinds are rising TO THE INSIDE of the struts. Stewart watches in horror as the blinds creep toward her, until the thick metal presses against her wrists, threatening to sever her hands. With no choice, she lets go.

She flies up to the porthole and sticks there a moment, blocking the hole. Then her body rapidly deflates as she IMPLODES through the small opening.

McNair grabs the hatchway frame and pulls himself into the hatch. Bracing himself, he reaches his good hand out to Taylor, and with all his strength, he pulls her in the hatchway. Together they fight to close the door.

INT. HATCHWAY.

Suddenly silence. But through the window, the wind still rushes, smashing the greenery against the sides of the module.

McNair and Taylor are a sight. Wet, bloody, with dark smudges across their faces.

McNAIR

You okay?

TAYLOR

I think I cracked a couple ribs.

McNAIR

Can you walk?

TAYLOR

Do I have a choice?

She smiles weakly through the pain. McNair helps her to her feet and walks her down the accessway.

McNAIR

For what it's worth, I think you make one hell of a hero.

TAYLOR

You're pretty good yourself. How we doin'?

McNair checks his watch. Its crystal has been shattered. He shakes his head.

McNAIR

Three modules down, three to go. If I were a gambling man, I'd bet the farm against us...

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

BIGGS

The Life Support module's lost its atmosphere.

WALKER

Give me a visual.

BIGGS

We don't have one. The shielding system's been activated, but we've taken a blow to our long term air supply.

WALKER

(into com)

Stewart. Stewart. Do you read?

(no answer - beat)

Patch me into McNair's frequency.

Let's see if he's still alive.

INT. STORAGE MODULE.

The red emergency lighting casts long shadows over the maze of storage bins and massive air and water tanks.

Taylor props herself against the bulkhead, as McNair opens a wall mounted first-aid kit.

TAYLOR

We don't have time for this. Leave me.

McNAIR

It'll just take a second. I have to get the bullet out... and I need to catch my breath.

With the kit's surgical scalpel, McNair slices open Taylor's jumpsuit, reveal the gunshot wound.

TAYLOR

You know, you really didn't have to go to all this trouble to get a look at my legs.

With tweezers he pulls out the bullet, spreads on antibiotic and quickly dresses her leg wound.

WALKER (V.O.)

Col. McNair? Col. McNair? Are you listening? I have a proposition for you.

McNair keeps wrapping Taylor's leg, he does not respond. When he finishes, she pushes herself to her feet.

TAYLOR

Better.

McNair absent-mindedly puts the surgical scalpel into his breast pocket, as the two wounded astronauts hurry across the module.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

WALKER (V.O.)

Can you hear me, McNair?

GEN. TURGESON
Got you, you bastard. Get a lock on
that signal and update the
coordinates.

TECHNICIAN
Yes sir.

COOPER
Fifteen minutes to apogee.

INT. TARGETING MODULE.

They listen to the silence.

BIGGS
Maybe she got him.

WALKER
Maybe he's not responding.
(keys mike)
Quite a show you put on in the Life
Support module. It was very
entertaining...

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

WALKER (V.O.)
... but I wouldn't be so proud of
yourself. I wouldn't be too cocky.

Static.

HALLIWELL
Why doesn't McNair answer?

GEN. TURGESON
Maybe he can't.

INT. ENGINEERING MODULE.

McNair and Taylor, moving quickly, cautiously edge their way
through the Module.

WALKER (V.O.)
McNair? You're trying my patience.
Respond or I will kill a member of the
station's crew.

McNair's hand hovers over the ATU activation button.

McNAIR
Why's he calling? What does he want
from us?

TAYLOR
Maybe he wants to negotiate.

McNAIR

That doesn't make sense. There's nothing we have that he could possibly want... except...

(beat)

Our lives. He doesn't know if we're still alive.

McNair moves his hand away from the ATU activation button.

McNAIR

And I see no reason to tell him.

INT. TARGETING MODULE.

BIGGS

He's dead. He must be.

WALKER

I underestimated them once before. I won't again. Shut down the transmitter.

Looks over to Maxwell.

WALKER

They haven't seen you. They don't know your face.

INT. ACCESS CORRIDOR.

McNair and Taylor into the next corridor.

TAYLOR

So what's the game plan, coach?

McNAIR

The way I see it we have no weapons, no time, and no hope. So I'm improvising.

They reach the far lock.

McNAIR (cont'd)

You have any thoughts, Senator?

TAYLOR

Yeah. The way I see it, it's hopeless, and we only have a few minutes left to live. So... let's just fuck.

That catches McNair by surprise. Beat. Sly smile.

McNAIR

Sorry, not enough time.

