

FIRST MAN

Screenplay By

Josh Singer

Based on the Book By

James R. Hansen

OVER BLACK:

We hear a **LOW RUMBLE**.

It gets louder as we hear... a **SCREAMING ENGINE... HOWLING WIND... BURSTS of STATIC... and FAINT COMMS**.

It **SURROUNDS** us, filling us with dread, **POUNING US INTO --**

1 **INT. X-15 COCKPIT, HIGH RANGE, ABOVE EDWARDS AFB - DAY** 1

A pair of **BLUE EYES**. TICKING back and forth. Rapidly.
Ignoring the **FRIGHTENING WALL OF SOUND** all around us.

JOE (COMMS)
Data check?

NEIL (O.C.)
2 APU on. Cabin pressure is
good, 3500 on #1, 3355 on #2.
Platform internal power.

PULL BACK TO NEIL ARMSTRONG, 31, in a silver pressure suit. Neil
is **INTENSELY FOCUSED**, impressive in the **SEVERE TURBULENCE**.

JOE (COMMS)
What's your mixing chambers?

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
-44 and -45.

BUTCH (COMMS)
Two minute point.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
MH circuit breakers on,
opening nitrogen valve.

Neil opens the nitrogen valve on the low tech console. As the
nitrogen creates a **THIN WHITE FOG** in the cabin, Neil looks out
the window. *The plane looks like a **ROCKET... because it is**.*

This is the X-15... the FASTEST FUCKING AIRCRAFT EVER MADE.
Hence the nitrogen. Neil shivers a bit.

NEIL
Chilly.

JOE WALKER (COMMS)
Won't be for long.

We note the X-15 isn't flying exactly, it's under the wing of
a B-52, an **EIGHT ENGINE BEHEMOTH** shaking more than the X-15.
TERRIFYING, but Neil's calm as he's **KNOCKED** about the cockpit.
Neil closes the nitrogen valve.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Precool is off. Little bumpy.

Classic Armstrong understatement; underscored over comms by
the pilot of the B-52 (BUTCH).

BUTCH (COMMS)
*Worst it's ever been, real rough up
 here, fluctuating a half degree each
 side.*

But this just drives Neil into deeper focus. His eyes **TICK
 METHODICALLY** from gauge to gauge.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Velocity 900 fps, altitude 44,500,
 igniter ready to light.

JOE (COMMS)
Arm switch lite checks.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Going to prime. Ammonia up.

In the bumpy cockpit, Neil grabs the stick.

BUTCH (COMMS)
Twenty seconds to drop --

NEIL (COMMS)
 Rog, precool on, lox pump
 bearing plus eight.

BUTCH (COMMS) (CONT'D)
Ten seconds --

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Igniter idle, ready to launch
 on 3, 2, 1, release --

The X-15 is **RELEASED** from the wing of the B-52. Through the window, we see the B-52 **RISE AWAY** as the X-15 DROPS IN FREE FALL... *A fall we feel in our gut because...*

WE'RE NOT CUTTING AWAY. *We're gonna be IN THE COCKPIT with Neil for this ENTIRE HEART-POUNDING RIDE.*

*So, we're **DROPPING. FAST.** Neil pulls the throttle inboard. The rocket LIGHTS, WE HEAR THE ROAR OF 57,000 LBS OF THRUST.*

The rocket **TAKES OFF.** Neil's **PRESSED** into his seat.

He grips the stick.... then tilts it slightly. The plane **BUCKS TO THE RIGHT.**

JOE (FAINT, COMMS)
Good on track, 15 seconds.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Pulling up, I'm indicating
 Mach 3.

Neil pulls on the stick. The plane **RISES SHARPLY...** it's black nickel nose glowing **CHERRY RED** from the heat. The **GLOW** lights up the cockpit, extending around Neil's legs and lap.

Neil starts to sweat in the heat. Heavily. Sweet Jesus.

Neil's eyes **TICK** to the analogue altitude gauge, **SPINNING UP** past 150,000 feet, **BLUE SKY NOW TURNING TO BLACK...**

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
I'm indicating 5,800, pushing over.

We're over **MACH 5** and we feel it... until Neil CUTS the engine, **JOLTING** him against his harness.

All is STILL. Quiet. The radio BUZZES, but it's far away.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
190,000 feet, no radio reception,
setting instruments to record high
altitude flight response.

A **PENCIL FLOATS PAST NEIL** and we realize... we're suborbital.
So yeah, things float. Neil's eyes move from the book to the
earth curving away below the **BLACK SKY**. The STARS. The MOON.

He pauses, breathes it in with BOYISH AWE... and a **REVERENCE**.
The world below seems distant and serene.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
207,000 feet. Top view, looking
out, can see an awful long ways.

The radio quiets. A beat, then Neil notes the G-Force gauge
(**G-gage**) climbing up to **3.5 Gs**...

Neil **FOCUSES** on the **G-GAGE**. We hear GARBLED **BUZZ** over comms.

JOE (COMMS)
*Okay, 140,000 feet, on your way
down.*

The plane descends, starts to **SHAKES** as the altitude gauge
spins down through 135,000, **BLACK SKY FADING AGAIN TO BLUE...**

JOE (FAINT, COMMS)
*...approaching 115,000 feet, should
be regaining aerodynamic controls...*

Little more shake. Neil reaches for the stick and focusing
again on the G-gage, now at **4 Gs**.

JOE (FAINT, COMMS)
Okay... right turn.

WIND **WHIPS** over the plane. Neil pulls the stick right, but his eyes remain focused on the G-gage...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Sixty degree bank. Climbing past 4
Gs, the G-limiter should kick in...

...until he notices the altitude gauge SPINNING UP. 115, 116, 117... the sky turns from blue back to black.

The shaking stops and the wind fades to eerie silence...

JOE (COMMS)
*...we show you ballooning, not
turning. Hard right turn.*

Neil's eyes **TICK** to the windows, he **PULLS** on the stick...

JOE (GARBLED COMMS)
*...altitude rising... lot more
right.*

Neil hits a few buttons on the console...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Didn't appreciate the altitude I was
at, increasing deflection on the
stabilizers. Should be enough air
to bite into...

Neil pulls at the stick again, his eyes **TICKING** from his gauges to the vista racing by despite his maneuver...

JOE (COMMS)
*Neil, you're bouncing off the
atmosphere...*

The altitude gauge spins up through 120,000 feet.

Neil struggles with the stick. He remains calm, but through the windows we still see **BLACK SKY**, the world flying by; *it's like he's drifting off the face of the planet.*

JOE (COMMS)
Still ballooning Neil, hard right!

The speed at which the world passes, the lack of control, it's terrifying... but Neil just works the problem. He eyes the altitude, climbing past 140,000 feet... realizing something.

NEIL
Air's too thin, aerodynamic controls
not responding, switching to
reaction controls.

He drops the stick, squeezes the ballistic controls. A burst of gas shoots down from the left wing...

TOSSING the left of the plane **UP TOWARDS THE SKY...**

Black sky to Neil's left, the earth to his right; Neil's *banked into a 90 degree turn...*

...but out the window, the world is still slipping by.

Neil HITS the ballistic controls again... a BURST of gas, this time from the plane's nose, pushing the plane's nose DOWN.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Decreasing angle of attack to
increase airspeed...

Neil eyes the **ALTITUDE GAUGE**. **145, 146... HOLDING** at **147,000 FEET...** and then starting to fall. **146, 144, 141....**

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Coming down now...

...the plane starts falling **FASTER**. **100, 95, 90...**

G-forces **PRESS** Neil into his seat as the sky **FADES TO BLUE**. The vista stops sailing by, the plane finally starts to turn.

The plane **GROANS** under the strain of the steep bank and Neil eyes the gauges, reaching for the stick...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
350 knots, switching back to
aerodynamic --

Neil's **SMASHED into his seat**; we feel every bit of the steep bank as aerodynamics take hold and we start turning right, the vista moving back the other way. We're also **FALLING**. **FAST**.

NEIL (INT COMMS)
...surfaces bottoming out...

75, 70, 75... Neil wrestles with the stick as we bank and **FALL** at **TERRIFYING SPEED...**

At last, he **PULLS** the lifeless plane **LEVEL**. *Jesus*.

JOE (COMMS)
You seem to be in position.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
(scans his gauges)
I agree, 300 knots, coming down now.

JOE (COMMS)

Can you give us an estimate of your location?

Neil eyes tick from his gauges to the window, taking stock...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Looks like I'm pretty, in pretty bad shape for the south lake bed.

JOE (COMMS)

Okay, working the contingencies for a landing from the south.

Neil scans the landscape for the desert runway as the plane **DIVES LIKE A BRICK** towards the mountains. But he knows...

JOE (COMMS)

Neil, there is no contingency. You need to get back to Rogers.

40, 35, 30... Neil **BEARS DOWN**, WILLING the engine-less plane in. The plane **SHIMMIES**, wind **BUFFETING HIM** at 250 knots.

JOE (COMMS)

8 degree angle.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Affirmative. I'm going to jettison now.

He flicks a switch; a hiss as oxygen and ammonia jettison out the rear the rear of the plane.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

I can see the base, the landing will be on south lake.

His eyes **DART** from the distant landing strip to the altitude gauge, dropping 20,000 feet per minute. He closes the speed brake handle... **WHITE GAS POURS** from the instrument panel.

JOE (COMMS)

You're gonna have to make in a straight in approach. You'll have to stretch out your glide.

The cockpit is **FILLED** with the WHITE NITROGEN GAS FOG... The gas slowly dissipates, but the view is **HARDLY A RELIEF**.

JOE (COMMS)

Neil, we show you're short.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

I'm a little shorter than I thought.

Neil pulls the stick to hold altitude, but he keeps **DROPPING**.
9,000... 8,500... 8,000 feet... Fuck. It's gonna be close.

We see a CHASE PLANE **SWING UP** on Neil's right.

CHASE PILOT (COMMS)
*Neil, you can punch your
ventral...*

NEIL
Okay, shoulda done that
sooner.

Neil, ANNOYED at himself, **HITS** the ventral jettison button.
The ventral fin **BLOWS OFF** and the plane **LURCHES** forward...
Neil **STRUGGLES** with the stick... **4,000, 3,500, 3,000 feet...**

CHASE PILOT (COMMS)
Start your flaps down now.

NEIL
Thank you.

Neil **LOWERS** the flaps. The plane slows a bit more...

PUSH IN on Neil, INTENSITY **BURNING**. **2,000, 1,000, 500 feet...**
Neil **HURTLES** past the brush, JUST CLEARING THE JOSHUA TREES!

CHASE PILOT (COMMS)
You're in! Go 'head, put her down!

Neil **PULLS UP**, flaring the plane... It **SLAMS DOWN** with a **BANG**,
SKIDS ROUGHLY across the lakebed... **SHAKING VIOLENTLY...**

Neil **OPENS** the back fin brakes and the plane **SWERVES**, **TOSSING**
Neil and **KICKING UP** a HUGE CLOUD of dust... until at last, it
eases to a HALT.

For a moment, all is **STILL**. Silent. Then Neil **STIRS...**

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
I'm down.

CHASE PILOT (COMMS)
Son of a bitch!

JOE (COMMS)
(clearly relieved)
*Very nice recovery, Neil.
Posse will get there shortly.*

CHASE PILOT (COMMS)
Yeah, might take a while.

2

EXT. LANDING STRIP 35, ROGERS DRY LAKE BED, EAFB - LATER

2

An Air Force jeep **WIPES FRAME**, **REVEALING** a FIRE TRUCK, a sedan
and TECHS surrounding Neil's X-15. AIR FORCE HELOS circle.

**Rogers Dry Lake
Edwards Air Force Base, 1961**

The period cars are cool, but our eye is drawn to the X-15.
The long fuselage, the thick dorsal fin, the NASA signage...
It's every bit as awesome as the flight we just witnessed.

PUSH IN on THE OPEN COCKPIT. NASA engineers take readings and Neil makes notes, UNFAZED by the flight. As he gets out, **JOE WALKER**, 40, thoughtful, walks up.

JOE
You okay?

NEIL
Yeah.

Joe looks at him, probing. But before he can say anything --

FLIGHT SURGEON
I gotta do his work up, Joe.

Joe nods. Neil follows the surgeon off. Joe turns back to his jeep, only to find a grizzled AIR FORCE COLONEL, late 30s.

COLONEL YEAGER (O.C.)
Kid's a good engineer, but he's
distracted.

JOE
He got home, Chuck. He bounced off
the atmosphere and still figured out
how to get home.

The Colonel frowns. His tag GLINTS in the sun. **C. YEAGER.**

COLONEL YEAGER
Third mishap this month, Bikle
should ground him before he hurts
himself.

Yeager heads out. **HOLD ON** Joe, wondering if Yeager's right as we **PRELAP** an **ODD WHINE...**

3 **INT. DANIEL FREEMAN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - INGLEWOOD, CA - DAY** 3

CLOSE ON a 2-year-old girl (**KAREN**). Quiet, self-contained.
PULL BACK to see she's on a gurney, a **COBALT RADIATION MACHINE**
HULKING over her -- the source of the **MECHANICAL WHINE.**

HOLD for an AWFUL BEAT... then **REVERSE TO** the OBSERVATION
WINDOW. Neil and his wife, **JANET**, 27. Watching.

NURSE
We've found this to be effective in
treating tumors like Karen's.

PUSH THROUGH THE WINDOW to Janet. FIGHTING her emotions. She reaches for Neil. He takes her hand...

Gone is his enthusiasm from earlier, not the RELENTLESSNESS.

NURSE

We're just not seeing the response
we'd like yet.

Neil **EYES** the NURSE, setting the RADIATION DIALS, then looks back to Karen.

HOLD ON Neil as the WHINE **CRESCENDOS.** Over the whine, **PRELAP** the sound of **VOMITING --**

4 **INT. BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG CABIN, JUNIPER HILLS, CA - DAY** 4

Neil holds Karen as she vomits into a bucket. They're on her bed, one of two kids' beds in the room. A curtain is all that separates Neil and Janet's queen. Karen finishes, slumps.

NEIL

It's okay. It's okay. There you
go, sweetheart.

Neil tries to soothe her, singing softly.

NEIL

*I see the moon, the moon sees me,
Down through the leaves of the old oak tree.
Please let the light that shines on me,
Shine on the one I love.*

PUSH IN on Neil, on the PAIN in his eyes. **CUT TO --**

5 **OMITTED** 5

9 **INT. OFFICE, ARMSTRONG CABIN - LATER THAT NIGHT** 9

CLOSE ON a NOTEBOOK filled with TIDY NOTES. A mechanical pencil writing out a heading. **Cobalt Session No.2.**

NEIL (INTO PHONE)

I wonder if I should call Dr.
Johns...

FIND NEIL on the phone at a makeshift desk. The Aviation Week to one side; Neil's now surrounded by neatly stacked **MEDICAL BOOKS**, mimeographed RESEARCH PAPERS. All marked and tabbed.

JACK (OVER THE PHONE)
 ...uh, who?

Neil grabs a medical paper on Cobalt therapy. Off the paper --

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
 Harold Johns, he developed the
 procedure. In Saskatchewan.

JACK (OVER THE PHONE)
 In Canada? How would you --

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
 I could take time off work.

JACK (OVER THE PHONE)
 Maybe you should talk to the
 folks at the hospital--

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
 Yeah, I've already spoken to
 them.

Neil pulls out his LOGBOOK from the hospital.

JACK (OVER THE PHONE)
 Well. I'm sorry I couldn't be more
 help.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
 That's okay, Jack. I appreciate it.

JACK (OVER THE PHONE)
 Of course, Neil.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
 Give my love to June.

JACK (OVER THE PHONE)
 You got it.

Neil hangs up. A beat. Then he turns back to his notebook.
 We see him focus in on a column he's just written up...

***Side Effects: Fatigue. Dizziness. Extreme headache. Vomiting
 (repeated). Hair loss/Scalp irritation. Loss of appetite.***

Neil scans the list... then pulls a DOG-EARED RESEARCH PAPER
 off the shelf. He reads, jots notes... *looking for a solve.*

7 **INT. FOYER/KITCHEN, ARMSTRONG CABIN - DAY**

7

Neil leads Joe Walker in. Joe carries a casserole. Neil
 pulls some beers out of the fridge.

NEIL
(off the casserole)
Now who made that-- you or Grace?

JOE
Grace did.

NEIL
I'll take it then. Thank you.

A small smile. Neil puts the casserole in the fridge, opens the beers with a churchkey, hands one to Joe.

JOE
Dick Day called from Houston, he was asking after you.

NEIL
Oh. That about Gemini?

JOE
(nods)
They're looking for pilots with a solid background in engineering.

Neil hesitates.

NEIL
Well, maybe once Karen starts feeling better. It's just-- I wouldn't want to move her 'til then.

JOE WALKER
Well. It'll be nice to keep you around.

If Joe has an agenda, Neil misses it. Off Neil --

8 **EXT. ARMSTRONG CABIN - DUSK**

8

Rick sits on the porch, playing with some tape.

PULL BACK TO FIND Janet standing nearby, smoking. We see the **TOLL** Karen's illness has taken.

She takes another long drag as...

...Joe walks out. Janet puts on a good face.

JANET

Joe.

JOE WALKER

Hey Jan. You, uh... hanging in?

JANET

...oh, you know.

He looks at her, nothing to say. Then --

JANET

It's nice of you to come by.

He starts to go, when --

JOE WALKER

Of course. Night now.

Joe gets into his truck. Off Janet --

6 **INT. BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG CABIN - MOMENTS LATER**

6

Neil sits beside Karen, sleeping at last. He strokes her hair gently, staring down at her, glancing at a small name bracelet she wears. Breathing into the respite.

Off Neil, we **PRELAP** the chilling sound of a **MECHANICAL CRANK** --

10 **EXT. JOSHUA MEMORIAL PARK - LANCASTER, CA - DAY**

10

CLOSE ON a **CRANK**. Turning. Lowering a small coffin.

TIGHT ON Neil with Janet and their son, Rick. All in black. Janet cries as **KAREN'S COFFIN** sinks. Neil does not.

Neil keeps his eyes on the sinking coffin, **HUGGING** Janet close. **TIGHT**. The **SOUND** of the crank takes us to --

11 **INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG CABIN - DAY**

11

A LONG PUSH IN over trays of food. Dark suits and dresses. Quiet murmurs. Some small talk.

Neil walks through, barely enduring it all. He moves to the screen door, watches Rick toss a ball in the yard. Rick sees his father, runs up to the door.

RICK

Dad, wanna come play?

Neil hesitates. He looks at his son, differently than before. A DISTANCE there now. A moment, then...

NEIL

I should, I have to help your mother.

Neil exits, escaping past Janet, who's clocked it all.

12 **INT. OFFICE, ARMSTRONG CABIN - SAME TIME** 12

Neil walks in, closes the door, closes the shade...

...and moves to the desk. His eyes **TICK** over the marked up medical books and papers. His notebook, **FILLED**, lies open.

Neil **CLOSES** the notebook. Gathers the papers, **STACKS THEM AWAY**. And then opens the **DESK DRAWER**. He pulls out **NAME BRACELET** we saw Karen wearing earlier. And drops it in.

Then he **CLOSES THE DRAWER**. And sits. The **TEARS** coming, quietly, so no one hears.

A beat, then as he pulls himself together, we **CUT TO --**

13 **OMITTED** 13

14 **EXT. BACK PORCH, ARMSTRONG CABIN - NIGHT** 14

Everyone's gone. Neil stares off. Janet walks outside. It's **COLD**. She grabs a blanket, puts it around Neil, then sits. He doesn't say anything, but he puts an arm around her.

Janet tucks into him. We linger on them, huddled together.

15 **INT. BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG CABIN - EARLY MORNING** 15

CLOSE ON a **WESTCLOX ELECTRIC ALARM CLOCK**, not quite six. **PAN TO** Neil, staring up at the ceiling. ALREADY DRESSED. The alarm **TRILLS** lightly. Neil sits up. Janet stirs.

NEIL

I thought I might go to work.

JANET

Okay.

He exits. But we **HOLD ON** Janet, as she looks past the curtain to see Rick still sleeping. And the other bed -- **EMPTY**.

16 **INT. TEST PILOT OFFICE, NASA FRC, EDWARDS AFB - EARLY MORNING** 16

Neil sits at his desk, studying **AIRPLANE DIAGRAMS** for the HANDLEY PAGE HP-115. We note a CHANUTE AWARD on the desk.

