

ORBIT

Screenplay by
SHELDON V. TURNER

Based on the novel by
JOHN NANCE

Apartment 3B Prods.

January 24th, 2007

Fox 2000

OVER DARKNESS

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

I can't point to any single reason...

COLD CUT IN:

VIDEO CAMERA POV: Propped on a tripod, fixed on MATTHEW DAWSON(39). Boyishly handsome with a generous smile, he answers questions from a woman OC.

MATTHEW

...I mean, who hasn't dreamt of going into space?

(a smile)

I wanna see what's up there.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

How's your family feel about you applying to the "Civilian in Space Program"?

MATTHEW

Good.

She waits for him to expand. When he doesn't...

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I see here you have two sons - they've gotta be pretty supportive...

A BEAT. The smile fades from Matthew's face.

MATTHEW

One son. Brian.

(then)

We lost one.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

...I'm sorry.

(an awkward beat)

Has that influenced your decision to come here today?

He stares at the camera, before we - -

CUT TO:

BLACK. Daunting SILENCE. Title:

"ORBIT"

EXT. MILFORD ACADEMY - - NAPA - - DAY

A vast and verdant prep-school.

INT. AUDI SUV - - STATIONARY - - CLOSE ON A WOMAN (CINDY)

In the passenger-seat. Blinking back tears.

BRIAN (V.O.)
I knew she was gonna cry...

INT. ROOM - - FRESHMAN DORM - - DAY

Matthew helps his son, BRIAN(15, slim and awkward with a rebellious mop of auburn hair)unpack boxes.

MATTHEW
I think your mom just saw the tuition,
B'.

Brian smirks. "Funny, dad". Starts to make the bed.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Why do I have the feeling this is
the only time you're gonna make your
bed all year?

Matthew moves to Brian's side. Helps him tuck the sheet in.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Soccer tryouts next week, huh?

BRIAN
Uh-huh.

MATTHEW
You ready?
(Brian shrugs)
You're ready.

Matthew fluffs a pillow. Holds it when he looks at his son.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
You're gonna do great, you know that,
right?

Brian nods. Not so sure.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
And you know that you can always
come back home and - -

BRIAN
Dad. I know. I got it. I'm cool.

MATTHEW
Okay. Good.
(a laugh)
...I'm glad one of us is.
(they hug)
Love you, pal.

FAVOR BRIAN as they hug, looking for the first time like the scared little boy he is.

INT. AUDI SUV - - MOVING (NIGHT)

The drive home, Matthew behind the wheel beside his wife, CINDY (35, unconventionally beautiful, strong and a bit stubborn). Talk radio plays.

CINDY
I promised him I wasn't gonna cry.
Did he say anything?

MATTHEW
Nah. I don't even think he noticed.

She looks out the window. Studies the lights blurring by.

CINDY
...I don't know that we should'a let
him go.

MATTHEW
He's a good kid. It's what he
wanted...

CINDY
Would your dad have let you go away
to school at his age?

MATTHEW
My dad? He left before I could ask
him.

He offers a comforting smile. Lets the silence settle in.
And all we hear is:

TALK RADIO (V.O.)
...The senator went on to say that
NASA needs more than "a contest" to
bring it back to respectability,
calling the Civilian Space Program
"a blatant publicity stunt" - -

Matthew changes the station. Something benign. Then:

CINDY
I keep thinking about Danny, you
know? More than usual. I miss him.

Matthew puts his hand on hers, his eyes on the road ahead
when he says:

MATTHEW
It's gonna be okay.

EXT. KENTFIELD - - MARIN COUNTY - - NIGHT - - TO ESTABLISH

Fog blankets the Golden Gate Bridge.

INT. BEDROOM - - DAWSON HOUSE - - NIGHT

Cindy in bed. Alone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - - DAWSON HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

From inside, lights dim, Matthew stands on the deck outside.

EXT. DECK - - DAWSON HOUSE - - NIGHT

He stares up at the sky: A pyramid of stars. And only now, alone, do we see a profound sadness and loneliness to him.

INT. DANNY'S ROOM - - HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

Darkness punctured by the CREAK of a door, a crack of LIGHT: A little boy's domain. Toys and all the typical fare.

But half of the room stands out, devoted to space exploration.

Books. Photos of astronauts and missions. Miniature models of jets and shuttles. A STUFFED MONKEY. A walkie-talkie.

Matthew stands in the doorway, at a distance, admiring the GLOW-IN-THE-DARK STICKERS on the ceiling.

He closes the door, leaving us in DARKNESS.

INT. BEDROOM - - DAWSON HOUSE - - THE NEXT MORNING

Cindy wakes to see the creased but empty space beside her.

INT. KITCHEN - - START ON THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

CINDY (O.S.)

You sleep?

The paper lowers to reveal Matthew as Cindy enters...

MATTHEW

Eh. You?

She methodically dumps items into a blender. A protein shake.

CINDY

I got up and went to go wake Brian...

Matthew's BlackBerry phone VIBRATES. He checks caller ID before sending it to voicemail.

CINDY (CONT'D)

(re: call)

Work?

MATTHEW

Hmm? Yeah...

Matthew's on the move, cleaning his cereal bowl before placing it in the dishwasher. Stopping when he hears:

CINDY

I made an appointment for us to go see a counselor...

MATTHEW

"A counselor"? - we going to Summer Camp?

(off her look; playful)

Oh, you mean a therapist.

(slips into suit jacket)

Honey, we're doing fine...

CINDY

No. We're not.

A BEAT.

MATTHEW

I didn't know there was a right way to mourn your thirteen year-old son.

CINDY

(gently)

It's been a year since Danny died. You haven't gone to the cemetery. You've barely gone into his room.

MATTHEW

Can we not talk about this now? Please?

CINDY

It's not going away.

He bridges the gap between them. A whisper:

MATTHEW

We're doing fine.

(a kiss goodbye)

Love you.

Cindy watches him go. Belatedly starts the blender.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - - MORNING

Southbound traffic inches slowly along.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

(filtered)

Matthew, it's Diane Cooley from Nasa.

(MORE)

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Would you give me a call, please?
 Thanks.

INT. AUDI SUV - - MOVING (BARELY)

Matthew listens to the voicemail message on his BlackBerry phone as traffic starts. And stops. And STAYS stopped.

He glances to the STATION WAGON stalled alongside him. To the LITTLE BOY in the backseat who stares at him. Unveiling an angelic smile before the automobile moves on...

But Matthew's car stays still.

Punched in the gut, he stares where the little boy was a moment before. A HORN brings him back.

INT. OFFICE - - ORACLE - - MORNING

Cup of coffee in hand, Matthew navigates past the maze of empty cubicles on his way through the software company.

INT. MATTHEW'S OFFICE - - ORACLE - - MOMENTS LATER

At his desk, he works on his computer...

TAP-TAP(OS)

TODD WICHECK(40's), stands in the doorway. Balding and bespectacled, he's Matthew's colleague and friend...

MATTHEW
 T-bone...
 (back on computer)
 Come on in, siddown.

Todd enters. Stays standing. Looks around the office: No photos of family. No personal effects to speak of.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
 (looks up from
 computer; winning
 smile)
 What's going on, man?

TODD
 Nada, just wanted to say "hey". We
 never talk anymore, you know? Go to
 dinner, us and the wives.

MATTHEW
 Yeah, yeah. We should do that.

TODD
 You guys doing okay?

MATTHEW
Yeah, we're doing great.

The intercom BUZZES.

INTERCOM (V.O.)
(female assistant)
Diane Cooley on line one.

MATTHEW
(into intercom)
Thanks.

TODD
Well...

MATTHEW
Glad you came by, man...

Todd leaves the door open. And Matthew waits a moment before standing and quietly closing it. Returning to take the call:

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Diane...

CLOSE ON MATTHEW as he listens to the voice on the other end(os). And after a moment of listening, he closes his eyes. Bows his head slightly.

INT. GREENS RESTAURANT - - FORT MASON - - NIGHT

Matthew fidgets with the silverware, nervous - even more so when Cindy walks in. She looks stunning.

MATTHEW
(stands)
Wow...

CINDY
I was definitely the only girl on the ferry dressed like this. I got a little excited at the prospect of a date night.
(as she sits)
We haven't done this in a while.
Not since...
(voice trails off)

She sits. In silence. Before LAUGHING lightly.

MATTHEW
What?
(then; realizes)
Oh, God. You're never gonna let me forget that first date, are you?

CINDY
It's just the only time I ever went
to dinner with a cadaver...

MATTHEW
I was terrified.

WAITER (O.S.)
Something to drink, ma'am?

THE WAITER. Earnest eyes. A plastic smile.

CINDY
(to Matthew; hopeful)
Should we get some wine?

MATTHEW
(clears throat)
Sure.
(to waiter)
Just give us a minute.

The waiter recedes, Matthew shifting in his seat before...

CINDY
Remember our last date night? - the
babysitter calling us, frantic...

MATTHEW
...'Cus Danny couldn't find his teddy
bear.

CINDY
Not a teddy bear. "It's a monkey,
dad."

MATTHEW
...A monkey named "John Glenn".

CINDY
(a smile)
....He loved that thing.

Matthew inches forward. Psyching himself up. And Cindy,
thinking him about to make a romantic overture, takes his
hand in hers as he says...

MATTHEW
I...I know I haven't been there for
you...the way you need me to be...

...The waiter returns, WINE LIST in hand. Matthew quietly
removes his hand from hers. When the waiter exits...

CINDY
(to Matthew; "keep
going")
Please...

MATTHEW
Something happened today. Something
amazing.
(just as she smiles)
I entered that contest. To go into
space. And I won.

CINDY
(a laugh)
...What?

MATTHEW
I know I should'a told you but I
never thought it would actually
happen...

Cindy looks at him in disbelief. And SILENCE.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Tell me what you think...
(she's still silent)
Cindy...?

She just looks at him, stunned.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Say something. Please...

Before anyone can say anything, the waiter returns.

WAITER
(re: wine list)
You guys had a chance to decide?

A newfound distance between them, there's another bout of
silence, before we...

INT. AUDI SUV - - MOVING

Matthew drives, Cindy riding shotgun. A beat, then:

CINDY
Tell me why you need to do this.

MATTHEW
It's not any one thing. It's...
everything.

CINDY
Then tell me everything.

Before he can speak, the SUV drives around a corner to see NEWS VANS and REPORTERS outside the Dawson home. Waiting.

And they're both caught off guard, staring at the spectacle as the SUV pulls into the driveway.

And the mob swarms in, camera lights blinding them - only adding to the confusion and discomfort.

They sit in stunned silence, trapped in a bubble, surrounded.

INT. HALL - - HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

- - Matthew enters, SOUND filtering in from reporters outside before he closes the front door. Follows after Cindy.

MATTHEW

Talk to me, please...

She stops. Turns back to face him.

CINDY

I love you. But this is not the way to deal with this. Not for you. And sure not for us.

MATTHEW

I just feel like...

He trails off, distracted by the CAMERAMEN outside the window.

CINDY

Tell me...

MATTHEW

...Like I was chosen for this. Like this is happening for a reason.

CINDY

You weren't chosen by God. You were chosen by the PR Department. You're a story to them.

MATTHEW

I just need you to support me...even if you don't understand it. I don't understand it.

CINDY

That's not good enough, Matthew. Not anymore.

He struggles to find the words. Finally:

MATTHEW

There are things a father should say to a son...things that I didn't say.

Cindy moves closer, hugging him before there's a KNOCK at the door, a woman and a cameraman visible on the porch.

And slowly Matthew wiggles free of her, gently:

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
I have to do this...

And Matthew opens the door to see DIANE COOLEY(40's, a bundle of angst and estrogen, the head of NASA's Public Relations Department). When he turns back around...Cindy's gone.

DIANE
Congratulations, Matthew. You ready?

We see the media mob behind her, SOUND RISING, before we - -

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - - THE NEXT DAY - - SILENCE

The SUV sits in the driveway, its back trunk open.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - - HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

ZIP! Matthew closes a suitcase. Packing for his trip. He goes to a DUFFEL BAG: An APPLE LAPTOP inside.

INT. DANNY'S ROOM - - HOUSE - - MOMENTS LATER

Matthew enters tentatively, walking on quicksand.

Moving to the bookshelf, he reaches for a miniature replica of the SPACE SHUTTLE and a WALKIE-TALKIE(a handy-talkie, actually). He places both in the duffel bag.

And he stands there, staring up at the stuffed monkey - the aforementioned "John Glenn".

MATTHEW
What're you smiling about?

INT. LIVING ROOM - - START ON PACKED LUGGAGE

Aligned by the door, we PAN OVER to see Matthew ON THE PHONE:

MATTHEW
...I have no comment. Please don't
call here.

He hangs up. Sees CINDY in the doorway, arms crossed.

In the BG, we see Matthew's image on the television, the media blitz already begun. He turns the TV off just as - -

- - The phone RINGS. They trade a glance before the machine picks up on the fourth ring.

CINDY
We should change the number...

MATTHEW
Yeah, absolutely. Will you give it
to me when we do?

He smiles. She doesn't. Then:

CINDY
What's gonna happen with work?

MATTHEW
They're calling it "a sabbatical".
Which means they think it's good
publicity. Trust me, if they couldn't
spin it, they'd probably find my job
curiously "obsolete".
(then; off Cindy)
Tell me you understand...

CINDY
I'm trying. I really am. I wanna
be supportive because I know you're
in pain. But I've already lost
someone I loved so much...
(a beat; a sad smile)
At dinner, for the first time, I
thought we could be like we were...

MATTHEW
We train for six weeks before we go
up. I need you there, at the launch.
Please.

After a moment, she nods.

EXT. DORM - - MILFORD ACADEMY - - DUSK

The SUV idles outside, hazard lights pulsing.

INT. COMMON ROOM - - MILFORD - - CONTINUOUS

Arms folded, MATTHEW watches the local news on TV...

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
(on TV)
*...When the computer consultant's
thirteen-year old son died from a
rare form of bone cancer.*

BRIAN (O.S.)
Big news on campus, too...

BRIAN. In the doorway.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

...I'm a minor celebrity. Right up there with the kid whose mom went on "Fear Factor".

MATTHEW

Yeah, but hopefully I won't have to eat animal excrement. How ya' doing, pal?

BRIAN

Okay. How's mom handling it?

MATTHEW

And you thought she was upset when you went away...

(then; serious)

I'm not gonna do this unless you guys agree to let me.

BRIAN

Then the heat's off me 'cus no way mom's letting you go.

MATTHEW

She already has.

BRIAN

Seriously? How'd you work that?

Matthew only smiles. And father and son regard each other in silence, Matthew awaiting his son's decision. Finally:

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Okay. So long as you tell me everything...

MATTHEW

I'm gonna keep a blog on my laptop.

A BEAT.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Take care of yourself, okay?

As they hug, Matthew's gaze goes to the running TV(=s) over Brian's shoulder, hearing:

METEOROLOGIST (O.S.)

...Expect sunny skies over the next coupla' days.

EXT. ROAD - - THE NEXT MORNING

RAIN POURS.

Superimpose: *Houston, Texas.*

A red pick-up TRUCK barrels by, heavy metal tunes blasting.

INT. TRUCK - - MOVING

OWEN LARAMIE(40's). Lean and lantern-jawed with the squint of a man on the perpetual brink of solving a math problem. Blue collar to the bone, he's got a Southern drawl tinged with nicotine and North Texas.

Baseball cap on his head, gaze fixed on the dashboard's digital clock, he cranks the stereo up. Drives faster.

EXT. BUILDING FIVE - - HOUSTON - - MORNING

The truck lurches to a stop in the busy parking lot, Owen vaulting out and striding towards the monolithic building known as JOHNSON SPACE CENTER(JSC).

Oblivious to the rain, he waves to DIANE - who waits underneath an umbrella-like awning.

DIANE
(over rain)
You're late!

OWEN
I wanted to build up the excitement.

EXT. MAIN GATE - - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - DAY

Still raining, a Towncar pulls in, MATTHEW exiting.

He stares up at the building, David to its Goliath.

INT. AUDITORIUM - - TRAINING FACILITY - - START ON DIANE

Microphone in hand, she addresses an unseen audience.

DIANE
...I promised you guys a real-live
astronaut and we've managed to track
one down...

CLOSE ON OWEN - - BACKSTAGE

Regarding himself in a mirror, he presses his wet hair flat as a smattering of APPLAUSE echoes...

OWEN
(sotto)
Your fans await...

TRACK WITH OWEN - - MOMENTS LATER

As he emerges from behind a curtain to see the auditorium's filled with...twenty or so EIGHTH GRADERS(POV).

Owen takes the microphone from Diane. Faces the crowd.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Hey, you guys. My name's Major Owen
Laramie. I understand y'all might
have some questions for me...

Hands shoot up. Owen points to a cute little girl.

CUTE LITTLE GIRL
How many people work at NASA?

OWEN
'Bout half.
(no one laughs)
...Roughly 10,000 or so.
(low; to Diane)
Is that right?