(beat)

How 'bout a raincheck?

TAYLOR
I don't give rainchecks.

INT. ENGINEERING MODULE.

McNair and Taylor enter the bowels of the station. The metallic entrails stretch up the walls to the vast webwork of piping above. Conduits and wiring snake and slither around generators and control panels. Humming, whirring and clicking.

A rhythmic clanging resonates through the chamber. Metal on metal. As they cross...

McNAIR
Listen... morse code.

They follow the sound to a storage locker. McNair tries to open it. Locked.

McNAIR
Stand clear.

With a spinning kick McNair nails the door of the storage locker. The thin metal buckles and the door springs open.

Maxwell tumbles out and onto the floor.

MAXWELL
Thank god. I thought I'd go crazy in there.
(looking up)
You're not... one of them.

McNAIR
No, NASA. We were just their bus drivers. What happened?

MAXWELL
They took the crew... I don't know. I'm the engineer for the reactor. They thought they might need me later on so they stuffed me in there.

McNAIR
Okay, calm down. Listen, if we don't secure this station, it's going to get shot down in a matter of minutes. Now do you have any kind of weapons, anything that we might use?

MAXWELL
No. I can't.... I can't think of anything.

TAYLOR
(thinking)
You're the engineer... What about the reactor. If we can somehow sabotage it, they won't be able to use the weapon.

McNAIR
(to Maxwell)
Can you do that?

MAXWELL
Yeah. yeah, of course I can. I'll...
I'll need some help.

McNAIR
Go with him.

TAYLOR
No way. I'm going with you.

McNAIR
I like hedging my bets and two shots are better than one.

Taylor tries to protest.

McNAIR
Don't argue. We don't have time.

MAXWELL
The controls are down in this trench.

Taylor looks after McNair, then, favoring her good leg, gingerly descends into the trench.

TAYLOR
Take care of yourself.

McNair heads to the far side of the module and disappears into the airlock.

MAXWELL
(into Com)
Our friends are still alive.

Taylor turns from her position in the trench and sees Maxwell standing over her, gun pointed down at her.

MAXWELL
I have the Congresswoman.

While Maxwell turns back to the accesslock to check McNair, Taylor notices a vent covering on the side of the trench.

MAXWELL
McNair's headed your way. But he's
injured and unarmed.

WALKER (V.O.)
Dispatch the lady. We'll take McNair.

MAXWELL
Roger. Oh, and apparently a missile
strike is imminent.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Walker scratches his head.

WALKER
I didn't think they'd risk it. No
matter. We're prepared.
(to Biggs, smiling)
They think they can shoot us down.

INT. ENGINEERING.

Maxwell turns back to the maintenance trench, but Taylor is gone. He notices that a vent on a maintenance crawlway is slightly askew.

MAXWELL
Goddamnit. You can never pin a
politician down.

INT. CRAWL-WAY.

On her hands and knees, Taylor shimmies down the maintenance crawl-way, a space no bigger than a sewage pipe. Wiring hangs like cobwebs -- piping and hoses twisting down its length.

She gets about fifteen feet in before Maxwell makes it to the entrance. His body eclipses much of the light coming down the tunnel.

Maxwell can't make out much ahead of him in the small crawl way. He ventures in, firing the occasional burst from his automatic.

BULLETS smack about Taylor's feet, as she propels her body forward.

But her foot gets tangled up in some wiring, -- dragging her back, like a swimmer drowning in seaweed.

She can see the backlit shape of Maxwell heading toward her down the maintenance tunnel. Taylor looks up to the WIRING running down either side of the crawlway. She reaches under her shirt and grasps her LOCKET. She removes it.

Maxwell pushes wiring aside. His gun gets caught in the tangled mess and he stops to free it -- then crawls commando style on his belly, closing in on her.

Maxwell's five feet away now. He sees she's trapped. He grins as he closes in for the kill.

MAXWELL

You don't need the ballot when you got the bullet.

Taylor tries desperately to free her leg from the wiring.

As Maxwell edges closer he sees something dangling in front of his face. A LOCKET.

He reaches out to push it aside. But the moment he touches it...

A MASSIVE ELECTRIC CURRENT shoots through his body. We see the locket has been looped around exposed wires on either side of the crawlway.

Maxwell is blown backward a good five feet. What little light there is shudders. Maxwell is very much dead.

Taylor carefully works her foot loose, and cautiously slides the rest of her body past the now hanging live wire necklace.

She retrieves Maxwell's pistol, blown clear away.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - DAY

Turgeson watches the graphic as the station approaches the zenith of its orbit.

COOPER

Eight minutes to apogee.

GEN. TURGESON

Let's start the countdown. Send the launch codes to the silos.