BUTCH (O.S.)

They want a free flying trainer to simulate a landing? They haven't even figured out how to get there. I'm not wasting time on that.

Joe walks in with STAN 'BUTCH' BUTCHART, who flew the B-52 on Neil's X-15 mission. Butch clutches a **XEROXED MEMO**.

NEIL

Morning.

They look up at Neil, **SURPRISED** to see him.

BUTCH

Neil.

It's **AWKWARD**. Butch drops the memo, moves off. Joe lingers.

JOE

You can take a few days, you know.

NEIL

I know, I'm just getting up to speed on the new Delta wing in the UK.

Joe glances at the diagrams Neil's studying. Then, **GENTLY** --

JOE

Bikle cancelled the trip. He wants you focused on writing up the pilot report from your last flight.

Neil looks at Joe.

NEIL

Am I grounded, Joe?

JOE

(hesitates)
Write up the report on the bounce, okay?

Joe moves off... but we **HOLD ON** Neil, watching Joe head into the corner office to chat with FRC HEAD PAUL BIKLE.

Neil **STARES**. To be stuck on the ground now... that's the last thing he wants. He **STRUGGLES**, staring down at his desk...

...noticing a **NASA X-PRESS NEWSLETTER** under a pile of papers.

CLOSE ON the newsletter, a headline clear: **NASA TO SELECT ASTRONAUTS FOR PROJECT GEMINI**

REVERSE TO Neil. Something SHIFTING in him. As he processes, considering the **CHALLENGE**, we **CUT TO --**

17 **OMITTED** 17

18 **INT. HALLWAY, ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE - LATER** 18

A hall lined with chairs. Candidates sit reading **PROJECT GEMINI BRIEFING BOOKS**. Most of them in **MILITARY UNIFORM**.

FIND NEIL, in a suit and tie, sitting apart from the others.

**Astronaut Selection, Project Gemini
Ellington Air Force Base
August 13, 1962**

ELLIOT SEE, 35, another suit and tie, walks in. Elliot's a cerebral flight test engineer from UCLA; he catches a few looks from the military men and decides to sit next to Neil.

ELLIOT
Civilian?

NEIL
Yeah.

ELLIOT
Yeah, me too. Elliot. NEIL
Neil.

Neil turns to his packet, but Elliot, anxious, keeps talking.

ELLIOT
Tough morning, huh? I barely lasted two minutes in the ice bath. Course I suppose NASA's probably interested more in psychological reactions.

NEIL
Well, I think I made it pretty clear that I thought it was cold.

This draws a smile from Elliot. A **SMALL CONNECTION**.

DEKE
Armstrong.

Neil looks up, sees **DEKE SLAYTON**, 37, MACHO back when that was appealing, at the end of the hall. Neil stands.

ELLIOT
Good luck.

NEIL
Thank you.

Neil walks down the hall, passing a few of the military men.

PETE CONRAD
'nother egghead.

COLONEL **ED WHITE**, 32, a lanky Texan with easy-going charm, SMIRKS at NAVY CAPTAIN **PETE CONRAD**, 32, a wicked witted WASP.

ED
It's Easter.

Pete laughs. Neil ignores it, keeps going as we **CUT TO --**

19 **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE - MOMENTS LATER** 19

Neil sits in front of **BOB GILRUTH**, 48, bald, strong and calm and A PANEL OF MEN including Deke; **CHRIS KRAFT**, 37, clean cut; and **JOHN GLENN**, 40, very much the American hero and icon.

GILRUTH
Neil, we've been chatting with candidates about the program. As you know, our decision to forego Direct Ascent in favor of a Lunar-Orbit Rendezvous approach to the eventual Moon mission has had a major impact on Gemini.

KRAFT
Do you have any thoughts on that decision?

NEIL
Well, even considering Von Braun's initial criticism, it seems that the payload saved by parking the primary vehicle in orbit and sending a smaller ship down to the lunar surface is well worth the resulting risks and challenges.

KRAFT

What do you see as the challenges?

NEIL

Rendezvous and docking.

DEKE

Why do you think spaceflight's important?

Neil pauses.

NEIL

I had a few opportunities in the X-15 to observe the atmosphere. And it's so thin; such a small part of the earth that you barely could see it at all. When you're down here in the crowd and you look up, it seems pretty big and you don't think about it too much, but when you get a different vantage point, it changes your perspective... I don't know what space exploration will uncover, but I don't think it will be exploration just for the sake of exploration. I think it will be more the fact that it allows us to see things that maybe we should have seen a long ago but just haven't been able to until now.

It's a lovely sentiment. Everyone's impressed.

GILRUTH

Does anyone have anything else?

JOHN GLENN

Yeah. Neil, I was sorry to hear about your daughter.

Neil nods. An awkward beat.

NEIL

I'm sorry, is there a question?

JOHN GLENN

Uh, what I mean is, do you think it will have an effect.

Neil pauses, considering. Then, genuine --

NEIL

I think it would be unreasonable to
assume that it would have no effect.

Off Deke, taking this in, **CUT TO --**

20 **INT. ARMSTRONG CABIN - NIGHT**

20

Neil, Jan and Rick eat supper. Quiet, a **PALLOR** still hangs.
The phone RINGS. Janet reaches for it.

JANET (INTO PHONE)

Hello? Yeah, sure. Neil?

Neil looks up. Janet holds out the phone. He takes it.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)

Yello.

RICK

(to Janet)

Can I go play outside?

Janet nods, motions for him to go. Rick scurries off.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)

Yes. Uh huh. Okay. Yes, sir.

Thank you.

Neil hangs up. Processing. Then he sees Janet STARING.

NEIL

I got it.

He looks to Janet.

JANET

It's a fresh start.

NEIL

Are you sure?

JANET

It'll be an adventure.

Janet **REACHES FOR HIM**. Neil holds her hand tightly, wanting
to believe her. Off this slightest touch of **HOPE**, we --

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK

**Manned Space Center
Houston - Fall 1962**

21 **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, MSC - HOUSTON - DAY**

21

GRAINY FILM FOOTAGE, an NASA animated film explaining the moon mission in basic terms...

NASA ANNOUNCER (ON FILM)

Since the time of Jules Verne, man has imagined traveling to the moon and back. But making the trip as Jules Verne imagined -- in a single spaceship -- would require an enormous rocket. For this reason, NASA has come up with a new approach, lunar orbit rendezvous.

PULL BACK to **FIND** NEIL in the flickering light, taking **COPIOUS NOTES**; a tech at a REEL-TO-REEL PROJECTOR.

NASA ANNOUNCER (ON FILM)

The spacecraft traveling to the moon would actually consist of two, separate vehicles. A command ship that will remain in lunar orbit and a lunar lander that two crewman will take to the surface. After the men explore the surface, the lander lifts off the moon then rendezvous and docks with the command ship, which will take them back to earth. Thus, NASA will land the first men on the moon and return them safely home.

The NASA LOGO appears as the film ends. Neil and Elliot See, both taking notes, look FASCINATED. **GUS GRISSOM**, 39, gruff, flicks on the lights. We see Deke beside him.

Deke moves to the long blackboard at front, draws a circle way on the left and writes EARTH. He marks dots beside it for --

DEKE

Here's reality. Sputnik 1, Sputnik 2, Vostok, Gagarin. The Soviets have beaten us at every single major space accomplishment. Our program couldn't compete, so we've chosen to focus on a job so difficult, requiring so many technological developments, that the Russians will have to start from scratch. As will we. So instead of here...

(points to dots around Earth)

...we go here.

And now he walks all the way to the right edge of the blackboard... then past it to a separate blackboard... and draws a small circle. Which he labels MOON. He eyes the men.

DEKE

That's to scale. Check it.

A tech moves to the blackboard, measures as Deke continues.

DEKE

If we want to get this done, we first have to prove two ships can rendezvous and dock in space. That's the primary mission of Project Gemini.

Deke writes **RENDEZVOUS. DOCKING.** Neil, INTENT, takes it down, more of that **FIRE** in him -- like when he saw the LLTV diagram.

DEKE

Only after we master these tasks do we move on to Apollo and consider trying to land a man on the moon.
(then)
Gus, you got anything you wanna add?

Deke looks over at Gus. Gus shakes his head.

GUS

Just do your job.

Neil and THE NINE GEMINI MEN (Elliot, Ed White, Pete Conrad, rugged former Navy test pilot **JIM LOVELL** and others) eye the blackboard as the tech ERASES Deke's Moon and draws a new one.

DEKE

Almost to scale.

A foot further away. Off Neil, taking in the vast blackness between earth and moon, we **PRELAP** --

WALTER CRONKITE (**PRELAP**)

Good evening, this is Walter Cronkite at CBS News Headquarters in New York. At its beginning this day looked as though it might be one of armed conflict...

23 **INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - EL LAGO, TX - DAY** 23

CLOSE ON a B&W CBS NEWS BROADCAST. WALTER CRONKITE sits at his desk.

WALTER CRONKITE (ON TV)
*...between Soviet vessels and
American warships on the sea lanes
leading to Cuba. But there has been
no confrontation as far as we know,
and some hope has been generated by
suggestions of negotiation.*

FIND NEIL watching, a Gemini binder open in front of him, a number of equations written in the margins.

Nearby Janet, recently pregnant, unpacks BOXES. Or rather, she was. Now, she looks from the TV to Rick, who's painting a candy bag for Halloween, a GUMBY DOLL on the floor nearby.

There's a **KNOCK** at the door. Janet walks over --

24 **INT./EXT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY** 24

Janet opens the front door. MEET **PAT WHITE**, 30, perky, blond, youthful, upbeat and warm.

PAT
Hey. I'm Pat. Got here about a week before you, so welcome to the neighborhood...

Pat hands her a plate of cookies.

JANET
Oh, that's so kind of you. I'm Janet.

PAT
Nice to meet you.

Janet looks past Pat, spots a MAN tossing a ball with his son. We recognize Ed White. Janet watches for a moment, maybe a tinge of sadness at how far away that kind of normalcy seems.

JANET
(pointing)
So that's you over there?

PAT
That's us right there.
(pointing)
That's my husband, Ed...
(MORE)

PAT (CONT'D)
and that's Eddie junior... I don't
know where Bonnie is.

JANET
You've got two.

PAT
I do. I see...
(noticing Janet's stomach)
Is this your first one?

JANET
(indicating Rick)
Oh no, we've got a boy, Rick.

PAT
How old is he?

JANET
He's five and a half.

PAT
We should get them together.

JANET
Yeah, that'd be great.

A smile. It almost sets Janet at ease.

PAT
Actually, I just got the kitchen
squared if you want to join us for
dinner?

Janet hesitates. She'd really like to. But she declines.

JANET
Oh, that's real nice of you but I've
already got some soup on, so...

PAT
Okay. Well, another time.

JANET
Yeah, I'd love that.

Pat smiles again. Janet smiles back.

PAT
It was nice meeting you.

JANET
And you, Pat. Bye.

25 **INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY**

25

Janet walks back in. Neil looks up.

JANET

Well, we've been invited over for dinner.

(off his look)

I said we were busy.

NEIL

(genuinely grateful)

...Thank you.

JANET

You want a cookie?

She holds out the tray. He takes one.

JANET

You okay with me picking up a pizza?

NEIL

Uh huh.

Janet never had dinner on. Neil returns to work...

26 **INT. MULTI-AXIS TRAINER ROOM, MANNED SPACE CENTER (MSC) - DAY** 26

WIDE ON a **HUGE, GEODESIC STRUCTURE** in a hangar; **COLORFUL PIPES** cocooning a **COCKPIT CHAIR** SUSPENDED IN THREE CONCENTRIC RINGS.

GUS

The Multi-Axis Trainer was designed to replicate roll coupling on three axes, the kind you might encounter in space.

Find the Gemini astronauts walking in with Gus, Deke and a SIM SUPE. Gus continues to the group.

GUS

The challenge is to stabilize the machine before you pass out.

(to Neil)

First victim, Armstrong.

Neil nods. He walks up the steps and sits in the cockpit chair. The SUPE straps him in then starts the machine...

The inner rings **SPIN**, tossing Neil in all directions. Slowly at first... then **FASTER**.

PUSH IN on Neil. The chair speeds up, his head WHIPPING in and out of frame as he struggles to analyze the spin.

His HANDS **GRAB** the controls... CLICKING to steady himself... but the machine just spins FASTER. Neil bores down... But it's TOO FAST... his eyes droop... and we **FADE TO GRAY**.

FLASH TO --

Juniper hills. The cabin. Karen. And Janet, younger, carefree. Neil with them. With Karen. Happy.

A mechanical thud **SLAMS US BACK TO --**

THE MULTI-AXIS TRAINER. Neil blinks, **OPENS HIS EYES.** The Supe moves to unbuckle him. Deke looks to Ed.

DEKE

White, you're up.

ED

Yeah, I got it.

NEIL

I'm okay. Let's go again.

Neil STARES right at Deke. Gus eyes Deke. Who shrugs. Gus nods to the Supe, who tightens the straps, starts the machine.

As it spins, we **PUSH INTO NEIL'S POV.** The room, spinning. *And if it's nauseating, well, that's how it's supposed to feel.* Neil **CLICKS** the controls and the trainer slows...

...and then **SPINS FASTER.** Images of the other astronauts BLEED TOGETHER. As Neil starts to FADE, we **SMASH TO --**

27 **INT. BATHROOM, MSC - DAY**

27

Neil vomits. Head on the toilet seat. **SHAKING...**

Neil finally gets it under control. Pale, vulnerable. Almost overwhelmed. He spits into the toilet, then pulls himself up. Wavering for a moment, then staggering out to the sink...

...just as Ed walks in. Stares at Neil. Neil stares back, these two opposites facing each other. A beat.

Then Ed turns GREEN and **RUSHES INTO** a stall. We hear him **VOMITING.** Off Neil, maybe a small smile, **CUT TO --**

28 **INT. CLASSROOM, MSC - HOUSTON, TX - NIGHT**

28

CLOSE ON A THICK GEMINI BINDER, opening to --

Physics of Rocket Propulsion - Rocket Vehicle Performance

1. Equations defining stage performance
2. Theoretical optimization of stages
3. Practical techniques using digital computers
4. Trajectory losses (drag, gravity, potential energy velocity)

PAN UP to Ed. Exhausted. Around him, the others scan binders with BLEARY EYES, many with **VOMIT STAINS** on their shirts.

Ed glances at Neil, behind him. Neil reads, **FASCINATED**. Just then, DAVID HAMMOCK enters, writes on the blackboard.

HAMMOCK

Gentlemen, welcome to basic rocket physics. We'll just be covering the first chapter tonight.

As Neil whips out a pen, intent, we **RACK BACK TO** Ed. STARING. And WONDERING: *Who the hell is this guy?* Ed shakes his head, flips open the chapter - 105 pages. Off Ed, **CUT TO --**

29 **OMITTED** 29

30 **INT. FOYER/HALLWAY, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT** 30

Neil walks in, tired. He puts down his bag, sees the nursery door open. The outline of a crib. He hesitates, walks into --

A31 **INT. NURSERY, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** A31

Neil leans over the crib, stares down at the ten-month-old sleeping soundly. **MARK**. For a moment, Neil just stands over the infant. Frozen, a distance there. Off Neil, **CONFLICTED --**

31 **INT. KITCHEN, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATER** 31

Neil eats alone at the kitchen table, the house ASLEEP... save for Janet. She enters, sits with Neil.

JANET

Hi.

NEIL

Hi.

Neil nods to her, but he's DISTANT. Not oppressive, like after Karen died; but detached.

JANET

You okay?

NEIL

Yeah... Just thinking about this lecture... it's kinda neat.

JANET

What's neat about it?

NEIL

Well, it was about how to rendezvous with the Agena? If you thrust, it actually slows you down because it puts you in a higher orbit. So you have to reduce thrust and drop into a lower orbit in order to catch up. It's backwards from what they teach you as a pilot but if you work the math, it follows.

(lost in it, a beat)

It's kinda neat.

JANET

Yeah, it's kinda neat.

That LIGHT in his eyes, it's back. Janet tries not to LAUGH. Neil catches it. Realizes...

NEIL

What's funny?

JANET

It's not funny. It's just... it's kinda neat.

She breaks; they both LAUGH. Off this, we **CUT TO --**

32

INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

32

Neil stands at the record player. Puts on a record... We hear an otherworldly melange of piano, chorale and THEREMIN. As he stands, Janet walks out of the kitchen.

NEIL

Do you remember this?

JANET

Yeah. I'm surprised that you remember it.

He smiles. They stand a few feet apart, sizing each other up, like kids at a school dance. Almost with fresh eyes.

He holds out his hand. She takes it and he pulls her in. They SWAY together... it turns to **DANCING**. Neil's hands on her back feel almost foreign...

...like they've forgotten what this is. And for a moment, they're just a couple kids in love.

He kisses her. Sweetly, then with URGENCY. It's raw, **VISCEAL**, real **HEAT** there. As they pull at each other, we move to the phonograph, the spinning record: "**Lunar Rhapsody.**"

33-42 **OMITTED**

33-42

A43 **INT./EXT. ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT**

A43

Pat and Janet prepare dinner as **MARILYN SEE**, 30s, teaches her daughter (7) how to dance to Peter, Paul and Mary.

1965

Rick horses around with Ed's kids **EDDIE** (11) and **BONNIE** (8). Elliot's other daughter (8) joins them as they run outside, past Elliot, who smiles at them. Off Elliot, we **CUT TO --**

43 **INT. DINING ROOM, ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

43

The three couples eat, the kids still playing in the yard.

JANET

Thank you for having us.

PAT

It's a pleasure.

Carrie See runs out of the kitchen with a popsicle, trying to keep up with Bonnie White.

MARILYN

Carrie, slow down.

Carrie slows, runs her fingers along the banister, walks out.

JANET

That's a lovely piano. Do you play?

PAT

(shaking her head)
Bonnie's taking lessons.

JANET

Perhaps we'll sing for our supper.

ELLIOT

Neil plays piano?

JANET

Neil knows all sorts of show tunes.

ED

NEIL

Come on.

Janet --

JANET

He was musical director of his fraternity in college. He wrote the musical for the all-student revue.

Neil's a bit embarrassed.

NEIL

I didn't write the music. We used music from Gilbert and Sullivan.

JANET

He wrote all new lyrics. "The Land of Egelloc." It was quite funny.

ELLIOT

The Land of... Egelloc?

They look at Neil. A beat.

NEIL

Egelloc. You've never heard of it?

ELLIOT

I haven't.

NEIL

Oh, I'm surprised. It's a... distant land, but a magical place...

JANET

It's college spelled backwards.

The whole group STARES at Neil.

ED

Seriously?

NEIL (CONT'D)

Yep.

The table laughs. Neil, too.

44 **OMITTED**

44

45 **EXT. BACK PORCH, ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

45

Elliot takes a **SEXTANT** READING. Ed and Neil sit behind him, sharing a beer. The kids are still playing in the backyard.

ED

You're backup on five, huh?

ELLIOT

Yep.

ED

You'll get your own mission soon enough.

ELLIOT

How's training going on Four?

ED

Good. I think we're close on E.V.A.

ELLIOT

First man to walk in space. That'd be something, huh?

ED

Well, the walking's the easy part. It's getting back inside that's tough. Helluva ride if I come back with my tail hanging out.

NEIL

Oh, I think McDivitt'll cut the cord before that happens.

A beat, then Elliot smiles. As does Neil.

ED

Whoa, whoa, whoa, throttle back there, Armstrong.

The men laugh, a **BOND FORMING**. Pat comes to the door.

PAT

Ed, phone for you.

ED

Who is it?

PAT

It's Deke.

Ed gets up.

ED
Okay.

Ed hustles into --

45A **INT. KITCHEN, ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 45A

Ed picks up the phone. Janet's still at the table.

ED (INTO PHONE)
Deke? Ed.

45B **EXT. BACK PORCH, ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME** 45B

Elliot takes a reading. Neil sits, looks up at the moon...
...until he hears Ed.

ED (O.C.)
I'll call you back.

Neil looks towards the house. Elliot turns as well... we see someone has turned on the television in the kitchen.

We hear a **TELEVISION NEWS REPORT...**

CBS ANCHOR (V.O., ON TV)
*Leonov is tethered to Voshkod 2, but
nothing separates the cosmonaut from
space other than his pressure
suit...*

Neil and Elliot head inside.

46 **INT. KITCHEN, ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME** 46

Ed stares at the TV, Pat, Marilyn and Janet watching with him.