DIANE
(not even close)
Roughly.

Owen points to a chubby kid with his hand up.

CHUBBY BOY
What's it like in outer space...?

OWEN
A guy named Neil Armstrong said it's
like "having a privileged view of
infinity."

But this description falls flat so...

OWEN (CONT'D)
It's Christmas morning, your birthday,
the first day of summer, all rolled
into one.

The kids' faces brighten, imbued with excitement.

OWEN (CONT'D)
(another kid)
Go ahead, chief.

ANOTHER KID
How many times have you been in space?

OWEN
I've actually, officially, never
been up. I'll be on the next launch.

Disappointment registers across the kids' faces as SILENCE
settles in, Diane squirming. Finally:

OWEN (CONT'D)
Any other questions?

WAIT. The kids stare at Owen until a hand rises, a bespectacled BLACK KID rising from the back...

BLACK KID
My question's twofold: Firstly: Why aren't there any African-American astronauts? And as a follow-up: Do you expect that to change anytime soon?

INT. PRESS ROOM - - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - DAY

Photographers snap pictures as we SLOWLY PUSH IN on MATTHEW, his smile looking more like a grimace.

INT. TRAINING CENTER - - START ON TREADMILL

Feet pound with momentous force before we PAN UP to see OWEN RUNNING. Pushing himself. Harder. Faster.

Ipod Nano buds blasting death metal, he slows upon glancing into the mirror. A man motions for him, as we PRE-LAP:

COOPER (V.O.)
How's your daddy doin'?

INT. OFFICE - - NASA - - MOMENTS LATER

Owen sits across from NASA Executive Director, STAN COOPER(50's), a bear of a man with an impaired fashion sense.

OWEN
Good. He's good.

COOPER
Haven't talked to him, have ya'?

OWEN
Not for a while, no sir.

COOPER
Best test pilot on the planet.

OWEN
(a laugh to blunt the truth of it)
Not the best dad on the planet.

Cooper exhales. No easy way to segue into this so...

COOPER
You already know there's a civilian joining the mission...

OWEN
Yessir, of course.

COOPER
And you know there's a five man crew
limit on the Intrepid...

And then neither man need say it. It's clear. Owen's face registers reflexive disappointment.

COOPER (CONT'D)
You'll get your shot, Owen. Just
not on this one.

And for a moment, we see defiance in Owen's eyes. But it fades as quickly as it appears. A good soldier.

OWEN
Yes, sir.

COOPER
(before Owen can stand)
Hold up. Look, this straight-up
sucks. You know it, I know it.
There's a politics to this business -
shit if it hasn't benefited me from
time to time. But you, son, it has
not. People don't always appreciate
the concept of candor. And you've
made the godawful mistake of actually
telling people what you think.

Owen nods, just wanting to flee, before - -

COOPER (CONT'D)
There's something else they want you
to do...

OWEN
Sir...

COOPER
Seems while you're in that particular
position, they'd like you to touch
your toes. This new guy, the
civilian? - They want you to train
him.

Even Owen's stoic demeanor's tested with that one.

INT. TEMPORARY HOUSING - - HOUSTON - - NIGHT

A bare-bones room, Matthew unpacks items from a suitcase before grabbing the phone. Punching digits.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
 (Brian's voice)
*You've reached the Dawsons, we can't
 get to the phone, leave us a message.*

BEEP(OS).

MATTHEW
 (into phone)
 It's me. Matthew? Matt? Your
 husband? Mildly funny, frequently
 annoying guy? Call me.

He hangs up. Surveying the somewhat depressing confines, a
 decision rendered, before we - - CUT TO:

EXT. CHUCK E. CHEESE - - HOUSTON - - NIGHT

Across the street from JSC, it's done in astronaut motif.

INT. BOOTH - - CHUCK E. CHEESE - - START ON MATTHEW

Pandemonium heard as he looks OC, eyes unblinking(POV): A
 birthday party comprised of young kids.

DIANE (O.S.)
 I see you've discovered our night
 life...

Matthew looks up to see DIANE.

MATTHEW
 You missed the balloon show. If
 you're lucky the guy in the rat suit
 sings...

DIANE
 (she sits)
 How ya' doin'...?

MATTHEW
 Seems to be a popular question these
 days...

DIANE
 Well, you're a popular guy. You
 missed the media session today...

MATTHEW
 I didn't miss it. I skipped it.
 I'm not doing this for the publicity.
 Sorry.

Diane nods. Waves to the waiter. Asks for:

DIANE
 Some of those cheese sticks, please.

DIANE (CONT'D)

(back to Matthew)

You remember the first shuttle launch?
I was in college. But I remember
what an event it was. 10,000 people
turned out in person. 10,000. Now?
Nobody watches, nobody cares. It's
part of the reason why NASA's in a
rut. And it's a big part of the
reason why we came up with the
"Civilian in Space Program". I think
people wanna care. They just need a
reason to. You're that reason.

MATTHEW

Look, I'll talk to the press. So
long as it's about the mission.

DIANE

Can I tell you a secret? Nobody
cares about the missions; they care
about the men and women who go on
them.

MATTHEW

Sometimes the puppet knows that's a
hand up its ass. I understand why I
was picked. But don't ask me to
publicize the worst thing that ever
happened to me...

DIANE

Believe me, I'm not always proud of
what I have to do. You know how
long I've been doing this? Before
tragedy became a branch of journalism.
Now I look around and I see these PR
girls with their spray-tans and their
text-messaging and I feel...old.
Things are not the way they were.

Matthew looks at her. Likes her. But still he stands and...

MATTHEW

I'm sorry...

She watches him go, flustered - even before the guy in the
MOUSE COSTUME ambles over. And begins to SING a happy song.

INT. CAFETERIA - - JSC - - THE NEXT MORNING

Donning the powder blue t-shirt of an astronaut in training,
Matthew sits alone at a table. Shoveling scrambled eggs.

OWEN slides in across from him. Says not a word. Finally - -

MATTHEW

I'm Matthew. Matt.

OWEN

I know. I'm gonna be assisting in your "training".

Doing his best to stay cordial, Owen's eyes give him away; he's sizing Matthew up. Less than impressed.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Whenever you're ready, superstar...

Owen stands. Looking down at Matthew, waiting.

MATTHEW

Now?

OWEN

Well, let's see: We've gotta, what, condense about twelve to fourteen years experience into a nice little five-week period before we ship you off to Florida, so, yeah, now would be good.

INT. TRAINING CENTER - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Three men and one woman, each clad in NASA sanctioned workout gear, congregate. A jocular atmosphere, the lone woman(MARY GORDON)runs on a treadmill.

COMMANDER ROMAN GIBBS walks over to her, teasingly:

COMMANDER GIBBS

'Less we gotta' run to the space station, you're spending entirely too much time on that thing...

ASTRONAUT GORDON

I'm getting married in two months, and my ass will fit into that dress.

PILOT HOLLOWAY does bicep curls in front of the mirror.

PILOT HOLLOWAY

How is it that I'm getting *smaller*?

SPECIALIST MARK LANDERS(stocky, funny)chuckles at that, his laughter - and every other conversation - truncated when...

...Matthew enters, Owen by his side. Everyone knows who he is. And no one's particularly ecstatic about it.

But Commander Gibbs puts on a happy face, introducing himself and his team(AD-LIB INTROS)before...

OWEN
 (excusing himself)
 Well, we got some work to do so...

Before Owen and Matthew can leave - -

COMMANDER GIBBS
 Owen...

Owen gestures for Matthew to go ahead without him before reconvening to a corner with Gibbs...

COMMANDER GIBBS (CONT'D)
 (re: Matthew)
 Take it easy on him, okay?

OWEN
 Not my job to "take it easy on him"...

COMMANDER GIBBS
 You know what I'm saying...

OWEN
 If you're thinking I'm upset because I've been replaced by a glorified reality TV star capitalizing on the death of his son to get his fifteen minutes...well, yeah, I'm not thrilled about it. And if you're worried that I'm gonna be hard on him, lemme tell ya', I am gonna be hard on him. But lemme tell you why: Because that man has absolutely no right or reason to be up there with you. And because I won't let him go into that unprepared.

INT. WATER TANK - - BUILDING 29 - - JSC - - LATER

SPLASH! Donning a bulky suit, Matthew plunges into the water. Rendered instantly immobile. Owen paces along the periphery.

OWEN
 This is engineered to help you experience what it's like to perform an EVA. A space walk to the uninformed.
 (Matthew's still motionless)
 That means you move, Dawson. Contrary to conventional wisdom, this is something anyone can do with a modicum of initiative and athleticism.

Matthew takes a tiny step, struggling.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Don't expend all your energy at once.

When it's clear Matthew's exerted all he can, Owen uses a crane-like instrument to fetch him out.

Matthew dangles above the water, soaked and out of breath.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Well, that was impressive. AGAIN!

The crane lowers...

INT. TEMPORARY HOUSING - - HOUSTON - - LATER THAT NIGHT

Post workout, ice packs on his legs, Matthew sits on the carpet in a sweaty t-shirt. Startled by the RINGING PHONE.

He grapples to his feet, hobbling to answer it...

MATTHEW

Hello...

CINDY (V.O.)

Hey.

INT. KITCHEN - - HOUSE - - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

CINDY. At the kitchen table - atop which we see a smattering of NEWSPAPER ARTICLES about Matthew.

MATTHEW

You should see me. I'm a human ice pack. I feel like I've just gone twelve rounds with a bulldozer...

CINDY

"The bulldozer" being your instructor...?

MATTHEW

I know you may find this hard to believe, but I don't think he likes me...

She stands. Moves around the house. Finally:

CINDY

Is it helping?

MATTHEW

What?

CINDY

Being there.

MATTHEW

Well, my cholesterol - which was apparently that of an obese rhinoceros - is down, and my O2 intake is up so...who could ask for more?

That's not what she was asking. And he knows it. Before she can call him on it - -

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

You squared away on your tickets?

CINDY

So we're going to Florida?

MATTHEW

Orlando. They train in Texas. They launch in Florida.

CINDY

Not "they"; you.

(then)

We're flying in the night before. I hate flying.

MATTHEW

Me, too.

And they share a laugh, before we...

INT. APARTMENT - - START ON COMPUTER SCREEN

A formal letter, we glimpse a few choice words typed: "Proud service"...*"unable to continue"*...*"tender my resignation"*.

REVERSE to see OWEN at his desk. He looks at the computer screen for a deliberative moment before hitting "print".

EXT. TRACK - - JSC - - THE NEXT MORNING

Matthew stretches on the field, Owen looming over him, hands on his hips like a demonic drill sergeant.

Matthew struggles to make conversation...

MATTHEW

Your dad was a pilot. Right?

(Owen stares back)

Is it that you don't like me? Or you don't like what I represent?

OWEN

"C."

MATTHEW

(realizes)

..."All of the above."

Owen winks. *Bingo.*

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
I didn't know I was gonna be replacing anybody...

OWEN
Get up.

Matthew rises from the grass.

MATTHEW
(droll)
Glad we had this talk. I feel better.

Owen starts jogging, Matthew no choice but to follow as we go to an ELEVATED ANGLE and...

OWEN (O.S.)
Some things you need to understand,
superstar. This crew? - They've
been together for nine years...

As he continues, we'll see a series of shots comprising several weeks of training.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - - CONTINUOUS

Dinner. The Intrepid crew chuckles over an inside joke.

OWEN (O.S.)
So I'm sure you'll fit right in...

PAN DOWN the table to find Matthew on the outside. Alienated.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew's hunched over, his back to us.

OWEN (O.S.)
By the end of it all, you'll feel
ten-feet tall and bulletproof...

Matthew catches his runaway breathing. Owen laughs.

INT. SHUTTLE SIMULATOR - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Nicknamed "the vomit comet", it's a modified Boeing 707.

OWEN (O.S.)
But nothing can really prepare you
for space travel...

FIND MATTHEW, clinging to the wall. Nearly hyperventilating.

INT. COCKPIT - - T-38 - - IN FLIGHT

Matthew sits behind a PILOT - who ascends. *Rapidly.*

OWEN (O.S.)

Which isn't to say we won't try...

Matthew opens his mouth to scream, before we - -

EXT. SKY - - DAY

The T-38 jet climbs higher with a ferocious *WHOOOOOOOSSSHHHHH!*

OWEN (O.S.)

...Pushing you to every height
imaginable...

INT. BUILDING 4 - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew takes a test on the Computer Aided Instructional Trainer(also known as CAIT, it's a computer program designed to test aptitude), flustered with the results(os).

OWEN (O.S.)

Mentally...

INT. CARDIO ROOM - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew endures a fitness test on the treadmill.

OWEN (O.S.)

...Physically.

Owen jacks the incline up-up-up.

INT. BUILDING 4 - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew works on a single systems trainer(also known as SST, it's a cubicle that simulates flight).

OWEN (O.S.)

...And emotionally.

Fists balled, he looks like he wants to punch the screen.

INT. BUILDING 29 - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

A 25-foot water tank enables the crew to engage in extended training periods. Matthew still finds it hard to move.

OWEN (O.S.)

In no time, it'll all be a walk in
the park...

Superimpose: ***Four Weeks Later.***

EXT. FIELD - - JSC - - ELEVATED ANGLE - - DUSK

And, amazingly, Matthew's ahead of Owen on the track.

As we see him now, he's gotten a haircut and lost some weight.

CLOSER: Owen's barely out of breath as he settles to a stop.

OWEN
(clicks stopwatch off)
Better. I only lapped you twice.

Matthew hunches over, palms to knees, sucking wind.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Building Two. Five minutes.

Owen walks off, Matthew's legs like Jell-o...

MATTHEW
...Piggy-back ride?

OWEN
(unamused)
Four minutes.

CLOSE ON MATTHEW'S GRAINY IMAGE

The clip that opened our movie. Matthew's "audition tape":

DIANE (O.S.)
...How has that influenced your
decision to come here today?

A long, disconcerting beat. Finally:

MATTHEW
I don't wanna talk about it.

OWEN (O.S.)
Uh-oh. That can't be good for
business.

The image of Matthew FREEZES before we WIDEN to see - -

INT. OFFICE - - PUBLIC RELATIONS - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

OWEN stands in the doorway as DIANE watches the video.

DIANE
(re: Matthew)
He won't talk to the press. Not
about personal stuff.

Owen's surprised. And impressed.

OWEN

Really? Can't say I blame him.

DIANE

(a sigh)

Yeah. Me, neither.

(clicks TV off; swivels
to face him)

But the reality is, that's why he's
here...

(remembering Owen's
situation)

Sorry...

(then)

How's he doing on your end?

OWEN

He's good. Smart. A quick study.
But there's no version of this where
he learns all he needs to in the
time we have.

DIANE

So we're both in over our heads...

They share a laugh, eyes engaged.

INT. TEMPORARY HOUSING - - CEILING POV

Looking down at Matthew as he lays in bed, restless. Finally,
he stirs. As if answering some unheard alarm.

INT. HALLWAY - - BUILDING 4 - - NIGHT

Empty. Not a soul in sight. A light comes from - -

INT. CLASSROOM - - BUILDING 4 - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew works on the CAIT(the computer program)as Owen watches
from the doorway in the BG. After a moment, he enters and
sits down beside Matthew.

OWEN

(off computer question)

The telemetry's the shuttle's primary
form of communication with Mission
Control - -

(sees Matthew's answer)

...But you already know that.

(beat)

How do you know that?

MATTHEW

(points to screen)

Don't know this one...

ON SCREEN: "How many separate parts are on the Intrepid?"

OWEN (O.S.)
Six million. You know why that's important?

MATTHEW
Six million things that can go wrong...

Owen nods. Back to screen:

OWEN
Don't worry about this one...

Matthew types(os), the DING telling us he's right.

OWEN (CONT'D)
You know morse code?

Matthew stays focused on the screen. Murmurs:

MATTHEW
My son, he did. He taught me.

A BEAT. Owen measures his words carefully:

OWEN
I know I haven't been the welcoming committee since you've been here...
(voice trails off;
then)
I just wanna make sure you're ready.

Matthew knows how hard that was for Owen. Nods "thanks".

MATTHEW
You're not going with us to Florida?

OWEN
You'll be in good hands.
(a beat)
Lemme show you something...

INSERT - - OWEN'S SECURITY CARD

As it's slid into a door slot. GREEN LIGHT.

INT. SUIT ROOM - - JSC - - WIDER

Filled with memorabilia, mission patches line the walls, astronaut gear everywhere. Matthew's appropriately awed.

OWEN
Our unofficial museum...

Matthew walks around, admiring the place.

OWEN (CONT'D)

What're you bringing up with you?

MATTHEW

My laptop. A few other things.

(a beat)

Danny loved space. And not the way most kids do. Not the laser beams or space ships...I'm taking this walkie-talkie that we'd talk on before he'd go to bed. Corny, I know...

Silence. Owen not sure what to say. Finally:

OWEN

Bring a CD. Everybody brings country. I hate country. I wanted to be the first guy to play Pantera in space.