TECHNICIAN

Yes sir.

INT. MISSILE SILO.

A Team of TWO AIR FORCE OFFICERS man the missile operation and launch center. One's thumbing through a Playboy, the other is watching Cable T.V.

A RED LIGHT activates, followed by a CLANGING BELL. The officers spring to life.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1

We have a confirmed launch order.

MISSILE OPERATOR #2
Co-ordinates, sir?

MISSILE OPERATOR #1
Stand by. 23, 52. Elevation plus 275.
This can't be right. That's up in
space.

MISSILE OPERATOR #2
Confirming. Yeah... those are the
coordinates.

They punch in the numbers.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1
Okay. We're locked.

MISSILE OPERATOR #2
We have an incoming launch code. Delta
Charlie Foxtrot Two Niner Bravo.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1
(types in code)
Code locked and verified as authentic.
Holy shit.

MISSILE OPERATOR #2
Okay. Right. Arm warheads.

They both work their control panels.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1
Cluster one, armed. Cluster two,
armed. Cluster three, armed.

MISSILE OPERATOR #2
T-minus five minutes thirty eight
seconds and counting.

INT. HATCHWAY, JUSTICE, SPACE.

McNair looks through the window into the lower level of the
Targeting Module. It looks deserted.

McNair pauses by the hatchway door, and taking a deep breath,
he opens the hatchway, and steps into the Module.

INT. TARGETING MODULE.

An eerie silence. McNair closes the hatchway, revealing Walker
standing behind it with his microwave gun drawn.

WALKER
And fools rush in where angels fear to
tread.

Biggs slides out from behind a bulkhead rib. He holds his automatic pistol on McNair.

WALKER

Hands.

McNair puts his hands up. Walker circles around McNair.

WALKER

You've done a lot of damage. But I assure you, it's nothing we can't recover from.

McNAIR

I'm not done yet.

Walker grabs McNair's hand and bends his broken finger back. McNair stifles a scream as Walker forces him to his knees.

WALKER

You stupid son-of-a-bitch. You just don't get it, do you?

Walker kicks McNair in the stomach, doubling him over.

WALKER (cont'd)

If you did, you wouldn't want to stop me.

McNAIR

Fuck you.

WALKER

Eloquent.

Walker kicks McNair in the head.

WALKER

Call me a dreamer.

Kicks him again.

WALKER

Call me a visionary.

Kicks him in the face.

WALKER

Call me a madman.

Kicks McNair squarely in the groin. McNair balled up in a fetal position, surreptitiously removes the scalpel from his breast pocket.

WALKER

But show me a little consideration.
I'm doing this for you McNair. For
everyone. I offer the world peace,
enforced peace yes, but peace
nonetheless. Why can't you accept
that? Why do you all defy me like
bratty, ungrateful children?

Bruised and bloody, McNair looks up at Walker.

McNAIR

Because you're a thug and I don't like
thugs. You're the big kid on the
playground bullying the others.

WALKER

History will remember me as a saviour,
not a bully.

McNAIR

You can't control history, Walker. No
one can.

WALKER

Watch me.

Walker kicks McNair again. But this time McNair reacts,
slamming the surgical scalpel into Walker's hamstring, a hot
knife through butter. Walker screams and collapses to the
grating.

McNair grabs Walker's weapons hand.

WALKER

(to Biggs)

Shoot him!

Biggs lets loose several rounds, but as the two struggle for
an advantage, a round hit Walker's arm, one hits McNair's leg.

McNair wrests the microwave pistol free and fires at Biggs,
repeatedly.

Biggs stops his firing, pauses a moment, scratches at his
throat. His mouth opens slightly and a reddish foam emerges.
He convulses, shaking horribly, then collapses in the center
of the room.

Walker smashes McNair's face with double clenched fists. The
two wounded men struggle tete-a-tete. McNair is losing.

McNair slams his forehead into Walker's head. Blood on both
their brows. McNair butts him again with knockout force.
Walker tumbles back, but wrests the microwave pistol away.

He stands on his uninjured leg and touches his wounded arm. Blood comes out of the bullet hole. He looks at his blood stained hand then smears some blood on his face. Red streaks down both cheeks.

Injured and exhausted, McNair pulls himself up along the edges of the bulkhead.

WALKER

See McNair... there comes a point in a man's life where he's got to stand up for what's right...

Walker stalks over to McNair and shoves the microwave pistol into his cheek.

WALKER (cont'd)

... for what he believes, no matter how high the cost to himself or to those he loves.

As Walker is about to squeeze the trigger of the microwave gun...

TAYLOR

Drop it!

Walker sees Taylor standing by the airlock holding Maxwell's automatic pistol.