CBS ANCHOR (V.O., ON TV)
*...a pressure suit we're told was
designed for the lunar surface.
This is, of course, mankind's first
E.V.A., or Extra-Vehicular Activity.*

Neil and Elliot walk in, their smiles FADING as they see B&W FOOTAGE of **A COSMONAUT FLOATING OVER EARTH.**

The men TIGHTEN, watching the FIRST SPACEWALK, a huge feat. Like Gagarin and Sputnik, a major victory for the Soviets.

PUSH IN OMINOUSLY on the TV...

BANG! A fist **SLAMS** against the wall. Ed's fist. Janet and Marilyn **REACT**, startled.

CBS ANCHOR (V.O., ON TV)
Within the American space program, EVA is seen as one of the crucial tests the Astronauts must master if they are to successfully carry out their mission to the moon. Astronaut Ed White was scheduled to perform the first EVA during Gemini 4, so this is yet another major victory for the Soviet Union in the Space Race...

PUSH IN ON Neil and we CUT TO --

47 **OMITTED** 47

48 **INT. THE WHITE ROOM, PAD 19, CAPE KENNEDY - DAY** 48

CLOSE ON an Astronaut. Outside a Gemini cockpit. Is Neil about to launch?

GEMINI 5

REVEAL Neil and Elliot pulling themselves out of the cockpit, wearing ROUTINE FLIGHT SUITS.

They move away from the spacecraft, passing GORDO COOPER, 38, and Pete Conrad. In **SPACESUITS.**

PETE CONRAD (COMMS)
We got it from here.

Neil and Elliot walk out, towards the elevator. But Neil turns back, watching Gordo and Pete pull themselves into the Gemini spacecraft.

HOLD ON Neil looking at them, watching the techs close up the hatch. Maybe wishing he were the one inside.

49 INT. LAUNCH PAD ELEVATOR, PAD 19 - MOMENTS LATER

49

Neil and Elliot ride down the side of the small Titan rocket.

ELLIOT

To be honest, I'm kinda glad we're backup on this mission. Eight days up there... what do you say the odds are that they make it?

NEIL

I'd be more worried they're gonna kill each other.

ELLIOT

(smiles)
Sure would be quieter around here.

A smile as the elevator stops...

50 EXT. GEMINI LAUNCH PAD - SAME TIME

50

Neil and Elliot emerge from the elevator and join the techs at the base. We hear Deke call out.

DEKE (O.C.)

Neil.

Elliot joins the techs, Neil walks over to...

ANGLE ON Deke with TWO MEN in their early 30s, BUZZ ALDRIN and ROGER CHAFFEE. Neil joins them.

DEKE

Neil Armstrong, our backup
Commander.

Neil nods, shakes hands. They introduce themselves.

BUZZ

Buzz Aldrin.

ROGER CHAFFEE

Roger Chaffee.

DEKE

A couple of the greenhorns from the third group. They'll be over in the blockhouse for launch. Neil, can I speak with you for a minute?

(to Buzz and Roger)

Fellas.

Buzz and Roger leave. Neil follows Deke off to the side.

DEKE

We're putting you in command of Gemini 8. Dave Scott is gonna be your pilot. We get the Agena back on line, you're probably gonna be the first to dock.

Neil nods, but glances over at Elliot. Deke clocks it.

DEKE

Don't worry about Elliot. We'll put that brain of his to work, but we've got a big EVA planned for 8. Dave's a horse.

NEIL

Yes sir.

Neil watches Elliot working with one of the techs. Off Neil, disappointed for him, we **CUT TO --**

A51 **OMITTED**

A51

51 **INT. KITCHEN, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY (2/28/66)**

51

CLOSE ON hands washing dishes. We hear a Broadway show tune, maybe *Oklahoma!* It's something by Rodgers and Hammerstein...

REVEAL Janet washing, Neil drying. It rains hard outside, real Texas thunder. But in here it's lovely.

On the table, we notice a cake. **GOOD LUCK DAD!** An icing Gemini 8 approaches an icing Agena.

RICK

Dad, wanna come help?

REVEAL Rick (now 9) at the table, works on a PUZZLE of The Golden Gate Bridge. Mark (3) plays with trucks on the floor.

JANET

Honey, let your father--

NEIL

Sure.

Surprised, Janet watches Neil sit and start in on the puzzle. They work on it for a moment.

RICK

Have you ever been there?

Neil looks at Rick, who nods to the photo of the Golden Gate Bridge on the puzzle box.

NEIL

No. But I flew under it once.

Rick looks at him.

RICK

Stop fooling.

I'm not.

NEIL

RICK

You can't fly under a bridge.

NEIL

Well, sure you can.

RICK

Mom, is dad making fun?

JANET

Doesn't sound like your dad.

There's a **KNOCK** at the door. Neil starts to stand but Janet, wanting him and Rick to keep talking, heads for the door.

JANET

I'll get it.

FOLLOW JANET, glancing back at Rick and Neil. She can barely hold back a smile. She opens the door. It's Ed, RAIN-SOAKED.

JANET

Hey, Ed.

ED

Oh, hi. Can I speak to Neil?

JANET

Yeah, sure. Why don't you come on in? You're soaked?

ED

No, I'll wait here. Thanks.

The mood shifts. Something's wrong. Janet knows not to ask.

52 **EXT. FRONT STOOP, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY**

52

Neil walks out onto the stoop.

NEIL

You know they make this thing called an umbrella, comes in real handy at times like these.

ED

Hey. I got some bad news about Elliot.

NEIL

No, Elliot's in command of Gemini 9 now. I know, Deke told me he bumped Elliot, but --

ED

Neil. Elliot and Charlie were flying into St. Louis to train this morning. Their T-38 crashed on approach. There was a lot of fog...

Neil stares, knowing from Ed's tone that Elliot's gone.

ED

We'll meet over at Jim's.

NEIL

I'll meet you there.

ED

Okay.

Off Neil, processing...

53 **INT. KITCHEN, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY**

53

Neil walks back in.

RICK

So did you really fly under that bridge? Was it fun? Were you scared?

Neil looks down at Rick. Lost. Janet sees something is wrong, intercedes.

JANET

Ricky, honey, why don't you go get your homework so I can check it.

RICK

Yes, mom.

Rick heads off. Janet glances at Mark, still playing with his trucks, then turns to Neil. Quietly.

JANET

Who was it?

NEIL

Charlie Bassett. And Elliot.

Janet PALES. **CUT TO --**

54 **INT. ELLIOT & MARILYN SEE'S HOUSE - TIMBER COVE - LATE AFTERNOON**

CLOSE ON Marilyn See. **LOST. PULL BACK** to **FIND** a **PHOTO OF ELLIOT** and flowers on a mantle. Trays of food, **MOURNERS** in black, a priest. And a dazed old couple, Elliot's parents.

A few **KIDS**, oblivious, scurry through the crowd and out to --

55 **INT./EXT. PORCH, ELLIOT & MARILYN SEE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON** 55

The kids race into the backyard, passing Neil on the porch, looking through the screen door at the gathered mourners. He nurses a glass of **CHIVAS REGAL**.

PETE CONRAD

I was cornered by three congressmen at Arlington. They thought it was the time to ask why we don't send machines to the moon instead? Two weeks before we launch 8.

Just beyond Neil, a **CIRCLE OF ASTRONAUTS** stand on the porch, passing a bottle of vodka, a lime inside.

GRISSOM

Shit, how the hell did this happen?

JIM LOVELL

Cernan told me the cloud cover was down to 500 feet. A low go-around underneath low clouds, that's tough.

BUZZ

Clearly, the error was the approach. He was coming in too slow to reach the runway.

Lovell glances at Buzz, taken aback. The men go quiet.

BUZZ

What? You know Deke had doubts about him. That's why he moved Elliot off Eight.

NEIL

Deke gave Elliot his own command.

They all look up. Surprised at Neil, who's normally taciturn.

BUZZ

Elliot wasn't aggressive enough. You of all people have to know that--

NEIL

No. I don't. I didn't investigate the crash, I didn't study the flight trajectory, and I wasn't the one flying the plane, so I wouldn't pretend to know anything.

BUZZ

We'll never be 100 percent sure.

Silence. The other men just sit there. The tension is thick.

56 **INT. LIVING ROOM, ELLIOT & MARILYN SEE'S HOUSE - DUSK** 56

Neil, even more on edge now, moves through the mourners... eyes **TICKING** past **WIVES** raising hands in greeting...

...past **ED** waving at Neil from across the room...

...past **ELLIOT'S PHOTO** on the mantle...

...and pausing on **A LITTLE GIRL** playing jacks under a table. Neil stares at the girl. She looks up at him. It's Karen.

Neil blinks at her, then quickly moves into --

57 **INT./EXT. KITCHEN, ELLIOT & MARILYN SEE'S HOUSE - DUSK** 57

Janet pours coffee for guests. Neil walks up beside her.

NEIL

Can we go?

JANET

Uh, not right now, I want to help Marilyn clear all this up, I don't want her to have to do it after we've gone.

NEIL
(quiet)
I need to go.

JANET
Okay, well, why don't you go and sit
down and I'll bring you a cup of
coffee. It'll just be a minute.

She keeps pouring... until she realizes Neil's gone.

JANET
Neil?

She turns. We hear a car start. Janet looks out the window,
sees Neil pull away. Off Janet, we **CUT TO --**

58 **INT. PAT WHITE'S STATION WAGON (MOVING) - HOUSTON, TX - LATER** 58

Close on Janet. In the backseat. Upset and embarrassed.

JANET
I'm sorry. I hate to be a bother.

ED PAT
Oh, Jan... It's no bother.

Ed drives. Pat beside him. A beat.

JANET
Neil's... there was a year when we
were at Edwards. Four pilots died.
(then)
We got good at funerals that year.
We haven't been to one in a while...

She looks out the window. A beat.

JANET
Has he ever talked to you about
Karen, Ed?

ED
...Not really. No.

PAT
(a beat, gently)
Does he talk to you about her?

JANET
No. Never.

Off Janet, staring out the window --

59 **EXT. BACKYARD, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATER** 59

Neil stands under the stars. He looks up at the moon. Then starts practicing, taking readings with the sextant.

We see Janet in the window. **HOLD ON** her. She considers going to Neil, but decides against, goes to help Rick with homework.

REVERSE BACK TO Neil. Sextant raised. Staring up at the heavens. Off Neil, we **PRELAP** --

PAO ANNOUNDER (**PRELAP**, LOUDSPEAKER)
*T minus one minute and counting on
the Atlas-Agena launch...*

A60 **OMITTED** A60

B60 **OMITTED** B60

60 **OMITTED** 60

61 **OMITTED** 61

62 **INT. WHITE ROOM, PAD 19, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER (KSC) - 10AM** 62

CLOSE ON the elevators. They open and we **REVEAL** --

Neil. **CLOSE ON HIS FACE**. He looks straight ahead, STARING at something. A beat, then we **REVERSE TO** --

THE GEMINI 8 CAPSULE. Hatch doors OPEN. Backups in flight suits doing final checks. FAINT COMMS buzz.

Gemini 8
Two weeks later

This is no test. **THIS IS IT**.

IN THE ELEVATOR, Neil grabs his pack. Dave does the same. Deke, beside them, gives Neil **A LOOK**: *You good to go?* Neil gives a subtle nod, then leaves Deke behind and...

...walks across the small bridge into THE WHITE ROOM. He's in helmet, spacesuit; Deke, **DAVE SCOTT**, 33, muscular and handsome, and a number of techs behind him.

We feel a SHAKING and hear a distant **ROAR**. Neil turns. Through the canopy window, he sees a **FARAWAY ROCKET LAUNCH**.

AGENA CONTROL (COMMS)
Liftoff. Agena is go.
(then)
(MORE)

AGENA CONTROL (COMMS)
*Agena flight dynamics plot looks
 good, stand by for Gemini launch.*

Neil watches, then turns back and finds himself in front of the hatch door. A beat, then Neil moves forward and with the techs' help, pulls himself into the left hand seat of --

63 **INT. GEMINI 8 CAPSULE, PAD 19, KSC - CONTINUOUS**

63

Neil's feet are pointed up, he and Dave sit facing skyward, listening to the comms tracking the Agena as techs and backups hover over them, strapping them in.

GUAYMAS CAPCOM (COMMS)
 AFD, Guaymas read you loud and
 clear. We have S Band track and...

Carnarvon capcom fades to STATIC

ASST FLIGHT DIRECTOR (COMMS)
*Did you say all systems go on
 T.M.?*

GUAYMAS CAPCOM (COMMS)
*...we're having a little
 trouble locking up right now.*

ASST FLIGHT DIRECTOR (COMMS)
 Roger.

PETE CONRAD (O.C.)
 Hold still, wouldja?

Neil looks over. Pete Conrad struggles to buckle Dave in. We see the catch on DAVE'S PARACHUTE HARNESS is **CLOGGED**.

RICHARD GORDON
 What is that? Glue?

PETE CONRAD
 Hold on a sec. Scoot down.

DAVE SCOTT
 What are you doing?

PETE CONRAD
 Hey, does anybody got a Swiss
 Army Knife?

DAVE SCOTT (INTO COMMS)
 What'd you say? A Swiss Army Knife?

Pad leader **GUENTER WENDT** (42, spectacles, bow tie) leans in.

PETE CONRAD
 Yeah, yeah. It's just a
 little --

GUENTER WENDT
 See if this'll do the trick.

He holds out a **DENTIST'S PICK**. Pete takes it. Dave stares as Pete grabs the harness catcher mechanism, digs out some epoxy.

DAVE SCOTT
Are you kidding me?

PETE CONRAD
Got it.

GUAYMAS CAPCOM (COMMS)
AFD, *Guaymas Agena is go...*

AFD (COMMS)
Roger, Guaymas.

The men finish up, attaching hoses, then pulling back. Giving everything a final once over before reaching for the doors.

We're ON NEIL as he looks across the small cabin and sees...
Dave's door **CLOSING SHUT** with a thud.

Neil turns, sees a tech above him nod. He gives a thumbs up.
Then his door **CLOSES IN** on him...

...and **THUDS SHUT**.

It's like being buried alive, worse when we hear the **SCRAPING METAL** of the ratchet that **SEALS** the doors.

The capsule is now SEALED and **CLAUSTROPHOBIC**. Dave adjusts his suit flow for air temp. Neil is still.

PUSH IN on Neil. On his eyes. Focused. DETERMINED. **HOLD THERE** for a moment... then we hear a **LOUD MECHANICAL SOUND**.

Neil glances up; the GANTRY **SLOWLY PULLS** away from the rocket, revealing CLEAR BLUE SKY. It's almost surreal... More so when a **SEAGULL SQUAWKS**, hovering above Neil's window.

DAVE SCOTT (INTO COMMS, O.C.)
Switching to HF. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. 5,
4, 3, 2, 1, check out.

Neil's eyes follow the seagull. A beat, then --

GT-8 STC (COMMS)
*Copy. T minus 2 minutes. Engines
to start.*

The focus **RETURNS** as Neil scans the console. The engine lights come up.

DAVE SCOTT (INTO COMMS)
Ground power removal...

EECOM (COMMS)
*Pressurization initiated.
Ground power removed.*

Dave adjusts his suit flow again, Neil pulls out his **MIRROR**. A beat. Neil hears a **BUZZING**...

...spots **A BUG** on the console. Mundane. Odd.

LVTC (COMMS)
*Stage 1 pre-valves coming open, 5
seconds. T minus 20 seconds mark...*

Dave and Neil SET for launch. We feel the weight of the last minutes, months, years...

LCC PAO (COMMS)
*10, 9, 8, 7, 6... Main engines
start...*

A **DULL THUNDER** from ten stories below turns to a **ROAR**...

LCC PAO (COMMS)
4, 3, 2, 1... Ignition...

...and we feel a **JOLT** as the Titan **JERKS** off the launch pad.

LCC PAO (COMMS)
Lift-off! Lift-off 16:41:00!

The **THRUST** kicks in, **SHOVING** them into their seats as they vault away from the ground below.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Clock is running. Got a Roll Program in.

LOVELL (CAPCOM, COMMS)
Roger. Roll. Good liftoff, 8.

The **STRAIN** on Neil's face tells us *we're accelerating to 18,000 MILES PER HOUR*.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Pitch program.

LOVELL (COMMS)
Roger. Pitch program.

Neil switches mode as Dave checks the gauges, the computer.

DAVE SCOTT (INTO COMMS)
DCS update received.

LOVELL (COMMS)
Roger. DCS.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Stage 2 tanks look good. That's about three and a half Gs.

Dave looks out the window, **STRUCK** by BLUE SKY TURNING BLACK.

LOVELL (COMMS)
Go from the ground for staging.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
(enters staging command)
Roger.

A **SHEET OF FIRE ENGULFS** the craft... **IT'S FUCKING TERRIFYING.**
Dave FLINCHES... even Neil BLINKS. *What the hell is going on?*

A beat, then... as the fire outside subsides, we realize this is normal. They refocus on the gauges.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Fuel cells are solid.

They hurtle forward, checking gauges, monitoring the stage...

LOVELL (COMMS)
Gemini 8, you're go from the ground.
Mark. V/VR = point zero eight.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Okay. Mode 3.

The second stage cuts off; they're **TOSSED INTO MICROGRAVITY.**
Dave GRUNTS. Engines off, it's eerily QUIET. Dave pulls out a mission checklist and it FLOATS across the cabin.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
We've had SECO.

Neil looks out the window. *Nothing like the X-15, the world much farther below. The chaos down there, it's gone up here.*

PUSH IN on Neil, A BOY, **STRUCK** by the GRANDEUR, the MYSTERY.
HOLD ON him for a moment, staring out the window.

A64 **EXT. GEMINI VIII - SAME TIME** A64

We peer out over the nose of the craft, looking down at the Earth. The view is breathtaking, utterly majestic.

B64 **EXT. FRONT PORCH, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - HOUSTON, TX - DAY** B64

Rick stands below the flagpole, raises an American Flag. He looks up at it, waving in the breeze.

C64 **INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - HOUSTON, TX - SAME TIME** C64

Mark sits with Janet's MOTHER, reading a book. In the b/g, we can hear faint comms from the squawkbox.

64 **INT. BATHROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - HOUSTON, TX - DAY** 64

CLOSE ON Janet. Drying her hands, staring into a MIRROR. By now we know she's not a worrier. But even she is SWEATING.

The comms continue, faint in the b/g, as Janet **STEELS** herself then opens the door and walks out into --

65 **INT. HALLWAY/LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 65

Janet walks down the hall in silhouette to... THE LIVING ROOM. Rick hovers by a NASA SQUAWKBOX and Mark sits with Janet's MOTHER (late 50's) in the b/g.

Other than that, it's SURPRISINGLY EMPTY, just a Public Affairs Officer from NASA and Life Photographer **RALPH MORSE**.

JANET

You need anything, Mom?

Her mother shakes her head. Janet sits on the couch beside the squawkbox, Morse snapping photos. Janet forces a smile for the camera...

...but we can see her NERVES as she leans forward, turns up the volume on the squawkbox.

PAO (ON SQUAWKBOX)

*This is Gemini Control, Houston.
Our big display chart here in the
Control Center is now showing both
the Gemini spacecraft and the Agena.
The Gemini will soon begin its
search for the Agena, so we'd like
to review some of the rendezvous
maneuvers coming up.*

INTERCUT WITH:

67-68 **OMITTED** 67-68

69-71 **OMITTED** 69-71

72 **EXT./INT. GEMINI VIII, ORBITAL SPACE - DAY/NIGHT** 72

The thrusters fire as Neil begins one of the many burns needed to rendezvous with the Agena.

Inside the craft, we see the CONCENTRATION on Neil's face as he gently presses on the **MANEUVER CONTROLLER**...

A beat, then Neil kills the burn.

NEIL

Burn end.

DAVE SCOTT

Good burn.

Neil's eyes **TICK** over the instruments, glance out the window.

DAVE SCOTT
Shouldn't we have a visual on the
Agena by now?

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Houston, I think we overdid it a
little.

SMASH TO --

73 INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - SAME TIME

73

Welcome to Mission Control, all the latest technology of 1966.
PUSH BUTTONS, ROTARY PHONES, STATIC MAPS on the big screens.

**Mission Control Center
Houston, Texas**

Lovell, at CAPCOM, talks to the Gemini under the watchful eye
of Flight Director **JOHN HODGE**, 37, British.