MATTHEW

Owen.

OWEN

Uh-huh...?

MATTHEW

Am I ready?

OWEN

(a beat)

You're ready.

Matthew knows when he's being lied to.

FADE TO BLACK:

Superimpose: **Cape Canaveral, Florida.**

CUT IN:

THREE U.S. AIR FORCE HELICOPTERS

Buzz towards a river separating us from...THE LAUNCH ZONE.

Superimpose: **Launch Day.**

A NEWS CREW sets up shop on the grass, the Space Shuttle INTREPID visible beyond the fence, in the distance.

INT/EXT. HANGAR - - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - MORNING

Owen catches up to Diane - who carries her luggage toward a NASA jet visible through the hangar doors on the tarmac.

OWEN

Big day.

DIANE
Can't be fun for you...

OWEN
Yeah, "what doesn't kill
you"...generally sucks.
(she laughs)
Do me a favor? Take care of him.

And Owen watches as she moves towards the jet, and we...

INT. VAN - - MOVING

A NASA vehicle takes Brian and Cindy to Cape Canaveral.
Behind them, we notice a few other people.

Brian looks at TWO BUTTONS he's been given with his father's
picture on the front. He offers one to his mom.

Cindy tucks it into her pocket. Brian just stares at the
button and his dad's image on it as the driver pulls into
the entry gate for KENNEDY SPACE CENTER...

INT. PRE-FLIGHT - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew stands in his Escape Suit (ACES) known as the CSU-4/P
as other crew members sit in anticipation.

Commander Gibbs spots Matthew. Saunters over.

COMMANDER GIBBS
Remember that weird reactions happen
up there: Nosebleeds. Back pain.
Headaches. Only feels good on takeoff
and landing. You'll be in constant
contact with us...
(gestures to Landers)
...Unless Mark's on the mic. He
likes to freeze the rookies out on
occasion. Don't take it personally.
(a small smile)
It's gonna be okay.

He locks Matthew's Anti-G protection system in...

COMMANDER GIBBS (CONT'D)
Now let's review the shuttle geography
one more time...

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE INTREPID - - STATIONARY

STEADY TRACKING SHOT through the bowels of the beast. 57
feet high, 122 feet long, it's the size of a DC-9.

COMMANDER GIBBS (O.S.)
In the mid fuselage, the payload
bay's the largest area on the craft...

MOVE through the cavernous section, a stairwell and catwalk set up around the RMS(robot arm)...

COMMANDER GIBBS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You'll be close to it in the Mid-deck - where we keep sleep stations and stowage facilities...

CLIMB those stairs, slipping through an open hatch to see a single chair bolted down in front of a series of lockers...

COMMANDER GIBBS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's not the most scenic of spots.

A small portal WINDOW provides a horizontal view of the world outside before we CONTINUE into the...

COMMANDER GIBBS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The flight deck's 20 yards away...

THE FLIGHT DECK: Four chairs. Two in front, two behind them. Close confines. A wall of panels and buttons.

RESUME SCENE:

COMMANDER GIBBS (CONT'D)
And most important of all, don't forget these...

He stuffs two EMESIS BAGS(barf bags)into Matthew's pocket.

INT. LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER(LCC) - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Family members are met outside "the green room" by their official "escorts"(responsible for assisting and accompanying the families of astronauts).

COMMANDER GIBBS' WIFE(we see Gibbs' face on her button) welcomes other family members, a veteran at this.

Diane talks to an "escort" before moving for Brian and Cindy.

DIANE
Mrs. Dawson, Diane Cooley, we met in San Francisco...

CINDY
Cindy. This is my son, Brian...

DIANE
Hey, Brian. We're gonna be watching the launch from the roof of this building. Should we go see the man of the hour?

INT. CORRIDOR - - PRE-FLIGHT - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Diane leads Cindy and Brian down the hall, halting when she comes to an indelible RED LINE painted across the floor.

And they stand in silence before we hear a loud CLICK-CLACK emanating from down the hall. Coming closer.

Brian and Cindy trade eyes before MATTHEW appears from around the corner. Clad in his ACES suit.

More tense silence as Matthew stops on the other side of that line. And Brian looks at him. And bursts out LAUGHING.

Matthew joins in. Even Cindy and Diane crack smiles.

And now Cindy moves closer, Diane forced to warn - -

DIANE

He can't have physical contact with anyone before the launch. Just a precaution.

So Cindy and Brian are forced to stay awkwardly behind that line as Diane moves away, giving them some privacy.

MATTHEW

Thanks for being here.

When Cindy doesn't say anything...

BRIAN

It's cool. You got me out of school.

Matthew looks at Cindy. She looks more nervous than he does.

MATTHEW

I know this isn't easy.

Cindy looks at him. Nods. Fending off emotions. Afraid to talk for fear she'll start crying.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

See you in a few days.

And Matthew and Cindy stare at each other, separated by more than a red line.

INT. WAREHOUSE - - CLOSE ON A FORMIDABLE GATE

That churns electronically up as we WIDEN to see the Intrepid crew assembled in full regalia, Matthew included.

The astronauts prepare to walk towards the helicopters that will ferry them to the Intrepid.

Only, as the gate unfurls, we see less than a hundred spectators present. An anticlimactic moment for sure.

EXT. ROOF - - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER - - KSC - - MORNING

Atop the four-story building, we see families and their escorts scattered about. Diane stands with Cindy and Brian, disappointed by the small turnout below.

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

Two engineers strap MATTHEW into his chair.

INT. FLIGHT-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

Harnessed in, the crew goes through the pre-flight checklist.

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS - SANS AUDIO

Matthew locks his helmet visor in, takes a deep breath.

INT. HALLWAY - - BUILDING 30 - - JSC - - SANS AUDIO

Insert Legend: *Johnson Space Center. Texas.*

COOPER stands alone. Psyching himself up. He pulls an UGLY TIE from his pocket. Begins to ceremoniously fasten it.

A pre-launch ritual.

EXT. LAUNCH - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - MORNING - SANS AUDIO

A familiar shot, we behold the shuttle on its perch, the DIGITAL CLOCK ticking at its base. ALL IS SILENT.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Owen sits on a bench press. Watches on a suspended TV.

EXT. ROOF - - LCC - - KSC - - MORNING - - SANS AUDIO

Cindy's hand tremors slightly as it holds a glass of water. Brian notices.

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - SANS AUDIO

Matthew grips the chair. Wait. Wait. Wait - -

And then, all at once, SOUND UP - -

EXT. LAUNCH - - KSC - - MORNING

LONG SHOT: The clock hits 00:00 as smoke billows from beneath the shuttle, a deep RUMBLING coming with it...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

The crew feels seven-million pounds of thrust, the three liquid engines of the shuttle rattling to life...

COMMANDER GIBBS
(points to a camera)
Let's all send our love to Houston...

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER - - BUILDING 30 - - JSC

Several big screens. And the dozens of diligent men and women who monitor them.

The FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM(FCR): Comprised of fifteen engineers and technicians. The heart of the launch.

On one screen, we see Commander Gibbs and his crew giving everyone THE FINGER. On another, we see Matthew in the mid-deck(unaware of the camera, he looks to be in deep thought).

COOPER
America's finest...

And take a good look around because this is as calm as this place will get today.

ON SCREEN #1: The Shuttle has liftoff.

EXT. ROOF - - LCC - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Diane stands beside Brian and Cindy - who flinch from the SOUNDS of launch.

INT. WEIGHT ROOM - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Owen stands, watching on the TV. Alone.

A bittersweet moment, he can't help but smile.

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - FAVOR MATTHEW (HAND-HELD)

EYES visible in his helmet, the world rattles around him.

STAY TIGHT ON MATTHEW

During the entire liftoff. Experiencing complete terror. And then, mere seconds later, complete...euphoria.

EXT. THE CAPE - - MORNING

The shuttle emerges through a mushroom cloud.

WIDER - - CINDY AND BRIAN

Marvel at the sight.

SFX: APPLAUSE.

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER - - BUILDING 30 - - JSC

Everyone on their feet, most CLAP save the FCR team - who stare collectively at the main screen. Game faces donned.

They know their job's just begun.

EXT. THE CAPE - - MORNING - - WIDE SHOT

Nothing left but a fiery cloud, the sky ablaze.

COMMANDER GIBBS (V.O.)
(filtered)
How we doin' back there, Mr. Dawson?

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - ASCENDANT

And Matthew's grip has loosened slightly on the chair...

(NOTE: All communication's relayed through a headset called THE COMM. CAP located inside the astronauts' helmets.)

MATTHEW
(into comm. cap)
Great...doing great...

His voice cracks slightly when he says it.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - ASCENDANT

A LAUGH from the crew before - -

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)
(filtered)
You have negative return, Intrepid.
Good luck.

The laughter diminishes before...

COMMANDER GIBBS
Affirmative, Houston, negative return.

There's no turning back now.

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CLOSE ON WINDOW VIEW

Crystalline. Uncorrupted. Heavenly.

MATTHEW'S REFLECTION

Fills frame, a smile beneath the shield of his helmet.

And Matthew consumes it all(os), captivated. The contour of the earth discernible(POV)as we leave home, and...

EXT. THE INTREPID - - APPROACHING ORBIT - - SUPER WIDE SHOT

The shuttle looks tiny. And fragile.

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - EIGHTEEN MINUTES LATER

FAVOR MATTHEW

Tendons tight, muscles clenched, he waits for the G-force storm to subside before he's distracted by the errant items floating past. Nuts. Bolts. An X-Acto blade. *Gulp.*

Matthew follows their flight until the debris is sucked into the ventilation system. A common occurrence. Then:

MATTHEW
(into comm. cap)
Flight command.

No answer.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
(into comm. cap)
Flight command? Hello?

Still. NOTHING.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
(into comm. cap)
Flight command, can you hear me?

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

The crew enjoys teasing Matthew with silence until...

COMMANDER GIBBS
(into comm. cap)
We're not going anywhere, Mr. Dawson.

MATTHEW (V.O.)
(filtered)
Not to alarm anybody but there are parts coming loose back here.
(silence)
Is that normal?

Gibbs trades a conspiratorial chuckle with Mary Gordon.

COMMANDER GIBBS
(into comm. cap)
"Normal" no longer applies, Mr. Dawson.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper stands by the MAIN CONTROL BOARD with a semicircle of engineers; chief among them, THE FLIGHT DIRECTOR - a diminutive, inherently calm fellow named NEWSOME.

Not far away, stands the SPACECRAFT COMMUNICATOR (CAPCOM) - the man entrusted with talking to the astronauts...

COOPER
(into mic.)
How we lookin', Intrepid?

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

COMMANDER GIBBS
(into comm. cap)
Tip-top, chief.

Mary Gordon notices something on the instrument panel...

ASTRONAUT GORDON
...What's going on *here*?

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Light eclipsed, the infinity of space envelops us.

And slowly Matthew acclimates to his environs. Lifting the visor from his helmet, he takes greedy gulps of air.

Finally, once his breathing regulates, he pulls a dog-eared PHOTO from his pocket...

ON PHOTO: *A grinning photo of Danny on his 10th birthday.*

But Matthew loses his grip on it, the picture floating up and away like a balloon.

And he's about to unlatch himself to retrieve it before common sense sets in. Reminded of his limitations.

MATTHEW
(into comm. cap)
Flight control, are we alright to
move about the cabin...?
(no answer)
Flight control?

When no objections come, he grabs a restraining strap, methodically unfastening all eight of them.

Which spurs him effortlessly out of the chair. The suit weighs nearly 65 pounds. And Matthew's now...weightless.

Disoriented, he sets his feet to stop his momentum. About to retrieve that photo when a thought freezes him.

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - TWO-AND-A-HALF MINUTES LATER

Still clad in that bulky spacesuit (minus the helmet), Matthew moves through the largest area of the shuttle when - -

- - the spacecraft's ROCKED by some unseen punch.

The force sends Matthew into a wall. Nearly fells him.

He shakes it off. Resets himself.

INT. ENTRY BAY - - THE INTREPID - - ON MATTHEW

Climbing a rickety ladder - no small task in the ACES suit - when another JOLT jabs the ship.

There. And gone. A tremor.

Could be normal. Still scares the shit out of him.

Unable to talk to the flight deck sans helmet, he shouts:

MATTHEW
I'm coming up.

He continues his climb, finally reaching the deck entry point. Unsure of the protocol, he knocks on the door.

A deliberative beat.

Matthew defuses the air-lock. But the door won't open without a fight. He leverages his weight into it, finally wedging it open with a loud WHOOOOSH.

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

And there they sit, THE CREW. Perfectly arrayed. Perfectly calm. Perfectly still.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)
Flight Crew Intrepid, tell us what's going on up there, guys, we lost the cameras and we're showing problems with the oxygen depressurization system.

Matthew stands there. Waits for someone to answer. Then:

MATTHEW
Everything okay?

When no one answers, he places a hand on Gordon's shoulder.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Mary.

She doesn't speak. Doesn't flex. Doesn't flinch.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Mary?

He steps closer, able to discern(POV)the BLOOD SPLATTER that sullies her visor.

- - He lurches back, retracting his hand, aghast.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Oh, my God.

- - Words expire, the thought occurring to Matthew that no one else has answered. That no one else has moved.

He wades deeper into the deck...

And now he sees it: Every astronaut's helmet and suit is tarnished with a mist of crimson, heads slumped forward.

THEY'RE ALL DEAD.

And Matthew stands there, motionless. As if paralyzed. Nearly catatonic until the reality of it all takes hold:

HE'S ALONE.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

OhGod...OhGod...

Hunched over, he tries to catch his breath before he's reminded of something - -

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)

Intrepid, do you copy?

The radio. His salvation. If he could only find it amidst the unknown gadgets on the instrument panel.

He moves past the crew, angling for the main panel...

MATTHEW

They're dead...they're all dead...

Panic-stricken, he maneuvers past Gibbs' slumped body, almost at the front panel now. Following the sound of - -

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)

Intrepid. Please respond...

Another JOLT jars Matthew, sends him into Gibbs' lap.

But he's on his feet fast. Eyes falling on something that looks remarkably like a radio. He stabs a button, spits out - -

MATTHEW

HELP - -

Wrong button. Not the radio.

But then he sees something that might explain what went wrong, a flashing red light telling us: "OXYGEN PRESSURE RESTORED".

Another look at the dead crew members before he's distracted by what he sees through the FRONT WINDSHIELD.

CLOSE ON MATTHEW'S EYES

Only now understanding the source of the "turbulence"...

MATTHEW POV: He needs no official training to recognize A METEOR SHOWER. On approach. *Fast.*

And it's at this moment that Matthew finds THE RADIO by Gibbs' seat, about to activate the appropriate button when - -

THE SHUTTLE'S ROCKED

Bombarded by space debris. Propelling Matthew into the panel before he's slammed to the floor.

He finds himself at Gibbs' feet, his head slamming against the lower main frame, drawing blood.

Matthew watches as his blood - scarlet specs - float about. The weirdest thing you've ever seen.

THE SHUTTLE - - EXTERIOR SHOT

Assaulted by a field of space garbage.

INSIDE THE SHUTTLE - - FAVOR MATTHEW

Curls into a defensive, near fetal, ball. Reduced to his most base instinct: Survival.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Please...please...

Unable to grab hold of anything, he slips free of his gloves. Hangs onto the seat guard beneath Gibbs' body.

And then, all at once, it STOPS. And the shuttle resets, continuing to orbit in its predetermined pattern.

Matthew stays down. Afraid to move.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper's been summoned back in, a Subway sandwich in hand.

NEWSOME

...We lost visual about two minutes ago. We don't know why.

COOPER

What's the crew telling you?

NEWSOME

Nothing.

COOPER

What?

CAPCOM

They're not responding, chief.

Cooper looks for somewhere to put his sandwich. Finally hands it to a young techie before studying the screens.

NEWSOME

(jiggers switches)

The shuttle telemetry's out.

COOPER

What do you mean, it's out?

NEWSOME

About a minute after we lost visual, everything failed. I mean, everything. There's no way for us to tell where they are or what's going on up there.

Cooper looks at screens two and three: *Fields of fuzz*. Screen two rewinds, showing the crew from behind (the camera placed in the back of the flight bay) before it goes to snowy static.

NEWSOME (CONT'D)

Get's worse: Before we lost contact, they were having problems with the oxygen valve on the flight deck.

It must be serious because Cooper tugs at his tie (but never dares taking it off). A tic. Then:

COOPER

Find out what the hell is going on up there. Keep trying 'em.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE DEPTHS OF SPACE - - OUTSIDE THE ATMOSPHERE

The shuttle circles. Orbit in effect.

Superimpose: **257 miles above the Atlantic Ocean.**

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

LONG SHOT: Matthew stands in the bay, idle. Surrounded by death before we RAPIDLY PUSH IN, stopping inches from his unblinking orbs, his empty expression.

Too terrified to scream, he simply BLINKS himself back. And begins, hard as it may be, to...move.

Checking the instrument panel for anything even remotely operational. But the buttons, the control stick, aren't responsive; the shuttle on effective autopilot.