TAYLOR

I'll shoot.

WALKER

You won't. If you shoot me, I'll end up killing him by reflex.

McNAIR

Forget me. Shoot.

Taylor considers, Mexican stand-off.

McNAIR

What are you waiting for?

WALKER

Sentiment. Or maybe she can't kill. Or perhaps you still think you can get away?

Walker removes the detonation KEY from his belt. Places it on his tongue and swallows it.

WALKER

No one leaves this station without my full cooperation, so put the gun down.

Taylor takes a few steps closer. Weighing her options.

WALKER

Irony, isn't it? No matter what choice you make, he dies. But the question is, can you live with that? Would you rather blame yourself or blame me?

TAYLOR

Either way, I'll blame you.

WALKER

Either way, he dies. But you don't have to. Put down the gun and I'll let you live. You can become part of history with me.

TAYLOR

You'll pardon me, but I've seen too many old movies to trust a white flag flown from a pirate ship. I'll make you a deal. Put down your weapon, I'll let you live.

(moving in closer)

See, our situations are the same. No matter what happens, you will die. Because no matter what you do, I will kill you. Irony, isn't it?

WALKER

Life is full of ironies. They say that absolute power corrupts absolutely, but yet we still believe in a magnanimous God.

McNAIR

And what would your God say about what you've done?

WALKER

My God? Let's just say I didn't see a heaven on the shuttle flight up.

McNAIR

Then go to hell...

McNair shoves Walker back. As Walker pulls the trigger...

A GUNSHOT echoes down the chamber. A clean hole drills through Walker's weapon hand, snapping his arm back.

McNair dives out of the line of fire as the microwave bursts shower sparks from overhead.

INT. MISSILE SILO.

A counter clicks down.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1
T-minus thirty seconds... twenty
nine...

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

A SECOND GUNSHOT rips through Walker's chest.

Walker holds a moment in the center of the room. Utter disbelief.

WALKER
You shot me.

Walker staggers. Aims again at McNair.

INT. MISSILE SILO.

A counter clicks down.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1
T-minus twenty two... twenty one...

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

A THIRD GUNSHOT drills through Walker's forehead. He collapses to the floor.

Taylor stands by the hatchway. Gun still smoking.

McNAIR
Helluva first shot. That was real
lucky.

TAYLOR
(crossing to him)
Luck nothing. I'm from Texas.

McNAIR
Help me up.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

All eyes on the graphic of Justice nearing apogee.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)
Thirteen... twelve...

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM, UPPER LEVEL.

McNair at the Zeus controls.

McNAIR

The transmitter. We have to bring the transmitter back on-line.

McNair hits several keys.

EXT. COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY.

The mighty antennae turns slightly.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)

Nine... eight... seven...

On one of the snowy video monitors, the static fades to an image of McNair.

HALLIWELL

Look!

McNAIR (Video)

Hold off the attack. Do you read? Does anyone copy? Walker is dead. The station has been secured. Hold off the attack.

GEN. TURGESON

Hold. Hold the countdown! Hold the countdown!

INT. MISSILE SILO.

MISSILE OPERATOR #1

two... one... Mark!

MISSILE OPERATOR #2

Mark.

The missile operators turn their keys.

MISSILE OPERATOR #2

We have green lights on all the birds. Launch successful.

EXT. CORN FIELD - EVENING.

A FARMER, perched atop his tractor, turns his head as a pair of missiles scream into the sky, trailing long plumes of smoke.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

The still water of the Atlantic ruptures as TWO more birds break the surface, their rocket engines rumbling.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

The main video tracks the outgoing missiles on their intercept course with Justice Station.

LOUDSPEAKER (V.O.)
Missiles away.

GEN. STONE
We're too late.

COOPER
Missile impact ETA three minutes,
forty five seconds.

HALLIWELL
Can't you stop them.

GEN. TURGESON
No.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

WARNING BEEPS -

Taylor looks at a display screen.

TAYLOR
Jake, the computer's tracking thirty
inbounds, um, identified as...
(reading off the screen)
Exo-atmospheric Defense Interceptors
with conventional cluster warheads.
(shakes her head)
I voted for those.

McNAIR
We've got to stop them.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

McNair and Taylor on the video.

GEN. TURGESON
It won't work.

McNAIR (VIDEO)
Why?

GEN. TURGESON
There's not enough time. At the best,
you might be able to shoot down ten or
fifteen. We didn't want Walker to have
a chance.

McNAIR (VIDEO)
Well for God's sake, let us try.

COOPER
(tracking the missiles)
Two minutes, twenty five seconds.

EXT. SKY.

A pair of missiles screams through the clouds, breaking into the upper atmosphere. They are joined by a second pair of birds.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Taylor at the targeting console. McNair hovering over her.

GEN. TURGESON (VIDEO)
Now using the light pen, target a cluster of missiles. They must be within a radius of ten kilometers of each other.

Taylor highlights the closest group of missiles on the tracking screen.

GEN. TURGESON (VIDEO)
Now hit the red "lock" button in the upper left.

McNair hits the button. On the computer screen -

"PLEASE ENTER ACCESS CODE"

McNAIR
What's the access code?

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

Turgeson glances over at General Stone. The Chairman nods.

GEN. TURGESON
Alpha 6 Delta 4 2 5 Romeo Tango 3.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Taylor types the code in on the keyboard. Hits enter.

"ACCESS DENIED"

McNAIR
Give us the code again.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)
Alpha 6 Delta 4 2 5 Romeo Tango 3.

Taylor types it in again as he speaks.

McNAIR
Are you sure?

GEN. TURGESON

Positive.

Taylor hits enter. "ACCESS DENIED"

McNAIR

They must've changed it. Can we bypass the security system?

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)

It would take hours...

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

GEN. TURGESON

And without the access code the weapon is useless.

Long beat.

McNAIR (Video)

Understood. McNair out.

The screen goes black. Silence in the Command Room for several beats.

COOPER

One minute.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Taylor stands by one of the portholes, a tear wandering down her cheek.

McNAIR

I'm sorry. I guess I am bad luck.

She looks out at EARTH among her bed of stars. Swirls of wispy clouds twirl their way across the Atlantic. The crescent moon floats magically among the milky way.

TAYLOR

I never imagined it could be so beautiful... I remember being five years old, living on a ranch in Texas, hell, Mission Control was almost in my backyard... I'd sit alone on the back porch looking at the stars and dream I could make wings from corn husks and fly into space.

McNAIR

When you're a kid you think it's all magic... the twinkling stars, a mysterious man in the moon that looks in the window when you're sleeping, always following you around on those long twilight walks through town. And the truth is, it is magical. After all these years... it's still magical.

He reaches out to her hand. She takes it in her own.

TAYLOR

Of all the things I've done in my life... I'm glad I made it up here.

Through the window, the first of the missiles approaches.

A FLASH of LIGHT.

McNAIR

Here we go.

The shock wave hits the station, sending the pair flying out of their chair. Tumbling.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - EVENING

All eyes on the graphic display. Missiles closing in.

EXT. SPACE, JUSTICE STATION.

The second missile angles right toward the station.

BOOM!

It SMASHES into the Operations Module.

HUGE EXPLOSION.

The Station SOMERSAULTS as it plummets toward Earth...

... falling away from the other incoming missiles. A series of smaller EXPLOSIONS pop off across the station's exterior.

The frame work twists and wrenches. And like a tired gyroscope, it tumbles and gyres out of the path of the other missiles.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

Taylor and McNair are rolled around like a pair of shoes in a dryer.

Another flash of light in the distance, and another and another.

Shock wave after shock wave. The station rumbles with the angry thunder of an electric storm, it shakes and tumbles with the power of an earthquake.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - EVENING

One by one the tracked outbounds explode in a video burst around Justice Station. It's like watching some kid play Missile Command.

EXT. SPACE, JUSTICE STATION.

Some explosions are closer than others, but none of the other missiles directly hit the now wayward station. The shock waves, however, take their toll, buffeting the craft.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND - EVENING

Cooper hangs up the telephone.

COOPER

NORAD confirms detonation of twenty five warheads. Five failed at the target area...

(under his breath)

...not that it matters.

Eyes on the graphic. The flashes of light have stopped.

GEN. TURGESON

(into com)

Col. McNair? Representative Taylor?

Are you still there? Col. McNair...

Col. McNair?

Halliwell turns his back on the screen.

GEN. STONE

We did our best for them.

Several long beats. General Turgeson rubs his head.

GEN. TURGESON

Well... that's that. Someone check with the Naval Observatory and see if anything's left... we've still got a reactor to worry about. And can I get a cup of coffee?

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

McNair and Taylor, floating unconscious in the middle of the platform. ZERO G.

Taylor drifts into a support beam. Bumps her head. Stirs with a moan. She opens her eyes, taking in her surroundings.

TAYLOR

Shit.

She reaches over and pulls McNair to her, shaking him.

TAYLOR

Hey. Hey... you okay?

His eyes flutter open. Sees her.

McNAIR

I better be dead.

TAYLOR

Bad news. You aren't.

McNair propels himself down to the targeting readout station.

McNAIR

Christ. Everything hurts.

He looks at the external video of the station. It's badly bent out of shape, twisted.

The Shuttle Horizon is still attached.

McNair activates the com link.

McNAIR

Station control, this is McNair. Come in, Station control.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

A broken video signal, static...

McNAIR (V.O.)

Station control... You guys still there?

HALLIWELL

They're alive.

GEN. TURGESON

(com link)

McNair, you are the toughest airman I've ever met. What's your status?

McNAIR (V.O.)

We got shook up real bad. The station seems to be intact but it's in pretty bad shape.

Cooper anxiously surveys readout data from his station.

COOPER

Holy Christ.... Based on his signal coordinates, they're coming down and they're coming down fast.

GEN. TURGESON

McNair, you're not out of the woods yet. The station's losing altitude.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

McNair checks some numbers.

McNAIR

Yes sir, we are. Looks like... looks like the correctional thrusters have failed. Is there any way to re-activate them from here?

GEN. TURGESON

No. You can only do it from the operations module.

McNAIR

Sir, there is no Operations Module anymore. It was destroyed in the explosion.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

Turgeson looks to Cooper.

GEN. TURGESON

Cooper?

COOPER

Without those thrusters, there's nothing to brake her fall. She's going to come down, and come down hard.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)

McNair, you hear that?

McNAIR

Yes, sir. Looks like I'm fighting destiny.

But through the window, something catches McNair's eye.

The SHUTTLE HORIZON. His eyes light up...

McNAIR

Thrusters.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

HALLIWELL

Why wasn't the station destroyed?

COOPER

The first missile impact knocked the station out of the others' range.

PRESIDENT

Tell me again about the radiation and fallout.

COOPER

The Zeus weapon is powered by a tritium-deuterium reactor. If it indeed enters the atmosphere, the cooling units will fail, and the result will be a mid-air meltdown of the reactor core, spreading exceedingly high levels of radiation over thousands of square miles.

GEN. TURGESON

Do we know where?

COOPER

Yes. Given their orbital decay, we can expect the fallout region to include the Western U.S. seaboard, the southwestern states and up through the plains.

PRESIDENT

Good Lord. The country will be devastated.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM, LOWER LEVEL.

Taylor, half-doubled over in pain and propped against the bulkhead for Zero G stability, wears shaded goggles as she cuts through the welded seal on the access hatch with the terrorist's acetylene torch.

Taylor has almost finished cutting through the metal plate when McNair enters wearing one of the terrorist's spacesuits.

McNAIR

You there yet?

TAYLOR

Almost.

McNair retrieves Walker's body. He wraps a cable around the corpse to hold it in place, then locates the surgical scalpel, still imbedded in Walker's hamstring.

McNAIR
No one deserves this, Walker. Not even
you.

McNair finds a foot hold and braces himself.

We hold on McNair's face as he slices into Walker's stomach.
We see droplets of blood spray out and float past him.

McNair roots around, and withdraws his hand. Covered in the
dead man's blood. But he holds THE KEY.

Taylor finishes cutting through the metal plate when a...

TREMENDOUS JOLT and SHUDDER...

...hits the station.

Everything is slammed around once again.

TAYLOR
What was that?

McNAIR
The atmosphere. We skipped off it,
like a skipping stone on water.

TAYLOR
What does that mean?

McNAIR
We're just about out of time.

Taylor opens the access hatch. The trapped crewmembers spill
out, soaked in sweat, many unconscious, many out of air.

McNAIR
Get out! Everyone out.

McNair picks up his helmet and swims to the hatchway.

TAYLOR
Does their suit fit?

McNAIR
It'll do.

TAYLOR
Hey McNair.

McNAIR
Yeah?

TAYLOR
I voted for you... I'd trust you with
my life.

He clicks his helmet into place and steps inside the access hatch. Taylor closes the door behind him. Through the glass she gives him the thumbs up.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

Cooper, Turgeson, Stone and the President stand apart from the rest, talking in hushed tones.

COOPER

The key is heat, gentleman. With the last missile strike we had to estimate the station's position, but as they hit the atmosphere, they'll start to burn up. A heat source.

GEN. TURGESON

If we use heat seeking missiles, we can crawl an explosives package up their ass and incinerate the reactor.

PRESIDENT

Won't that still cause radiation fallout?

COOPER

Yes, but not as much. Part of it will be filtered out by the upper atmosphere.

GEN. STONE

Is this our best bet?

COOPER

Sir... it's all I got.

PRESIDENT

(to Turgeson)

Do it.

EXT. EXPOSED ACCESS HATCH.

McNair dives down toward the opening. He grabs a hold of Walker's cable, and pulls himself hand over hand toward the open bay of the Horizon.

EXT. SPACE.

JUSTICE STATION clips the top of the atmosphere again.

It jolts and turns, like a boat getting hit by the broadside of a wave.

McNair holds onto the cable for dear life, as it swings and shimmies and shakes.

He waits a moment for it to settle, and with renewed determination runs himself across to the shuttle.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

A new graphic is on the screen, like a weather map of the Pacific with two glowing points of light on it.

COOPER

This is an infrared view from TechSat. These points show friction heat from where the station's skipped off the atmosphere. We expect it to settle into a slow burn within the next five to seven minutes.

GEN. TURGESON

Vandenburg has launched a patrol of F-15's, each armed with heat seeking Sparrows. They'll be in range shortly.

EXT. HORIZON BAY.

McNair opens the airlock and climbs inside.

INT. HORIZON - MID-DECK.

McNair spins open the airlock hatch. Swims inside. He pulls off his helmet.

ANOTHER SHUDDER as station and shuttle hit the atmosphere's surface.

McNair grabs the ladder, pulls himself up to the flight deck.

INT. FLIGHT DECK.

A sharp JOLT as McNair swims to his flight chair.

The C-4 explosives package still wired to the shuttle's control.

McNair wrestles his spacesuit off enough to reach his breast pocket. He removes the key.

Another JOLT knocks the key out of his hand. It floats across the cabin.

McNAIR

For christsake.

McNair dives after it.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

More heat bursts bloom across the infrared screen.

COOPER

We'll have a steady furrow soon. Tell
the pilots to stand by.

INT. TARGETING MODULE.

The module bakes from the friction. Active members of the
station's crew assist the injured ones.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

McNair retrieves the key, propels himself over to the flight
chair. He shoves the key in the lock.

Takes a breath. Clinches up.

He turns the key.

The red light switches to green. McNair sighs and settles into
the flight chair.

He checks his gauges, looks out the cockpit window.

A reddish haze forms at the bottom of the station. Atmospheric
friction takes it toll.

A HAND touches McNair on his shoulder. Startled, McNair turns.

A FACE, bloated and blue. McNair jumps, then regains his
composure. Ashley's dead body. He pushes it across the cabin.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

The bursts of heat have become a steady line on the infrared
image.

COOPER

Here she comes.

GEN. TURGESON

SSC to Team Leader. Do you read?

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

Cloudless. A swarm of F-15A EAGLES scream into view, their
afterburners blaring.

INT. F-15 FIGHTER COCKPIT - NIGHT

LEAD PILOT

This is Team Leader, over.

GEN. TURGESON (V.O.)

Have you located the target?

LEAD PILOT
Negative on instrumentation. I think
we have a visual...

Lead Pilot's P.O.V. through the cockpit window.

Ahead and high above him, a dull orange glimmer begins to
brighten.

LEAD PILOT
... but we are not close enough to
engage. Stand by.

GEN. TURGESON
Standing by.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

McNair checks gauges, activates switches.

He flicks a couple of gauges with his fingers and they spring
to life.

McNAIR
That's a baby. Now, let's see what
you've got.

McNair cuts in the aft primary thrusters. Nothing happens.
McNair tries again. Nothing.

McNAIR
No. No. No. No. No.

He sighs and starts again, quickly turning off switches, then
turning them on again.

INT. F-15 COCKPIT - NIGHT

The plane's targeting computer focuses on the glowing orange
ball at the edge of space.

LEAD PILOT
In range.

The computer locks.

LEAD PILOT
Locked...

The pilot's finger pulls hard on the joystick trigger.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The air-to-air missiles drop from the plane's wing, sleep for
a moment and then their mighty tails awaken, shooting forward
toward Justice station.

LEAD PILOT (V.O.)
Target has been engaged. I repeat,
target has been engaged.

INT. FLIGHT DECK.

Like a frustrated motorist cranking a flooded engine, McNair tries the aft primary thrusters again. Still nothing.

McNAIR
Should've been a fireman.

He sighs and tries it one last time. Nothing. In sheer frustration, he bangs the console hard.

Something catches. Then a rumbling.

EXT. SPACE.

The shuttle engines come to life. Horizon's AFT THRUSTERS IGNITE, fire pouring out of them.

Like a dog pulling at a leash, HORIZON struggles against the burden of Justice. The manipulator arm strains at its joints, pulling the station toward space.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

McNair shoves the joystick forward.

McNAIR
Come on, baby. Come on.

The cockpit begins to shake. Violently. WARNING LIGHTS FLASH... Systems overload.

McNair ignores the warning signs. The shaking continues.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The missiles scream toward their target.