LOVELL (INTO COMMS)
Roger 8, stand by for a
correction.

HODGE (INTO HEADSET)
Fido, Flight, how are we
doing?

Hodge looks to FIDO.

FIDO (INTO HEADSET)
We've got solid track on both
vehicles, calculating now.

Kraft watches nearby, along with Ed, Gus, the other astronauts
and a few USAF OBSERVERS, including a BLACK PILOT, 31. We
note his name tape, **R. LAWRENCE**.

AGENA CONTROL (INTO HEADSET)
Fido, Agena, you have what you need
from us? Fido, Agena?

HODGE (INTO HEADSET)
Fido, did you copy that?

FIDO (INTO HEADSET)
Roger, flight. I copy.

GUIDANCE shows a printout to Fido.

GUIDANCE (INTO HEADSET)
You guys getting this?

FIDO (INTO HEADSET)
We just have some ratty data
from the Gemini computer.

Fido, Guidance and Retro huddle. Hodge grows impatient.

HODGE (INTO HEADSET)
I need the correction,
gentlemen.

GUIDANCE (INTO HEADSET)
Sending it up now.

Fido writes up the PAD, hands a copies to Lovell and a tech who runs into the projection room. It APPEARS on screen.

HODGE (INTO HEADSET)
Okay, capcom, let's get it up to them.

LOVELL (INTO COMMS)
Gemini 8, Houston capcom. We want to give you another burn here very shortly. Stand by to copy. GET B: 03:03:41; Delta-V is 2 feet; Posigrade...

74 **OMITTED**

74

75 **INT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY**

75

CLOSE ON the squawkbox. Janet sits on the couch leaning over it, listening intently.

LOVELL (ON SQUAWKBOX)
...8, Houston. Do you copy?

No answer; it's unnerving. More so, when Mark runs in and grabs the squawkbox.

JANET
Mark, give that back. Mark, give that back, put it back on the table. I'm not joking, Mark.

The LIFE photographer begins snapping photos.

LOVELL (ON SQUAWKBOX)
Gemini 8, Houston capcom.

JANET
Honey, give me it, it's really important. Give that back to mommy right now.

LOVELL (ON SQUAWKBOX)
8, do you read? Copy.

JANET
Mark Armstrong, if you don't give me that back...

Mark refuses to put it down. He smiles. Janet, trying to control herself, bends over Mark. She LOWERS her voice.

LOVELL (ON SQUAWKBOX)
8, can you give us a status?

JANET
I'm not joking, Mark.

Off Janet, frustrated, **SMASH TO --**

76 **INT. GEMINI VIII COCKPIT - NIGHT/DAY**

76

Neil checks the rendezvous chart as Dave stares at the computer read out; something's off.

DAVE SCOTT
I'm getting a horrendous 20
to 25 feet per second down,
Neil.

NEIL
I can't see any possible
reason for that.

DAVE SCOTT
Where are we on the plot?

NEIL
We're up above it.

DAVE SCOTT
Right, but what does it look
like if --

NEIL
I can't-- I'm sorry, I have
to, I have to look at this...

Dave QUIETS as Neil keeps working the numbers.

LOVELL (COMMS)
8, can you give us a status?

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
No, I've got too much to do.

LOVELL (COMMS)
Copy. Standing by.

NEIL
(beat, to Dave)
...okay. We're going to go
with the closed loop. 25
forward, 8 left, 3 up, and
I'm going to RATE COMMAND.

Dave quickly adjusts the dials. A beat, then Neil's eyes **TICK**
to the clock.

NEIL
...3, 2, 1, burn.

Neil **HITS** the thrusters. The craft **SWINGS** left and Neil lets go. Dave eyes the console, jots down residuals...

...then spots Neil staring. Dave follows his gaze to what looks like a BRIGHT STAR in the window.

NEIL
Could be a planet.

DAVE SCOTT
Could be.

It's not. Dave **SMILES**.

LOVELL (COMMS)
This is Houston, we have your ground TPI backup when you're ready to copy...

DAVE SCOTT (INTO COMMS)
Stand by. We have a visual on the Agena... at least we have something we think looks like the Agena.

LOVELL (COMMS)
Understand, possible visual on the Agena.

Neil SQUINTS at the Agena **GROWING** in the window as the sun rises over the earth.

NEIL
We're getting a little Out-Of-Plane now...

DAVE SCOTT
(checking the computer)
We've got to get 3 aft and 2 1/2 up...

Neil sets braking thrusters, grips the maneuver controller.

NEIL
I'm going to start braking. Give me a digital range and rate.

Neil hits the **BRAKING THRUSTERS**. The Gemini slows as it rushes to meet the Agena.

NEIL
I'd better back off a bit.

DAVE SCOTT
(takes a reading)
6,000 feet, 31 feet per second.

Neil hits the braking thrusters again.

NEIL
Put in a little to the left.

DAVE SCOTT
1680 feet.

And now the Agena **GROWS** in the window, until it's HOVERING in full view. Neil smiles.

NEIL
That's just unbelievable!

DAVE SCOTT
Would you look at that!

Dave smiles broadly, Neil smiles back. An unusual TWINKLE in Neil's eyes and, again, a touch of that **CHILDLIKE WONDER**.

LOVELL (COMMS)
Gemini 8, Houston. Standing DAVE SCOTT
by for rendezvous remarks. You tell them.

NEIL (COMMS)
Houston, we're station-keeping on
the Agena at about 150 feet.

77 **INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - DAY**

77

CLOSE ON Ed, tense... breaking into a smile.

He looks over at Gus and a few of the astronauts, excitement and relief. Lots of smiles. **RACK TO** Hodge at a console.

HODGE
Okay, stay focused gentlemen, we're only halfway there.

Fido turns to Retro.

FIDO
Thanks for the extra hands. HODGE
Stay focused, gentlemen.

The men turn back to their consoles as we **CUT TO** --

EXT. GEMINI VIII, ORBITAL SPACE - SAME TIME

From a distance, we see the Gemini and the Agena, two tiny objects just below the earth.

78 **INT. GEMINI VIII - DAY**

78

Dave is smiling, still feeling the rush. He looks to Neil. Who's smiling as well...

NEIL
Man it flies easy.

A79 **EXT. GEMINI VIII, ORBITAL SPACE - SAME TIME**

A79

CLOSER ON the Gemini and the Agena, now moving towards each other in a graceful ballet. It seems effortless, a joy to it.

As the Gemini inches closer to the Agena, we **INTERCUT WITH --**

B79 **INT. GEMINI VIII - SAME TIME**

B79

Neil flies the Gemini, a **LIGHTNESS** to him. The grit of training, the darkness of Elliot's death have all **FALLEN AWAY**.

DAVE SCOTT

Does it really?

NEIL

This station keeping, it's just,
it's like nothing.

Dave SMILES at Neil's enthusiasm. Outside the ship, we see the Gemini has crept up right beside the Agena.

DAVE SCOTT (INTO COMMS)

RKV, this is 8. We're
sitting about 2 feet out.

RKV CAPCOM (COMMS)

*Roger. Stand by for a couple
minutes here.*

DAVE SCOTT (COMMS)

Roger.

HOLD ON Neil and Dave, waiting on the precipice.

RKV CAPCOM (COMMS)

*Okay Gemini 8, we have T/M solid.
You're looking good on the ground,
go ahead and dock.*

Dave enters '221' on the Agena encoder. We hear a **BUZZ**.

Neil lines up the GEMINI DOCKING BAR with the SLOT on the Agena... then squeezes the throttle, moving forward SLOWLY.

Outside the ship, the Gemini and the Agena **CRUNCH** together.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Okay, I'm going to cycle our
Rigid/Stop switch now.

Neil nods to Dave. Moment of truth. Dave hits a switch. We hear the motor aboard the Agena WHIR and we **PUSH OUTSIDE...**

79 **EXT. GEMINI VIII, LOW EARTH ORBIT - DAY** 79

From afar, we see the Agena **CLASP** onto the Gemini... There's a loud **CLANK. SMASH BACK INTO --**

80 **INT. GEMINI VIII COCKPIT - DAY** 80

In the cockpit, the 'RIGID' button on the Agena Station display panel **LIGHTS UP**. Neil and Dave share a **LOOK**.

Neil puts out a hand. Dave smiles broadly, shakes it.

NEIL

Flight, we are docked.

81 **INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - DAY (5:10 PM)** 81

Ed **SMILES BROADLY** as the other astronauts in the room explode with **CHEERS**. Kraft shakes Hodge's hand. Gus calls out...

GUS

Someone call Cronkite, have him tell the Soviets they can go screw! And Pete, call those idiots in Congress while you're at it!

More **CHEERS**, laughter as Deke, Conrad and Dick Gordon **ENTER** in **FLIGHT SUITS** (from the Cape). Deke smiles pleased, as the men slowly get back to work.

FIDO (COMMS)

Okay, let's go ahead and get a state vector for the combined spacecraft.

82 **INT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY** 82

Morse takes a photo of Janet and the kids.

MORSE

Congratulations, Mrs. Armstrong. A great day for the United States.

The kids jump up. Janet forces another smile. Still uneasy.

RICK

Hey mom, can I go to Carl's house?

JANET

Sure you can. You just have to be back by 7, okay?

Rick runs off.

RICK
 Yes, ma'am.

MARK
 Can I go too?

Mark calls out as Janet grabs a coffee cup.

JANET
 No, you're staying here with me.

MARK
 Nooo.

LOVELL (ON SQUAWKBOX)
*Gemini 8, we're about to have loss
 of signal, but I have some dope for
 you which we'd like you to follow...*

83 **INT. GEMINI VIII COCKPIT - NIGHT**

83

Dave grabs a pen, takes notes as Lovell continues.

LOVELL (COMMS)
*We'd like to have Dave begin prep
 for EVA. And ENABLE the SPC's... if
 you run into... Attitude... Agena...*

But the comms turn **STATIC** as they lose signal and go into the dark, earth night. Dave drops his pen, grabs a book but sees Neil's pulled out two PACKETS. **DAY 1, MEAL B.**

He holds a packet to a nozzle on the console, injects it with water. It looks pretty bad. Analytical --

NEIL
 Man, that's peculiar.

Dave, who's been looking through a manual, turns to him.

DAVE SCOTT
 Oh, great.

NEIL
 I think there's some air bubbles in it.

DAVE SCOTT
 I think I'm gonna save mine for later. A little treat.

They laugh. Dave puts his meal aside and reaches for a manual, glancing at the console... PAUSING.

DAVE SCOTT
 ...Neil, we're in a bank.

Neil's eyes **TICK** to the **8 BALL**. It shows a 30 degree roll.

DAVE SCOTT

We're not doing it, it's not
us, it must be the --

NEIL

Shut off the Agena's control
system.

Dave quickly follows orders, punching in commands to turn off
the Agena ACS, horizon sensors and geocentric rate.

DAVE SCOTT

Code 400, Agena control system is
shut down.

Neil hits the thrusters, Neil WATCHES the 8 ball... it isn't
working. He switches to rate command, keeps trying...

...when the items floating in the cabin are **SLAMMED UP** against
the walls, as if by an unseen force.

Neil moves to direct. Still can't control the spin. Shit.
Neil scans the console, turns to Dave...

NEIL

Cycle the Agena.

DAVE SCOTT

(commands encoder)
Turning it on...
(commands encoder)
...turning it off.

...but the items remain pressed to the walls. The sun rises
and now the earth swings past the window OVER AND OVER. We
realize **WE'RE SPINNING**. It's **DIZZYING**.

DAVE SCOTT

I'm gonna cycle the ACME and the
propellant motor valves.

Dave does this, no improvement.

NEIL

Switching ADL to pitch.
(no response)
RL to pitch.

PUSH IN on Neil, working the problem, eyes **TICKING...**

...to the 8 BALL showing a HUGE BANK...

...to the ROLL RATE GAUGE moving past 180°/SEC...

...to DAVE STRUGGLING with the disparate G-forces...

DAVE SCOTT

Roll rate is at 180 degrees per
second... 190... 200...

NEIL
Separate from the Agena.

Dave hesitates, but Neil's not waiting. Dave gets to it.

DAVE SCOTT
Setting Agena to allow remote
command, switching on the DAC.

Dave quickly punches commands into the encoder.

DAVE SCOTT
Make sure you give it extra
thrust so we don't smash into
the Agena --

NEIL
On my mark, undock.

The RIGID LIGHT goes **OUT**. Neil **GRABS** the maneuver thruster.

NEIL
2, 1...

Dave FLIPS the undock switch; Neil **PULLS** back on the maneuver thrusters to pull away and the Gemini **JERKS** back...

The Agena SPINS VIOLENTLY outside the window, **NARROWLY MISSES** the nose of the Gemini. Dave looks relieved... until he feels the **G FORCES**. He looks out the window, sees the world pass.

Shit. They're spinning even faster now.

Neil keeps hitting the throttle... but it doesn't help. **SURPRISED**, he drops the stick, eyes **TICKING** from the console to Dave...

DAVE SCOTT
OAMS propellant down to 13 percent,
our roll rate is still rising...
It's not the Agena, it's us!

Neil **STRAINS** against the **ROCKETING G-FORCES**, NAUSEATING and DEADLY... his eyes **TICKING** to the roll rate gauge at **300°/SEC**.

Off the two men, **STRUGGLING** to work the problem, **SMASH TO --**

84

INT. HOLD, COASTAL SENTRY QUEBEC, PACIFIC OCEAN - SAME TIME

84

A windowless room in the hold of the **U.S.N.S. SHIP. JIM FUCCI**, 42, mans a state of the art TRACKING CONSOLE.

MCC NETWORK (COMMS)
*Gemini 8 coming back into
range in 3, 2, 1...*

FUCCI (COMMS)
This is CSQ checking our
comm link. How do read?

Nothing.

FUCCI (INTO COMMS)
Gemini 8. How do you read?

NEIL (COMMS)
We have serious problems.

Fucci **FREEZES**, stares at his instrument panel. The men around him go quiet...

NEIL (COMMS)
We're, we're tumbling end over end up here, we're disengaged from the Agena.

FUCCI (INTO COMMS)
Okay. We got your spacecraft free indication here... what seems to be the problem?

NEIL (COMMS)
..we're rolling up and we can't turn anything off. We're continuously increasing in a left roll...

HODGE (COMMS)
CSQ, Flight.

FUCCI (INTO COMMS)
Go ahead, flight.

Off Fucci, PALE, **SMASH TO --**

85

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - EVENING

85

Kraft, Deke, Hodge and Ed stand by Lovell. The normal chatter in the room has all dropped off.

HODGE (INTO COMMS)
Did he say he could not turn the Agena off?

Everyone is quiet, listening intently to --

FUCCI (COMMS)
No, he says he is separated from the Agena and he's in a roll and he can't stop it. It's approaching one revolution per second, at that rate they could black out any minute...

Ed **TIGHTENS**, looks to the others.

DEKE
Paul. Paul.

Deke gets the attention of PAO Paul Haney, motions for him cut the public feed. As he does, we **SMASH TO --**

86 **INT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - EVENING**

86

Janet, **WHITE**, kneels by the squawk box.

NEIL (COMMS)

*We have a violent left roll... we're
rolling up and we can't...*

The box **CUTS OUT**. No static. Just **SILENCE**. Janet hits the power, than the volume. No response. She **SLAMS** the box. Then again, **HARDER**. *Nothing*.

MISSION CONTROL MUST HAVE CUT IT OFF. Janet **SPINS** on the NASA Public Affairs Officer... who looks frightened himself.

PAO

They must have cut it off.

JANET

Well, get them to turn it back on.

PAO

I'm sorry, ma'am.

Off Janet, now struggling not to **VOMIT**, **COMPLETELY TERRIFIED** --

87 **OMITTED**

87

88 **INT. GEMINI VIII COCKPIT - DAY (SAME TIME)**

88

A **DIZZYING SPIN**... the ship **GROANS**, ready to **RUPTURE** as **SUNLIGHT BLAZES** intermittently, a **NAUSEATING STROBE LIGHT**...

The comms go to **STATIC** as the **EXTREME G-FORCES OVERCOME** Dave, his eyes **ROLLING BACK**. Neil clocks it, but tries to remain focused on the console, trying thrusters, the stick, searching for an answer as...

Sound **FADES**. Just the **SLOSHING** in Neil's ears. **SMASH INTO** --

NEIL'S POV. His peripheral vision **DISAPPEARING**. He **SHUTS** his eyes and **OPENS** them... everything **SPINS** at stomach-churning speed. The sloshing in his ears **FADES** to **CHILLING QUIET**...

Neil **SHUTS HIS EYES** again... trying to **PUSH** the sound away. In the dark, he faintly **HEARS** a HISSING. A **THOUGHT** occurs...

Neil's eyes **FLY OPEN**. He **YANKS** the breakers, CUTS POWER. It goes **BLACK**, save for the **STROBING SUN**. His eyes **TICK** to the **GAUGES**. **OAMS DROP** but ROLL RATE keeps RISING...

...the needle inching past 360°/second.

Neil's eyes start to ROLL BACK... He **FORCES** them to focus, only seconds remaining... **DARTING** across the controls... fixating at last on the **RCS SWITCHES** on the center console.

NEIL

Close the RCS breakers. Dave.

Neil shakes Dave. But Dave, GROGGY, can't follow. Neil turns back to the console, then...

...strains to **REACH OVER HIS HEAD...**

At last he hits the RCS squibs, pulls the RCS switch on then flicks into RCS Direct on the front console.

NOTHING HAPPENS. **Shit.** Neil blinks, bleary...

FUCCI (COMMS)

Gemini 8, did you say you are closing RCS breakers? If you run out of RCS fuel you'll have no control on re-entry...

Neil, struggling to stay conscious, pulls himself awake... his eyes search for an answer on the console...

...he spots the ACME bias power is off.

Neil again reaches up, goes through the same sequence and...

TWHIP, THWIP, THWIP! The re-entry thrusters **FIRE...**

Neil **GRIPS** the thruster, **BATTLES** to stabilize the ship... His eyes **TICK** to the ROLL RATE...

365, 370, 375, 375... the needle **HOLDS.** **STEADY.**

PUSH IN ON NEIL *forcing himself to stay conscious.* He **STARES** at the needle, **WILLING** it to FALL as we **SMASH TO --**

89 **INT. BRIDGE, COASTAL SENTRY QUEBEC - EVENING**

89

CLOSE ON a needle, **STILL QUIVERING** at **375°/second.** Men cluster around Fucci, staring. And sweating.

Fucci pauses. On his console, the RCS LIGHT has **BLINKED ON.**

90 **INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - EVENING**

90

It's **SILENT.** The room crowds around Lovell, hanging on every word. Ed, tense, looks to Kraft, Deke, Hodge and Gilruth, who's just joined. All of them look **GRIM.**

HODGE (COMMS)
CSQ, is there a status update?

FUCCI (COMMS)
*He's blown both RCS squibs. They
 have initiated squibs and blown 'em.*

Why blow RCS squibs? An awful beat as the men try to process.

FUCCI (COMMS)
*And he's lost considerable gas
 pressure in...*

STATIC cuts him off. Then, faintly...

NEIL (COMMS)
*Okay we're, uh, regaining control of
 the spacecraft slowly in RCS direct.*

A huge intake of breath.

FUCCI (COMMS)
Roger, copy.

HODGE (INTO HEADSET)
 (relieved)
 Roger, copy.

NEIL (COMMS)
*We're pulsing the RCS slowly, it's
 all roll right...*

We clock the **RELIEF** in Ed's eyes as we **SMASH BACK TO --**

91 **INT. GEMINI VIII COCKPIT - DAY (SAME TIME)**

91

Dave, foggy, unsettled, watches Neil calmly pulsing the RCS, his eyes on the DROPPING roll rate gauge: **90°... 80°... 70°.**

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 We're trying to kill our roll rate
 here.

Dave nods. The sun stops strobing, flight plans and ephemera peel off the walls and start floating about the cabin again...

NEIL
 Move us back to one ring.

DAVE SCOTT

Copy.

Off Neil, **CUT BACK TO --**

92 **INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - NIGHT**

92

Kraft leans into Hodge, Deke hovering.

KRAFT

I want emergency landing options.

DEKE

You don't wanna wait to find out how much fuel he's got left?

Kraft considers, then turns to Gilruth.

KRAFT

Bob, what do you think?

GILRUTH

I think they'd better land now.