Matthew sets his sight on the FLIGHT CHECKLIST. Flipping through the three-ring booklet, the arcane notations providing little relief...

And no movie convention here, Matthew murmurs to himself(if for no other reason than to fill the silence)...

MATTHEW

Backup, there's gotta be a backup...

He surveys the scene, hastily sorting through every potential storage space. A search, no small undertaking.

He looks down through the portal hatch, before we - CUT TO:

SERIES OF TIME CUTS:

Matthew checks the hull for any alternate form of communication. Finding...nothing.

IN THE PAYLOAD BAY: He pads walls, looking for anything of interest. He comes across, ridiculously enough, A BOOM BOX.

IN THE MID-DECK: He rifles through dozens of drawers(QUICK CUTS). Each and everyone empty.

Matthew stands there. Wondering what to do.

Only now does he notice the miniature shuttle MODEL floating effortlessly in the air. As if in imitation.

He tries to visibly calm himself. Muttering:

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

They know you're up here. They're sending help right now...

But his gaze betrays these assumptions, going to the window and the emptiness outside(POV).

EXT. INTREPID - - IN ORBIT - - SPACE

And we see Matthew, palms pressed against the glass. Never has a man looked so alone.

DRIFT SLOWLY BACK, leaving him behind, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - TEXAS - - DAY

CLOSE ON A SATELLITE, spinning in circles...

INT. LOCKERS - - ASTRONAUT LOUNGE - - JSC - - DAY

BAM! A locker slaps shut. A name on the masking tape on its front: "LARAMIE".

REVERSE TO see OWEN. Backpack slung over his shoulder, he peels the tape off like a Band-Aid.

Finally just...yanking it off.

He crumples it up and tosses it into the nearest wastebasket.

Even that, he misses.

OWEN

(sotto)

Perfect.

INT. HALLWAY - - JSC - - MOMENTS LATER

Owen's struck by the how populous the corridor is, moving past an MCC engineer as he asks an obligatory:

OWEN

How's it going, Tommy?

ENGINEER

Huh? What's that?

OWEN

How. Are. Things.

ENGINEER

For me? Yeah. Good. Real good.
Great.

Owen watches him go with an amused expression.

INT. LOBBY - - LAUNCH CONTROL CENTER - - KSC - - DAY

Diane shepherds Cindy and Brian out, family members still fraternizing behind them. A subdued celebration.

DIANE

...We have a luncheon for the families
in about half an hour...

CINDY

Thanks, we're on the red-eye back tonight...

Cindy and Brian stop by the door, Diane picking up on their tension. Feeling the need to assure...

DIANE

He's in good hands. They're gonna take good care of him.

(hands her card over)

And if you need anything...or have any questions...

Diane watches them leave. HER CELL PHONE RINGS.

DIANE (CONT'D)

(doesn't recognize caller ID)

This is Diane...

OWEN (V.O.)

(filtered)

Hey, it's Owen.

INT. HALLWAY - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Owen plugs quarters into a vending machine, stocking up on candy bars and cookies while he talks on his cell-phone:

OWEN

I get you at a bad time?

INTERCUT AS NECESSARY:

DIANE

No, it's okay...

Several serious looking men huddle outside Mission Control before ducking inside...

OWEN

I think something's going on.

DIANE

What do you mean?

OWEN

With the shuttle.

DIANE

Why?

OWEN

Normally some MCC technicians go home about now, get some sleep.

(MORE)

OWEN (CONT'D)

Nobody's leaving. Too much silence.
Too many serious faces. And they're
only letting "Clearance One" staff
into Mission Control.

DIANE

So it's a gut thing...?

OWEN

Pretty much, yeah.

DIANE

(good enough for her)
Okay. I'll call you back.

EXT. SPACE - - IN ORBIT

The shuttle circles.

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - IN ORBIT

Our view of the enormous midsection's disrupted by the TORSO
portion of the ACES suit as it floats past, and we find - -

MATTHEW

Hovering in midair. An amateur in the ways of zero-gravity,
he struggles to disrobe. No simple task.

Clad in a t-shirt and slacks, he moves slowly, negotiating
real estate like a newborn baby taking his first steps.

He stops beside a closet, removing several clear LARGE PLASTIC
BAGS from inside. FOUR in all.

Matthew prepares himself for the gruesome task ahead.

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

CENTER COMMAND. Cooper, Newsome and a team of technicians
and engineers confer around the main grid...

COOPER

...Is there any way to tell the status
of the oxygen depressurization unit?

NEWSOME

Not without the telemetry...

Cooper rolls his sleeves up, sweating through his shirt.

COOPER

Alright. Now what could have knocked
the communication system out?

CAPCOM

Crossed wires.

(off looks)

What, it happened in '73.

NEWSOME

Yeah, so did disco. We're talking about what's viable here.

(to Cooper; definitive)

There's enough space garbage and debris up there to fill three football stadiums...it'd be the equivalent of a meteor shower if the shuttle got in its way. The Russians dump it everywhere up there. Our orbit was designed to avoid it. Before all this, of course...

CAPCOM

Keep in mind, we lost communication with them *before* we lost the radio.

COOPER

Meaning...?

NEWSOME

They might've been...incapacitated. Before the radio went out.

Which leaves everyone silent...

Cooper processes. A methodical man. Then:

COOPER

Assuming the radio is damaged, we have backup systems in place, right?

CAPCOM

Sure. A secure radio and an iridium satellite phone. But...

COOPER

(anticipating)

...They're linked into the telemetry.

CAPCOM

Bulls-eye.

NEWSOME

At this point, all we know for sure is our line with the shuttle was knocked out at two thirty-six p.m. today.

COOPER

Anyway to tell the status of the crew?

A telling beat of silence, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - THE INTREPID - - LATER

The seats newly VACANT, no sign of the deceased crew.

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew drags Gibbs' bag-encased body towards one of the many stowage closets along the wall. Catches a glimpse of the wedding BAND on the astronaut's finger.

Matthew hauls the body up and into the narrow confines(not far away, we see the other crew members).

And he hastily shuts the door, averting his eyes. Leaning against the wall, trying to catch his breath.

But Matthew soon finds that even the act of breathing is made difficult in space.

Like everything up here, it's harder to control.

But there's something else: He can see his breath.

It's getting colder in here, too.

He hugs himself, rubbing his arms for warmth, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper stalks around the FCR when a SUPPORT STAFFER approaches from behind him.

SUPPORT STAFFER

Director Cooper, sir. I've got Diane Cooley from Kennedy on the line for you.

COOPER

I'm gonna need to call her back.

SUPPORT STAFFER

She said she'd hold.

(understatement of
the year)

She's fairly...persistent.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - - MISSION CONTROL - - MOMENTS LATER

Cooper stands behind the glass, overlooking the FCC.

COOPER (O.S.)
It's all preliminary now...

INT. OFFICE - - HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY

Diane has set up a temporary office used for storage space (PR works out of Johnson Space Center).

DIANE
Look, I'm on your side here, director.
But I've got families that need to
know what's happening.

COOPER
Diane, I was gonna call you when we
had something more concrete.

DIANE
(breaking protocol)
The lack of shuttle communication's
pretty concrete, Stan.
(then)
Here's what I propose...

COOPER
We need to keep this on lock down
until we can confirm or clarify the
situation.

DIANE
I can't do that, sir.

COOPER
You wanna help?

She puts a hand on her hip. Let's the silence answer.

COOPER (CONT'D)
You said you wanna help, right?

DIANE
God forbid - if your wife or son
were up there - you'd wanna know,
wouldn't you? I won't keep
information from these people.

COOPER
We still don't know what any of it
means.

DIANE
Then that's what we'll say.

Cooper looks out at the room below, reading the uncertainty
visible on FCR crew members' faces.

COOPER

Okay. Tell the families but - and listen to me here - be *discreet*.

DIANE

By "discreet" you mean...?

COOPER

I prefer this not leak to the press. Not yet, at least.

DIANE

We need to accept something right now: It will leak. It always does. Let's get in front of it. Hold a press conference.

Cooper ponders that. Nothing he hadn't considered.

COOPER

Give it another few hours. If we can't get a beat on this by then we'll consider other options.

DIANE

Director, I really think - -

COOPER

Call the families, Ms. Cooley.

DIANE

Yessir.

Before she can hang up - -

COOPER

Ms. Cooley?

(she stops)

You wanted to get America interested in space? Lemme be the first to congratulate you.

Diane hears nothing but the CLICK of the disconnected line.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew floats into the staging area, approaching the windshield to discern the twinkling black sea outside(POV).

An alternately gorgeous and grotesque sight.

He settles into the commander's chair. Strapping in before his body mass shifts him elsewhere.

And he studies the instrument panel, fixing focus on the OXYGEN GAUGE. Telling us how many hours of oxygen remain:

"32:32:03...02... 01... 00"

Matthew does a double-take. The figure improbably low.
Until he realizes the oxygen tanks - located below the forward fuselage - have been damaged.

Matthew grabs the reins of the shuttle. Steering the beast...to no avail. Utterly impotent.

And still the question remains, even if he could: *Where to steer to?* A vast wasteland before him.

INT. LOBBY - - HILTON HOTEL - - EVENING

Cindy stands in line, waiting to check out from the hotel, Brian beside her, text-messaging on his cell-phone.

CINDY

You okay?

BRIAN

(still texting)

Uh-huh.

They inch down the line, the front desk busy with check outs.

CINDY

Who're you texting...?

BRIAN

Everybody wants to know how it was.

CINDY

And...how was it?

BRIAN

Cool. Weird.

(then)

We gonna come back for the landing next week?

CINDY

I don't know if I like you missing that much school.

And they move towards an available FRONT DESK CLERK when Cindy's cell phone CHIMES to life...

They stop short of the desk...

CINDY (CONT'D)

(answers cell)

Hello...

The bloated businessman behind Cindy and Brian waits to see if they're going to move closer to the desk. When they don't --

IMPATIENT GUEST
Are you gonna...?

He gestures towards the front desk, Cindy oblivious before the guy takes the liberty of moving in front of her.

Brian finally looks up from text-messaging. Sees the look on his mom's face.

BRIAN
Mom. What is it?

CUT TO:

INT. MIDBAY - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew. In the seat where this journey began. Trying to think, before he looks up to see THE PHOTO of Danny. Caught in a locker crevice.

He blinks. And rises. Newly energized.

He strains to reach the once unreachable, regarding the image on it before tucking it safely into his pocket.

And he's about to exit. Before stopping. And going back for something(os) - -

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - START ON DUFFEL BAG

As Matthew sorts through it, coming across Danny's stuffed monkey. He looks at it. Asks:

MATTHEW
Any suggestions?

CLOSE ON JOHN GLENN, staring blankly back.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
You will not be my "Wilson"...

He tucks the monkey back into the bag before removing the HANDY-TALKIE and settling into the commander's chair.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
(into walkie-talkie)
Ground Control to Major Tom...

Next he pulls his LAPTOP from the duffel bag. Resting it on his thighs before it floats up again.

He pulls it back down. Only to watch it reascend.

An almost humorous interplay.

Finally, he fishes the wires from the knapsack, securing the laptop to his thighs. Holding it in place.

He tries the Internet. No go.

He searches for anything to document his thoughts. Then, in lieu of that, clicks on the America Online(AOL) icon...

CLOSE ON LAPTOP SCREEN

A blank email page appears. Matthew addresses it to his own blog: *Dawson@blogspot.com*.

MATTHEW

Stares at it. As if challenged.

Or perhaps, he has too much to say...

Where to begin?

He looks at the oxygen gauge, a literal ticking clock. Less than 28 hours of oxygen - of life - left.

An idea festering, he looks at the laptop.

Picking up the handy-talkie, he studies it.

Hmm.

He proceeds to connect the handy-talkie to his laptop via an adapter, hoping it will help transmit.

And he looks curiously at the odd appendage now protruding from his computer before CHUCKLING at the ridiculousness of this and his predicament.

He pecks at the laptop keyboard, murmuring as he types:

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

"This is to chronicle the events on the Intrepid Shuttle, to serve as a sort of black box before the rescue team arrives. Everyone's dead..."

CLOSE ON LAPTOP: ...*"everyone but me..."*

LONG SHOT: The simple specter of a man and his laptop.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - MCC - - NIGHT

Cooper bounds down the hall, on his cell, a thermos in hand. It takes him a moment to see someone seated on a bench ahead.

Someone who stands to reveal...OWEN.

COOPER
 (into cell)
 I'll call you back.
 (to Owen)
 Major.

And he tries to pass, moving towards the ARMED MARINES posted in front of Mission Control like stoic Centurions but...

OWEN
 Director.

Something about Owen's tone makes Cooper stop. And turn.

OWEN (CONT'D)
 No one knows that shuttle better
 than I do, sir.

Cooper offers an imperceptible nod, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - IN ORBIT

The shuttle circles...

Superimpose: *25 hours of oxygen left.*

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

Lights dim save the phosphorescent glow of the laptop, Matthew fends off a chill, typing feverishly away.

It's the most energized we've seen him. Words pouring out of him as the

CAMERA SLOWLY CIRCLES

To catch fleeting glimpses of what he writes, a flood of words and phrases...

"...A fault of the pressurization system - either too much pressure or not enough. I don't have the knowledge to say..."

WIDE-SHOT: Nothing heard but the steady thrum of the shuttle and the tip-tap of computer keys.

Waiting for the rescue team.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - - EARLY MORNING

A glorious stretch of land, the sun casts enormous shadows.

But we're most focused on a cabin-like home in the hills, a slew of satellite cups arrayed around its perimeter.

Superimpose: *Kalgoorlie-Boulton, Western Australia.*

INT. BEDROOM - - START ON A COMPUTER SCREEN

And a web page called THE UFO UPDATE, before we REVERSE to meet ALASTAIR WOOD(25). The skinny man-child sits at his cluttered desk, staring at the screen.

Moving on, he peruses the web as we catch sight of his digs: Everything devoted to technology. Geek paradise.

And whatever he's reading(ostensibly) puts a smile on his face. After a moment, he stabs SPEAKER, hits speed-dial.

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
(filtered; groggy)
What'd I tell you about calling me
this early, mate...?

ALASTAIR
I just sent you something. This
dicky wants us to believe he's
stranded in space...

YOUNG MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
(filtered)
This is why you wake me?
(a sigh)
What is it?

ALASTAIR
A blog, I reckon. Read it. You'll
almost believe the guy.
(looks at screen;
shakes his head)
People got way too much free time on
their hands, mate...

With this, he stabs the speaker OFF, chuckling, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Diane stands at an uncluttered desk, searching for something to write with as she talks ON THE PHONE:

DIANE
...Yes, ma'am. No, at this point,
we couldn't say. Yes, ma'am.

She scours through the boxes on the shelves, finding unsold memorabilia(plastic shuttles, key chain, etc.)before coming across a PEN shaped like a rocket.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Okay. Go ahead.

DIANE (CONT'D)
(writes phone number
on desk)
Yes, ma'am. I'll call you at this
number as soon as we know. You,
too.

She hangs up. Looks to see a STAFFER in the doorway.

DIANE (CONT'D)
You people have any paper around
here?

STAFFER
Someone's here to see you.

CUT TO:

INT. GREEN ROOM - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

A rerun of "Friends" plays on the TV, Brian trying to watch
from the couch as Cindy and Diane stay standing...

DIANE
...All they're telling me is that
the shuttle telemetry's out.

CINDY
I don't know what that means...

DIANE
It's how we communicate with the
shuttle.

CINDY
So it could be that...it could just
be a...a glitch?

DIANE
(no)
It's possible.
(then)
I'm sure you guys would be more
comfortable back at the hotel...

CINDY
We're staying here.

Diane looks at Cindy. Knows better than to press the point.

DIANE
I'll get you some blankets and
pillows.

And she exits, closing the door behind her.

Cindy stays standing, staring at a PHOTO ON THE WALL of the APOLLO 11 landing as Brian continues to watch TV.

Nothing heard but the TV LAUGH TRACK, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - JSC - - PAN ACROSS

The faces of the technicians and engineers in the FCR, hard at work, before we STOP on the primary team of NASA decision makers, trading arcane and advanced theories before - -

WE PICK UP ON OWEN

Beelining over to them. On a mission. Blurting out:

OWEN
We need to go up.

Everyone stops. And stares at OWEN. Cooper already regrets inviting him in here.

OWEN (CONT'D)
You guys sit here and you talk
"theory" but this isn't a theoretical
problem.

NEWSOME
And just what would you recommend?

OWEN
We have to assume they're alive...

CAPCOM
How can we even assume that?

OWEN
Because it's better than the
alternative.

COOPER
Not to offend you, major...

OWEN
My experience? - Every time a
sentence starts with "not to offend
you"? - prepare to be offended.

COOPER
Be that as it may, you wanna mount a
rescue mission, is that what I'm to
"assume"?

OWEN
That's right.

COOPER

A rescue mission to a location we're not sure of, based on a scenario we don't have, with an objective we don't know?