Missile infrared P.O.V., sniffing up the station's path, zipping right toward her.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

Shaking like L.A. in an earthquake.
McNair fights the joystick with all his might.

EXT. HORIZON CARGO BAY.

One of the retaining bolts for the manipulator arm shears from the force. A second shears, bending the metal like tin.

But still the arm holds firm to Justice.

EXT. SPACE, JUSTICE STATION.

The entire station glows red, especially around the reactor.
But it does seem to be rising slightly.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

The missiles close fast on the fire in the sky. Almost there.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

McNair straining against the joystick.

He hits another series of buttons.

EXT. HORIZON.

Secondary thrusters join the primary ones. Fire streaming out.

INT. TARGETING PLATFORM.

The inside of the station is like an oven.
The station crew huddled together.
A bright reddish haze surrounds the portholes casting long
shadows across the somber, arrested faces.

TAYLOR

Come on, Jake. Come on.

EXT. HORIZON CARGO BAY.

Another retaining bolt on the manipulator arm snaps. The
manipulator arm shudders.

EXT. SPACE, JUSTICE STATION.

The station slowly rises from the atmosphere. Slowly.

EXT. SKY.

The missiles, adjusting their course. Zeroing in.

MISSILE TARGETING P.O.V. - Locked on the heat trail.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

They watch the video feed from the missile, ala the Gulf War,
homing in on the station.

COOPER

Four miles away.....
Three miles.....
Two miles.....
One mile.....

They await impact.

Suddenly, the video feed from the missile clears to empty skies, as the heat source evaporates.

"Lock broken, Unable to re-establish." flashes on the screen.

The missile disengages.

GEN. TURGESON
What the hell's going on?

EXT. SPACE, JUSTICE STATION.

Backlit by the moon, Justice slips out of the atmosphere and back up into the darker reaches of space.

EXT. SKY/SPACE.

A slew of missiles zip below Justice unable to find their target.

INT. HORIZON FLIGHT DECK.

McNair gives out a yell of relief and surprise.

As he clears the atmosphere, the shuddering stops and he easily maneuvers the ship to higher space.

INT. STRATEGIC SPACE COMMAND.

People running around frantically.

GEN. TURGESON
Where are they?

LEAD PILOT (V.O.)
It just disappeared. Nothing on radar
and no visual.

GEN. TURGESON
Cooper?

COOPER
I can't find 'em.

McNair's voice crackles over the box. A seasoned pro.

McNAIR (V.O.)
(through static)
Station control, this is Shuttle
Horizon. The station has cleared the
atmosphere. I repeat, we've cleared
the atmosphere. Heading for open
space.

HALLIWELL
McNair!

A pouring of cheers reign through the Strategic Space Command. Turgeson and Stone clasp each other in a bear hug.

The President exhales in relief.

EXT. BLUE SKIES - DAY

From out of the wild blue yonder, a pair of NASA needlenose T-38 chase planes descend, flanking the Space Shuttle ENDEAVOR.

REPORTER (V.O.)

... and as Endeavor breaks through the clouds, it brings to a close one of the most dramatic rescue attempts in NASA's history which began weeks ago when the crew of the shuttle Horizon was hijacked by foreign nationals demanding access to a communications satellite.

EXT. EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

Endeavor touches down on the long runway. The reporter finishes her commentary.

REPORTER

Congresswoman Sarah Taylor and astronaut Jake McNair, both severely wounded, managed to survive in their damaged craft for nearly two weeks while NASA prepared a rescue flight. As we earlier reported, other members of the Horizon's crew were killed in a confrontation with the terrorists. The President has flown to meet the shuttle and honor those he called "American heroes deserving of international praise."

LATER - ON THE TARMAC

With full honor guard, several flag draped coffins are removed from the Endeavor.

Then McNair and Taylor emerge at Endeavor's hatch. The assembled CROWD cheers at the sight.

The President, and Taylor's daughter, await them at the end of a red carpet.

Taylor waves to the crowd. McNair shakes his head.

McNAIR

They're cheering and they have no idea how much danger they were in.

TAYLOR

They'll find out in time.

McNAIR

Sometimes I think Walker was right. I mean, who's gonna make sure this doesn't happen again.

TAYLOR

Relax, fly-boy. That's my job.

She takes his hand...

TAYLOR

Come on, I want you to meet my daughter.

... and together they descend the stairs. The honor guard salutes as they walk the length of the red carpet.

CAMERA pulls up and out... Over the Endeavor... Over the flag draped coffins... Over the crowds... We hold on the scene a beat... then...

CAMERA tilts up and the blue of the sky becomes the black of space.

Justice Station floats silently by. Repair crews busy at work.

It's still up there.

FADE OUT.