Deke **PROCESSES** as Ed walks up. He leans in, sotto --

ED

Deke. Jan's outside.

93

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE MISSION CONTROL CENTER, MSC - NIGHT

93

CLOSE ON Janet by the door. **CLENCHED.** Eyes radiating **INTENSE RAGE.** And **TERROR.** A beat, then Deke and Ed walk out.

DEKE

Jan, the ship is stable, they're going to be all right, Jan.

Janet doesn't believe him. She looks to Ed again.

ED

He's okay.

She takes a breath, processing.

DEKE

I need you to go home.

JANET

Fine. Turn the box back on.

DEKE

I'll see what I can --

JANET

Now. Turn the box back on now.

DEKE

...well, there's security protocols --

JANET

I don't give a damn. I've got a dozen reporters on my front lawn, you want me telling them what's going on?

DEKE

Jan, you have to trust us, we've got this under control.

JANET

No, you don't. All these protocols and procedures to make it seem like you have it 'under control'. But you're a bunch of boys making models out of balsa wood, you don't have anything under control.

TEARS WELL; embarrassed and FURIOUS, she **STALKS OFF.** Off Ed --

94 **OMITTED** 94

95-96 **OMITTED** 95-96

97 **INT. GEMINI VIII COCKPIT - DAY** 97

Dave stows gear while Neil checks headings, helmets now on.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

Naha RESCUE 1 will be on station at splashdown with a flotation collar.

The COMMS **CUT OUT.** They're on their own.

NEIL

Did you get the call signs?

DAVE SCOTT

Yeah. It's Naha RESCUE 1, Naha SEARCH 1.

Neil pauses.

NEIL

Well, I'd like to argue with them. About the going home. But I'm not sure how we can.

DAVE SCOTT

Yeah.

The slightest hint of frustration. But there's nothing to do.

NEIL

I keep thinking is there anything else that we forgot...

DAVE SCOTT)

We did everything, far as I know.

NEIL

Okay.

Dave turns to the basic computer, starts punching in numbers. Neil prepares as well, when in the window he sees...

The **AGENA**. Floating in the distance. Neil stops, confronting the FAILURE of the mission. He's quietly devastated.

He sits there for a moment, staring out, then gets back to it.

Neil looks UNSURE. But they need to finish. Neil flicks the four squibs, they close their visors and...

CAPCOM (COMMS)

5, 4, 3, 2, 1, retrofire.

SMASH TO --

98 **INT. AUDITORIUM, MANNED SPACE CENTER - HOUSTON, TX - DAY** 98

Gilruth stands at the podium, addressing a **MASS** of reporters. Deke watches from the audience.

**Gemini VIII Pilot Press Conference
March 26, 1966**

GILRUTH

Gemini 8 saw two complex vehicles launched on the same day, on time. We saw a flawless rendezvous and docking. All of which has tended to be overshadowed by the malfunction.

Find Neil behind him with Dave and NASA personnel. Neil looks EVEN MORE UNCOMFORTABLE than he was moments ago...

GILRUTH

But I think we should focus on the progress resulting from the mission.

99 **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, MANNED SPACE CENTER - DAY** 99

CLOSE ON a finger pressing "**Record**" on a REEL-TO-REEL.

GEORGE MUELLER

The board would like to focus on the malfunction.

Gilruth, Kraft, Deke and Nasa Associate Administrator **GEORGE MUELLER**, 49, at a long table. Neil and Dave sit across from them. It's a **FORMAL MISSION REVIEW...**

...and judging by Mueller's tone, Neil's job is on the line.

GEORGE MUELLER
Neil, walk us through the decision
to separate from the Agena.

As Neil considers, we **SMASH BACK TO --**

100 **INT. AUDITORIUM, MANNED SPACE CENTER - HOUSTON, TX - DAY** 100

Reporters **CLAMOR**. JULIAN SCHEER, the NASA HQ Assistant
Administrator for Public Affairs points to the Houston Post.

HOUSTON POST REPORTER
You mentioned the rate of revolution
was more than once a second. How
near were you to being unconscious?

NEIL
We didn't have any specific
difficulty in observing the panel.

HOUSTON POST REPORTER
You hadn't begun to gray out or
anything like that?

Off Neil, HESITATING, not in his element, **SMASH BACK TO --**

101 **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, MANNED SPACE CENTER - DAY** 101

GEORGE MUELLER
Did you think to use the Agena to
stabilize the combined craft?

NEIL
We did. This was not successful.
As I said, we initially assumed that
the anomaly was with the Agena
control system. There was no way to
know a thruster on the Gemini was
causing-- if we could've isolated
each of Gemini thrusters, if we'd
had that capability in the moment --

SMASH BACK TO --

102 **INT. AUDITORIUM, MANNED SPACE CENTER - HOUSTON, TX - DAY** 102

Questions **KEEP COMING**. In **QUICK CUTS --**

AGENCE FRANCE REPORTER
Agence France. Did you have any
feeling of anxiety after the failure
of the thrusters?

HAMBURG PRESS

In the midst of the spinning did you seem to realize or feel the presence of God closer than other times?

TIMES REPORTER

With this so hot on the heels of the loss of Charlie Bassett and Elliot See, do you question whether the program's worth the cost? In money and in lives?

SPIN BACK TO Neil. Blank, EXHAUSTED. **SMASH BACK TO --**

103 **INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, MANNED SPACE CENTER - DAY**

103

Neil and Dave still sitting there.

GEORGE MUELLER

Alright, thanks, guys. We've got a lot to discuss and we'll be back in touch with you soon.

It's not warm.

NEIL

Thank you.

As a hand **SHUTS OFF** the REEL-TO-REEL, we **CUT TO --**

104 **INT. NEIL'S OFFICE, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - DAY**

104

CLOSE ON Neil on the phone. As AGITATED as we've seen him.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)

'Our Wild Ride in Space'? It sounds sensationalist to me.

Neil stares at an ADVANCED COPY of a Life Magazine article. We hear piano from the living room and we **INTERCUT WITH --**

105 **OMITTED**

105

A106 **INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - SAME TIME**

A106

CLOSE ON small hands playing a piano. REVEAL Rick practicing. Janet stands over him, trying to help.

JANET

We're using our thumb now, honey.

She hears Neil, inside his office.

IN HIS OFFICE, Neil walks back and forth, carrying the cradle.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
Well, that's not my concern.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, Janet walks over to the table to wrap a birthday present from Mark.

RICK
Seriously?

JANET
I don't want to hear it.

IN HIS OFFICE, Neil's frustration builds.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
I'm not interested in how other magazines are framing the story, I think it's an inappropriate title for the piece.

Neil kicks the door shut.

IN THE LIVING ROOM, Rick stops playing, looks to Janet.

Janet reacts, sees Rick looking at her. She forces a smile, trying to pretend it's nothing.

IN HIS OFFICE, Neil puts down the cradle.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
Well, then maybe you should take my name off it.

Neil hangs up, putting the receiver down with some **FORCE**. He walks back and forth in his office. Not happy.

He spots an old MODEL PLANE. Reacts. Looks off.

FLASH TO --

Karen. In Juniper Hills. Smiling at him.

FLASH BACK TO Neil. STRUGGLING. Off that look, **PRELAP --**

PAT (**PRELAP**)

If it's any consolation, Ed was a zombie for weeks after Gemini Four.

106 **EXT. ED & PAT WHITE'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

106

Janet stands with Pat beside a lemonade stand Bonnie set up.

JANET

Yeah?

PAT

Uh huh.

JANET

Yeah, I guess it must be...
disorienting for them.

Pat nods. A beat.

JANET

God, I married Neil because I wanted
a normal life.

Pat chuckles. Janet laughs too.

JANET

I know. He was just so different
from all the other boys on campus.
He'd been through the war, you know.
He knew what he wanted to do. It
seemed so stable.

(then)

I guess all I wanted was stability.

Janet's smile fades. A darkness crosses. Pat reads it.

PAT

I've got a sorority sister with a
normal life.

JANET

Yeah?

PAT

She married a dentist.

JANET

A dentist. Sounds good.

PAT

He's home by six every night. And
every few months she calls to say
she wishes he weren't.

Janet manages a smile. A beat, **CUT TO --**

107 **INT. NEIL'S OFFICE, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

107

A LARGE DESK. **SCHEMATICS** of the Agena, **DIAGRAMS** of the Gemini thrusters... Neil hunched over it all. We hear a **KNOCK.**

NEIL

Yeah.

Ed walks in.

ED

Still working, I see?

NEIL

Yeah.

Ed clocks the copy of LIFE in the waste basket.

ED

Well, I was, uh, gonna go grab a beer at Dave's.

No response from Neil. Ed, giving up, starts to retreat...

ED

Alright...

NEIL

...I could use a beer.

Ed pauses. He and Neil share a smile. **PRELAP MUSIC, CUT TO --**

108 **EXT. BACKYARD, DAVE SCOTT'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

108

Neil and Ed drink with Dave on the patio; through the window, we see the shadow of Dave's wife doing dishes.

The three men listen to the **RADIO.**

DAVE SCOTT

You know, I will say one thing.
It's all I can think about. Getting
back up there.

Dave looks down.

ED

You just caught a rough break. I
was talking about it with Gus and we
both agreed, you did everything
right. Everything.

He says it to both of them, but it's directed at Neil.

DAVE SCOTT

Yeah, I heard a rumor you'd been hanging out with Gus.

ED

You did?

DAVE SCOTT

Ed. Hey, hey, is it true?

Neil looks at Ed.

NEIL

Is what true?

Ed hesitates. Can't help but smile.

ED

Deke pulled me aside and told me he and Gus want me on the crew.

NEIL

For the first Apollo?

Ed nods. Dave explodes, excited for Ed. Neil GRINS.

DAVE SCOTT

Yeah, yeah. Holy shit.
That's huge!

NEIL

Congratulations. I've gotta shake your hand.

Neil smiles, stands, holding out his hand. Ed smiles, shakes.

ED

Thanks, man.

NEIL

Saturn's a monster.

ED

It is.

NEIL

You're in for one heck of a ride.

DAVE SCOTT

And hey! You know Deke wants Gus to be the first one on the moon, so... this puts you in the LM with him for the landing.

ED

Let's not get carried away here...

DAVE SCOTT

Come on, Ed...

But Ed's not having it. Dave shakes his head, playful.

DAVE SCOTT

Alright, get out of my house, I'm gonna go to bed. I'm not kidding, get out of my house.

The men laugh and we **CUT TO --**

110 **INT. GILRUTH'S SECRETARY'S OFFICE, MSC - DAY**

110

Neil, in a chair, in the reception area. As anxious as he gets. SWEATING a little. At last, the door opens.

DEKE

Neil.

Neil stands. Quickly. Deke leads him into --

111 **INT. GILRUTH'S OFFICE, MANNED SPACE CENTER - DAY**

111

Wood paneling, a few service plaques, function over form. Gilruth sits behind a desk.

GILRUTH

Hey, Neil. Don't bother sitting, it's gonna be a short meeting.

Neil stands. A tense beat.

GILRUTH

We've talked it through and we think it's pretty clear. If you hadn't kept cool, well, you wouldn't be here and we'd still be asking what the hell happened.

DEKE

So would Congress. It's a showstopper.

GILRUTH

This mission was a success. We're full steam ahead for Apollo. You good with that?

NEIL

...yes sir.

It's a **BIG MOMENT**. Even Neil can't mask his **RELIEF**.

GILRUTH

I trust you won't mind representing us at the White House?

NEIL

No sir.

GILRUTH

Good.

Off Neil, we **CUT TO** --

112 **EL LAGO (APOLLONIA) MONTAGE** 112

In a series of QUICK CUTS, we see --

112A ARMSTRONG KITCHEN. Neil studies a preliminary Apollo flight plan... at least until he realizes that someone's put his wallet on his head. He smiles, grabs Rick. 112A

112B ARMSTRONG HALL/BEDROOM. Neil creeps down the hall, in pursuit of the boys. He slips into the bedroom; Rick runs out but Neil finds Mark, playfully throws him up over his shoulder. 112B

112C ARMSTRONG KITCHEN. Neil tries to punish Mark, makes him stand in the corner. Janet covers a smile, then can't help it, starts laughing. Neil can't help but laugh too... 112C

113 ARMSTRONG POOL. Summer chaos. Green trees, bright sun. Local kids in the pool. Rick dives in as the Whites' dog barks at Eddie White, using a HOPPITY HOP to splash Bonnie and Carrie, floating in the USS Eggshell. Off the joy, **PRELAP** -- 113

ED (**PRELAP**)

I tell you Eddie started asking questions about the new command module?

109 **EXT. EL LAGO STREET - LATER THAT NIGHT** 109

Ed and Neil walk home.

NEIL

Is that right?

ED

Yeah, he wants to, wants to know if it's gonna fly any different from Gemini. If all the buttons are gonna be in the same place.

Neil smiles, looks over at Ed.

NEIL

Oh boy. You've got yourself a little engineer there.

Ed laughs, looks up at the moon.

ED (CONT'D)

I tell you, though, I love that he's interested. He came in the other morning, he comes running up and he says, "Daddy, if you go to the moon, are you gonna be lonely out there? So far away from earth? All of us back here at home?"

(then)

This whole thing is expanding his horizons... It, uh, you know, it gives me faith. Make sense?

But Neil's distracted. He eyes a **SWING** in a neighbor's yard. Ed notices him staring.

NEIL

Lunneys got a new swing set.

ED

Yeah, I noticed that.

Neil walks on for a beat.

NEIL

We had a swing like that back up in Juniper Hills.

(then)

Karen really loved it.

ED

...that's your daughter.

Neil doesn't answer. He looks again at the swing. Ed starts to say something but...

NEIL

I guess I oughta be getting home.

Neil goes. Off Ed, realizing how deep that wound is --

114 **OMITTED** 114

A115 **OMITTED** A115

116 **INT. GANTRY ELEVATOR, LAUNCH TOWER, PAD 34, KSC - DAY** 116

Deke rides the elevator with Gus, Ed and Chaffee, spacesuits and helmets with visors up. Ed, all **NERVOUS EXCITEMENT**, wouldn't trade this for the world. But Gus is concerned.

GUS

I think the 21st is pushing it.

DEKE
The Russians have already
tested the Soyuz.

GUS
I'm aware the Russians've
already tested it, but if the
command module's not ready --

ED
It'll be ready, Gus.

GUS
I'm not going up there in a goddamn
lemon.

DEKE
No, we wouldn't let you. If the
ship doesn't pass plugs out, we'll
go back to the drawing board.

The elevator stops. **Short.** A FOOT below the bridge to the
APOLLO COMMAND MODULE. Gus **SHOOTS** Deke a look, we **CUT TO --**

115 **INT. GREEN ROOM, THE WHITE HOUSE - DAY**

115

Lovell and Neil, in SUIT AND TIE, talk to a SENATOR. Neil
clings to a wine glass. Around him, CHATTER and PIANO.

LOVELL
Well, we're very, very bullish on
Apollo, Senator.

SENATOR
I should hope so, given the time
we've spent developing it. Times
have changed, you know. Half the
country doesn't think it's worth it
anymore.

NEIL
We only learned to fly sixty years
ago, so I think if you consider the
technological developments in the
context of history, it's really not--

SENATOR
I'm considering it in the context of
taxpayer dollars.

LOVELL
(stepping in)
And so are we, Senator. Between us,
we're doing some final tests on the
new command module today.

(MORE)

LOVELL (CONT'D)

I'm sure Mr. Gilruth would be happy
to tell you about it. Let me
introduce you to Bob, come on...

Lovell leads him away. Neil eyes the UNCTUOUS POLITICOS, Pete Conrad working on a few of them. Off Neil, maybe wondering how long until he can get back to work, we **CUT TO --**

117 **INT. THE WHITE ROOM, ADJUSTABLE LEVEL 8, PAD 34 - MOMENTS LATER** 7

The Pad Leader oversees techs removing thick power cords from the new APOLLO COMMAND MODULE.

PAD LEADER

Closing hatches now.

Ed, in the capsule, helmet on, pushes the inner hatch towards us, SEALING THE COMMAND MODULE.

Techs close the hatch above, using one RATCHET to tighten all SIX LATCHES... They close the cover, start the process again.

INTERCUT WITH --

118 **INT. APOLLO COCKPIT, PAD 34 - SAME TIME**

118

CLOSE ON another a hand using a ratchet to lock the hatch.

ED (O.C.)

Okay, that's all of 'em.

FIND Ed in the familiar Apollo cockpit. He glances at the locked latches, puts away his ratchet.

IN THE WHITE ROOM. The techs close up the ablative hatch.

PAD LEADER (COMMS)

*Ablative hatch closed. Closing the
boost protective cover.*

They close the boost protective cover, then start to remove all of the hoses and wires connecting the craft to the ground.

PAD LEADER (COMMS)

And plugs out.

The techs finish up, leave the White Room.

IN THE APOLLO COCKPIT. The men sit, ready to start the test.

GUS (INTO COMMS)

Ready for oxygen purge.

We hear the **HISS** of oxygen... and **SNIPPETS** of conversation over Comms. Gus, beside Ed, hits the COMMS BUTTON.

GUS (INTO COMMS)
Guys, you want to hold down the chatter? We've got an open mic.

ROCCO PETRONE (COMMS)
Uh, let's hold the countdown.

A beat. The crew looks annoyed as they wait for further instructions from LAUNCH DIRECTOR **ROCCO PETRONE**.

ROCCO PETRONE (COMMS)
Sorry guys, we'll get this squared.

GUS (INTO COMMS)
Shit, we're gonna be here all night. ROCCO PETRONE (COMMS)
...Gus, we didn't get that.

GUS (INTO COMMS)
Course you didn't.
(off Ed's laugh)
Glad you think this is funny.

Ed smiles. Gus, **PISSED**, shakes his head, we **TIME CUT TO --**

119 **INT. APOLLO COCKPIT, PAD 34 - FOUR HOURS LATER (EVENING)** 119

It's dark out the window now. Ed reads a manual, **BORED**. Gus, frustrated, sweating, lifts up his visor, rubs his face. **HOLD** for a long beat. Then Roger gives it a shot.

CHAFFEE (INTO COMMS)
Well I haven't talked yet, how's this? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.

No response. **UNNERVING**. Unsettling. **STATIC** over comms.

DEKE (COMMS)
...ah, we need another minute to get it sorted. GUS (INTO COMMS)
How are we gonna get to the moon if we can't talk between three buildings?

No response. It's warm. Ed sweats, lifts his visor too.

ED (INTO COMMS)
They can't hear a thing you're saying. GUS (INTO COMMS)
Jesus Christ.

ROCCO PETRONE (COMMS)
Say again?

GUS (INTO COMMS)
 (annoyed)
 I said how are we gonna get to the
 moon if we can't talk between two or
 three buildings?

Nothing. Ed chuckles.

ED (INTO COMMS)
 You tell 'em, Gus.

GUS (INTO COMMS)
 Mickey Mouse shit.

TECH (COMMS)
*I got a surge in the AC Bus 2
 Voltage.*

ROCCO PETRONE (COMMS)
Try resetting the meter.

DEKE (COMMS)
You getting this, Gus?

Gus, happy to have something to do, leans forward.

GUS (INTO COMMS)
 Rog, you pick anything up on the
 dials?

Now Chaffee looks... and spots a spark... then a **SMALL FLAME**
 on the floor. Before he can react, the flame **JUMPS**.

ED (INTO COMMS)
 Hey, we got a fire in the cockpit.

Flames **FLASH** through the cockpit, **FIRE BLAZING** around them.

Ed grabs the ratchet, loosens the latches and pulls at the
 hatch... *but it won't budge, the pressure inside too great.*

CHAFFEE (INTO COMMS)
 We got a bad fire! We're burning up in
 here!

ON ED, REALIZING, as FIRE RUSHES IN with speed as shocking as
 it is terrifying and **THE FLASH OF AN EXPLOSION SMASHES US TO --**

A120 **INT. WHITE ROOM, PAD 34, KSC - SAME TIME**

A120

CRACK! The boost protective cover **RUPTURES**, smoke trickling
 out and we **SMASH TO --**

120 **OMITTED**

120

A121 **INT. GREEN ROOM, THE WHITE HOUSE - EVENING**

A121

Neil's at the bar. A WHITE HOUSE STAFFER walks up.

WHITE HOUSE STAFFER
Mr. Armstrong? I have Deke Slayton
on the phone for you.