Owen smirks, his mind going a million miles an hour. Then:

OWEN

What about NORAD? We have pictures?

Newsome slides several SATELLITE PHOTOS over, blurred images of the Intrepid's unsteady orbit(POV).

NEWSOME (O.S.)

Shuttle's intact. Probably damaged, hard to tell how severely. But it's still orbiting.

OWEN

If they could - after losing telemetry - they'd abort and come back, right? - Standard protocol. So we can assume they can't come back on their own...

CAPCOM

"Assumptions" aren't real popular around here, major...

OWEN

I understand that. But right now the "science" is a mystery.

He points to the distorted satellite images and the unspoken horrors that it portends before...

OWEN (CONT'D)

Look, I'm just a jet jockey, I get it. But lemme explain some things as I - a simple guy - see them...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew occupies the commander's chair as we HEAR - -

OWEN (O.S.)

Chances are, they've got a limited amount of oxygen...

Matthew stares at the oxygen gauge as it dwindles down...

OWEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They've got finite fuel...

The lights on the instrument panel are noticeably dimmer.

OWEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 And with the power source damaged,
 if not gone, it's gonna get cold in
 there. Uncomfortably so.

Matthew hugs himself to generate warmth.

OWEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It's not impossible to think that -
 even in a short amount of time -
 dementia could set in...

CU ON MATTHEW'S EYES(RAPID FRAME), bloodshot, his lids
 flickering like the wings of a hummingbird...

OWEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 And I'll tell you something else,
 the only thing I know for sure:

RESUME SCENE - - **CLOSE ON OWEN**

OWEN (CONT'D)
 ...The longer we wait down here, the
 less their chance of surviving up
 there.

Owen lets that sink in, everyone paying attention now, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew continues on his laptop, murmuring as he types:

MATTHEW
*...It's been I don't know how many
 hours. Long enough that I can't
 help thinking, what if no one's coming
 for me?*

His fingers stop typing, letting those words sink in before
 he resumes...

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
...What's there left to do?

With this, he stops again. And slowly closes the laptop
 lid. Staring outside the canopy, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. MEN'S BATHROOM - - BUILDING 30 - - UNKNOWN POV

SPLASH! A palmful of water slapped in your face before we
 WIDEN to see COOPER. Toweling off. Studying himself in the
 MIRROR, he tugs at his red-rimmed eyes before...

HIS CELL PHONE RINGS.

He checks caller ID. Sighs. Answers anyway:

COOPER
Ms. Cooley...

DIANE (V.O.)
Everyone's been contacted. A few of
the families are here at Kennedy.

COOPER
Okay. Great.

He goes to the paper towel dispenser. Finds it lacking.

COOPER (CONT'D)
Okay. Well, thanks for the update.

He smacks the AIR BLOWER. Dries his hands under it.

DIANE (V.O.)
Sir. There's something else:

He stops. Moves away from the air blower to better hear:

DIANE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I think it's too late for that press
conference.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A NEWS ANCHOR - - CAMERA POV

A thick AUSTRALIAN accent that needs no title card...

ANCHOR
*...Reports that communication's been
lost with the Shuttle Intrepid. The
condition of the five astronauts on
board - civilian Matthew Dawson among
them - is, at this time, still
unknown...*

PULL-BACK to see we're in...

INT. LIVING ROOM - - AUSTRALIA - - NIGHT

An ELDERLY WOMAN sits watching the news. Exhibiting the
enthusiasm of a mannequin, she shouts:

GRANDMA
Change the channel, Al!

ALASTAIR (O.S.)
Hang on, Grandma.

ALASTAIR emerges to see the broadcast...

GRANDMA
My shows are on...

But he's not paying attention, transfixed on the TV.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)
Alastair.

He moves closer to the TV, a metal to magnet, the realization that the assumed "hoax" might be much more...

And Alastair stares at the television, BOOSTING the volume to drown out his grandmother's protests, as we - -

AUDIO CONTRAST CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - 257 MILES OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - - SILENCE

Superimpose: *19 hours of oxygen left.*

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - THE INTREPID - - START ON SHUTTLE MODEL:

A highly detailed miniature rendition of the Intrepid, it fits in the palm of Matthew's hand.

MATTHEW

Regards it before he looks OC and we REVERSE to reveal the object of his interest: The RMS (Remote Manipulator System). Also known as the robot arm - a 58 foot appendage used to make repairs incurred on the shuttle's body.

An idea festers in Matthew's head, before we - -

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - TWO MINUTES LATER

Situated behind the primary deck, Matthew occupies a table where we see the equipment used to operate the RMS:

A joy-stick. A computer screen. It's akin to the game where you use a mechanical arm to snatch toys.

Matthew flips a switch ON, the RMS humming to life...

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - FLOOR POV - - CONTINUOUS

The roof parts above us, revealing...SPACE.

EXT. THE INTREPID - - SPACE - - OVERHEAD SHOT

The arm rises like a serpent awoken. A human-like appendage.

INT. RMS CONTROLLING AREA - - FLIGHT BAY - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew looks at the screen(POV), providing us with camera coverage of the damage incurred to the shuttle.

And we realize he's using the shuttle miniature model as a reference, maneuvering the arm down the front fuselage...

He leans closer, squinting at the OXYGEN TANK to see prominent DENTS incurred from the barrage of debris...

MATTHEW

(sotto; realizing)

*The tank got hit...that's why we
lost oxygen...*

He moves the joystick, the RMS going closer to the injured area before the screen goes abruptly - **BLACK.**

EXT. SPACE - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

The arm extended too far, a fracture ripples down the RMS, nearly cracking it in half.

INT. RMS CONTROLLING AREA - - FLIGHT BAY - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew stares at the blank screen, vying for visual by pressing a button on the side of the monitor.

Over and over again.

To no avail.

Finally, he stops. And simply stares at the empty screen, nothing staring back but the prism of his reflection.

And then, as if to remind himself he's still alive, he YELLS.

A dull bray echoes through the cabin.

The loneliest sound you've ever heard.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO - - SKY TV - - AUSTRALIA - - CONTINUOUS

The Fox affiliate in Australia, STAFFERS buzz by as we PUSH IN ON A TV EXECUTIVE going over notes with a well-coifed anchor. An assistant gingerly approaches...

ASSISTANT

(Australian accent)

Mr. Devereaux? There's a call for
you, sir.

TV EXECUTIVE
Unless his last name's Murdoch I'm
not interested...

ASSISTANT
I'm told it's important...

TV EXECUTIVE
Who is it?

ASSISTANT
An Alastair Cook.

TV EXECUTIVE
Who in the fuck is Alastair Cook?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - - CONTINUOUS

Alastair confers with the TV exec via SPEAKER PHONE as his
computer downloads more of Matthew's blogs...

ALASTAIR
- - I'm the guy's gonna help you
break the story of the century, mate.
Why don't you visit my web page?

CUT TO:

INT. GREEN ROOM - - KSC - - START ON BRIAN

As his eyes drift slowly open before we WIDEN to see him
crashed on the couch. He squints to see(POV):

His mom with her back to him, staring at the buffet of food
items arrayed on a table.

Brian sits up straight. Runs a hand over his groggy face.

BRIAN
Mom...

FAVOR CINDY

And only now do we see she's crying, wiping stubborn tears
away as she recomposes herself. Keeps her back to Brian.

CINDY
(almost to herself)
I should be hungry...I'm not
hungry...I can't...focus long enough
to eat.

BRIAN
You okay, mom?

She turns to face him.

CINDY
I can't just sit here.

BRIAN
(absently)
...You're not sitting.

But like that she's galvanized, marching towards the door...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(leans up)
Where you going...?

CINDY
To find out what's going on...

She opens the door, already halfway out before Brian hops up and follows her out, and we - -

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - - KSC - - EARLY MORNING

A young assistant fields a flurry of calls as

THE CAMERA SNEAKS PAST...

And into Diane's immaculate office - where she dabs sweat under her arms before changing into a clean blouse.

She buttons the blouse up. Grabs the phone:

DIANE
Jerry. Thanks for holding. There's
a press conference at noon that'll
answer all your questions, okay?

The assistant pokes her head in. Indicates "Line Two" (the peace sign). Mouthing the word, "important".

DIANE (CONT'D)
(back to phone)
I'll see you at noon.

She hangs up. Hits the SPEAKER PHONE option as she proceeds to tuck the blouse into her skirt.

DIANE (CONT'D)
(into speaker phone)
This is Diane...

INT. OFFICE - - SKY TV - - AUSTRALIA

The TV exec we met earlier looks at the blogs as they stream by on his computer, the newsroom abuzz behind him.

TV EXECUTIVE
 (into phone)
 Mrs. Cooley, this is Eric Devereaux
 with Fox Australia, we've just been
 made privy to some information
 regarding the Shuttle Intrepid - -

INT. OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Diane snags the phone off speaker, as we PRE-LAP:

CAPCOM (V.O.)
 A "transmission"?

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - TWO MINUTES LATER

Diane relays word to the team via SPEAKER PHONE:

DIANE (V.O.)
 ...An email, essentially.

CAPCOM
 How'd the Aussies get it before we
 did?

DIANE (V.O.)
 Oh, it's worse than that. They got
 it from an unemployed 25-year old
 who lives with his grandmother.

OWEN
 Does he know we're hiring?

COOPER
 When's the story gonna break, Diane?

DIANE (V.O.)
 It already did...

Cooper sighs. Then:

COOPER
 How's the crew, are they alright?
 (no answer)
 Diane...?

Owen and Cooper trade grim expressions, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

ON THE MOVE with Cindy and Brian as they bound down the
 corridor, a door open up ahead...

They walk faster, Cindy freezing when she stops outside the door. And looks inside:

WHAT SHE SEES: Commander Gibbs' wife being consoled by her "escort". A strong woman, she looks devastated, bawling.

BACK ON CINDY: Her breath catching, she knows what this means.

BRIAN

Mom. Mom!

She staggers back, Brian grabbing a hold of her, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - THE INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew types on the laptop, as we HEAR:

MATTHEW (V.O.)

...The thing is, I'm not nearly as scared as I thought I'd be at the end - which either makes me really brave or really stupid - more likely the latter. And just to clear up a myth...

AUDIO BLEED INTO:

A FOX ANCHOR

Picks up from Matthew's words...

FOX ANCHOR

...*"Your life doesn't flash before your eyes when you think you're gonna die. Nothing does."*

(looks up from pages)

Dawson's journal entry goes on to confirm that the crew of the Intrepid died tragically and violently shortly after achieving orbit, apparently damaged by some form of space debris...

We're watching the main screen in the...

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - WIDER

The FCR team: Things more dire than they even imagined...

FOX ANCHOR (O.S.)

Dawson has no idea that his words, his most intimate thoughts, are being broadcast all over the world...

FAVOR OWEN, his friends, his peers, gone.

FOX ANCHOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*He is alone. In space. Terrified.
 With fleeting oxygen, no experience,
 and experts say, virtually no chance
 of survival. Now we go to Aviation
 Analyst John Nance in Seattle...*

OWEN

Looks away from the screen. To Cooper. An uncertain beat,
 no one quite sure what to do or say.

A moment to mourn before Cooper quietly asks Owen:

COOPER
 How's Dawson still alive?

OWEN
 He wasn't in the flight bay. There's
 a different pressurization system in
 the mid-deck. It's one of the things
 they're looking to "correct" on the
 newer shuttles...

COOPER
 (almost to himself)
*Finally our lack of foresight works
 to our advantage...*

He exhales audibly. Composes himself with a commander's
 ease in crisis. Announcing to the room:

COOPER (CONT'D)
 This is a horrible day. A horrible
 day. And I'm gonna ask you to do a
 horrible thing. I'm gonna ask you
 to forget about it. To put the pain
 aside for a little bit. Just long
 enough for us to bring Dawson home.

The broadcast proceeds in the BG(os)as gradually, after a
 moment, everyone returns to their stations, and we - -

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - - FLIGHT LAUNCH CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Diane ducks into the green room: No sign of Cindy or Matthew.

INT. ELEVATOR - - KSC - - DESCENDING

Alone in the elevator, Diane's tortured by Musak. *Finally,
 she reaches the lobby, the doors opening to see(POV)*

BRIAN AND CINDY

In the center of the lobby, a security guard doing his best to help them as Cindy keeps her face buried in her hands.

DIANE

Disembarks, hustling to the Dawsons...

DIANE
He's okay. He's alive.

Cindy's tear-streaked face looks up, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - THE INTREPID - - TIGHT ON MATTHEW

As he types up a frenzy. So much to say.

MATTHEW (V.O.)
...To my fifth-grade teacher, Ms. Allen; I did cheat on that Algebra quiz. Pretty amazing, considering I still failed it. And for the record, I did buy Michael Bolton's Greatest Hits. And, yeah, I liked it. And, no, I didn't have sex with my date, Carol Dunfy, after the junior prom - sorry, Carol 'cus I told everyone we did...

He continues, unfiltered, exposing his foibles, before we - -

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - START ON A MONITOR

As we see Matthew's words strewn across the screen.

NEWSOME
...We'll be able to download Dawson's feed directly...

COOPER
How'd anyone pick up the transmission in the first place?

NEWSOME
The highly technical explanation is:
We don't know.

OWEN (O.S.)
I think I do.

All eyes go to OWEN.

OWEN (CONT'D)

He brought a walkie-talkie with him.
If it's a TNC - a handy-talkie - it
can facilitate the range.

NEWSOME

How so?

OWEN

When I was a little kid we used to
be able to talk to truckers all the
way over in Humboldt County with our
handies. It extends a signal's reach.
Kinda' like a ham radio.

(to the room)

Dawson's a computer guy so he'd know
to connect it to his laptop.

NEWSOME

(to Cooper)

We got lucky.

COOPER

Yeah, well, far as I'm concerned, we
were due. So we can communicate
with him?

NEWSOME

Not that lucky. It's a one-way feed.
Helluva lot easier for it to find us
than for us to find it. There's no
imprint code for us to pick up on
and reciprocate.

Everyone processes this in silence before Owen leans into
Cooper. In a subdued but certain voice:

OWEN

We don't have a choice, sir, we need
to go up and get him.

Cooper simply stares at the screen - now showing an anchor
reading from Matthew's "blog".

FOX ANCHOR (O.S.)

*...Dawson writes: "On the upside,
very few people know the exact amount
of time they have left to live. Me,
I've got 17 hours, fourteen minutes,
eleven seconds. And absolutely
nothing to do but write letters to
myself."*

Owen and Cooper focus on the screen - -

FOX ANCHOR (CONT'D)
*That message, it's estimated, was
 sent over two hours ago.*

OWEN
 Let me go. Let me bring him back.

Cooper looks from the screen to Owen.

COOPER
 Is our backup crew in place?

OWEN
 Yes, sir.

WAIT.

COOPER
 Get 'em ready, major.

Owen's already on the move as Cooper turns back to Newsome:

COOPER (CONT'D)
 What's the status of the Shuttle
 Liberty?

NEWSOME
 We were prepping her for launch in a
year. Haven't even locked in the
 thermal heating tiles. We don't
 have any available shuttles.

COOPER
 What about the Odyssey?

NEWSOME
 "The Odyssey"? The experimental
 shuttle?

COOPER
 Yeah.

NEWSOME
 It's experimental.

COOPER
 (a beat)
 Yeah, well, we might have one hell
 of an experiment.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - THE INTREPID - - TIGHT PAN ACROSS

THE FRONT FUSELAGE, enabling us to see the damage done to
 the Orbiter Boom Sensor System(OBSS).

Superimpose: 15 hours of oxygen left...

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - THE INTREPID - - START ON MATTHEW

As his eyes pop open from a fitful slumber.

And he's re-donned the ACES suit to ward off the ever-increasing chill in the cockpit.

Once again, he looks through the stowage space, his breath visible as he comes across a glass-encased - -

RED LEVER.

At wit's end, he sees no choice but to - *SMASH* - break the glass with a punch. There's a lever beneath it.

After a ponderous beat, he yanks the lever down, and - -

Nothing. No immediate effect.

Then;

SWOOOOOOOOOOOSSSHHHHHHHH!

A vent slides open, a shot of wind gushing through, sucking Matthew in like dust to a vacuum cleaner - -

EXT. SPACE - - CONTINUOUS

He's repelled end-over-end into the valley below, before we - -

HARD CUT TO:

MATTHEW'S EYES. Bursting open.

Stirring to find himself in the SLEEPING QUARTERS near the...

INT. MID-DECK - - WIDER

A dream. A bad dream.

Rattled, he rouses to his feet. Regaining composure as he notices RED BLOBS floating past his eye-line.

BLOOD. Leaking from his nose.

Just as Commander Gibbs warned with climate duress.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFETERIA - - HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - - CONTINUOUS

Empty save Brian and Cindy who sit at a long table. Brian spoons cereal as he takes note of his anguished mother.

BRIAN
You gotta eat, mom.

She nods. Doesn't touch the yogurt cup in front of her.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Mom?

CINDY
I know.

BRIAN
You haven't slept or - -

CINDY
I know.
(softens)
...I know.

Silence. Nothing heard but the resumed CLANG of Brian's spoon on the cereal bowl as Diane enters...

DIANE
You guys all set? If you want something warm I can get the chefs to make you anything you want.

BRIAN
That's okay...

CINDY
(to Diane)
You're so polite.

DIANE
(a little laugh)
Excuse me?

CINDY
"Is there anything I can do?"
"Anything you need?" "Can I help in anyway?" I could'a used your help before my husband decided to go on some suicide mission to advance your goddamn agenda.

Diane takes it. Says nothing. Stares back.

CINDY (CONT'D)
So no, right now, there's nothing you can do.

With this, she shoves off the table. And stalks out.

Brian looks at Diane with a contrite little shrug before following after his mom.

Off Diane, deflating, we - -

CUT TO:

EXT/INT. HANGAR - - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - DAY

TWO ASTRONAUTS in flight suits prepare items on tables. Surprisingly young, their movements are sharp and crisp (which doesn't mean they're not terrified).

Through the hangar doors we see the NASA jet fueling up on the tarmac. Ready to fly to Kennedy Space Center.

CUT TO:

INT. COOPER'S OFFICE - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper. At his desk. ON THE PHONE:

COOPER

...What I'm telling you is, we don't have a choice. We don't have fifteen months or fifteen days...we've got fifteen hours. And the only thing that can get us there is that shuttle. Yes sir, I know that.
(a meaningful beat)
It's my call.

TAP-TAP(OS)

He hangs up. Looks up to see OWEN in the doorway.

COOPER (CONT'D)

Don't you have better things to do right now than chat me up, major? That's one plane you do not wanna miss.

A skittish Owen enters in his flight suit. Clears his throat.

OWEN

Sir, you'll be receiving a letter from me in the next day or so regarding, um, various career decisions. If you would kindly disregard it. Please.

Cooper nods, seemingly perplexed. Dismissing Owen with:

COOPER

Good luck, son.
(when Owen gets to
the door)
Laramie.

(MORE)

COOPER (CONT'D)
 (he stops; turns back)
 I wasn't gonna accept it one way or
 the other.

And now we see OWEN'S RESIGNATION LETTER in Cooper's hand.
 Right before he tears it to pieces.

Owen nods. Nearly smiles. Exits.

Only now, when Owen's gone, do we see how concern crinkles
 the corners of Cooper's already exhausted eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. GREEN ROOM - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

The TV runs continuously, the commercials particularly
 grueling for Cindy and Brian(the one we see is about life
 insurance of all things)...

The phone rings.

The first realization that there's a phone in the room.

Cindy moves tentatively towards it as Brian continues to
 text away on his cell. Cindy answers on the third ring:

CINDY
 (into phone)
 Hello.

She listens, Brian peeking up from the cell.

CINDY (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Okay.

She hangs up.

CINDY (CONT'D)
 They're going up to get him.

CUT TO:

INT. SLEEP QUARTERS - - THE INTREPID - - START ON MATTHEW

His face reflected in a tiny MIRROR, he stems the blood
 leaking from his nose with a tissue.

And he regards himself: His bleak eyes. His ruddy complexion.

MATTHEW
Lookin' good, Dawson...

He looks down at his hands, gripping the sink-like structure.

Shaking.

After a moment, he settles back behind the laptop, muttering the words as he types them - -

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
*Now, for the first time in a long
 time, I've got time to think...*

As he continues to type, we - -

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS - - WORD SPREADING:

- A MANHATTAN LEGAL OFFICE: Paralegals and assistants congregate around an undersized TV.
- A CHICAGO "CIRCUIT CITY": Customers and employees watch a wall of big screen TV's, each turned to a national broadcast.
- A BOSTON RESTAURANT. WEAVING through the dining hall, each and every conversation regarding "the lost shuttle".
- AUSTRALIA. Alastair and his grandmother sit on the couch watching the news, entranced.
- STAPLES CENTER, a weak turnout for the Clippers game, several fans bring small TV's to keep up with events.
- TEXAS LIVING ROOM. A little boy sits on his daddy's lap, both riveted to the television screen.

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 ...And now I'm realizing I engineered everything in my life to *avoid* thinking. To distract. To deter. Phones. Internet. Email. Most of all, I'm thinking about how I wish I dealt with the things in my life, and with the people I love. And how I wish I felt something other than the fear of feeling...

PICK UP ON:

CHARLIE GIBSON on "Good Morning America"...

CHARLIE GIBSON
 ...And we'll learn how they feel about Matthew Dawson, and see...

- MARY HART on "Entertainment Tonight".

MARY HART
 ...How he's affecting some of your favorite stars...

- LARRY KING on "Larry King Live".

LARRY KING
...Asking the question: Who's
responsible for this tragedy?

CUT TO:

EXT. LANDING AREA 39 - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - NIGHT

LONG SHOT: The NASA jet sails in for an easy landing, skimming along the runway, before we - -

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. NASA JET - - ON THE TARMAC - - MOMENTS LATER

The crew disembarks, trundling down steps where they're met by a phalanx of NASA staff, Diane among them.

Owen appears last, peering down the ladder. Resisting the urge to smile when his gaze goes to Diane.

He pads down the steps, passing her with...

OWEN
(low)
*Lotta' trouble to go through just to
see me again...*

She smiles with her eyes, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - - FIRING ROOM - - CONTINUOUS

Brian continues to text-message on his cell as Cindy stares blankly at the running televisions carrying coverage...

Cindy tics a glance at her son. Stifles words. Then:

CINDY
I wish you'd talk to me...

BRIAN
I am talking to you.

CINDY
I mean, I wish you'd tell me what
you're feeling...

He keeps texting. Stays silent.

CINDY (CONT'D)
And I really wish you'd stop doing
that.

BRIAN

What, so I could just sit around and feel like shit with you?

CINDY

Brian.

He stops texting. Looks up.

BRIAN

No, all you ever wanna do is talk about our *feelings*, analyzing everything I do and say. How do I feel? I feel bad, mom. Okay? I'm scared outta' my mind. Is that good? Does that make you feel better?

Cindy's taken aback. Then:

CINDY

Is that why you went away? - Was I that hard to deal with?

BRIAN

Don't play the martyr, mom. I left because of both of you. Because dad was acting like everything was okay, and you were acting like it was never gonna be. You have any idea what it was like living in that house after Danny died? You guys are supposed to be strong...you guys are supposed to be the strong ones, not me...

But he sees the hurt on his mother's face. And the solitary tear trickling down her cheek.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry...

CINDY

It's okay...you're right.

She wraps him in a hug. Kisses his bushy head of hair. And they stay like this until...

CINDY (CONT'D)

(through tears)

You shouldn't sell yourself short; you're pretty good at saying how you feel...

They share a laugh, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - 257 MILES OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

The Intrepid. On its seemingly endless orbit.

Superimpose: *12 hours of oxygen left...*

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - INTREPID - - CLOSE ON MATTHEW

Removing the tissue from his nostrils to see that his nose no longer bleeds. He sucks in a deep breath before we WIDEN to reveal he's back in the ACES suit...

And after a moment, he slips into his helmet. Slaps the visor down. CLOPPING towards the deck and the exit hatch located below the left canopy.

He waits there. Eyeing the air-lock:

MATTHEW POV: Inside the helmet, we sound like Darth Vader doing wind sprints, our gaze fixed on the exit.

BACK ON MATTHEW, trying to psyche himself up for the task.

MATTHEW

*You can do this...he said you could
do this...you have to do this.*

(then; realizing)

And now you're talking to yourself...

He reaches for the hatch handle, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. THE INTREPID - - SPACE - - IN ORBIT

We see the hatch from the outside.

CUT TO:

INT. THE INTREPID - - SPACE - - MATTHEW POV/AUDIO

And only when the hatch opens do we realize that Matthew's attempting to physically assess the damage incurred.

An objective that requires walking outside the shuttle while it's still revolving in its orbit.

(NOTE: The shuttle can never stop moving while in space.)

EXT. THE INTREPID - - SPACE

Nearly frozen with fear, Matthew(STILL POV) inches along the side of the shuttle. Moving as if in slow motion.

CLOSER - - ON MATTHEW

Only now do we see the umbilical chord tethering him to the Intrepid. A tenuous line separating him from...infinity.

His breathing amplified, his every movement measured, it's an alternately magnificent and terrifying sight.

Every. Step. A. Mile.

All we HEAR is his accelerated breathing.

WIDE SHOT: Matthew, a tiny spec on this endless canvas.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - - MCC - - START ON SATELLITE PHOTOS

Blurry images of the Intrepid, an area circled in red marker.

NEWSOME (O.S.)
From what I can tell...looks like
he's trying an EVA...

WIDER to see a cabal of advisors assembled around the table.
Replete with engineers and technician.

COOPER
(incongruous)
Wait a minute, he's walking outside
the shuttle?

Everyone in the know gains a quiet reverence for Matthew.

ENGINEER
If he spotted damages outside the
shuttle with the robot arm, he might
be trying to repair them...

NEWSOME
The shuttle engineering's antiquated,
most of it done in the seventies.
The control panel doesn't look all
that different from a fuse box.

COOPER
So it's possible he could fix it...?

NEWSOME
If the damage isn't too severe he's
got a shot to get the telemetry back.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. THE INTREPID - - FRONT FUSELAGE - - SPACE

Matthew's momentarily distracted by the view, a picture perfect shot of planet earth during SUNDOWN.

Incandescent, it's doubly bright, articulating the shuttle as if inches from the sun.

It bolsters Matthew, his breath regulating before darkness returns, leaving him no choice but to focus back on - -

THE CONTROL BOX(POV): Several multicolored wires. Most of them bent, molted or disbanded.

HIS GLOVED HAND

Trembles as it reaches for the stray wires, his breath audible and accelerated...

He locates a black wire, plugging it back into its corresponding spot with surprising ease and aplomb.

And then he feels a tug at his waist: The tether line.

Tightening. Flapping erratically. Suddenly tenuous.

CLOSE ON MATTHEW'S EYES

Through the helmet visor, panic setting in, pupils dilated.

THE TETHER LINE CHORD

Frays at the edges, coming undone. A fracture trickling down it like the fuse on a stick of dynamite.

MATTHEW'S GLOVED HANDS

Grapple rapidly along the line, pulling himself back...

MATTHEW POV: Nearly hyperventilating, the world spins around us, lost in the darkness, disoriented before finally, mercifully, our HAND touches the hatch just as...

- - The tether line TEARS - -

- - And Matthew slips back inside the - -

INT. ENTRY BAY - - INTREPID - - CONTINUOUS

He slaps the hatch shut, flipping his visor up, sucking in air like a deep sea diver returning to the surface.

And he slides down against the wall. Exhausted. Incongruous. But also, oddly enough, elated.

He can't believe what he just did.

And now he WHOOPS in the air, a triumphal sound that echoes.

CUT TO:

EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - NIGHT

An overhead shot, we see the vast array of media trucks assembled around the edifice.

INT. CONTAMINATION ROOM - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Owen, donning his ACES suit, steps out to see Diane. Not sure what to say, she wryly asks:

DIANE
So what's going on?

OWEN
Not much. You?

DIANE
Just taking it easy...

A small smile. Then:

OWEN
Dawson's family here?

DIANE
They say they're not going anywhere until he's home.

OWEN
You trying to put more pressure on me, Cooley?

He winks at Diane before swaggering back, as we HEAR:

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
The truth is, I wasn't that great a dad to Danny when he was alive...

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S ROOM - - HOUSE - - CONTINUOUS

CAMERA MOVES through the perfectly preserved confines, past the penants and posters, over the toys and trophies...

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
All I keep thinking about are the things I missed...

STOP ON A DRAWING

Scotch-taped to the wall, depicting a man in a spacesuit. Adrift in space, his ship out of reach.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And the second chances - the ones
 that came in the form of Danny's big
 brother, Brian...

EXT. BROADWAY STREET - - TIMES SQUARE - - NIGHT

A throng of New Yorkers stand amidst the neon clutter, staring
 up at the Jumbotron relaying the latest news on Matthew.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 ...I blew those, too.

CLOSE ON THE JUMBOTRON

Where the newscast has put up A PHOTO of Matthew with his
 arm wrapped around Brian.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I wish I lived in the moment,
 appreciating things when they
 happened, not just when they were
 taken away...

And we see random shots of the denizens below, seeing how
 Matthew's words affect them.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The moments with you, Cindy...

INT. GREEN ROOM - - LCC - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Brian and Cindy sit watching TV.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 ...I remember those most of all...

CLOSER - - ON CINDY

Trying to be strong. Her eyes betraying the visage.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 How it took me a year to ask you
 out...another year for you to say
 "yes"...

INT. PAYLOAD BAY - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

WIDE: Only the glow of the laptop articulates the scene...

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 And how it never felt like too long
 to wait...

CLOSER - - ON MATTHEW

Sitting on the floor; the laptop, his confessional...

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I remember how Danny used to work
 for hours building those model planes,
 gluing pieces together...

INT. GREEN ROOM - - LCC - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cindy and Brian sit in silence, eyes still on the TV.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 ...And how somewhere along the line,
 I stopped trying to put our pieces
 back together...

INT. HANGAR - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Owen, Cooper and a team of techies and engineers stare at
 something OC, riveted.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 Now all I want, more than anything,...

REVERSE to see the apple of their eye: ANOTHER SHUTTLE.
 "The Odyssey". A new car shine to it, it's decidedly larger
 than the Intrepid.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...Is another chance to remember...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - CLOSE ON MATTHEW

Typing away, staring at something OC.

MAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
 'Cus now I know - without a doubt -
 that every second counts...

REVERSE to see he's staring at the oxygen gauge: Eight hours
 and nine minutes remaining.

PICK UP WITH:

INT. STUDIO - - NBC - - MANHATTAN - - CONTINUOUS

BRIAN WILLIAMS (the man whose voice we've been hearing) reads
 from Matthew's latest entry:

BRIAN WILLIAMS
 That message to Dawson's wife was
 received less than twenty minutes
 ago.

A beat of silence, before SOUND UP, and - -

CUT TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - MORNING

Diane addresses the press. Forced to shout over the mayhem:

DIANE

...I can confirm that we'll be sending another shuttle up to assist in the recovery of Matthew Dawson and the Intrepid.

REPORTER

How long will it take to reach the shuttle?

DIANE

We'll launch in roughly three hours. It takes approximately 10 to 12 minutes to exit the atmosphere. And we're estimating it'll take about two hours to reach the shuttle after that.

Reporters do the math, one eager reporter shouts:

ANOTHER REPORTER

So once they're in space, they'll have less than two hours to find the Shuttle Intrepid?

Diane was hoping she wouldn't have to get into that but...

DIANE

That's right.

SILENCE. Brutal arithmetic. Finally:

ANOTHER REPORTER

Is it true that the shuttle's unproven?

DIANE

(spinning it as best
she can)

The Shuttle Odyssey will be the first of its kind to go into space.

This provokes A CLAMOR from the crowd, dozens of questions hurled forth at once. Diane speaks over the din:

DIANE (CONT'D)

The Odyssey, piloted by Major Owen Laramie...

FADE TO:

INT. HANGAR - - START ON OWEN

His eyes shut, his face subsumed in shadow, as we continue to hear Diane at the press conference...

DIANE (O.S.)
...And astronauts Tom Richter and
Donald Lewis...

WIDER to see Owen's in the ACES space suit, helmet tucked under arm. Two granite-faced ASTRONAUTS beside him.

The darkness lifts, light shed on these intense men...

DIANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...Will depart today at 1400 hours.

The formidable gate rises - a shot identical to the one before Matthew's launch...

Only now the stands are PACKED with spectators. Near THOUSANDS. A sea of pumping fists and flags.

An astounding sight.

BACK TO:

INT. PRESS ROOM - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Diane surveys the assembly of reporters before pronouncing:

DIANE
...May God be with them.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. HANGAR - - EVENING - - TRACK WITH OWEN AND HIS CREW

As they step outside the hangar, greeted by a deafening ROAR.

Stunned by the outpouring of support, the astronauts move towards the vans that will shepherd them to the shuttle.

In the distance, looming large, we see the SHUTTLE ODYSSEY.

COOPER (V.O.)
When will we be operational?

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

Back in Texas, Newsome, Cooper and crew behold the Odyssey on the main monitor.

NEWSOME
Can you give us a month?

NEWSOME (CONT'D)

(then; serious)

We did every check we could considering the time we had to work with, Stan...

COOPER

(droll)

Well, gee, that's awfully inspiring, Terry...

NEWSOME

There's no contingency plan, no precedent, for sending two shuttles up at once. The Odyssey hasn't even been outside the atmosphere. She's a zygote. I can't tell you what she can and can't do because I don't know. What I do know is we're sending an untested astronaut up in an untested shuttle.

(points to weather board)

And doing a launch at this hour with those winds coming off the South Coast...

His voice trails off. Cooper fills in the empty air...