Neil's a bit surprised, but he's happy for the distraction.
He takes his glass as the staffer leads him out into --

121 **INT. HALLWAY, THE WHITE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

121

A black phone on small side table. Neil picks up.

NEIL
Thank you.
(into phone)
I'm glad you called, I'm not sure if
I'm helping or hurting over here.

DEKE (OVER PHONE)
Neil, we had a problem with
the plugs out test.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
That's why we have tests,
right? We'll figure it out.

DEKE (OVER PHONE)
...there was a fire. There's no
easy way to say this... Ed, Gus and
Roger, they're gone.

Wait... *what?* Neil tries to process. His eyes **DARKEN**.

DEKE (OVER PHONE)
Neil, listen, we need you guys to
head back to the hotel. The press
is going to be all over this,
Congress is going to be calling for
investigations, we just don't want
you guys in the middle of all that.
(then)
Do you understand?

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
Yeah.

DEKE (OVER PHONE)
Alright then.

NEIL (INTO PHONE)
Okay.

Neil slowly hangs up. He sits, his face TAUT. He starts to
SHAKE, CLENCHING his jaw...

Until we hear a **POP**.

Neil FLINCHES. Sees his hand is covered in **BLOOD**, the glass
he was holding **IN PIECES**.

A beat. Neil reaches into his coat pocket for a handkerchief and wraps the wound. His face blank...

...save for his eyes. He is quietly devastated.

As he stands there, still processing, we **PRELAP** --

ED (**PRELAP**, ON TV)

I think a lot of people forget about the influence that the lunar program has on the raising of our young people in the country.

122 **INT. CONRAD'S ROOM, GEORGETOWN INN - LATER**

122

CLOSE ON a TV. Footage of a CBS interview. With Ed.

ED (ON TV)

I think that if a civilization doesn't look out, if it doesn't try to expand its horizons, then we're not going to progress as a nation.

Neil, Conrad and Lovell now in shirtsleeves, stare at the screen. And drink. CBS cuts to anchor MIKE WALLACE.

MIKE WALLACE (ON TV)

At 10:30 tonight Eastern Time, rescue teams began to remove the bodies of the three astronauts from the charred spacecraft. A NASA spokesman said the dead astronauts were left in the ship for four hours to aid the investigation into the tragedy.

PUSH IN on Neil. His eyes are full of **PAIN. ANGER.** But as Wallace talks, we see him slowly **PUSH THOSE EMOTIONS DOWN...**

MIKE WALLACE (ON TV)

And according to the latest information from NASA at the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston, the first Apollo flight, which was scheduled for February the 21st, has now been postponed indefinitely...

...and as Neil's eyes **HARDEN**, we...

FADE TO BLACK.

**Ellington Air Force Base
1968**

SMASH TO --

123 **EXT. ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE - HOUSTON, TX - DAY**

123

TIGHT ON NEIL'S FACE. Eyes focused. *Wounds buried, scar tissue invisible to most, less so to us.*

FRANK BORMAN (COMMS)
*Winds are pretty rough today, keep
an eye on your yaw.*

PULL BACK to find Neil exposed to the elements, strapped into **THE LUNAR LANDING TRAINING VEHICLE...**

A MESS of METAL PIPES with a COCKPIT.

Neil hits the thruster. A BURST of peroxide **JOLTS** the craft left and we **PULL BACK FURTHER** to FIND Neil... **1000 FEET IN THE AIR** in a contraption that doesn't look like it should fly.

Jesus. The camera does a **WILD 360** around the belching craft then... **PUSHES IN** on Neil.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
One thousand feet. Switching to
lunar mode and starting descent.

Neil switches from gimbal lock to lunar simulation mode. He begins to guide the LLTV to a landing.

Thrusters **POP** and **HISS**, the jet engine below him **ROARS** and the craft **BUCKS**, but Neil's eyes REMAIN STEADY, ticking from his surroundings to his gauges.

CLOSE ON the ALTITUDE GAUGE: **700... 400... 200 feet.**

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Final landing approach.

Neil pilots the LLTV down through 100 feet... when the bottom **FALLS OUT.** The craft starts to **DROP RAPIDLY.** Neil **PULLS** on the thruster, but the LLTV doesn't respond.

FRANK BORMAN (COMMS)
You're too low. Neil! Climb!

Neil **SWITCHES** back to GIMBAL LOCK...

The craft **SHOOTS UP** to 200 feet... Neil tries to regain control, but the craft **QUICKLY SLIDES RIGHT!!**

Thrusters **SPIT** steam; the peroxide burns Neil's neck as he tries to correct the roll... but the craft goes **UP ON ITS SIDE LIKE A CARNIVAL RIDE!!**

FRANK BORMAN (COMMS)
Neil, slow your rates! Neil,
do you read?

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Control is degrading.

But Borman's voice FADES... then **THE SOUND DROPS OUT ENTIRELY**. In the **SILENCE** we **PUSH IN TIGHT** on Neil's face. We clock the **INTENSITY, HARD** and **COLD**, the **DARKNESS** in his eyes...

...MORE FRIGHTENING than anything happening around him.
 Neil's eyes **TICK DOWN**, the ground **RUSHING UP** to meet him.

LIGHTENING FAST Neil **PULLS** the ejection handle. **BOOM!!!**
 Sound comes **RUSHING** back as the Ejection Seat **EXPLODES** out of the LLTV, **TOSSING** Neil up into the air!!!

POP! Neil's parachute unfurls, stabilizing him just in time to see the LLTV CRASH below... and **BURST INTO FLAMES**.

Neil floats down quickly, lands **HARD**... and is immediately **YANKED** back by his parachute... which **DRAGS** him through the high grass. Neil **STRUGGLES** to stop rolling...

...at last coming to a halt. He **STAGGERS** to his feet, face red, bleeding... the LLTV a **FIERY BLAZE OF METAL** in the b/g.

DEKE (PRELAP)
 The vehicle is not safe.

124 **INT. WORK SPACE, MANNED SPACE CENTER - DAY**

124

A huge hangar, techs look over F-1 ROCKET ENGINES. Gilruth and Deke walk with Neil, bad **SCRATCHES** on his face and neck.

NEIL
 Unfortunately, it's the best simulation we have.

Neil is fairly calm; Gilruth and Deke less so.

GILRUTH
 You and the others are too valuable.

DEKE
 It's a fly by wire system, it's got no backup.

NEIL
 The ejection seat is the backup.

GILRUTH

Neil, the political fallout
from another accident --

NEIL

With all due respect, it's
not my job to worry about the
political fallout.

DEKE

The damn thing could have
killed you.

NEIL

Well, it didn't.

DEKE

A split second more and --

NEIL

We need to fail.

Neil stops, turns to face them.

NEIL

We need to fail down here so we
don't fail up there.

GILRUTH

Neil, at what cost? Huh?

NEIL

At what cost? It's a little late
for that question, isn't it sir?

Neil turns, heads off. Off Gilruth and Deke --

A125 **INT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

A125

Janet walks out of the laundry room with a basket of folded
clothes. She walks through the house...

...dropping dish towels in THE KITCHEN... hand towels in THE
BATHROOM... and finally turning into...

125 **INT. RICK'S BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON**

125

Janet puts the basket on the bed, moves to put a few shirts in
his dresser drawer... and SOMETHING CATCHES HER EYE.

REVERSE TO the Whites' house, Pat's car in the driveway. Pat
is staring down into her open trunk. She doesn't move.

Janet, DISCONCERTED, wipes off her hands and heads outside.

126 **EXT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE/WHITE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

126

Janet, a jacket on, walks across the street, approaches Pat.
We note fallen autumn leaves in a yard that needs raking.

JANET

Pat? Pat. You okay?

At last, Pat looks up. Eyes VACANT.

PAT

Yes.

The trunk is **EMPTY**. Janet sees Eddie in the window, then glances at Pat, now staring off into the distance. Janet SWALLOWS her emotions.

JANET

Why don't we go inside.

She closes the trunk. And gently leads Pat inside.

127 **INT. KITCHEN, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - LATER**

127

Janet walks in. **DEEPLY UNSETTLED**, more **FRAGILE** than we've seen, she pulls a pack of cigarettes from the drawer...

She tries to light up, but her hands are **SHAKING**.

At last she manages, takes a shaky drag, trying to settle herself. A beat, then she hears the door. She looks up...

Neil walks in, hurries down the hall, **WIPING** past the kitchen.

HOLD ON Janet, **CLOCKING** the bruise on his face.

She starts to follow... then stops to put the cigarette out. As she rushes after Neil, we **FOLLOW HER** down the hall into --

128 **INT. BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

128

Neil's changing his shirt.

JANET

Are you okay?
(off his face)
Jesus.

NEIL

I'm fine.

JANET

Look at your face.

Janet's concerned, but Neil **AVOIDS** her gaze, heading past her, back into --

A129 **INT. HALL/KITCHEN, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

A129

Neil moves down **THE HALL** towards the kitchen. He tries to act normal, tucking in his shirt...

...but THE BOYS run in, excited Neil's home early.

RICK

Dad, wanna come play?

Neil, flustered, doesn't answer. Janet pulls the boys back as he pours himself a glass of iced tea.

JANET

Ricky, boys, go back, go back and, go back and play your game.

RICK

His face...

JANET

I know, I know. Dad's fine. Go back, go back and play...

They back out... but Janet turns back to Neil and can't stop herself. She walks towards him.

JANET

What happened?

Neil hesitates, it's suddenly **STIFLING**. He can't be there.

NEIL

I, uh...

JANET

(reaching for his face)
Jesus.

NEIL

I just remembered, I left something at the office.

He walks past her, grabbing his briefcase. She's stunned.

JANET

Do you know what time you'll be back?

But he walks out the door. **HOLD ON** Janet for a moment, **DESPERATELY STRUGGLING** to find her balance...

B129 **EXT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

B129

Neil gets into the car and backs down the drive way. As he pulls off, leaving the house behind, we hear **DRUM BEATS...**

129 **OMITTED**

129

A130 **NASA PROTEST MONTAGE**

A130

In a series of QUICK CUTS, a number of public figures and ordinary Americans **CRITICIZE** NASA and the TAX DOLLARS spent on the attempt to send a man to the moon. This takes us to --

130 **EXT. PROTEST, CAPE KENNEDY - DAY**

130

Over a hundred **PROTESTORS**, many camped out, some playing music. A couple news vans. We **PAN OVER** a SPATE OF SIGNS...

"How many must we sacrifice?" "GRISSOM, WHITE, CHAFFEE, SEE, BASSETT, FREEMAN, WILLIAMS, GIVENS, LAWRENCE."

"Billions for space, but pennies for the hungry?"

Beside this last sign, we find a drummer and an African American man, GIL SCOTT HERON, singing into a microphone.

GIL SCOTT HERON

*A rat done bit my sister Nell
with Whitey on the moon.
Her face and arms begin to swell
and Whitey's on the moon.*

Heron continues singing as we **INTERCUT WITH** --

INT. F-1 MANUFACTURING PLANT, ROCKETDYNE - CANOGA PARK, CA - DAY

Techs oversee **MOLTEN STEEL** poured into a mold. We don't see what they're building at first...

GIL SCOTT HERON (V.O.)

*I can't pay no doctor bill,
but Whitey's on the moon.
Ten years from now I'll be paying still,
while Whitey's on the moon.*

ANGLE ON a familiar **F-1 ROCKET ENGINE** from the Saturn V rocket as techs spray it with water, cooling it down.

CAPE KENNEDY PROTEST

The mixed crowd gathers in, listening to Heron as he sings in front of a purple peace sign.

GIL SCOTT HERON

*You know the man just upped my rent last night.
Cause Whitey's on the moon.
No hot water, no toilets, no lights.
But Whitey's on the moon.*

We now see the familiar VAB BUILDING towering in the distance. The music takes us to...

131 **EXT. VEHICLE ASSEMBLY BUILDING, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME**

CLOSE ON the a huge **SATURN ROCKET**... rolling out of the VAB.

GIL SCOTT HERON (V.O.)
*I wonder why he's upping me?
Cause Whitey's on the moon?
I was already giving him like fifty a week.
With Whitey on the moon.*

The drums continue as we **REVEAL** a massive APOLLO CRAWLER-TRANSPORTER slowly moving the SATURN towards the launch pad.

MIKE COLLINS (O.C.)
Jesus, that's a big mother.

MIKE COLLINS, 38, is with Neil, Buzz, Lovell and others, just beyond the Crawler-Transporter, staring up at the rocket.

BUZZ
It'll go up like a half kiloton a-
bomb if it blows.

The guys look at Buzz; will he take a hint? He doesn't.

BUZZ
It's a political rush job. Congress
wouldn't fund us to come in second.
Why else would NASA be sending a
virtually untested rocket to the
moon?

Lovell stares at him. Then --

LOVELL
Thanks for the insight, Buzz.
Always a pleasure with you.

Lovell walks off. Mike shoots a look at Buzz.

BUZZ
Doesn't matter. He's not in the
lunar lottery.

MIKE COLLINS
And you are?

BUZZ
The only guys they let on the LLTV
since Neil's accident are the ones
who might land.
(MORE)

BUZZ (CONT'D)

That's Neil or Conrad and I'm backup with Neil, so...

COLLINS

So you think you're going to the moon.

BUZZ

It's been up for grabs since Gus died.

(then)

I'm just saying what you're thinking.

NEIL

Well, maybe you shouldn't.

Mike turns towards Neil, surprised. We **PUSH IN** on the HUGE ROCKET and **PRELAP** --

LAUNCH CONTROL (**PRELAP**, OVER PA)

All systems go on Apollo 8...

132 **INT. PRIVATE VIEWING ROOM, KSC - DAY**

132

TIGHT ON Neil, Buzz, FRED HAISE and a few military uniforms **THROUGH A GLASS PANE**. Neil stares out...

**Apollo 8 Launch
December 21, 1968**

...in the glass, the reflection of a FAMILIAR ROCKET.

LAUNCH CONTROL (OVER PA)

...man's first attempt to orbit the moon. The engines are armed...

SLOWLY PUSH IN ON NEIL, as flames from the launch begin to light up his face. The **RUMBLE** of the rocket **GROWS**, but our focus remains on Neil...

LAUNCH CONTROL (OVER PA)

4, 3, 2, 1, 0, we have commit, we...

...until the rocket's ROAR drowns out the PA. It's like nothing we've ever heard. We hear nothing else as we **PUSH IN** on Neil, his eyes moving up, following the rocket until we...

RACK FOCUS to THE GLASS, the reflection of Apollo 8 racing towards the heavens. **RACK BACK** to Neil, **CLOSE ON** his eyes.

He walks off and we... **REVEAL** Deke. Watching Neil walk away.

133 **INT. BATHROOM, KSC - CONTINUOUS**

133

Neil washes his hands. Methodical.

DEKE
Helluva launch.

Neil looks up, sees Deke's walked in behind him.

NEIL
Yeah.

DEKE
Everything stays on track, Eleven's
gonna be the landing. I talked to
Bob, everyone's in agreement, we'd
like you to command.

Neil's pleased, but doesn't acknowledge how big this is.

DEKE
The doc cleared Collins, he's the
best Command Module Pilot available.

NEIL
And Buzz for LM Pilot.

DEKE
That's the rotation. But no one
would fault you if you'd rather take
Lovell.

Huh. Helluva choice. A beat.

NEIL
Let me think about it.

Off Neil, considering we **PRELAP** --

CRONKITE (**PRELAP**, ON TV)
It looks like a red dot with...

INT. LIVING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - MAY 26, 1969 - 11:52 AM

CLOSE ON a TV. Footage of the Apollo 10 re-entry.

CRONKITE (ON TV)
*...a long tail, a long plume, that's
got to be the spacecraft, that has
to be Apollo 10 re-entering.*

FIND Neil, on a couch, watching. **PUSH IN** on him. **PROCESSING**.
Not celebratory. Just on to what's next.

CRONKITE (ON TV)

And so, the flight of Apollo 10 has performed the major function of its mission. It has proved through these daring three astronauts that all of the systems work properly and that there should be no reason why man cannot, perhaps as early as July, land on that picked spot on the moon's equator...

Now we **FIND** Janet, watching from the hall, far from Neil.

CRONKITE (ON TV)

These are sailors of the sky and what we've seen and heard today make the great ocean voyages of the earthbound seem, well, earthbound indeed.

The moment **LANDS** on each of them separately. At a loss, she walks back down the hall and into --

A135 **INT. BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

A135

She stands there for a moment. Mark peeks in, goes inside.

MARK

Mom? What's wrong?

JANET

Hmmm?

MARK

What's wrong?

JANET

Nothing, honey. Your dad's going to the moon.

Mark takes this in. Not quite processing.

MARK (O.C.)

Okay. Can I go outside?

JANET

Sure.

He runs off. We **STAY WITH** Janet, then we **SMASH TO --**

135 **INT. MOVIE THEATER, MANNED SPACE CENTER - EARLY MORNING**

135

THREE MEN in **GAS MASKS** are led into a theater packed with reporters, pads and cameras ready. It's ODD.

**Apollo 11 Pre-Flight Press Conference
July 5, 1969**

The men are led on stage to a **TALL, THREE-SIDED PLASTIC BOX**. They sit, take off the masks. It's Neil, Mike Collins... and BUZZ. Deke, off to one side, nods to Neil.

NEIL

We're here today to talk a bit about the forthcoming flight. But we're able to talk about it because of previous flights. Every flight had new objectives and left us with very few additions to be completed. We're very grateful to those people who made it possible for us to be here today.

Neil sits, no trace of emotion.

DEKE

Alright, we'll take some questions. Jim?

REPORTER #1

Neil, when you learned you were going to command this flight, were you surprised? Overjoyed?

NEIL

...I was pleased.

REPORTER #1

Okay, but how would you compare this feeling to winning an automobile? Or being selected as an astronaut?

NEIL

(pause)
I was pleased.

The camera **PUSHES IN** on Neil as the questions come **FASTER...**

NEWSWEEK REPORTER

Neil, were you aware that Ralph Abernathy is planning a protest for the day of the launch?

NEIL

No. I wasn't.

More questions come, we're **TIGHTER** on Neil now.

REPORTER #2

Neil, if it does turn out, you'll go down in history.

(MORE)

REPORTER #2 (CONT'D)

What kind of thoughts do you have about that, when a thought hits you -
- 'Gosh, suppose that flight is successful' --

NEIL

We're planning on that flight being successful.

REPORTER #2

Uh, I just meant, how you feel about yourself being a part of history?

Neil hesitates... and in that moment Buzz jumps in.

BUZZ

I think I can shed some light here. It's a responsibility, but it's exciting to be the first. Even my wife is excited. She keeps slipping jewelry into my PPK.

Some laughter. Neil looks **IRRITATED**.

REPORTER #2

You're planning to take some of her jewelry to the moon, Buzz?

BUZZ

Sure. What fella wouldn't want to give his wife bragging rights?

Laughter. Buzz smiles, enjoying the limelight.

REPORTER #3

Neil, will you take anything?

NEIL

If I had a choice, I'd take more fuel.

A few chuckles, but not many.

DEKE

Alright, next question.

Off Neil, **UNCOMFORTABLE, CUT TO --**

136 **OMITTED**

136

137 **OMITTED**

137

138 INT. BEDROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - NIGHT

138

8pm. Janet walks in to find Neil. PACKING, methodical.

She stands there for a moment. Watching him. GIRDING herself for a confrontation. A deep breath, then quietly --

JANET

I thought you were gonna talk to the boys.

NEIL

Well, what did you want me to say?

JANET

What do you want to say? You're the one that's going away.

He doesn't say anything. Just keeps packing.

JANET

You're just killing time until you can get in the car.

Neil pauses, then walks past her. **CUT TO --**

A139 INT. NEIL'S OFFICE, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A139

Neil packs up his briefcase. Janet walks in.

JANET

Neil, I need you to talk to the boys.

(then)

Can you hear me? I need you to talk the boys. What are you doing?

NEIL

I'm going to work.

And now, her anger **CRESCENDOES**, overtaking her...

JANET

Well, just stop it. Just stop, just stop packing.

Janet grabs his briefcase, hurls it onto the floor. Neil looks up at her. She slams the office door shut.

JANET

What are the chances you're not coming back? What are the chances this is the last time the boys are gonna see you?

NEIL

I can't give you an exact number.

JANET

I don't want a fucking number, Neil!
It's not zero. Is it? Is it?

Neil hesitates. Looks down...

NEIL

No.

JANET

No, it's not. Pat doesn't have a husband, those kids, they don't have a father. What are the chances that's gonna be Ricky and Mark?

(then)

You're gonna sit them down now, both of them, and you're gonna prepare them for the fact that you might not ever come home. You're doing that. You. Not me. I'm done.

(pause, then)

So you better start thinking about what you're gonna say.

Janet turns and walks out. Off Neil, **CUT TO --**

139 **INT. DINING ROOM, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - NIGHT**

139

Neil and Janet sit with Rick and Mark in pajamas. Rick is slightly disengaged. A long silent beat. Then --

MARK

Jimmy asked what you're going to say when you get on to the moon.

NEIL

Well, we're not sure we're gonna get on to the moon, a lot of things have to go right before that happens.

Another awkward silence. Then --

MARK

How long will you be gone?

NEIL

Well, we launch in ten days. We'll be up for eight. And then about a month in quarantine.

MARK

What's quarantine?

NEIL

We'll be in isolation. To protect in case we, uh, carry any diseases from the lunar surface, or something of that nature. It's not likely, but it's a precaution.

MARK

So you won't be here for my swim meet?

NEIL

No. I'm sorry.

(beat)

Does anyone have any more questions?

RICK

Do you think you're coming back?

Neil looks up at him.

NEIL

We have real confidence in the mission. And there are some risks, but we have every intention of coming back.

Not comforting. Rick's old enough to read between the lines.

RICK

But you might not.

NEIL

...That's right.

Neil shifts, uncomfortable.

JANET

Okay. Okay, time for bed.

They get up. Mark gives Neil a hug, then scurries off. Rick walks over, then holds out a hand.

Neil hesitates, then shakes hands with Rick.

It's heartbreaking in its distance, its formality. Off Janet--

140 **INT. GILRUTH'S OFFICE, MANNED SPACE CENTER - NIGHT**

140

Gilruth sits, reviewing some papers. Deke walks in.

GILRUTH

White House sent down a contingency statement. You mind if I...

Deke nods. Gilruth picks up the speech. "**CONTINGENCY STATEMENT IN EVENT OF MOON DISASTER.**" And starts to read...

GILRUTH

Fate has ordained that the men who went to the moon to explore in peace will stay on the moon to rest in peace. These brave men, Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, know there is no hope for their recovery.

141 **INT./EXT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - NIGHT**

141

WIDE on the house. A GOVERNMENT SEDAN idles. Neil comes to the door, duffel and a briefcase. Janet's behind him.

GILRUTH (V.O.)

They will be mourned by their families; they will be mourned by a Mother Earth that dared send two of her sons into the unknown...

Neil gives her a peck on the cheek, walks to the sedan, hands off his duffel and, without looking back, gets in...

GILRUTH (V.O.)

Others will follow, and surely find their way home. But these men were the first, and they will remain the foremost in our hearts.

HOLD ON Janet. **ALONE.**

142 **INT. GOVERNMENT SEDAN, ARMSTRONG HOUSE - SAME TIME**

142

Neil sits back. He pulls out a mission briefing, starts to read as the driver gets back in the car.

GILRUTH (V.O.)

For every human being who looks up at the moon in nights to come will know there is some corner of another world that is forever mankind.

The sedan pulls off and tension LEAVES Neil's face. He looks out at the houses slipping away... and we see **RELIEF**.

The mission has begun.

143 **INT. GILRUTH'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

143

GILRUTH

Prior to the statement, President will telephone each of the widows-to-be. A clergyman will adopt the same procedure as a burial at sea, commending their souls to 'the 'deepest of the deep.

(then, looking up at Deke)
Any thoughts?

A beat. The speech has had an impact. Deke pushes it aside.

DEKE

Sounds fine.

144 **EXT. LAUNCHPAD, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - 4AM**

144

HUGE FLOODLIGHTS **ILLUMINATE** the **SATURN V** STEAMING on the pad.

4:15 AM, Kennedy Space Center
July 16, 1969

The **TERRIFYING GIANT** casts shadows over TECHS hooking up **HOSES** for fuel, oxygen and nitrogen. **MUFFLED THUMPING** takes us to --

145 **EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - 4 AM**

145

Wide on a building. DARK, save for a few lit windows.

146 **OMITTED**

146

147 **INT. MESS HALL, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - 5AM**

147

Neil works through steak and eggs, incessantly looking over a map of the lunar surface. Mike and Buzz sign **POSTMARKED ENVELOPES** with **COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS**. A sketch artist sits beside Deke, making quick work of all three of them. It's still dark outside.

A beat, then Deke catches Neil's eye. It's time. Neil gives a half nod, stands. The others follow suit and we **CUT TO --**

148 **EXT. LAUNCHPAD, KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - 5:30 AM**

148

Personnel scurry around the **HUGE ROCKET**, doing final checks.

5:30 AM (T minus 4 hours, 3 minutes)

A **BUZZER**, then a CALL for non-essential personnel to leave the pad. We spot **HUGE FUEL TANKS** beside the pad... and **MASSIVE HOSES** filling the rocket with **LIQUID OXYGEN** and **HYDROGEN**.

As the techs check the hoses, **INTERCUT WITH --**

149 **INT. THE "SUITING UP" ROOM, KSC - SAME TIME** 149

Tape **SEALS** up a URINE COLLECTION DEVICE around a man's waist.

Hands pull on a basic set of **COTTON LONG UNDERWEAR**.

A THERMAL SKIN is **VELCROED** on top of that.

METALLIC RINGS **SNAP ON** one glove, then another.

A COMMS (SNOOPY) CAP chin-strap is **SNAPPED** in place.

The WIRE from the cap is **PLUGGED INTO** the top of the suit.

An AIR NOZZLE is **TWISTED ONTO** the BLUE PORTAL on a spacesuit.
We hear the **HISS OF OXYGEN** as...

A HELMET is **PLACED** on the head of a SILENT NEIL.

The helmet **SWIVELS** in place and the sound **FADES**... we hear only the oxygen's hiss. **PUSH IN** on Neil's eyes, **CUT TO --**

150 **INT. CREW QUARTERS - LATER** 150

Neil, **SUITED UP**, stares straight ahead as he walks down the corridor... shaking hands with cheering techs. All we hear is the **HISS** in Neil's helmet as he walks toward DOUBLE DOORS...

The doors swing open and Neil walks through. **CUT TO --**

A151 **EXT. CREW QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS** A151

Along with Mike and Buzz, Neil walks to the van, passing the spectators he (and we) can't hear. He gives a thumbs up, still staring **STRAIGHT AHEAD**, and we **MATCH CUT TO --**

151 **EXT. GANTRY ELEVATOR, LAUNCH PAD 39A, KSC - LATER** 151

CLOSE ON Neil. The HISS of air pervades.

6:45 AM (T minus 2 hours, 48 minutes)

Neil rides up the side of the **ENORMOUS SATURN V ROCKET** with Buzz, Mike and Deke. We truly appreciate how **HUGE** the rocket is. 363 feet tall, 33 feet wide... it dwarfs the world below.

Buzz finds it **STAGGERING**. Neil is too **FOCUSED** to notice. The elevator **JERKS** to a halt. Neil picks up his oxygen tank, leads the others onto --

152 **EXT. SWING ARM 9, LAUNCH PAD 39A - CONTINUOUS** 152

Neil walks across the vertiginous **ORANGE STEEL BRIDGE** to the small COMMAND MODULE atop the behemoth. The comm CHATTER is SUBSUMED by the eerie hiss of oxygen and Neil's **INTENSE FOCUS**.

This is a solitary moment. A beat, then Neil walks into --

A153 **INT. WHITE ROOM/APOLLO 11 CSM - CONTINUOUS** A153

Neil walks into the White Room and a tech walks up. Neil reflexively hands his tank to the tech then pauses...

We **PUSH IN** on Neil's face as the **HISSING** grows louder. A beat, then Neil pushes forward, through the White Room to the waiting spacecraft. He pauses at the open hatch. A beat.

He grasps the overhead handrail and swings himself into the craft, maneuvering into the left hand seat. The techs immediately reach in to hook up his lines and hoses...

The process takes a moment, but Neil just stares at the console. **THE MOON** small in the window.

The lights on the console **FLASH ON**.

We see Buzz to Neil's right and Mike to his far right. The techs close the hatch and we're in...

153 **INT. APOLLO 11 CSM - CONTINUOUS** 153

It's dark, save for a small window. **HOLD ON** the men in the **CLAUSTROPHOBIC** cabin; Neil's window looks into the white room.

Neil, seemingly oblivious to the stifling atmosphere, starts checks. As the others join, we see **A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS:**

HANDS flipping through the Flight Plan and the Mission Rules.

FINGERS flicking switches, punching buttons.

EYES ticking from books to the console to the clock.

A FINAL FLURRY OF **BUTTONS AND SWITCHES** as we arrive at...

FIDO (COMMS)

T minus two minutes and counting.

Nothing to do now but wait. Buzz and Mike twitch with nervous anticipation. Neil keeps his eyes focused. The White Room has been retracted, we now see sky through his window.

PUSH IN on Neil, hand on the ABORT HANDLE. Seemingly **CALM**.

PUSH IN FURTHER on Neil's EYES. A WEALTH of **EMOTIONS**. We **HOLD ON THOSE INTENSE EYES** as the call continues...

FIDO (COMMS)
20 seconds and counting... T LAUNCH DIRECTOR (COMMS)
minus 15 seconds... *Guidance is now internal...*

FIDO (COMMS)
12, 11 10, 9, ignition sequence
start...

We hear a LOUD **RUMBLING** from far below as the capsule begins to SHAKE. **HOLD ON** Neil. Steady. Unyielding.

The noise gets **LOUDER... DROWNING OUT** the countdown. The capsule **BUCKS** violently, vibrating side to side.

It's **FAR WORSE THAN GEMINI**. Even Neil is STARTLED by the DEAFENING ROAR and the INTENSITY of the SHAKE, but he **WILLS** himself to FOCUS, eyes **TICKING** from clock to console...

FIDO (COMMS)
 Tower cleared.

154 **SMASH OUTSIDE THE CRAFT** -- 154

We see BELCHING FIRE, BLACK SMOKE. Ice FALLS, flames RISE -- and the MONSTER LIFTS.

155 **SMASH BACK INSIDE** -- the worst turbulence you can imagine. 155
 Everything a blur, severe shakes, the whole craft seemingly buckling. Can this be what it's supposed to feel like?

Neil glances at the clock, monitors the gauges... and we **FEEL** the rocket **ROLL**, G-forces so INTENSE all three men FEEL IT.

More so as blue sky **RAPIDLY TURNS BLACK...** *MUCH FASTER than in Gemini or the X-15*. Mike reacts, but Neil remains **FOCUSED** on the instruments as we barely make out COMMS.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Mode 1 Charlie. Go for staging.

BOOM! The men are SLAMMED into their seats as we **SMASH TO** --

156-1 **OMITTED** 156-157

158 **EXT. APOLLO 11, EARTH ORBIT - DAY** 158

From the **POV** of the second stage, we see the CSM pull away.

We **HOLD** for a beat as the CSM gets farther away... then we gently **FALL**, earth DRIFTING back into view, the sun rising over it as we **CUT BACK TO** --

159 **INT. APOLLO 11, EARTH ORBIT - DAY**

159

Neil, helmet off, grabs his (floating) helmet and stows it. Off to the side, we hear Collins and Buzz, helmets off.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
*Apollo 11, this is Houston.
 Slightly less than 1 minute to
 ignition and everything is GO.*

As Buzz and Neil get to it, Mike glances at the day-lit earth, maybe thinking that they're about to leave it far behind...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Okay, 59:25 -- and this light will go off at 42 --

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)
 (snapping back to it)
 Time is based on tracking data; let me know when you start it up.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 When you feel it, that's when it is.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Apollo 11, you are go for translunar injection.

Mike eyes the **CLOCK** as Neil and Buzz monitor the gauges.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 Okay, we're operate - 59:59.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
 There we go; thrust.

A **FLASH** out the window and they're **PRESSED BACK** in their seats again. It's smooth, if JARRING.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
 IGNITION. Call it at 15.

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)
 Okay.

Mike watches the earth slowly SLIDE OUT OF THE WINDOW, casting them into darkness. Buzz turns up the lights on the console to light their journey into the unknown...

Neil and Buzz monitor the burn, but Mike is **DISTRACTED** by --

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)
 Flashes out window five. I'm not sure whether that's -- could be something to do with the engine...

The engine?

CAPCOM (COMMS)

Apollo 11, this is Houston. At 1 minute, trajectory and guidance look good, and the stage is good. Over.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Apollo 11. Roger.

Buzz and Neil look out the window, Neil UNFAZED.

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)

Watch window 5 for a second.
See it?

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

I don't see anything.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)

Yes, yes. Damn, everything's-- just kind of sparks flying out there.

Neil looks again, sees **SPARKS**. He ignores them.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

...yaw, Michael.

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)

(off Neil)
...do that?

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Yes, we better do that.

Mike reacts to the SLIGHT PUSH and makes the adjustment as...

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)

Okay, 6, about 5 seconds to nominal.

POP! They're HURLED against harnesses into MICROGRAVITY again.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

We have cutoff.

A notebook **FLOATS** across the cabin. He reaches for it, spots the VISTA in the window...

NOTHING BUT BLACK. There are NO STARS in cislunar space.
Earth is far behind already, they're on a dark and lonely sea.
Mike stares. It's **AWESOME**. And **TERRIFYING**.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

The Delta-V on the EMS: 3.3.

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)

Function off.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Okay, Houston, you read 11?

A beat. No answer from Houston.

NEIL
Not getting any answer.

MIKE COLLINS
Okay, let's go to IU ACCEPT
here. Why don't you try to
get up high...

Buzz is concerned about silence from Houston. Neil isn't.

NEIL
SCS TVC SERVO POWER 1, OFF.
(to Buzz)
You want to get Houston on the radio
if you can?

BUZZ
Yes.
(then, into comms)
Houston? Do you read?

Still nothing. Buzz is a bit **UNEASY**, maybe understanding for
the first time **just how alone they will be on this journey.**

BUZZ
Houston, do you read?

CAPCOM (COMMS)
This is Houston, we copy. Looks
like you're well on your way now.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Okay, Houston; we're about to SEP.
(then, to Mike)
Mike, it's your ship now.

TIME CUT TO --

A160 **OMITTED**

A160

160 **INT./EXT. APOLLO 11, TRANSLUNAR SPACE - NIGHT/DAY**

160

The SEP explosion **RIPS OFF** four panels connecting the Command
Service Module (**CSM**) to the Saturn's third stage.

The panels, **GLINTING** in the sun, float off as the CSM and
what's left of the Saturn races towards the moon.

The quiet is **UNNERVING**, 'til **RCS jets FIRE in four directions.**

We see the CSM **SLOWLY ROTATING**, nosing towards what's left of
the Saturn... and the **LUNAR MODULE (LM)** within.

Sunlight cuts in and flares, shifting us in and out of day...
It's a **STUNNING BALLET**, the CSM shifting, **INCHING** forward...

A small PROBE extends from the CSM's nose, **SCRAPING** the LM... NAILS on a chalkboard. *Is something wrong?*

The LM's **DROGUE** latches on. Both crafts **SHAKE**.

The CSM gently **PULLS** the LM free of the Saturn, its **FAMOUS ORANGE HULL** SHIMMERING in the sunlight, the fragile surface **RIPPLING** as it's pulled along. It's BREATHTAKING.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

*You can start PTC at your
convenience.*

Slowly, the COMBINED CRAFT starts **ROTATING**, speeding **BACKWARDS** towards the moon. We watch for a moment, then **CUT INTO --**

161 INT. APOLLO 11 CSM, TRANSLUNAR SPACE - DAY/NIGHT

161

Buzz finishes buttoning up his flight suit as Neil, already dressed, stows his spacesuit.

Mike, in his flight suit, **PULLS OPEN** a hatch and surveys the probe and drogue connecting the LM and the CSM up close.

Mike's face **CONTORTS**.

MIKE COLLINS

Smells funny. Like charred
electrical insulation.

ON NEIL, registering this. Not anxious. But it sits on him.

MIKE COLLINS

Wires I can see all look brand new.
Might just be rocket fumes.

Neil remains unfazed but Mike, a bit unsettled, looks back at Earth, **SWIFTLY RECEDING** into the distance. Buzz feels it to.

BUZZ

Did you bring any music?

MIKE COLLINS

No.

NEIL

Here, Buzz.

Neil who grabs a **CASSETTE TAPE** and floats it to Buzz. Buzz, surprised, puts it in the tape deck. A familiar track, a **THEREMIN** playing "Lunar Rhapsody". The odd music **SWIRLS...**

Buzz glances at Neil, working. Mike smiles.

MIKE COLLINS (INTO COMMS)
Hey, Houston, are you hearing this?

PUSH IN on Neil. **CALM.** Hearing the music... and falling into an almost **SPIRITUAL** state. **CUT TO --**

162 **EXT. TRANSLUNAR SPACE - SAME TIME**

162

WIDE ON the **TINY CRAFT**, the sun flaring the opposite side of the craft as it drifts away from us, hurtling through **INFINITE BLACK**, **SILENT** save for the **CASSETTE PLAYER** bleating out now **TINNY MUSIC**. It's **HUMBLING**.

TIME CUT TO --

163-1 **OMITTED**

163-164

165 **MISSION DAY FOUR - DAY (82:55:30)**

165

PAN OVER fogged up windows, streaked with condensation, a layer of grime over the instruments... and the men, who haven't washed in days and show varying degrees of stubble.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Apollo 11, this is Houston. You should have a good view in about two minutes, over.

Buzz and Neil in flight suits hover over a **TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP** of the moon.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
When you have a free minute, could you give us your onboard readout of N2 Bravo, please?

Neil continues to stare down at the map as Buzz checks nitrogen tank pressure.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Nitrogen tank pressure and the tank Bravo are showing 1960, something like that.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger.

Mike shoots Buzz a look. *This a problem?* Before Buzz can answer, the craft falls into shadow, the cabin turning dark...

...as slowly, something ominous **FILLS** the hatch window.

A MASSIVE DARK OBJECT...

It's our first close view of THE MOON. It hovers in view, its surface **STARK** and **FOREBODING**.

The moon is no longer a sphere in the sky but a **FULL-SCALE PLANETARY BODY**, both viscerally **REAL** and unbelievably **UNREAL**.

All three men stare out at the moon, in **AWE**.

We **PUSH IN** on Neil's eyes. A bit overwhelmed by the magnitude of it all. And yet, **RESOLVED**.

166-1 **OMITTED**

166-167

168 **INT. APOLLO 11, CSM, LUNAR ORBIT - MISSION DAY 5 (96:03:00)** 168

Neil, in his spacesuit, holding his helmet, prepares to enter the LM. Mike, **HUSTLING**, readies for separation, a flight manual on a lanyard round his neck.

MIKE COLLINS

This is a damn three-ring circus. I got a fuel cell purge in progress, I'm watching an AUTO maneuver and --

An ALARM goes off.

MIKE COLLINS

Jesus Christ.
(turns off alarm, into comms)
NORMAL, NORMAL.
(into comms)
Houston, stand by for auto alarm.
(to Neil)
Neil, the voice tape recorder, you know where that is?

NEIL

Uh, no...

Neil tosses his helmet through the hatch.

MIKE COLLINS

All this food and stuff up here, you want any of that?

NEIL

No.

MIKE COLLINS

Okay. Chewing gum, you want any of that?

NEIL

Mike.

Neil looks at Mike. Mike tries to SETTLE.

MIKE COLLINS

Come back, will you?

Neil nods, FLOATS TO the open hatch at the TOP of the CSM.
STAY WITH NEIL as he **FLOATS THROUGH THE HATCH INTO --**

169 **INT. CONNECTING TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS**

169

From Neil's POV, Buzz STANDS UPSIDE DOWN in the Lunar Module.
 It's DISORIENTING.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

*Eagle, this is Houston. We see the
 optics zero switch on. Before you
 take some marks, don't forget to
 cycle it back off and on, and then
 on. Over.*

Neil BLINKS away the vertigo, pulls himself into --

170 **INT. LUNAR MODULE (EAGLE) - CONTINUOUS**

170

Follow Neil in, **ROTATING** with him until... what was just
 upside down is RIGHT SIDE UP. He looks back Mike, now upside
 down in the CSM, CLOSING his side of the hatch.

Neil CLOSES the LM side of the hatch.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

*Eagle, Houston. Could you give us a
 hack on the time that you switched
 to LM power and also verify that
 we're on Glycol Pump 1, over?*

Neil checks the console.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

This is Eagle, we're on Pump
 1.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

Roger.

CLOSE ON NEIL'S BOOTS as he plants them firmly on the Velcro
 floor. He wraps a **HARNESS** around his waist, puts on his
HELMET and snaps on his **INNER GLOVES**.

COLLINS (COMMS)

*Eagle, Columbia. All 12 docking
 latches are cocked. And I'm ready
 to button up the hatch.*

We hear the hatch buttoned up. Then...

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Hey, Mike. Have you got to the
tunnel vent step yet?

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
I'm just coming to that.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Well, we're waiting on you.

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
I'm ready to go to LM tunnel vent.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Roger. Understand.

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
*I'm going to start a maneuver now to
our undocking attitude.*

Buzz looks to Neil. Neil nods.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Okay.

We hear the CSM THRUSTERS repositioning the combined craft...
the moon **TURNING SLOWLY** in the window.

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
*How about using, as an undocking
time, 100 hours and 12 minutes?*

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
What have you got for AOS?

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
I have 100 hours and 16 minutes.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Apollo 11, Houston. We are go for
undocking. Over.

PUSH IN on Buzz, **READYING HIMSELF** and the cabin for the final
step of their journey to the moon. He glances at Neil...

...who reaches for the throttle. As we **PUSH IN** on Neil, we
see the **ADRENALINE FLARING**...

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
15 seconds.

A beat, then at last we **HEAR** the probe above them **RETRACT**.

MIKE COLLINS (COMMS)
Okay, there you go.

Neil **PUSHES** the thruster. The LM slowly moves from the CSM, sunlight moving across the windows as Neil looks towards the waiting moon. **PUSH OUT INTO --**

171 **EXT. LUNAR MODULE, LUNAR ORBIT - DAY (100:17:51)** 171

WE see the LM slowly **PULLING BACK AWAY** from the CSM...

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Eagle, Houston. We - Houston. We see you on the steerable. Over.

NEIL (COMMS)
Roger. Eagle is undocked.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger. How does it look, Neil?

NEIL (COMMS)
The Eagle has wings.

ANGLE ON the CSM, receding...

A172 **INT. COMMAND MODULE - SAME TIME** A172

THROUGH THE WINDOW, we see the LM. **WE ROTATE**, so the moon is below us...

...then gas jets **ROTATE** the LM, pointing the landing gear forward, the front facing straight up, away from the moon.

B172 **INT./EXT. LUNAR MODULE, LUNAR ORBIT - SAME TIME** B172

The LM starts to drop towards the surface.

Out the window, we see the Command Module lift away as we're plunged into inky darkness, the cabin black, save for the console, then emergency lights...

...and then, slowly, the dark gray surface of the moon rolls backwards from the bottom of the window to the top.

C172 **INT. COMMAND MODULE - SAME TIME (102:26:28)** C172

THROUGH THE WINDOW, we see the LM, dropping down, further and further away, closer to the surface.

The LM begins orbiting around the moon, heading into night.

172 **INT. LUNAR MODULE - SAME TIME (102:26:55)**

172

A **500 CODE** pops up on Buzz's console. Buzz moves to descent 1 then back to auto. The alarm goes away.

Buzz notices Neil **STRUGGLING** with a LOOSE BREAKER.

NEIL

It just won't stay...

BUZZ

We'll have to tell them about that.

CLICK. Neil **FIRMLY PUSHES** the breaker back in. It stays.

NEIL

Let's prep for descent.

Neil gets to work, like nothing happened. For a moment, Buzz pauses, knowing his life's in Neil's hands.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

Eagle, you're go for powered descent.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)

Roger, we read you.

Buzz gets back to it as the sun breaks. He and Neil can see the lunar surface is even closer...

Two indicator lights on the DSKY flash on.

BUZZ

Altitude light's on, we don't have radar data.

NEIL

Let's proceed.

Buzz eyes Neil. He eyes the clock. No time to disagree.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)

Proceed. 1, 0...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Ignition.

A173 **SMASH OUTSIDE THE CRAFT --**

A173

The thruster comes to life, thrusting into the empty void.

B173 **INSIDE THE LM (102:35:14)**

B173

Neil eases the throttle forward and the lunar module **LURCHES** ahead... towards the surface.

Neil eyes the radar data, puts RADAR MODE SWITCH in SLEW, then looks to the window, **WATCHES** the landscape pass the hashmarks.

Buzz sees Neil's eyes ticking from the window the clock.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
...went by the 3 minute point early.
Our position checks downrange show
us to be a little off...

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger. Co...

HEAVY STATIC again. Shit. Then...

CAPCOM (COMMS)
...go to... You are go to
continue powered descent.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Roger.

A bit of a relief, until a button on the console **FLASHES ON**.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Program alarm.

1202. It beeps.

BUZZ
What's a 1202?

NEIL
I don't know.
(into comms)
Houston, give us a reading on
the 1202 program alarm.

The beeping seems to grow **LOUDER**. Neil's eyes **TICK RAPIDLY**
from the alarm to his **DROPPING ALTITUDE GAUGE**...

A **TENSE BEAT**, then --

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger, we got-- we're go on that
alarm.

Buzz shuts it off. Neil checks his instruments.

BUZZ
Looks like about 820...

Another button **FLASHES ON**. The same **BEEPING** again...

BUZZ
Same alarm.

Neil reacts, uncharacteristically **ANNOYED**. Buzz shuts it off
as Neil **YAWS** the craft. The moon **SLIDES** out of the window...

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger. We're go on that alarm.

We now see nothing but space. Neil continues to pitch.

The LM pushes over, feet towards the surface and Buzz sees THE MOON again, the surface now **RISING UP** to meet them.

NEIL
Okay. 3000 at 70.

A **THIRD ALARM** beeps. A new one. This time Neil **IGNORES** it.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Program alarm, 1201. CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger, 1201 alarm.

Buzz looks to Neil, but Neil keeps flying.

NEIL
2000 at 50.

Buzz stares at the alarm, beeping **PERVADING** the tiny space.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
We're go. Same type. We're go.

Neil PUNCHES OFF the alarm, **IRRITATED**. Buzz glances over at him, sensing the determination. **CLOSE ON** Neil's eyes, then --

C173 **SMASH OUTSIDE THE CRAFT** --

C173

Our biggest wide yet, the tiny fragile LM hurtling over the vast lunar surface, as ominous a landing pad as one has ever seen. We hold on this a moment, then we...

D173 **SMASH BACK INTO THE LM (102:42:32)**

D173

Neil looks out the window, getting a first look at the landing area. Neil's eyes **NARROW**.

There's a HUGE CRATER, A HUNDRED YARDS ACROSS.

NEIL
Give me an LPD angle.

BUZZ
47 degrees.

Neil eyeballs it. It's okay. They'll be short of the crater.

NEIL
Okay, we'll be short of that crater.

He continues to descend. Eyes **FIXED** on the landing area.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
700 feet, 21 down, 33 degrees.

NEIL'S POV. The landing area in front of the crater is not flat. It's covered with **GIANT BOULDERS.**

NEIL
Pretty rocky area.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
(follows his gaze)
Those boulders are as big as cars. We can't land there.

Buzz is right. Neil makes a **QUICK DECISION...**

NEIL
I'm going to manual...

Neil takes over manual control. We hear the **POP** and **HISS** of the Descent Propulsion System (**DPS**) as the craft **PITCHES OVER.**

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
540 feet, down at 30, down at 15.

Buzz eyes the gauges...

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
330... 300 feet, down 3 1/2.

Neil adjusts. Buzz watches the PROPULSION CONSOLE. **CLOSE ON** the FUEL DESCENT MONITOR #2. **DROPPING.** 12, 11, 10...

BUZZ
Fuel's at eight percent.

Neil keeps flying, focused, **INTENT**, even as the altitude and velocity lights **FLASH** on the DSKY.

BUZZ
Radar's lost track with the surface again.

But Neil grips the throttle, eyes **TICKING FURIOUSLY** from the window to the ALTITUDE GAUGE. As the DPS **HISSES...**

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
160 feet, 6 1/2 down... 5 1/2 down,
9 forward.

RACK TO Buzz, his eyes ticking from the ALTITUDE GAUGE to the **PROPULSION CONSOLE.** **CLOSE ON** the fuel numbers. **8, 7, 6...**

CONTROL (COMMS)
Low level.

FLIGHT (COMMS)
Low level.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
120 feet. 5 percent fuel remaining.

Buzz glances at Neil, **CLOCKS** his intensity... and at that moment he knows. **Neil's landing this ship.**

The FUEL QUANTITY LIGHT **FLASHES ON.**

BUZZ
Quantity light. 94 seconds to
bingo, 114 to mandatory abort.

Buzz clocks the **FIRE** in Neil's eyes, DETERMINATION. Jesus.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
Down a half, 6 forward.

Neil's eyes **TICK** from the gauges to the window...

CONTROL (COMMS) FLIGHT (COMMS)
Standby for 60. Rog.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
60 seconds.

...but it's unclear if Neil's even LISTENING anymore. We push in on Neil as Buzz continues to call the descent...

Buzz looks at the fuel. **CLOSE ON** the numbers. **3, 2... FUCK.**
Buzz's eyes WIDEN.

BUZZ (INTO COMMS)
40 feet, down 2 1/2...

CONTROL (V.O., COMMS) CAPCOM (COMMS)
Standby for 30. 30 seconds.

BUZZ
20 feet, down a half. Drifting
forward just a little bit.

Buzz eyes the fuel gauge, approaching **ZERO**...

...then, out the window, **DUST SWIRLS** up from the lunar surface. And, before they realize what's happening...

A **BLUE LIGHT FLASHES** on the console. Buzz blinks in **DISBELIEF.**
[MET is 102:45:40].

BUZZ (INTO COMMS) NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Contact light. Shutdown.

Neil, SPENT, lets the throttle SLIP from his hands. He flips the switch. The dust settles and we see... **the LUNAR SURFACE stretching out in front of them.**

Neil stares, BLANK. Buzz is STUNNED. A beat, then Buzz recovers, starts powering down the LM.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
...we copy you down, Eagle.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.

An **ENORMOUS CHEER** goes up in Mission Control. Neil **FLINCHES**. It's VISCERAL; something about it hits him right in the gut.

CAPCOM (COMMS)
Roger, Twan, Tranquility, we copy you on the ground. You got a bunch of guys about to turn blue. We're breathing again, thanks a lot.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Thank you.

Neil sits, struggling to process. Buzz extends a hand.

BUZZ
Very smooth touchdown.

Neil nods. **PUSH IN** on his eyes, deep PAIN and JOY battling within as we **MATCH CUT TO --**

173 **INT. LUNAR MODULE, LUNAR SURFACE - LATER (108:20:00)**

173

An **EVA BOOT** is pulled on over an under boot. An **ANKLE STRAP** is pulled tight; top boot **VELCRO** and **BUTTONS** are closed.

A **PLSS/EMU BACKPACK** is lifted onto a torso. **METAL CLIPS** at the waist and chest are fastened to hold the pack into place.

O2/CO2 HOSE NOZZLES (BLUE/RED) are plugged into suit **PORTS**.

An **RCU** is clipped into place with **METAL CLIPS**.

A **PLSS HOSE** and **CONNECTOR** is plugged into the RCU.

An **OXYGEN DIAL** is turned up on the RCU. We hear a familiar **HISS** as we **REVEAL --**

Neil. Bubble helmet, PLSS, EMU and RCU on. Hoses connected.

Neil and Buzz don inner gloves, checking wrist locks.
Meticulous, cognizant of the DANGERS on the surface.

Neil uses the **MIRROR** on his wrist to look at the controls on the RCU. He flips a switch. We hear water **WHOOSH** as it circulates through Neil's LCG.

And now we hear a **HISS** as they pressurize the suits. A beat.

Buzz opens a valve. We **HEAR AIR VENTING OUT**. It's nerve-wracking, all that air disappearing into space.

Buzz kneels, grabs the hatch handle, rotates it counter-clockwise and pulls... but the hatch won't budge.

Buzz pulls again. Struggling. He stops, **FRUSTRATED**.

Neil looks at Buzz... then Buzz tries again. This time, the door **PULLS OPEN**... revealing the barren surface below.

All sound is sucked out and **EVERYTHING GOES SILENT**.

Neil and Buzz **STARE**, taking in **THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE DOOR**. In this moment, we understand how odd, how **UNDENIABLY STRANGE** it is to be parked on the surface of another heavenly body.

A beat. Neil steps forward, puts his gold visor down, and turns around to start backing out. **TIME CUT TO --**

174 **EXT. LUNAR MODULE, LUNAR SURFACE (109:21:09)**

174

TIGHT ON Neil, gold visor down now, as he **SHIMMIES** back through the hatch onto the porch, Buzz helping guide him, holding tight the LEC that serves as a safety tether.

Neil steps down onto the top rung of the ladder.

Neil pulls the D-ring which releases the **MESA**, attached to the side of the LM under Buzz's station.

The **MESA** swings down into position... and we spot the **CAMERA** now pointed at Neil.

Neil continues to move down the ladder. He stays focused, eyes on the **LADDER, HANDS, FEET**...

CAPCOM (COMMS)
*Okay, Neil, we can see you coming
down the ladder now.*

Neil just continues moving down, reaching the final rung... then hopping off of it to the footpad of the LM. But before turning around, he quickly jumps back up to the first rung.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Okay. I just checked getting back up to that first step, Buzz. It's... the strut isn't collapsed too far, but it's adequate to get back up.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

Roger, we copy.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

Takes a pretty good little jump.

A beat, then Neil hops down to the LM footpad again.

CAPCOM (COMMS)

Buzz, this is Houston. F/2 - 1/160th a second for shadow photography on the sequence camera.

Neil pauses, staring out. A million things going through his mind, the **ODDNESS** of it all, the **DESOLATE BEAUTY**... The years of work and sacrifice. And Elliot. And Ed.

The **ENORMITY** of what he's done almost **OVERWHELMS**.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

I'm, uh, at the foot of the ladder, the LM footbeds are only uh... depressed in the surface about... uh, one or two inches, although the surface appears to be very, very fine grained as you get close to it. It's almost like a powder. Down there, it's very fine.

(then)

I'm gonna step off the LM now.

And now he steps down **ONTO THE MOON**... oddly **DISCONNECTED** from the moment, the line he's prepared...

NEIL (INTO COMMS)

That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind...

The COMMS **FADE**. Neil turns, taking it all in...

A beat, then he ties down his LEC to the ladder and steps around the side of the LM. He looks up, **FLIPS OPEN** his visor.

And now he sees the **EARTH**, hanging high over the lunar horizon. It's stunning.

Off the look in his eyes, we **PRELAP** --

BUZZ (**PRELAP**)

Okay, ready for me to come out?

175 **EXT. LUNAR SURFACE - MOMENTS LATER (109:43:16)** 175

WIDE ON Neil collecting a soil sample as Buzz comes down off the LM to the lunar surface. We **HOLD ON** Neil as --

BUZZ (COMMS)
Beautiful view.

NEIL (INTO COMMS)
Isn't that something?
Magnificent sight out here.

BUZZ (COMMS)
Magnificent desolation.

We **CUT TO** --

176 **EXT. LUNAR SURFACE - LATER** 176

Neil alone. Slowly moving across the lunar surface. He stops. Looks down, picks up his foot... sees his **FOOTPRINT**.

He looks up. And back behind him. Catching site of Buzz, loping across the surface. He looks back further. Sees the LM in the distance. Impossibly fragile. Off Neil, **CUT TO** --

177 **EXT. LUNAR SURFACE - LATER (111:11:15)** 177

The lip of LITTLE WEST CRATER. Visor now lifted, Neil stares into the crater. Deep and vast, like nothing we've seen.

Off the **UTTER BLACKNESS** of the long shadows, we **FLASH TO** --

Juniper hills. The cabin. Rick. Janet, younger, carefree. And Neil. With Karen. All of them happy. Paradise lost.

We linger for a moment, then **FLASH BACK TO** --

Neil peers into the void, holds a **FAMILIAR BRACELET**. Karen's.

PUSH IN on Neil's eyes, on the PAIN. A beat. Then he **FLICKS** Karen's bracelet into the crater...

It flies on and on and on, falling at last into the abyss...

Neil's **UNABLE TO CONTROL HIMSELF**. **A TEAR FALLS**, a bevy of emotions rising to the surface. All swirling round until...

...the **TEARS COME FREELY**, raining down with all the pent up feelings. The first and last such outburst we'll ever see.

178 **OMITTED** 178

179 **EXT. LUNAR MODULE, MOON - DAY 6 (124:19:59)** 179

We're on the side of the LM, looking down at the moon.

BUZZ (COMMS)
*...6, 5, abort stage -- engine arm,
 ascent, proceed...*

The thrusters **IGNITE**. DUST kicks up as the ship **ROCKS BACK AND FORTH**, lifting off the surface...

...and casting a **LONG SHADOW** as it rises.

As the ship pulls away from the moon, we hear familiar voices from a television broadcast...

WALTER CRONKITE (O.C.)
*It may not be a beauty one can pass
 on to future beholders. These first
 men on the moon can see something
 that men who follow will miss...*

ERIC SEVAREID (O.C.)
*Yes, we're always going to feel,
 somehow, strangers to these men...
 disappeared into another life that
 we can't follow. I wonder what
 their life will be like, now. The
 moon treated them well. How people
 on earth will treat these men...
 that gives me more foreboding...*

Off the now distant moon, we **SMASH TO --**

A180 **APOLLO 11 CELEBRATION MONTAGE**

A180

In a series of QUICK CUTS, we see **TV FOOTAGE** of crowds around the world watching the Apollo 11 landing; of individuals waxing on in amazement at the feat. This takes us to --

189 **INT. ASTRONAUT LOUNGE, QUARANTINE FACILITY - LATER**

189

CLOSE ON a SEA of MAGAZINES and NEWSPAPERS: **TIME, LIFE, the NEW YORK TIMES...** All with front page coverage of Apollo 11.

FIND BUZZ hovering over it all, staring at a TV. **MESMERIZED.**

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)
*And in Washington, an anonymous
 citizen has placed a small bouquet
 on the grave of John F Kennedy with
 a note, "Mr. President, the Eagle
 has landed." And indeed, on this
 day, it's hard not to think back
 upon that speech our 35th President
 gave at Rice University just seven
 short years ago...*

Neil walks in, glances at the TV. JFK's 1962 speech at Rice.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY (ON TV)
*But why, some say, the moon? Why
 choose this as our goal? And they
 may well ask why climb the highest
 mountain? Why fly the Atlantic? We
 choose to go to the moon. We choose
 to go to the moon in this decade and
 do the other things, not because
 they are easy, but because they are
 hard...*

Neil eyes Buzz, who seems **BEWILDERED**. Off Neil, processing --

EXT. ARMSTRONG HOUSE - HOUSTON, TX - DAY

CLOSE ON Janet as she walks briskly across the front yard, trying not to look at the **THRONG OF REPORTERS**, the **HUGE DISPLAY** of FLOWERS and SIGNS on the lawn...

...but the reporters **CORNER HER** as she reaches the car.

NBC REPORTER
 Mrs. Armstrong, have all your
 prayers been answered?

JANET
 Yes, yes they have.

She **FORCES** a smile.

REPORTERS
 How would you describe the
 flight?

JANET
 I could only say that it
 was... out of this world.

Another forced smile and then she gets into the car.

187 **INT. HALLWAY, QUARANTINE FACILITY, MSC - JULY 28, 1969 - DAY** 187

Deke walks Janet down a lackluster hall.

DEKE (O.C.)
 They will be quarantined for the
 full three weeks, but there's no
 sign of infection or disease.

They reach a door. Just before he lets her in...

DEKE
 Congratulations, Jan.

Janet walks into --

INT. PRESS ROOM, QUARANTINE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

The NASA logo. And a GLASS WALL. On the other side of it, in a large room, Neil stands in civilian clothes.

Deke closes the door behind Janet, leaving her alone with Neil. She walks to the glass. He sits and she does as well.

A long beat.

They **STARE** at each other through the glass.

At last, Neil lifts a **HAND...** then Janet does the same.

They **PRESS HANDS TOGETHER**, from opposite sides of the glass.

And off that small ray of **HOPE...**

...that maybe they might navigate the gulf between them, that they might find a way back to each other again, we...

FADE OUT

THE END