COOPER

What're my options, Terry? Hmm? To stand by and do nothing? To leave a man up there to die? As far as I'm concerned, this is the only choice we have.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew occupies the pilot's chair, once again trying to manipulate the control toggle...

...Trying to shift the shuttle back towards earth.

And this time, due to his EVA efforts - and to his utter surprise - the shuttle lurches forward with an abbreviated burn, the engine reignited for a moment before...

EXT. THE INTREPID - - SPACE

...The engine once again STOPS.

But the movement has realigned the shuttle on a different orbital path, still beholden to a preset route. Circling on its own accord.

(NOTE: Like a race track, this means the shuttle's still circling in orbit - only that it's occupying a new lane.)

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew clings to the arm guards until the tremors cease.

Locked on effective auto-pilot, the shuttle's once again immune to Matthew's efforts. Another hope dashed, he looks at the OXYGEN GAUGE.

POV: A blur. We only see the seconds ticking by.

BACK ON MATTHEW, watching his life drain away, his eyes fighting the urge to sleep, before we - -

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. REST STATION - - MID DECK - - THE INTREPID

Fatigue setting in, Matthew rummages through the provisions strapped to a counter. Not finding what he wants until he sees an instant-coffee bag. But...

It. Won't. Open.

Flustered, he tears the strip apart. And spills the grinds everywhere. Left to watch as they drift all about.

Desperately, he grabs at the airborne bits, snatching fistfuls of them...

MATTHEW

(sotto)

*Stay up, stay up...you've got the
rest of your life to sleep.*

He chews on coffee grinds, crunching away, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. ELEVATOR - - LAUNCH PAD - - ASCENDING

We ride with Owen and his two-man crew as they stare through the metallic mesh of the elevator at:

THE ODYSSEY

Close enough to touch. And no one says a word until:

RICHTER

(thick Southern drawl)

You ever seen anything like that?

Lewis shakes his head, overwhelmed, eyes expanding on sight of the unfamiliar spacecraft. Owen's undaunted:

OWEN

Sure.

The elevator CLANGS to a stop.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Don't you guys ever watch "Battlestar
Galactica"...?

He pulls the elevator door open, disembarking, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - START ON COOPER

Standing by the back, arms crossed and observant. A brief
respite from the havoc of the day, we go to COOPER POV as...

...All SOUND DRAINS OUT, and we watch everyone doing their
job with restrained, even repressed, emotion.

Amidst the uniformity of it all, however, a single HAND rises
up from the bank of engineer stations by the front.

And all at once, SOUND RESUMES with - -

YOUNG TECHIE (O.S.)

- - I got something!

JUMP CUT TO:

CLOSER - - ON THE ENGINEER'S STATION(MOMENTS LATER)

On the monitor, we see LIGHTS pulsing, signifying the
electronic status of the Intrepid.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

The telemetry's back...

WIDER: Newsome, Cooper and colleagues huddle around an
ENGINEER in the FCR, scanning the data on the screen(os).

NEWSOME

(realizing)

...The EVA. He got it back, the son
of a bitch got it back...

There's a buzz in the room, everyone newly energized.

COOPER

Can we communicate with him?

ENGINEER

(points to telemetric
link)

Negative, sir. The radio's still
not operational.

NEWSOME

(concluding)

It was damaged during the initial orbit.

The status of the Intrepid is conveyed on a monitor showing its electrical bearings.

NEWSOME (CONT'D)

He's got a little over four hours of oxygen left...

Just as everyone wraps their head around this time frame - -

VOICE (O.S.)

The oxygen supply's not the relevant indicator anymore.

Another engineer(RIVERS)steps into frame, a new set of NORAD-generated PHOTOS in hand...

RIVERS

Dawson managed to shift the shuttle when he tried to reenter the atmosphere. But now, as a result, he's off the preset orbital path.

(off Cooper's quizzical expression)

Think of it like a race track around the earth with five different lanes. We set the shuttle in one lane, and now it's moved into another.

COOPER

Why's it matter?

RIVERS

The lane he's in now?

(points to photos)

We got a two thousand pound fuel drum called a "Proton Booster" - courtesy of Mother Russia - in the same lane, on a direct path to collide with the Intrepid.

COOPER

When?

RIVERS

Two hours.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ODYSSEY - - PRE-LAUNCH

The astronauts are strapped into their seats, Owen still marvelling at the size of his new vessel.

OWEN
(low; sotto)
Where the hell is the...?

He does an appraisal of the shuttle, befuddled, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - - FIRING ROOM - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cindy, Diane and Brian prepare for another launch, eyes fixed on the bank of television monitors.

And Cindy searches her pockets, emerging with the BUTTON embossed with Matthew's picture on it. She pins it to her shirt, shares a glance with Brian.

DIANE
Before, what you said...

CINDY
I'm sorry, I just...

DIANE
No, you were right to be angry. We
wanted the world to hear your story -
but we never even asked you.

Cindy nods her appreciation as their eyes go collectively back to the TV, and we - -

CUT TO:

INT. RECREATION ROOM - - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

NASA employees congregate in an undersized room, assembled around a television to see the latest news...

COOPER

Walks past the door, stopping, looking in. Slowly, he enters.

A janitor notices the boss. Turns the volume down. And gradually everyone refocuses towards the back of the room.

COOPER
Hi. Anyone who's not needed in Flight
Control or Mission Control, you're
free to go home whenever you like.

Everyone stares back at Cooper. Perplexed. Perhaps even insulted. No one's going anywhere.

Cooper nods understanding.

As soon as he exits, the TV volume boosts back up, and we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - MAIN ENTRANCE - - DAY

Cars stretch back onto the highway. An event.

CUT TO:

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - - FIRING ROOM - - CONTINUOUS

And more officials have joined Cindy, Brian and Diane.
Nothing heard but the sound of the television:

CHARLIE GIBSON (V.O.)
*...Dawson had these words for his
son, Brian...*

Hearing this, Brian moves to the nearest TV.

CHARLIE GIBSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(on television)
*"Up here you get clarity - or maybe
it's honesty, I dunno which. I know
why you went away to school. I knew
then. I know now...."*

BACK ON BRIAN, on the couch now, leaning closer, elbows to
knees, eyes unblinking...

CHARLIE GIBSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*You were running away from me. From
us. And I should'a stopped you; I
should'a told you I'd make it
better...*

BACK ON TELEVISION: Even Gibson is visibly affected.

CHARLIE GIBSON (CONT'D)
(on television)
I'm so proud of you...

CINDY sits down beside Brian, an arm around him.

CHARLIE GIBSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*Take care of your mom. I'll always
love you, and always be looking after
you.*

And then, unexpectedly, Brian finds himself SOBBING. His
mom comforts him as everyone look on in silence, and we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. GRASS - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - NIGHT

QUICK PAN DOWN a line of journalists reporting "live" from the scene, posing for unseen cameras...

REPORTER #1
...An outpouring of support...

The stands are indeed packed with people...

REPORTER #2
...Mere minutes away from launch time and the winds are picking up considerably...

STOP PAN ON the last reporter...

REPORTER #3
...The Shuttle Odyssey will have less than three hours to reach its destination. An unlikely time frame according to all the experts we've - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - STATIONARY

Owen takes a deep breath, assuming control of his ship. He looks at Lewis and Richter before initiating pre-launch.

OWEN
How you guys doing today?

LEWIS
I was supposed to go to the in-laws so...things are looking up. Just happy to be here.

Owen gives a "thumbs up" before going over his checklist.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - HOUSTON - - CONTINUOUS

Newsome leads a checklist of his own(SRO? Go. DO? Go. SLC? Go. LAD? Go.). Roll call.

EXT. LAUNCH - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - NIGHT

The winds are fierce, palm trees swaying wildly across the bay; the shuttle visibly tremors on its easel.

INT. FIRING ROOM - - LCC - - KSC - - QUICK CUTS

Diane/Cindy/Brian watch with varying degrees of intensity.

INT. ODYSSEY - - LAUNCH

An alarming rumble, there's unadulterated fear on the astronauts' faces.

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Newsome stands beside Cooper, eyes on the main screen and the countdown beneath it: 20...19...18... 17...

NEWSOME

The winds, they're picking up...

...15...14... 13...

INT. ODYSSEY - - LAUNCH

Owen's face flesh flutters, sweat dripping onto his visor.

10...9... 8...

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Newsome stands beside Cooper, tacitly imploring him to call the launch off...

5...4... 3...

INT. FIRING ROOM - - LCC - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Cindy and Brian watch in turmoil.

...2...

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper stares at THE SCREEN, closing his eyes as - -

...1...

LIFTOFF.**INT. ODYSSEY - - ASCENDANT**

And we feel the G-force assault as Owen's head snaps back, tendons nearly bursting from beneath his space suit.

But look closely - beneath the discomfort - and you'll see the ghost of a smile on his face...

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - NIGHT

The Odyssey shoots into the sky...

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper and team watch on the main monitor. SILENCE.

INT. ODYSSEY - - ASCENDANT

Owen and team hold on for dear life, the concussive force of this more powerful shuttle felt in their bones.

INT. LADIES ROOM - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

Diane braces herself over the sink, trying to regain her composure. Only now do we see the burden she bears.

INT. FCR - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

The FCR crew monitor screens, the Capcom keeping in contact.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - ASCENDANT

Owen settles into the ride, Richter and Lewis already tending to a gamut of shuttle problems...

CAPCOM (V.O.)
(filtered)
How's she holding up, Odyssey?

The deck shakes relentlessly.

OWEN
(into comm.cap)
She's perfect, Houston.

A rough JOLT makes a liar of Owen, the crew grabbing a hold of the nearest handle, before we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

A tranquil shot until...

...We get our first good look at the Russian PROTON BOOSTER. A hulking grey whale, it resembles an oversized oil drum.

EXT/INT. FLIGHT DECK - - INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

And while Matthew's unaware that he's altered the orbital path, he can't deny the BEEPS coming off the instrument panel.

The telemetry reinvigorated, he's now treated to a symphony of warning alarms, none more resonant than the

RADAR(POV)

Which shows the PROTON BOOSTER on approach.

MATTHEW squints at the screen, unable to take his eyes off the massive blip on a path to collide with him.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper and crew closely monitor the screens relaying images of Owen and the astronauts...

CAPCOM
Heat tiles showing high pressure
levels, Odyssey...

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - FAVOR OWEN

A dark shadow falls over him as we reach 400,000 feet, exiting the atmosphere...

OWEN
We're good, Houston...

Right on cue, a LIGHT pulses on the instrument panel inspiring Owen to turn the comm. cap OFF and tell Lewis:

OWEN (CONT'D)
Find out what's wrong.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - JSC - - CONTINUOUS

TRACK WITH NEWSOME as he bounds over to the CAPCOM.

NEWSOME
Ask about the ME; we're showing signs
of duress.

CAPCOM
(into mic.)
Odyssey. What's the status of your
main engine?

Nothing but STATIC answers...

CAPCOM (CONT'D)
Odyssey?

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - IN ORBIT

Owen delays his response as Lewis relays his assessment:

LEWIS
(to Owen)
We're good for now. Can't say how
long it'll hold, though.

CAPCOM (V.O.)
(filtered)
Odyssey, do you copy?

OWEN
 (into comm. cap)
 Houston, the ME's tip-top. What's
 the ETA on the Proton Booster?

CAPCOM (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 Forty minutes.

EVERYONE'S SILENT.

CAPCOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (filtered)
 Odyssey...?

OWEN
 (into comm. cap)
 Copy, Houston. That was just the
 sound of us praying.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Cooper stares at the screen when he says:

COOPER
 Go with God, Odyssey. Just go fast.

He removes his headset. Readjusts his tie.

INT. FIRING ROOM - - LCC - - KSC - - CONTINUOUS

DIANE
 You guys should see something.

Cindy and Brian follow her out.

EXT. ROOFTOP - - CAPE CANAVERAL - - NIGHT

Brian, Cindy and Diane stand atop the asphalt, staring up at
 the sky as

THE CAMERA RISES SLOWLY

Gradually enabling us and them to see the thousands of people
 who've turned out to watch the Odyssey's return.

CLOSER ON CINDY AND BRIAN

Inspired by the sheer numbers in attendance.

They stare in collective awe, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - ODYSSEY - - HAND HELD

A rough ride, Owen and his crew cling to their chairs as they exceed advisable speeds...

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Everyone at their station. Eyes glued to the monitors. An engineer's disembodied voice keeps them apprised of the time:

ENGINEER (V.O.)
Twenty-five minutes until impact.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - 257 MILES OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

The PROTON BOOSTER flies closer to the Intrepid...

CUT TO:

INT. MID-DECK - - INTREPID - - START ON BOOM BOX

Matthew slides his selected CD in. Seconds later, we're treated to the sounds of...

...*The Beastie Boys' "High Plains Drifter"*.

Matthew snuffles at the irony, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - IN ORBIT

The shuttle shakes relentlessly, the speed too much for it to handle as Owen stubbornly presses on...

RICHTER
We're not gonna make it. She can't handle this.

OWEN
(defiant)
We're gonna make it.

Richter and Lewis hunker down, before we - -

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Everyone watches the screens in utter silence before Newsome sidles up beside Cooper.

NEWSOME
Leave no man behind.

Cooper nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - 257 MILES OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

The Proton Booster. Closer still.

CUT TO:

INT. MID-DECK - - INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Matthew. Just where we left him. The music continuing.
Danny's stuffed monkey now curled in his arms.

It's as if he's a child, prone to childhood fears. And
childhood exuberance.

At the intersection of one song to the next, in the breath
of silence, we hear a TAP-TAP-TAP.

Matthew flinches. Looks around. Christ, it sounds just
like Morse code.

He rises. Turns the stereo down. Perks his ears up.

Nada.

And he laughs.

He CRANKS the music up, drowning out his fears, as we - -

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOFTOP - - CAPE CANAVERAL - - NIGHT

A full moon articulates the scene, Brian and Cindy scanning
the skies. Nothing heard but angst and anticipation.

CUT TO:

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - DAY

Everyone on edge - a condition perpetuated when the screen
showing Owen and the Odyssey crew blinks to BLACK.

NEWSOME
Standard at this stage. We'll get it
back.

And Cooper's about to say something. About to issue some
command. But he doesn't. He simply puts his palm out...

And after a moment, Newsome realizes what he's doing. And he takes Cooper's hand.

And then, within seconds, everyone in the Flight Control Room is holding hands in a show of unspoken solidarity.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN FLIGHT

Matthew sits. Staring straight ahead. But not outside. At - -

MATTHEW POV: The PHOTO of his lost son, of his lost family; of his lost life.

And he's so very cold, and so very tired, and so very ready to be done with this struggle...

Tears trickle down his cheeks, Matthew making no attempt to wipe them away. But he smiles through the tears. Even laughs. An odd sense of satisfaction to this.

Completely at ease with the depths - and heights - of human emotion, Matthew doesn't hear the TAC-TAC-TAC echoing through the cabin. A rhapsodic beat.

To the untrained ear, it sounds like...*morse code*.

Even odder still, the look on Matthew's face tells us that it's actually conveying a message. He translates to himself:

MATTHEW
...*"Superstar?"*

He looks reflexively to his left. Seeking the source of the sound(POV): NOTHING.

Then, a cursory glance to his right, and - -

Motherfucker.

THERE'S SOMEONE OUTSIDE

An astronaut. Knocking on the window. Waving.

Matthew regards it with clinical detachment. He offers a hollow grin, quite certain it's an apparition.

But then he sees THE EYES inside the visor, the face, and realizes, dear Lord, IT'S OWEN. And he's outside the shuttle. Knocking on the canopy glass.

He's using Morse Code to communicate...

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
(heart in his belly)
Holy shit...

Then, almost matter-of-factly, he lurches up and slams back against the far windshield. Stunned. And ecstatic.

His gaze goes east to see the SHUTTLE ODYSSEY moving alongside his own spacecraft. A daring rescue attempt.

Unable to enter the shuttle, Owen taps on the wall.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
 (translates Morse
 Code)
 "Focus"...
 (wry)
 Thanks, that's helpful...
 (translates more)
 "The hatch".

He moves towards the area just below the left cockpit window. A plug-type HATCH. That won't budge due to his earlier escapades outside the shuttle. STUCK.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - NIGHT

Among the masses now, an enormous vigil, Diane shepherds Brian and Cindy through, a retinue of security around them...

Up ahead we see the largest runway in the world; 15,000 feet long and 300 feet wide. Four Microwave Scanning Beam Landing Systems(MSBLS)are close by, two on each end of the runway.

Cupping the cell, Diane relays word to the Dawsons:

DIANE
 They've reached the shuttle...

CINDY
 How much time do they have to get him out?

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE INTREPID - - IN SPACE - - ON OWEN

On the right wing, we see the TETHER linking him to the Odyssey - positioned just ahead and below the Intrepid.

RICHTER (V.O.)
 (filtered)
 We gotta hustle, Owen...

Owen proceeds to tap "Plan B" on the glass, as we - -

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - HOUSTON - - CONTINUOUS

The telemetry back up and running, we see Lewis and Richter on the MAIN SCREEN, relaying word:

RICHTER (V.O.)
(filtered)
The Intrepid hatch is broken,
Houston...

Cooper tucks his chin to his chest. Can't believe yet another obstacle has fallen in their path.

CUT TO:

INT. INTREPID - - ON MATTHEW

Owen perched outside the glass, Matthew translates his instructions via Morse Code...

MATTHEW
(translating)
"Go through the payload bay..."

CUT TO:

ON OWEN - - OUTSIDE THE INTREPID

Darkness. Only the hulking specter of the proton booster.

OWEN
(into comm. cap)
I'm gonna have him go out an
alternative exit...

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - HOUSTON - - CONTINUOUS

COOPER
...What "alternative exit"?

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT BAY - - THE ODYSSEY - - IN ORBIT

Richter, in the pilot's seat, stares at a radar screen dominated by the sphere of the Proton Booster.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - DAY

CINDY
He should've been out by now. Right?

Brian tries to calm his mom. But still has to ask Diane:

BRIAN
How much time?

CUT TO:

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

No one moves. Everyone still as stone. Waiting for word from the Odyssey.

A disembodied voice reminds us...

ENGINEER (O.S.)
Estimated impact: Five minutes...

Cooper tightens his tie. Slips back into his jacket. Newsome wryly wondering:

NEWSOME
You going somewhere?

CUT TO:

INT. MID-DECK - - THE INTREPID - - IN ORBIT

Helmet donned, Matthew's suddenly arthritic fingers find it hard to lock the helmet visor in place...

Finally, he clips it closed. And moves to the payload bay, Danny's stuffed monkey, John Glenn, strapped to him like a baby kangaroo.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE INTREPID - - OVERHEAD SHOT - - SPACE

"The alternative exit" Owen referred to, the payload ROOF opens, giving us view of the busted RMS inside, and of...

...OWEN

Climbing the side wall, a tenuous line linking him back to the Odyssey...

INT/EXT. INTREPID - - PAYLOAD BAY - - CONTINUOUS

Matthew clings to a wall of his own, no safety harness for him. One false move and he's lost in space. *Literally.*

He averts his eyes, his gloved hands shaking. Sweat soaking his face, dripping onto the visor shield.

MATTHEW POV: We look up, barely discerning the amorphous shape of OWEN above us. Waving us home.

WIDER: The Proton Booster appears over the endless horizon. And for the first time we're able to see that it's *really* MOVING. Gaining fury and momentum.

BACK ON MATTHEW, trying to focus, trying to forget about the conditions around him...

CAPCOM (V.O.)
(filtered)
How we doin', Odyssey?

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - HOUSTON - - CONTINUOUS

The capcom awaits word. Finally:

RICHTER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Little shaky at the moment, Houston...

For Cooper and his crew this is sheer torture.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. INTREPID - - PAYLOAD BAY - - CONTINUOUS

Owen extends himself over the wall, reaching into the hull, his GLOVED HAND showing Matthew the way...

MATTHEW

Loses his grip, his breath audible now. Nearly hyperventilating. Time ticking away...

OWEN

Looks back. Sees the Proton Booster: IT'S HUGE.

MATTHEW'S GLOVED HANDS

Continue to grapple up the side-wall until he realizes he can't make it. There's no way. The gloves are too bulky, his fear is too great. And he looks up at

OWEN

Who waves him on, shouting(os).

MATTHEW

Ganders back, an odd epiphany taking hold as he murmurs:

MATTHEW
Let go...

THE PROTON BOOSTER

Eclipses what little light remains, its shadow swallowing everything in its path.

MATTHEW

Reaches up, ready to let himself be taken by the gravitational forces. Praying that Owen's ready to catch him.

THE PHOTO OF DANNY

Slips from inside Matthew's pocket, drifting diaphanously away, Matthew reaching for it, but it's too late...

IT'S GONE

And Matthew clenches his eyes shut. And stretches his arms wide like Christ on an invisible cross as he decides to...

LET. GO.

Swept up by the prevailing forces(SLO-MO), he floats into eternity, about to fall into the endless abyss until - -

OWEN'S HAND(RESUME SPEED)

Grabs him. Reigns him in.

OWEN

I got'cha...it's okay...I gotcha'...

Matthew grabs onto Owen. Hanging on for dear life.

OWEN (CONT'D)

(into comm. cap)

We're secure, Odyssey. Coming back.

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

RICHTER (V.O.)

We've got him, Houston. They're returning to the Odyssey now.

More obstacles to overcome, no one's celebrating yet. A few measured nods and clenched fists.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - SHUTTLE ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

The walk from the Intrepid to the Odyssey looks interminable. A million miles away.

And Matthew's overwhelmed, paralyzed with fear and emotion.

Owen motions Matthew back to the Odyssey, eyes on...

THE PROTON BOOSTER

Hurtling closer still, ready to level the Intrepid as

MATTHEW

Snaps out of it. Moving back with Owen to the Odyssey...

LEWIS (V.O.)
(filtered)
Come on, come on, come on...

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Richter and Lewis eye the instrument panel, waiting for the appropriate instruction. Time standing still.

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - HOUSTON - - CONTINUOUS

SILENCE. Then:

CAPCOM
(into mic.)
Odyssey, is Dawson aboard yet?

NO ONE ANSWERS. MORE SILENCE.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Lewis and Richter stare at the instrument panel.

RICHTER
(into comm. cap)
Negative, Houston.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Newsome turns to Cooper, impassioned:

NEWSOME
It's gonna hit. We'll lose both
shuttles.

Cooper has only a moment to deliberate. Then:

COOPER
Get them out of there.

CAPCOM
(into mic.)
Odyssey. Disengage. Repeat:
Disengage.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Lewis and Richter trade eyes, not liking what they have to do. Finally, Lewis nods and Richter retracts.

...Leaving the intrepid and Matthew and Owen behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - - 257 MILES OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

WIDE: The Odyssey flies away, the PROTON BOOSTER visible in the BG as it decimates the Intrepid.

A spark of light.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

The disembodied voice informs the crew that...

ENGINEER (O.S.)
We have impact.

Cooper closes his eyes for a prolonged beat.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Showered in light, Richter stares at the instrument panel. IT'S BLANK. Non-responsive.

And Richter and Lewis trade sad eyes before Richter taps the screen. Only now do we see "HATCH SECURED".

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT CONTROL ROOM - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

Silence. The kind of silence that comes with tragedy. Then:

RICHTER (V.O.)
Dawson and Laramie are on board,
Houston.

A restrained cheer.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRY BAY - - THE ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Helmets off, Owen and Matthew stand across from each other, catching their breaths. And Matthew's about to say something - -

OWEN

Don't thank me yet, boss. Long way from home.

Matthew nods, stifling words before Owen looks down to see "John Glenn" strapped to Matthew's belly.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Whatever works, man...whatever works...

Before he can smile - -

- - THE SHUTTLE'S ROCKED BY DEBRIS FROM THE EXPLODING INTREPID - -
Concussive enough to fell both Owen and Matthew to the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Lewis and Richter endure the continuous tremors.

RICHTER

(into comm. cap)

WE LOST THE RESERVE ENGINE!

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - NIGHT

Cindy and Brian search the sky...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

Owen slips into the commander's seat...

OWEN

I leave you guys alone for five minutes...

He starts to jiggle with the instrument panel, finding little responsive; Owen's not joking anymore.

EXT. REENTERING THE ATMOSPHERE - - EARLY MORNING

The Odyssey, a comet-like entity STREAKS past - -

OWEN (V.O.)

Something I gotta do, fellas...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - IN FLIGHT (HANDHELD)

Owen slips a CD into the stereo system...

Pantera's "Cowboys From Hell" blasts throughout the flight deck, growing louder, before we - -

CUT TO:

THE SILENT SKY

Peaceful. Aqueous. Empty.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - - REVERSE

CINDY AND BRIAN

Cling to each other like broken magnets, Diane still trying to get word via her cell-phone.

DIANE
(into cell)
Tell me what's happening...

CUT TO:

INT. FCR - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

OWEN (V.O.)
It's nothing good, Houston.

Before Cooper or the Capcom can ask - -

CUT TO:

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - ODYSSEY - - IN FLIGHT (HANDHELD)

An intense amount of HEAT comes off the canopy as we see the condensation coating the astronauts' visors.

OWEN
(into comm. cap)
The thermal tiles aren't activating!

LEWIS
(off instrument panel)
We just lost the second tile!

CUT TO:

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - EARLY MORNING

Every eye on the sky.

CINDY
Where are they?

Diane doesn't know what to say. About to speak before - -

VROOOOOOOOOOOOOOMMM!

It sounds like the sky's just split down the middle; as if the heavens imploded.

Diane, however, composes an improbable smile, oddly comforted.

DIANE
It's okay. That's the sonic boom.
It means...

She doesn't finish the sentence because at that very moment...

THE ODYSSEY

Appears from above, a triumphant sight until we see...

...The flames flickering off its shell. Made all the brighter by the blistering SUNRISE appearing behind it...

CINDY
Oh, my God...

The Tactical Air navigation(TACAN)system lights the runway as the crowd emits a collective GASP of horror on sight of - -

INT. FCR - - MCC - - CONTINUOUS

ON THE SCREEN: We see the burning shuttle up close.

CAPCOM
(into mic.)
Odyssey, do you copy - -?

No response. The monitors showing the shuttle interior have gone tellingly BLACK.

CAPCOM (CONT'D)
They're in reentry blackout.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - - DAWN

A squadron of F-15's shadow the Odyssey on its approach as FIRE ENGINES swarm the tarmac below...

The shuttle's parachute blossoms from its backside...

EXT. RUNWAY - - KENNEDY - - DAWN

THE SHUTTLE

Wobbles left to right, trying to gain control until finally TOUCHING DOWN on the tarmac, flames flickering off its shell as it skids down the runway with reckless abandon...

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

CAPCOM
 (into mic.)
 Odyssey, do you read? Major Laramie,
 please respond.

Nothing but daunting silence from the other end.

EXT. ODYSSEY - - RUNWAY - - CAPE CANAVERAL - - DAWN

The shuttle idles on the tarmac as FIRE ENGINES and FIREMEN blast hoses along its body.

An army of REPORTERS broadcast live, a medley of newscasts heard...spectators watch in stunned silence.

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

CAPCOM
 Shuttle Odyssey, do you copy?

Newsome stands beside Cooper now, bracing him for support.

CAPCOM (CONT'D)
 Repeat: Shuttle Odyssey. Give us a
 status report.

More silence. Cooper takes the capcom headset, strapping it on before we hear a BURST OF STATIC from the radio.

OWEN (V.O.)
 What're you so worried about, Houston?

A HUGE CHEER erupts from the room.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - CONTINUOUS

FROM BEHIND: Through the canopy glass we see fire trucks, throngs flooding the runway as water washes over the windows.

OWEN
 You guys wanna hang out a little
 more or you wanna get outta' here?

Laughter as blood flows, hearts pump and legs move.

OWEN

Stands. And turns to see Matthew.

OWEN (CONT'D)
Now you can thank me.

They hug.

EXT. RUNWAY - - CAPE CANAVERAL - - EARLY MORNING

A picture perfect sunrise as the crowd pushes closer and

BRIAN AND CINDY

Run onto the tarmac...not too fast...not too slow...uncertain
what awaits them as we hear snippets of - -

REPORTERS (O.S.)

(several voices)

*...a daring early morning landing...an
historic moment...I've never seen
anything like this...*

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - STATIONARY

Owen helps Matthew towards the hatch...

OWEN

Carol Dunfy's here, too. She's still
pissed about the prom.

MATTHEW

(stunned)

...What?

OWEN

A few people been reading up on you,
pal...

EXT. ODYSSEY - - RUNWAY - - EARLY MORNING

The hatch shoots open, an inflatable ladder unfolding onto
the tarmac as thousands of fists shoot into the air.

A ROAR.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - - THE ODYSSEY - - STATIONARY

Owen gestures for Matthew to lead the way...

OWEN

After you, superstar...

And keep in mind, Matthew has no idea of the massive interest
his story has aroused. Not until...

...He steps into the doorway and sees...

THE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE OUTSIDE

Some hold signs. Some hold pictures. It's a spectacular
sight that cuts to Matthew's core.

INT. FCR - - MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

STAN COOPER

Stares at the screen. And unbuttons his jacket. And unfastens his tie. And carefully folds it up before sitting down. And finally, for the first time today...exhaling.

EXT. ODYSSEY - - ON THE TARMAC - - EARLY MORNING

Matthew slides down the chute into the awaiting arms of paramedics and firemen. As soon as he's on his feet...

MATTHEW

My wife...my son...where's my wife
and son?

But through the pandemonium, no one can hear Matthew;
everyone's too busy congratulating him.

He fights through the crowd, tears streaming down his cheeks
as the masses part and we see - -

CINDY AND BRIAN

And there's a beat before they move toward one another,
oblivious to the cameras that click and churn around them...

And Matthew kisses Cindy and Brian with unadulterated joy.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

(through tears)

I love you, I love you so much...

A FLEET OF HELICOPTERS

Buzz overhead, American flags fluttering with them...

OWEN

Cuts through the crowd, everyone congratulating him. But he
beelines for one woman...

DIANE

Who belatedly notices him. Offers a soulful smile.

DIANE

(over the crowd)

Kind of a lotta' trouble to go to
impress a girl...

Owen smiles. Wants to kiss her. Doesn't.

So Diane does.

SETTLE ON THE DAWSON FAMILY

Still clinging tightly to one another. Not about to let go.

CRANE SLOWLY BACK

Able to see the enormity of it all...fire engines and helicopters and general fanfare...

...All ceding to the simple sight of a family, as we HEAR:

MATTHEW (V.O.)

Someone once asked John Kennedy how he became a war hero...

FADE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - - 2 DAYS LATER

A celebration. Thousands turn out to honor the everyman. On stage behind Matthew, among the people, we see Alastair (the Australian kid who first picked up the transmissions).

MATTHEW (V.O.)

He said simply, "they shot my plane down"...

Matthew goes to the podium, humbled by the avalanche of applause; Brian and Cindy clapping loudest of all.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - - CONTINUOUS

Empty. Save Cooper. Right where we left him. Eyes on the blank screen as he puffs on a cigar...

MATTHEW (V.O.)

And so it is that heroes are made...

EXT. DINER - - FLORIDA - - NIGHT

Owen sits across from his father, an equally grizzled, equally stubborn man. We can tell the conversation's stilted.

MATTHEW (V.O.)

In truth, most heroes live beneath the surface...

A little kid approaches. Asks Owen for his autograph. His father looking proudly on as Owen signs...

MATTHEW (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...Defined more by their ability to rise up than by their inability to ever fall down...

INT. PRESS ROOM - - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - - CONTINUOUS

Diane stands behind a podium, leading a press conference...

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 These people, these heroes, they
 walk among us everyday...

EXT. ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY - - DAY

A service held for the fallen astronauts of the Intrepid.
 Empty coffins, we see enlarged photos of every crew member.

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 ...Affecting us, and each other, in
 ways we never imagined...

A fleet of F-16's swoop overhead, the sonic boom sending
 shudders down Cindy's spine as she holds Matthew's hand...

MATTHEW (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...Showing us who we are...

INT. DORM - - MILFORD ACADEMY - - CONTINUOUS

Cindy and Matthew help Brian pack his things up...

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 ...Who we ought to be...

INT. AUDI SUV - - STATIONARY

Matthew sits behind the wheel, Cindy riding shotgun, Brian
 in the back. A deliberative moment.

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 ...And how far we have to go...

Matthew reaches for the door as we see what's outside:
 A CEMETERY.

EXT. CEMETERY - - SAN FRANCISCO - - ELEVATED ANGLE

The Dawson family moves across the impossibly green grass,
 beset with headstones. Angling for one particular spot...

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 Those who inspire our better angels...

A HEADSTONE: "DANIEL MICHAEL DAWSON. 1993-2006"

And Matthew crouches down beside it, his first time here.

MATTHEW (V.O.)
 ...Those who dare look to the heavens
 and wonder what might be.

And after a moment, he places Danny's stuffed monkey, John
 Glenn, atop the grave.

And Matthew rises to his feet. And falls apart. Cindy and Brian comforting him, as we HEAR:

MATTHEW (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It all starts with one...small...step.

FADE TO:

EXT. DAWSON HOUSE - - KENTFIELD - - DUSK

The sun sinks into the sky as Cindy inhabits the back porch.

Hear the CLAP(os) of a screen door before MATTHEW enters frame, sitting down beside his wife, his arm easily around her.

Seconds later, BRIAN joins them.

And here they sit, gazes fixed above. Not a word spoken. Finding comfort in the silence.

SKY POV: Looking down at the Dawson family, a Rockwellian vision. A family. Healing. Looking admiringly, reverently, to the heavens, as we CUE U2's "*Luminous Times*", and slowly...

FADE OUT: