

RED MARS

FADE IN:

EXT. EARTH - VIEWED FROM SPACE

A perfect blue marble - clouds, oceans, continents. A voice begins to speak. An older, wise voice. Bud Chantilas. We'll meet him later.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

The Earth. From space. In all its glory, the most perfect, self-regulating organism you could imagine. We went out there; we turned around; we looked back; we saw it. You'd think we'd behold and learn something.

(beat)

We didn't.

The DATE APPEARS in one corner of the screen. 1961.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

It was 1961 when we first went into space. There were four billion people in the world.

The POPULATION APPEARS in the other.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

And at a rate that was scarcely comprehensible, we began to poison and populate our planet.

DATE SPINS, the POPULATION as well. The big, sparkling blue marble that is Earth begins to lose its luster and slowly turns gray. By the year 2000, the population is six billion.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

We increased by 80 million people a year. Pumped out our toxins beyond measure. Destroyed our resources killed forests, trees, plants, animals...Anything that couldn't be trademarked and sold at a profit we annihilated without a thought. We killed half of what was on the planet. We didn't care. Right about the millennium, we got another warning...

DISSOLVE TO:

PERFECTLY ROUND LILY PAD

in the midst of a pond. Surrounded by hundreds of dead, dying and deformed frogs.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

We killed all the frogs. Every frog on the face of the planet. We'd killed species before, sure, even a genus or two. But this time we wiped out an entire phylum. As the frogs breathe through their skin and react to toxins in the environment faster, this should have been a warning, canary in the coal mine kind of thing.

The last frog dies.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

Nah, we didn't pay any attention to that either. The only people who were really upset were the French. And no one really likes the French. We -

DISSOLVE BACK TO:

EXT. EARTH - VIEWED FROM SPACE

DATE and POPULATION begin to WHIR again. The planet grows dimmer and dimmer. The oceans grayer and grayer.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

By 2050 there were 12 billion people. It took us 100 years to go from the Industrial Revolution to putting a man in space. It took us only another 100 to poison and overpopulate the planet so seriously that if we didn't go out and find somewhere else to live, we realized we were gonna die out as a species ourselves in the next two generations.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

A billion stars. We PULL BACK THROUGH -

EXT. ARES - DAY

A spaceship unlike anything you've seen. Thirteen spheres up front, cuboctoahedral packing. The MEV (Mars Entry Vehicle), a large cylinder behind. The whole thing is slowly turning.

SUPERIMPOSE: FIRST MANNED MISSION TO MARS (DAY 190)

The ship floats by to reveal -

EXT. MARS

Red, huge, and very close. OVER which we hear -

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Houston, we are go for Mars orbit acquisition.

CAPCOM (V.O.)

You are go. Nice flight. Godspeed.

Engines light up in the back of the craft. The ship heads down towards Mars. Enters orbit. Disappears around the back side.

SUPERIMPOSE: MARS - FOURTH PLANET FROM THE SUN

The WORD SUN STARTS TO BLAZE BRIGHTER AND BRIGHTER, FILLING the SCREEN until we are LOOKING AT -

EXT. SUN

A writhing ball of plasma. The surface roils, waves of energy pass by and a flare starts to grow and expand out from one quadrant like a giant volcanic eruption.

INT. SOLAR OBSERVATORY (EARTH) - DAY

Two SOLAR ASTRONOMERS stare with mouths agape at the heliostat. Monitors around record the event as well.

SOLAR ASTRONOMER

Jesus...It's gotta be 800,000 miles long.
It's gonna shut down every comm satellite
on this side of the planet.

ALARMS are starting to BUZZ.

SOLAR ASTRONOMER

The good news is it's directional, most
of it's gonna miss us.

INT. MISSION CONTROL (HOUSTON) - DAY

More ALARMS. Science Officer, ANDY LOWENTHAL, turns to the
Flight Director, MATT RUSSERT.

LOWENTHAL

The bad news is it's directional, and
most of it's going toward Mars. Sub-light
speed. It'll take 40 minutes to get
there.

RUSSERT

Let 'em know.

He looks to the Capcom, JOHN SKAVLEM. News gets worse.

SKAVLEM

No comm. They're on backside. They'll be
clear in...40 minutes.

(NOTE All the crew in mission control wear small Projected
Image Monocles (PIMs) over their dominant eye. There are no
giant viewscreens dominating the room as in missions past.
When so moved, the flight director can throw an image on a
large general viewscreen. But unless noted, there are no
projected images in the room.)

EXT. MARS ORBIT - NIGHT

Dark side of Mars. The Ares is a slightly shining speck,
moving towards the horizon and light. At 17,000 mph.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Commander KATE BOWMAN is at the helm. She's got a kind of
quiet assurance. You'd like her. Mission co-pilot ED SANTEN
is beside and behind her. She speaks into a mike to rest of
the ship -

BOWMAN

We have stable orbit. We've got three
laps around, ninety minutes each. In four
and a half hours, we will launch the Mars
Entry Vehicle.

ROBBY GALLAGHER floats in through the hatch in the back.
He's been waiting 309 million miles for this -

GALLAGHER

Are we there yet?

Kate shakes her head. She's about to respond when -

EXT. SPACE

They just clear the edge of the planet, lights hit them
and...

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

Wham. One light starts to flicker to red. And then another. Some just go off.

BOWMAN

What the hell??

Santen reaches for the RADIO as it begins to blare STATIC.

SANTEN

Comm's out.

Bowman begins to rapidly reset states. Some hold, some flip back to red. Things are bad, but she's calm. Decides.

BOWMAN

Single event upsets. All over the board.
Latch up. Free flow. We're gonna lose
chips. Shut it down.

SANTEN

Shut it down?

Safety BUZZERS start to go off.

BOWMAN

Everything. SEP, some kind of massive
flare.

(then; into the intercom)

Gentlemen, correction, we will launch on
this pass. In fact...in five.

Santen is shutting off every system he can get his hands on. She reaches to finish it off herself.

BOWMAN

Proton flux. MULTIPLE Event Upsets. Ed,
bye.

Santen is out of his seat and heading back as fast as he can. Gallagher behind him. ALARMS ring now as he rushes out, the artificial gravity begins to fail.

INT. ARES - MULTIPLE DECKS

The crew madly scrambling everywhere.

On the MEV DECK, BUD CHANTILAS, Chief Science Officer (60s, graying) is pulling himself into a spacesuit.

Popping out of his bunk and into the wall, CHIP PETTENGILL (30s, a little dour), grabs a satchel of personal possessions and swims off down an access tube.

Gallagher and Santen rush along, careening off the walls.

Emerging onto the MEV deck, looking absolutely calm, COOPER BURCHENAL (40s, weathered, unconcerned) stops at an intercom station, presses a toggle -

BURCHENAL

Katherine, you could probably cut off
that caterwauling now. I'm up from my
nap.

A moment later, the ALARM CEASES.

INT. MARS ENTRY VEHICLE

6 High G couches are faceted about the interior walls, crew names stenciled on them. (Bowman's remains conspicuously empty.) Santen straps himself in. Chantilas, Burchenal,

Pettengill, and Gallagher stream aboard. Start cinching themselves in as -

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Kate continues to try to shut the ship down. Some circuits do, others flicker/free flow and refuse to stop. One particular circuit will clear, but only as long as she holds it shut manually - MEV Launch Release. Only takes her a moment to decide. She's not happy, but tries not to let her concern show as -

BOWMAN

Gentlemen, it seems I will not be able to join you and will maintain the manual release for the MEV from the Flight Deck.

SANTEN (V.O.)

Commander!?!

She has no time or inclination to engage in discussion about her decision.

BOWMAN

You are go for Mars descent, Lieutenant.
On my signal.

INT. MEV

Santen powers up the smaller craft. Seals the door. He can't believe he's doing this, but he has no choice.

SANTEN

We are green across the board.

The last of them finish torquing themselves down. Gallagher toggles his intercom to Bowman -

GALLAGHER

Promise you won't leave if we don't like it there.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

She responds in kind. Keeps her tone as light as she can...

BOWMAN

I promise.
(then)
Lieutenant Santen, you have control authority of the MEV. Now.

She holds the circuit closed...

INT. MEV

Lights are starting to flicker off on the board. Waiting is not a good plan. Santen calls out quickly -

SANTEN

Crew secure??!

ALL OF THEM

Secure. Secure. Secure. Secure.

Santen slams two large buttons on either side of him.

EXT. ARES - MEV CYLINDER - DAY

Explosive bolts blow the two halves of the cylinder away. The MEV is an icosahedron revealed inside. As this is space,

and a vacuum, there is no sound.

INT. MEV - DAY

However, in here, it's LOUD. EXPLOSION REVERBERATES. Half a moment later, ANOTHER EXPLOSION and -

EXT. ARES - DAY

The MEV is blown free of the Ares. Again, oddly silent. Small maneuvering MOTORS BURN for a moment, starting the MEV out of orbit and in free fall towards Mars.

It drops, drops, drops and disappears, friction blazing as...

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

There are still free-flows all over the board. Bowman can't get them to shut down. They flicker, pop on and off. Systems start and shut down and start up again all over the ship. Checks the COMM again. Still STATIC.

INT. ARES SPHERE SIX

Control panel on the wall. We hear a CLICKING. Inside the panel, we see the switch sputtering on/off. It fails, arcs. Smoke begins to wisp out.

INT ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

A red light comes on. Soft BUZZ. Kate turns. It's a smoke warning in sphere six.

INT. ARES - VARIOUS DECKS - DAY

Bowman rushes through A sphere that's a garden. Another with orchids growing on walls. Artwork on huge LCD screens...Pulls open panels and slaps down banks of breakers as she goes. Rooms turn dark, the artwork disappears. Only phosphorescent safety lights remain. More ALARMS.

INT. ARES - SPHERE SIX

Bowman yanks out a fire extinguisher. Sprays down the offending area. She is, of course, hurled across the room by the force. For a moment, though, it looks like she's succeeded. Smoke begins to wisp out again. She pushes over, anchors her feet and jams the nozzle into a fire port. Empties it. This time it seems as if she's prevailed. And then a gentle voice on the intercom.

ANNUNCIATOR (V.O.)

Fire. Sphere 5. Fire. Sphere 5. Smoke.
Sphere 8. Smoke. Sphere 8.

She still doesn't panic. Hurls herself down another access tube and...

EXT. MARS - DAY

Way up in the sky, we can see the tiny flare of the MEV entering the atmosphere. A moment later, a SONIC BOOM reaches us.

INT. ARES

Bowman fights a fire in another sphere. Dark now except for the flickering flames. This time we see them otherworldly round and glowing in the zero G. Smoke's in the air it's getting hard to breathe. She puts out the fire, but from the

ALARMS, it's clear she's now fighting a losing battle.

INT. ARES - MAINTENANCE LEVEL/MEV DECK - DAY

Kate rushes in. Starts pulling master breakers. LIGHTS are EXPLODING as the power surges. She's surrounded by a cloud of glittering glass fragments. We can see the fire/smoke panel lit up nearby. The news is bad. Half of the lights are red. She yanks on a spacesuit. Slaps on a small oxygen container. Locks on the waist, wrists. Reaches back to what seems to be a gelatinous hood. Pulls it over her head, locks the front down and the helmet turns rigid and transparent. She throws the last breaker. Life Support. The ship is now dead, but still burning. She clips herself in with a set of safety tethers and...throws open the main hatch.

INT. ARES - DAY

The venting air crystallizes in a huge white plume. Papers, books, cups, clothing flies forth as well.

INT. ARES - MAINTENANCE LEVEL/MEV DOCK

Bowman is sucked towards the open hatch. Tethers hold. Watching all her air escape is not a calming moment.

INT. ARES MULTIPLE DECKS

Without oxygen, the fires subside and die. All of them. The ship is still and dead.

INT. MAINTENANCE LEVEL/MEV DOCK

Total silence. Fire lights are out. Kate shuts the hatch. Finally she lets herself begin to react. Starts to hyperventilate and shake inside her spacesuit.

EXT. MARS SURFACE

The MEV has crash-landed. It's a wreck. Air bags deflate. Half have been destroyed. The icosahedron attempts to unfold. A figure struggles out of the shattered craft, collapses on the ground.

GALLAGHER

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

FLASHBACK - EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: LAUNCH MINUS 9 DAYS

The air is gray, thick. Stragglers in heavy protective gear struggle through the fetid wind to an airlock on the side of...

INT. NASA BRIEFING HALL - DAY

...and join hundreds of journalists in the audience. Lights dim. In front, face lit from below at a podium, Senior Scientist HAROLD ERNEST, 60s, head of the Space Exploration Office.

ERNEST

As many of you may know, in 2032 the Space Exploration Office began a series of unmanned flights to Mars.

The entire wall behind him, 40 feet by 100 feet, is a vid screen. As he speaks the images appear. Not as if he's narrating to the footage, but as if it's voice activated.

ERNEST

It had been determined by 2020 that Mars harbored no life. Although beginning with the same resources as Earth four billion years ago, Mars didn't support any life beyond the microbial stage in the last 300 million years. Nor did it have an atmosphere or climate supportive of human life.

Exactly as he describes it, it occurs. (Icecaps melt, temperature gradients rise, etc.). In the audience are hundreds of journalists watching.

ERNEST

It was, however, concluded that Mars was receptive to terraforming. If we could raise the temperature of the planet by only four degrees, the resultant melting of the ice caps would increase the density of the atmosphere, thus holding greater heat, melting the icecaps further. We could use the greenhouse effect to our benefit. To do this, we needed to increase the oxygen content of the atmosphere. Resultingly, a series of probes were sent, each releasing further and further genetically manipulated lichen and algae designed to stand the rigors of the Martian environment while augmenting the oxygen content of the Martian atmosphere. In the last 28 years, we have sent 2200 probes. The terraforming was initially successful.

We see the probes launching and bursting in aerosol deployments over the Martian surface. Algae blooms. Red, orange, green, black, burnt sienna. Every color you can imagine. Valleys covered with color.

ERNEST

The average temperature on Mars has increased two and a half degrees over the last three decades. The oxygen content began to increase as well. And then eleven months ago, the O₂ on Mars suddenly began to decline. Soon after, all the remote sensors on the planet ceased functioning. We have no idea what's gone wrong. We need to know why. Man's very destiny may lie in the answer.

The color on Mars ebbs away.

ERNEST

We are about to embark on the greatest mission of human exploration. By using a number of Heavy Lift Launch Vehicles and a modified close lunar cargo ship, we have created a vessel capable of journeying to Mars.

We see construction being rushed along and Hab-1 (a kind of big space RV) landing and deploying on Mars as -

ERNEST

Three months ago, Hab-1, an unmanned living environment, was launched. In nine days Ares-1, our first manned mission,

will be sent to Mars. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the first men and women to travel beyond the reach of Earth to the next planet in the solar system.

Light comes up on the crew.

ERNEST

Lt. Commander Katherine Bowman will supervise the flight component of our mission. Commander Bowman has 2200 hours in space. She will be assisted by Pilot and Mission Specialist Ed Santen.

(next)

And we're pleased to have Dr. Bud Chantilas come out of retirement as our Chief Science Officer. Bud brings a view as a generalist few can offer, with a Nobel in chemistry and a MacGregor in molecular biology. He was off getting another Ph.D., this time in...

(checks)

...theology when we asked him to join us.

(next)

Dr. Chip Pettengill, who until recently has held the number two position in the Terraforming Office, is an expert in extremophile and cryptoendolithic biology.

(then)

Dr. Cooper Burchenal, late of Western BioTech has left the private sector to help us.

(last)

And we are also joined by Robert Gallagher.

Santen turns to Kate and quietly mutters.

SANTEN

The janitor.

His MIKE was on. It ECHOES across the room. But Gallagher's too quick to let him try to apologize anyhow.

GALLAGHER

That's technically space janitor.

Crowd likes this. Gallagher continues -

GALLAGHER

When the toilet breaks 80 million miles from the nearest hardware store, they call me. Actually, they called me now 'cause then would be too late.

ERNEST

To be more precise, Mr. Gallagher is the Mechanical Systems Engineer. We're glad to have him along.

Ernest moves on quickly.

ERNEST

We stand on the threshold of the most triumphant moment of the millennium. Science has brought us here, and science will take us further.

CUT TO:

END FLASHBACK

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

The MEV is horrendously battered. It's a wonder they're alive. Chantilas is propped against a rock, moving a device the size of a hardback book across his abdomen. It's a kind of combination x-ray/sonogram. Doesn't like what he sees. Puts it aside for the moment without discussing it with the others.

Gallagher emerges from the MEV dragging some tools and other salvaged gear. (NOTE All communication is via the VOX radios in their spacesuits.)

CHANTILAS

What've we got?

GALLAGHER

The radio's dead. Rover's dead. AMEE's dead. You gave me a shop and three months and I could get this thing set for orbital re-entry. Otherwise...it's staying here.

Santen's climbed to the top of a nearby outcropping of rock. Surveys the area
red sky, blue clouds, rocks.

BURCHENAL

Anything?

SANTEN

No.

PETTENGILL

Great. We put up with your shit for three hundred million miles, so you could crash-land us on Mars. Just fucking great.

BURCHENAL

By all rights, son, we should be dead. That was a decent piece of flying.

SANTEN

We have a mission to accomplish, people...

PETTENGILL

We'll be dead in eight hours anyhow when the air runs out. 'Cause megapilot missed the landing site. There is no more fucking mission.

That puts it all into perspective.

GALLAGHER

So, where the hell are we?

SANTEN

The G.P.S. was tied to the radios...which are dead. Transponder on the Hab was tied to the nav computer...

GALLAGHER

...which is dead. Didn't the boys at NASA pack us a compass?

BURCHENAL

There's no magnetic core on Mars.
Wouldn't do any good.

Gallagher considers all this for a moment.

GALLAGHER

I don't think I like this planet.

CHANTILAS

Best guess. Where do you think we are?

Santen shrugs. As much as you can shrug in a spacesuit.

SANTEN

Somewhere downrange.

Santen pulls his HHC out of a pocket on his thigh. 2050
descendant of a laptop. Muttered at it. It whizzes past all
Hab info

schematics, the standard 360 degree pan
from the landing site, topo map of Mars.
Zooms in to show where the Hab was
deployed.

SANTEN

Based on the last uncorrupted nav state,
and given that we were in a full manual
descent with no computer correction, I'd
say...in this 60x120 mile ellipse.

Okay. That's big. There's a long moment of resignation. It's
a little irrational, but then, re the HHC -

BURCHENAL

We've got every other mission variable in
here, we ought to be able to figure
aerobrake friction and the speed and
orbit of the Ares when we exited. We
should be able to close in on the
downrange variables. Tighten up the
ellipse. It's about the math.

Gallagher can't believe it.

GALLAGHER

This is it. This is that moment they told
us about in high school. Where one day
again we'd use algebra. And it would save
our lives. And I thought they were
fucking kidding.

Gallagher turns in frustration and walks away. Chantilas
calls to him -

CHANTILAS

Stay in range. A thousand yards. And your
radio's line of sight.

GALLAGHER

Right, I wouldn't want to get lost.

He continues to wander off. We can hear them discussing drag
coefficients and whatnot. It just makes him ill.

Gallagher stares out at the Martian plain. It would be kinda
cool. Except for the fact he's gonna die here. He's pissed
and frightened. Yanks his HHC out. Muttered, images appear.
All the Hab details. Stares at the map and then the 360
degree panorama. Back at the map. Back at the panorama.

Something about it strikes him. Looks at it some more. He gets up, looks around. Looks around some more. Heads back to the guys...

GALLAGHER

I don't think it's about math. I don't like math, so I'm biased. I think it's about the picture.

He holds out the picture of the panorama. Santen dismisses him - he's not a scientist, he's not a pilot, he should leave them alone.

SANTEN

We're not in that picture. If we were, we'd know where the Hab was. We're trying to figure this out.

Robby ignores him, tosses a rock in the sand, wraps the the 360 degree panorama around it. Screen bends and turns translucent as he does.

GALLAGHER

Look, say that's the lander. At about 30 degrees in the distance, it sees this mountain with the funny top. And at about 180 degrees it sees this funny set of twin peaks. (points)
Now I see this mountain over there. And these peaks over there behind me almost on a straight line. And then there's this other peak maybe, which would put us on the line, say here. Which leaves the angle to the Hab at about there...

Santen and Chantilas start to manipulate their HHCs faster than you can follow. Muttering to them, hand-gesturing, cross-referencing back and forth to the map, as the ellipse shrinks and their landing location is...determined.

BURCHENAL

Space Janitor First Class Gallagher, nicely done.

SANTEN

The good news is it's an eight-hour walk.

GALLAGHER

There's bad news?

Chantilas checks Gallagher's wrist monitor.

CHANTILAS

You've got seven and a half hours of air. Try not to breathe too deep.

BURCHENAL

Let's get the hell outta here.

Chantilas struggles to his feet. As the five of them tromp away in the giant landscape...

FLASHBACK - EXT. SPACE -DAY

The Earth FILLS the SCREEN. And then PULLING BACK, BACK, BACK, BACK...It recedes in the distance and disappears. We CATCH UP WITH the Ares as the final launch stage fizzles out and is discarded.

SUPERIMPOSE: MISSION TIME: DAY 1

INT. ARES - PRIMARY SPHERE - DAY

A large open common space. Empty for the moment. Until Chantilas and Pettengill enter through an access tube. Gravity follows them around as they walk. Floor, ceiling wall...A meter on the wall with a glowing "G" points an arrow the direction of the current gravity.

PETTENGILL

Chief Science Officer Chantilas.

(off his nod)

This is trippy.

Chantilas grins. He's been up so many times he's forgotten what it's like the first time.

CHANTILAS

You'll get used to it. When you get home,
it feels weird you can't walk on the
ceiling.

INT. ARES - MEV DECK - DAY

Gallagher comes in too fast. Stumbles up. It's just confusing. He resets. Opens up a locker, about three feet by three feet. He calls in to what seems to be a large tangle of silver pipes.

GALLAGHER

Good morning, AMEE. Step out carefully,
we're in multi-directional gravity.

AMEE, the Autonomous Mapping Exploration and Evasion unit, unfolds and steps gingerly from the cabinet. About waist high, eight legs, stereo camera eyes. Like a big silver spider. Old attachments have been sawed off and buffed down. She's a piece of off-the-shelf gear that's been modified. When the light hits her at the right angle, we can see a Marine Corps insignia still etched under the refinishing.

GALLAGHER

How are we after launch? I'd like to run
a systems check. (as she nods)
Shall we do the hokey-pokey? Just to
satisfy me?

She rapidly shakes each of her legs in turn. Gallagher flips on a wrist panel display. Built into the fabric of his suit. He sees what AMEE sees.

GALLAGHER

Take a look around.

He flips off the lights. She flicks over to IR, sees just fine in the dark. Turns the lights back on.

GALLAGHER

And how is your C.P.U. today?

A 1000 quick calculations flash by and then - "Good."

GALLAGHER

Okay, run the occasional self test. Let
me know if anything's wrong. And back to
storage.

AMEE contracts and climbs back into her locker. Gallagher shuts the door. Display reads "Good-bye" and winks out.

INT. ARES - KITCHEN/DINING SPHERE - NIGHT

All six of them are gathered. First dinner in space.

BOWMAN

Any Space Adaptation Sickness? Vertigo?
No? Liars. You'll wake up all night long
thinking you're falling. Promise. I'll
hear you scream. Status?

BURCHENAL

Garden's good.

CHANTILAS

Didn't lose a plant.

BOWMAN

Anything else?

Gallagher holds back here a little. Not a scientist, not an astronaut. Suddenly feels like the most junior member of the crew.

GALLAGHER

Ahh, Commander...Bunch of the HVACs
jammed from the lift-off. Reset 'em.
They're fine now.

BOWMAN

I'll tell you what, unless we pass a
recruiting station on an asteroid and you
sign up for the military, you can call me
Kate for the next six months, okay?

GALLAGHER

Okay.
(as she waits; he relents)
Kate.

BOWMAN

Why'd you come, Gallagher?

Not expecting this one. Takes a sec -

GALLAGHER

I did two years as a mechanic at NASCAR.
A year and a half at McMurdo in the South
Pole. Three years on subs. I had the
highest military tech ratings you can
get. And I went cross-country once with
my cousins in a motor home. This didn't
seem so bad.

BOWMAN

That's why they called. Why'd you come?

A beat, then -

GALLAGHER

You ever been to Europe? Europe's
horrible. It's full of stodgy people
whose ancestors didn't have the balls to
go to America and try something new.
Earth is gonna be like Europe. You might
visit there and admire some old buildings
and crap, but you wouldn't want to live
there. This was like getting a call to go
with Columbus to America the first time.
But harder. How could you not go?

Damn. Burchenal grins.

BURCHENAL

I don't like Europe much either, son.
Didn't quite figure it the same way, but
damnation, you don't turn down a phone
call like that, do ya?

(to Kate)

You?

BOWMAN

I spent my entire life training to fly
the biggest, fastest thing you can fly.
This is it. It's the best job in the
world.

(points to Santen)

He's going 'cause he got the second best
job in space. He's a little pissed about
it, but he still came.

She's nailed him so precisely, Santen can only wince and
look away. Pettengill just pipes up. Maybe no one's gonna
ask and he wants to get it out in the open -

PETTENGILL

I was never supposed to come. I came
'cause my boss couldn't. He failed the
medical. Heart arrhythmia. So here I am.
They tapped me on the shoulder, told me I
was going to Mars. I was supposed to be
second in charge of the Terraforming
office till I died.

Chantilas's the last. They turn to him. His reason's a
little different.

CHANTILAS

Psalm 107, verse 23
They that go down to the Sea in Ships,
that do business in great waters, these
see the works of the Lord, and His
wonders in the deep.' So I figured how
much wonder for those in space?

Beat.

SANTEN

You're going to Mars because of a poem??

Chantilas thinks about it. He could go on about it, but...

CHANTILAS

Basically.

INT. ARES - EXERCISE SPHERE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: MISSION TIME: DAY 13

There's no up here, equipment is attached to the floor,
ceiling and walls. Santen and Bowman are on a large spinning
bicycle-driven centrifuge. Santen's pedaling. By keeping up
the speed, he's able to provide enough extra gravity for
Bowman, on the other side, to lift free-weights. They're
both dripping sweat so it must work. TIMER goes off, they
slow to a stop. Pettengill comes in. He looks a bit
uncomfortable. Certainly out of his element. A little, well,
puny.

PETTENGILL

So...required exercise. Haven't had this
since grade school.

SANTEN

Yeah, you musta been doing some kind of reverse thing where you get small...

Santen's got years in the gym. Muscles on muscles. Bowman takes a two-second evaluation of the situation.

BOWMAN

You're done. You can shower.

SANTEN

I'm not done. I was gonna...

BOWMAN

No. You're done.

Santen can't believe he's being thrown out. But he's also a product of the military and couldn't argue if he tried.

SANTEN

Yes, ma'am.

He leaves. Pettengill feels stupid.

PETTENGILL

You didn't have to do that.

BOWMAN

No. I did. If I didn't nip that in the bud, I wouldn't be doing my job.

(then)

Flying this beast is only half the job. The whole job's to get the crew in place in shape to do what they have to do. And the funny thing is, flying's the easy part.

Pettengill stands abashed for a moment and then his resentment just bubbles out...

PETTENGILL

I just hate all those fucking guys. I feel like I've spent my entire life being the guy who was hassled in phys ed. I lost the first girl I ever cared about to some thug who could throw a football farther than I could. It's like women are hardwired to think that guys who are proficient at sports are going to be better providers. It's not like we hunt and kill our own food anymore.

(then)

He sells cars for a living now. Cars. I end up working on a project that may save the existence of mankind and he sells cars.

This is impressively obsessive.

BOWMAN

You kept track of him. What happened to her?

(off his look of "who?")

The girl.

He has no idea. She grins at him -

BOWMAN

Little competitive? Who's hardwired for what, Cro-Magnon guy?

He can't help it, he grins, a little abashed.

BOWMAN

We're gonna start with the bungees. Try to quit being pissed off you weren't chosen for dodgeball, willya?

PETTENGILL

I'll try. Twenty years of hating the bullying motherfuckers is a hard habit to break.

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. CRASH SITE (MARS) - DAY

It's quiet. And then, a slight METALLIC SOUND. We PUSH TOWARDS the MEV and IN. AMEE lies on the deck beside her storage container. A leg twitches. Then another. Servo WHINE. Gets gingerly to her feet. Eyes turn. Wiggles once as if she was stiff and cautiously makes her way outside.

EXT. CRASH SITE (MARS) - DAY

Looks around. Analyzes. Turns and heads off into the landscape.

EXT. MARTIAN PLAIN - DAY

A landscape so huge, it's hard to comprehend. Five tiny figures progress across the bottom of the frame. They've already come a long ways. Beginning to string out. Pause and regather. Pettengill stops to catch his breath.

GALLAGHER

How you doing?

PETTENGILL

Little tired. I'm okay.

SANTEN

You should have put more treadmill time in.

PETTENGILL

(sotto)

Go fuck yourself.

SANTEN

What'd you say?

PETTENGILL

Ahhh...Musclehead, go fuck yourself??

They're both getting louder and louder...

BURCHENAL

Guys...

Burchenal reaches out, checks their wrist monitors.

BURCHENAL

We're doing fine. In point of fact, he's using less O2 than you are. We can stop a minute. Unless you two want to shout at each other and use up your air.

PETTENGILL

Sorry.

SANTEN

Fine. I'm sorry, too.

No one's sorry. They rest. Use the moment to look around. It's pretty astounding. Chantilas uses the respite to re-scan his abdomen. Puts the device away again. He's in pain but refuses to acknowledge it.

GALLAGHER

How you doing?

CHANTILAS

Things are as they are.

(then)

Lord. Look at it, we're on Mars. Pretty damn amazing.

PETTENGILL

It' weird. There's nothing here.

GALLAGHER

It's Mars.

PETTENGILL

No, I mean there's not even a trace of the algae.

He kneels down, examines a rock. Nada.

PETTENGILL

Even if it all died, there'd be something - a dried algal mat, traces on the lee sides, something. Nothing. Nada.

BURCHENAL

He's right. We sent up fifty-two varieties. Blue-green, black, orange. Anhydriobiosics, chemotrauphs, even a thibacillus that could grow autotrophically on elemental sulfur. Not only are they dead, they're all just gone. I don't get it. It's like they were scoured off the rock.

GALLAGHER

Maybe there was never anything in this valley.

As they walk, Burchenal checks his HCC.

BURCHENAL

If we are where we think we are -

Map appears on a small screen, he mutters to it, overlays of all the algae and lichen that were on Mars appear.

BURCHENAL

This valley was covered with blue algae a month ago. Valley back one should have been covered in an orange-red chloroflectic. He's right. It's weird. There should be something.

They crest a small rise. Below lies a valley that closes down quickly into an extremely narrow canyon. Burchenal and Santen check their HHC maps.

BURCHENAL

This, however, makes sense.

SANTEN

Debris apron. Delineated valley fill.
Depositional fan...

He double-checks with Chantilas. Seems they're going the right way. Chantilas leans back heavily against a rock.

CHANTILAS

Good. You gotta keep moving...

Chantilas doesn't get up.

GALLAGHER

And what're you gonna do, sit here and watch? You getting old and lazy?

CHANTILAS

My spleen's ruptured. There's significant internal bleeding. I'm not going any further. And trying to carry me will slow you down just enough that we can all die.

Robby's stunned, frantic.

GALLAGHER

We'll get you to the Hab. Lock out the spine impulse and you can walk one of us through it.

CHANTILAS

No. You won't.

Santen takes charge. It's his mission now.

SANTEN

We build a litter. We take him.

CHANTILAS

(stern)

Chain of command once we hit the surface starts with me. And I'm ordering you to go, Lieutenant. Now.

(turns to Robby)

I've only got about forty minutes. There's really not much pain. Put me around the corner where I've got a view.

They lift him to the other side of the rock. Gallagher stays with Chantilas a moment. Stricken, speechless. Inside Gallagher's helmet, we can see as the tears roll down. Then

-

CHANTILAS

It's okay. I'm not sorry I came.

Gallagher takes one last look over his shoulder. We are already PULLING BACK, BACK, BACK. Tiny figures in the landscape once again. One left behind.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

Tense. Flight Director Russert watches as Skavlem mutters into the mike.

SKAVLEM

Ares, this Houston, do you read? Ares,
this Houston, do you read?

Skavlem continues in the b.g. as -

LOWENTHAL

What do you want to do?

RUSSERT

Get every dish in the Deep Space Network pointed at Mars.

(doesn't like it, but)

Declare a spacecraft emergency.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

Chantilas has toppled over. Unmoving. We GO WIDE, WIDE, WIDE and...

EXT. HILLSIDE (MARS) - DAY

The four of them trudge up a long hill. The summit is a dozen steps away. Santen is the first to reach it. He looks out over the horizon. Turns back to the others -

SANTEN

You're gonna like this.

HIS POV

We see what he sees, as do the others as they arrive - not that far in the distance, in the valley below, they can see the lab shining in the sun.

BACK TO SCENE

BURCHENAL

Twenty-six months of food, water and air, gentlemen.

PETTENGILL

We're saved...

They run down the hillside. For the first time we get a feeling for the .38 gravity. Bouncing sixteen foot steps. Like little kids as they come bounding down.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR (MARS) - DAY

They keep running and leaping and coming. Until the first one begins to slow. It's not from exhaustion. And then the second and the third. It's from horror.

The Hab is in tatters. Roof is gone, walls are gone. Nothing but the titanium ribs remain. They approach. The insides are not much better. It's destroyed. There's no food. There's no water. There's no air.

EXT. MARS - HAB - DAY

They search. The news doesn't improve.

SANTEN

What the fuck happened here?

PETTENGILL

Jesus...

Burchenal continues to look around for a moment. It doesn't matter what happened. It's over. Shakes his head at Gallagher.

BURCHENAL

How's your air?

GALLAGHER

(checks)

Twenty-two minutes.

BURCHENAL

I'm not much better.

SANTEN

What the fuck...

He kicks angrily at what's left of the structure. Storms off. It takes Pettengill a moment to process it, but...

PETTENGILL

We're all gonna die, aren't we?

INT. ARES - MAINTENANCE LEVEL - NIGHT

Pitch black except for the electroluminescent panels she's stuck around the room. She cracks another one on. They work like glowsticks, but the size of menus.

She's jumpered the circuits. Multimeters Velcroed all over the place. Trying to reboot the entire ship. Checks her loads, balances one more jumper, throws a breaker. The SHIP GROANS, FLICKERS TO LIFE, DIES. She checks a meter, changes a jumper, tries again. This time the SHIP GROANS, FLICKERS TO LIFE and STAYS ON-line. The systems begin to come alive around her. Panels light up, turn from red to green. Lights start to come on. Gravity returns.

INT. ARES - VARIOUS SPHERES - NIGHT

Bowman moves through. The place is a mess. Soot and fire stains in some spheres. Smoke damage in all. Flowers destroyed. The garden is half-wrecked. She manually opens a set of valves in one room. AIR HISSES in from an emergency supply. She checks a meter in her hand, checks again to be sure. Folds back the helmet of her suit. Breathes.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bowman tries to bring the rest of the ship back to life. Half a dozen systems are just plain dead and have to be locked out. Things are not good. Light's beginning to come up. Moments away from entering front-side orbit. Kate opens a panel marked OBS and throws a series of switches.

EXT. ARES - NIGHT

Door slides open. A small optical receiver is seen. They clear the dark side and burst into the light.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

On a large viewscreen, Bowman can now scan the surface to about a one meter resolution. Searches. Starts wide, scanning the edge of the horizon as it comes into view.

Picks up the glint of the MEV. Zooms in. At first there's nothing but the crashed MEV in profile. (Like a spy satellite, we are at an EXTREME ANGLE, SLOWLY REVEALING more as the Ares grows less oblique and tracks overhead.)

Then the severity of the damage comes clear. Bowman tries not to react. Nothing else is there. No sign of activity or escape. The footprints are beyond the resolution of the camera. There's no reason to believe anything but they're all dead.

EXT. HAB & ENVIRONS (MARS) - DAY

Gallagher and Burchenal sit on rocks nearby. Not exerting

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themselves. Checking their monitors.

BURCHENAL

Maybe we got what we deserved. We ignored science and truth on one planet and poisoned it beyond repair. Then tried to get science to save us on another. Maybe it's the inconsistency that did us in.

Burchenal points at a depression a few hundred yards away.

BURCHENAL

(then; points)

That's what they call the datum. Sea level. If there was a sea. Or when there was a sea, that's where it was. You can tell 'cause the sand was created by what's called the fluvial process where water breaks rocks into smaller and smaller pieces. We're the first men on Mars. Even if it isn't gonna last long.

(then)

Would you rather I shut up so you can die quietly?

GALLAGHER

Nah, you can keep talking. It's kinda peaceful.

In the b.g., headed towards a ridge of rocks, we can see a lone figure making its way along.

It's Pettengill. He steps around the ridge. We can hear his RADIO WHOOSH TO STATIC as he loses line of sight communication with the others.

Up ahead of him, standing on the edge of an enormous drop-off, just staring out into space, is Santen. His back is to us. Pettengill walks towards him. Santen still doesn't hear.

Santen's radio is off. BEETHOVEN BLARES in his helmet. A 3000 foot drop at his feet. It is magnificent. As Pettengill approaches and Santen remains unaware, the scene seems less and less innocuous. We fear for him. Until...

Pettengill just walks right up beside him and stares out at the chasm as well. Santen LOWERS his MUSIC. They stand there silently for a moment. Santen has some kind of weak-ass epiphany...

SANTEN

Look, I'm sorry. I owe you an apology. I've been a dick. I pick on people who are weaker than I am.

It's way too little, way too late. But Pettengill doesn't let on. Just nods. As if he's forgiven him. Steps away and OUT OF FRAME. We HOLD ON Santen a moment and...Pettengill has picked up what would be a 250-pound rock back on Earth and is heaving it with all his might into Santen from behind. It slams into him, bending him in half, knocking his feet out from under him.

For half-a-moment we think Santen might regain his footing. But he doesn't. He starts to fall past the edge of the cliff. Slowly. In .38 grav SLOW MOTION. Flailing. Twisting in the air. As he falls, looking up, he slaps OFF the MUSIC, the RADIO COMES BACK ON. Pettengill leans over the edge.

PETTENGILL

Fuck you. Fuck you. I'm gonna die. But I'm gonna spend the next five minutes of my life completely satisfied knowing I killed you.

SANTEN

No, you won't, because...

Pettengill shakes his head and steps back out of the line of sight. Santen's last taunt turns to STATIC.

PETTENGILL

Yes, I will.

He turns and walks away.

EXT. MARS - HAB - DAY

Pettengill returns to the others. He can hear over the RADIO as he approaches -

BURCHENAL

Johannes Kepler was the first to accurately map the orbit of the planet. In 1609.

PETTENGILL

Santen's dead.

They turn. But not surprised. They just figure he -

BURCHENAL

Chewed through his air...

PETTENGILL

He threw himself off the cliff.

GALLAGHER

Ouch.

Burchenal bows his head down for a moment, overcome. But it's not Santen. It's the bigger picture...

BURCHENAL

It's not often you get to fail when 12 billion people are counting on you.

Gallagher's got more pressing problems. Checks his wrist. unnerved.

GALLAGHER

I'm at under a minute here. You guys know what this is gonna be like?

BURCHENAL

Hypoxia? Dizzy. Skin'll tingle. Vision narrows. Then anoxia. Shock, convulsions, acidosis.

GALLAGHER

Gonna hurt?

PETTENGILL

Yeah.

A WARNING TONE GOES OFF on Gallagher's SENSOR. He starts to gasp. Opens his mouth wide. Sucking in and out air that's worth less and less to his body.

He begins to claw at the air. It's not pretty to watch.

Spins about seeking some release. None forthcoming. Claws some more. Falls to his knees. The others can barely watch. They know they're next.

Gallagher's growing more claustrophobic and crazed. Falls the rest of the way to the ground. Still clawing at the air. It's horrible to see. And in one last desperate, angry, trapped-feeling move, reaches up and unhooks the front of his helmet and throws it back. Croaks out a faint epitaph as he collapses.

GALLAGHER

Fuck this planet.

And he's still. Still. And then in a last reflexive shudder. Gasps. Gasps again. Takes in the worthless Mars atmosphere. And right when we think it's entirely over...Takes in some more. Breathes again. And again. Opens his eyes.

GALLAGHER

I'm not dead.

The other two are watching in amazement.

GALLAGHER

I'm not dead. It's like being at high altitude. There's not much air here. But...

Takes him a minute to catch his breath, but...

GALLAGHER

We're not gonna die.

Burchenal's suit ALARM GOES OFF. He doesn't screw with gasping in the suit. Just opens the damn thing up and prays. Breathes. Raggedly.

BURCHENAL

It ain't much. But it'll do.

He looks around, puzzled.

BURCHENAL

What the hell's going on here??

Pettengill's ALARM GOES OFF as well. Much more tentatively he removes his helmet. Breathes. He's not really rejoicing like the others.

PETTENGILL

I thought we'd be dead.

The enormity of what he's done strikes him.

PETTENGILL

I thought we'd be dead.

They all breathe the thin Martian air for a moment.

GALLAGHER

God, if Santen had only waited five more minutes. What a waste...

OFF Pettengill's completely unsettled face...

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

STATIC on the comm clears. A brief caesura then -

BOWMAN

Copy.

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

Roger, Ares. Good to hear from you. We believe you may have suffered a proton field upset. What is your status?

Silence. Silence. Bowman struggles to maintain control. Tear runs down. Takes a deep breath.

BOWMAN

MEV launched. Radio contact zero. Visual shows crash site, one body, no motion. Believe entire crew to be End of Mission. Ares systems check at below 70 percent. Telemetry to follow.

She punches a button. Starts to upload it to them.

BOWMAN

Air purge in fire control degraded orbital path. Current orbit unstable. Thirty-two hour projected failure. Do you copy, Houston?

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

The telemetry has come in. Russert puts it up on the common viewscreen. Ship status and all the failures are displayed. It's a disaster.

SKAVLEM

Roger. We copy that.

He lets go of the mike. Can't help himself.

SKAVLEM

Jesus fucking God.

FLASHBACK - INT. ARES - ACCESS TUBE - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: MISSION TIME DAY 15

Dark. Someone moves along. And emerges into -

INT. ARES - OBSERVATION SPHERE - NIGHT

An icosahedronal slice has been removed from one side and replaced with optical glass. A billion stars are brighter and more numerous than you've ever imagined. Gallagher comes in, bumps smack into Chantilas. Thought he was alone.

GALLAGHER

Sorry

CHANTILAS

Lotsa room.

They lean back against the "floor" for a moment and stare out at a billion and a half stars.

CHANTILAS

Know the stars at all?

GALLAGHER

(pointing)

Andromeda, Cassiopeia, Cetus, Lepus, Canis Minor. We're looking at what you'd see south around midnight, mid-May if we were on Earth. At about 42 degrees.

He's not showing off. He just really does know. Chantilas looks at him, surprised.

GALLAGHER

My grandfather taught me to sail when I was a kid.

(fondly)

He made me learn the stars in case all the G.P.S. satellites fell out of the sky at once. He said anyone who put his life in the hands of anything run by batteries was a jackass.

CHANTILAS

He sounds like quite a guy.

GALLAGHER

He didn't like what he called the easy answer or the quick fix. He didn't want to own anything he couldn't repair himself.

(thinking back)

And, oh yeah, everything automatic sooner or later fails automatically, usually during or immediately before a crisis. He had a lotta damn sayings.

(then)

He wouldn't've approved of this.

CHANTILAS

Going to Mars?

GALLAGHER

No. That we killed off half the living things on Earth. That after we all but destroyed one planet with global warming, we're trying to bring another to life the same way. Kinda tricky, don't you think? He woulda said we were asking for trouble.

CHANTILAS

It looks like we got trouble. That's why they sent us.

A beat. They go back to staring at the heavens. Then -

GALLAGHER

I don't really get it. You quit being a scientist? You went back to school to study God??

CHANTILAS

I just realized science couldn't answer any of the really interesting questions.

(off Robby's look)

There are values that are fundamental to an adequate apprehension of the world in which we live that can't be expressed by equations or experiments. In that, you see the hand of God.

(explaining)

Acknowledgment of basic values. Love, kindness, joy. Science doesn't have much use for these. Look, ugly theories are wrong. We know it by insight. Science doesn't want to accept that. We live in a moral world and have moral knowledge that tells us that love and truth are better

than hatred and lies. But it's modern to think this is little more than genetic imprinting or a tacit communal cultural agreement. That's not a world I cared to live in anymore.

Robby stares back into the void. This is not the kind of conversation he's used to, but -

GALLAGHER

I asked my grandfather once if God existed. He played me Brahms' Third. Then he asked me what good it was? Or was it just vibration.

CHANTILAS

(following)

What good is beauty?

GALLAGHER

He said if a man could listen to Brahms and not believe in God, he was a fool.

CHANTILAS

I think I woulda liked your grandfather.

Robby turns to him.

GALLAGHER

You didn't come on this trip because of science at all, did you? That's why they let you come, but you're going to Mars to prove to yourself God exists.

Yup.

CHANTILAS

Maybe I'll pick up a rock and it'll say so on the bottom 'Made by God.'

GALLAGHER

Maybe God's more subtle than you are.

(then)

You think we're doing something we shouldn't, Bud, messing with another planet?

CHANTILAS

(unconcerned)

If so, it's because we're supposed to find something out. (then)
Let's say we didn't. And we finished poisoning off the Earth and everyone was dead in a hundred years. Then what was the point of any of it? Music, art, beauty, love? All gone. The Greeks, the Romans, the Enlightenment, the Constitution, people dying for freedom, ideas? None of that meant anything? I'd rather go out and make a mistake than live in a world that bleak.

GALLAGHER

No one said jack to me about the Greeks and Romans. Shit, I just came along to fix stuff.

CHANTILAS

Fooled ya, didn't we. It's okay. No one

told the others either.

There's a quiet moment. Robby just came up to stare at the stars. Wasn't expecting all this. Then -

CHANTILAS

There's a reason the planets go around the stars in exactly the same way electrons go around the nucleus of the atom. It's not an accident. There's a design at the bottom of all this. God's watching over you.

GALLAGHER

I just wish I didn't think he was chuckling.

END OF FLASHBACK.

EXT. HAB (MARS) - DAY

Gallagher, Burchenal, and Pettengill are still stunned over the fact they're alive.

BURCHENAL

There shouldn't be enough oxygen on Mars to do this.

PETTENGILL

We never even got close to a breathable atmosphere. Then the levels started to drop and the sensors all died. I don't understand what's going on here.

Gallagher is rummaging through the wreckage of the Hab. It's been devastated.

PETTENGILL

Wattya lookin' for?

Gallagher unearths a tangle of wire and chewed-up circuits.

GALLAGHER

This.

He tosses it aside. It's worthless.

GALLAGHER

It used to be the radio. I don't mean to piss on the parade, guys, but no one knows we're here. Don't you see? The good news is we can breathe. The bad news is, unless we can tell somebody, now we get to starve to death. The only mission left is rescue.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

The schematic she sent back to Earth is on the screen here as well. The ship is fucked-up bad.

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

The ground crew's dead, your orbit's unstable, and you're gonna burn in less than a day and a half.

(beat: then)

Let's get you home.

EXT. HAB - DAY

The three of them rummage through the ravaged structure.

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News isn't good.

BURCHENAL

We could head back to the lander, try to make something work there.

PETTENGILL

(won't make it)

It's six hours back.

GALLAGHER

And it all ran through the main computer which was half-fried and dropped from a great height.

Shakes his head no. That ain't gonna help. Then Burchenal, of all things, grins.

BURCHENAL

Gotta think about this scientifically. There's another radio. Two kilometers from here.

GALLAGHER

I didn't see any stores on the way over. I miss a Radio Hut?

BURCHENAL

We sent it here. Twenty years before you were born. In 1997. Think where we are...

PETTENGILL

(gets it)

We're right over the edge from the Ares Vallis. The Sojourner site.

The HHCs are yanked out.

PETTENGILL

There was a high-density ridge ringing the valley. The algae never took there.

Gallagher checks his watch.

GALLAGHER

We still might have a chance this pass. We wait long...

They start to run towards a ridge to west. Sun hangs low in the sky. Only an hour or so of day left.

CUT TO:

GALLAGHER, PETTENGILL AND BURCHENAL

with a goofy look on their faces. Like kids at Disneyland the first time. They're standing there looking at -

SAGAN/SOJOURNER SITE

The little rover. All those damned named rocks. Our first big visit to Mars. The reverie is over quickly. Gallagher tosses down his bag of tools. Walks over, kneels beside Sojourner (the rover).

GALLAGHER

Sorry about this.

He pats it once and starts POWER-SCREWING off the cover. Tosses another tool to Burchenal. Re the Sagan lander -

GALLAGHER

Rip the panels off everything around the aerial.

(then)

It's a fifty-year-old off-the-shelf computer radio modem on a frequency that we're not using for this mission.

PETTENGILL

Then why are we bothering?

GALLAGHER

Cause I'd rather die doing something than just sitting there.

CUT TO:

EXT. SOJOURNER SITE - DAY

Gallagher has cobbled together a radio from 50-year-old parts. Pettengill holds the solar panels at the sun while Robby carefully removes one of his two suit-radio microphones. Checks with a meter, then solders it onto his jerry-rigged radio.

GALLAGHER

Testing, testing...

He adjusts a tiny pot as he continues to call out. A green LED comes on, flickering with his voice.

BURCHENAL

Does it work??

GALLAGHER

Well, the little green thing lights up. I don't know if it works...

(into mike)

This is Ares ground crew, come back. This is Ares ground crew, do you copy?

We PULL BACK WIDER AND WIDER. They are so damn alone.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Various return scenarios are flickering on different vid screens.

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

Okay, scenario three calls for you to lock out systems 17, 22 and 40.

Kate tries. 40 freeflows, doesn't lock out.

BOWMAN

No joy.

She resets everything.

BOWMAN

Maybe we're trying to be way too subtle. Why don't we just jettison the damn tank?

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

Because the margins for error are so small. There's enough fuel to get you home, then if you don't sneeze. It makes us nervous.

BOWMAN

You want nervous...

INT. MISSION CONTROL

Over in the corner, Schlissel is listening to something on his headset that's blowing his mind. He starts waving three fingers frantically at Skavlem and Russert. They don't respond fast enough for him. He reaches over and patches someone into the comm link. A new voice breaks into the conversations. The accent's Australian.

OZZIE (V.O.)

Right, right. Commander Katherine Bowman?

RUSSERT

(peevied)

This is a restricted, encrypted frequency. Who is this?

OZZIE (V.O.)

(unperturbed)

This is Hank Osterbee in Canberra. Deep Space Network, mate. I've got a call for you.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

BOWMAN

A call for me?

OZZIE (V.O.)

Right. From the surface of Mars. I'm routing it through. Direct frequencies follow.

There's CRUNCH OF STATIC, then -

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

Commander Bowman?

BOWMAN

You're alive?? You're alive?!

EXT. SOJOURNER SITE (MARS) - DAY

GALLAGHER

We're at sixty percent. Lieutenant Santen and Bud are gone.

(beat: then)

Oh, and by the way, we can breathe.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

SKAVLEM

You can breathe??!

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

Not real well, but yeah.

(then)

Hey, Kate...We've changed our mind. Get us outta here. We'd like to come home.

If the room was at a standstill before, now it's frozen. Is there hope?

SKAVLEM

If they can breathe, can we live there?

LOWENTHAL

No. Ninety percent of the algae's gone. It's some kind of freak anomaly. Mars is

a dying planet. Just like Earth.

RUSSERT

They're breathing. It coulda worked.
Dammit, it coulda worked...

Then through the cacophony comes one voice.

SCHLISSEL

It doesn't matter. They're going to die tonight anyhow. In an hour, the sun sets on Mars. It's going to be minus 140. They cannot survive in the open. They're going to die.

Yow. Everyone shuts up. It's ugly but true.

LOWENTHAL

He's right. You can walk across the South Pole, long as you stay moving and you're wearing insulating clothing - the suits'll work - you can stay warm. But once they stop moving, without shelter, they're gonna die.

SCHLISSEL

Her orbit could degrade at any time. She could auger in and burn while they chat about old times and freeze to death. It's a waste. We should just bring her home.

Skavlem doesn't love it, but -

SKAVLEM

We can get a free return trajectory now. She's got enough food and water to bring one person back.

Russert not happy at all, but -

RUSSERT

You're not wrong.

Nods to Skavlem...

SKAVLEM

Commander, this is Mission Control.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

BOWMAN

No.

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

Ma'am?

BOWMAN

I'm not stupid, John, I know what the question is. I'd ask it if I was there. And the answer is no. So let's move on.
(then)

By my calculations, if I ditch my reserve tank now and commit to a three-second apogee burn, I stabilize my orbit for another eighteen hours. I'd like someone to check the numbers as my apogee's in seven minutes.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Russert has to grin. It's gonna drive him crazy and it's exactly what he'd do. Before any of them can bitch and whine

-

RUSSERT

Come on, people, you heard the woman,
let's get on it.

The techs begin calculating madly.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

The crew is coming down a rise toward the Hab. Carrying the radio. Walking back quickly. Sun is flat over the horizon. Shadows are long, already getting cold. You can see their breath.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

There's some concern at Mission Control.
About the weather.

GALLAGHER

(deadpan)
It's gonna rain?

BOWMAN (V.O.)

It's gonna get a little chilly.

GALLAGHER

I could see that. It's dropped about
fifty degrees in the last half hour. We
figure a hundred below fairly soon.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bowman is doing her best to keep the tone light. But she's gotta know whether or not he thinks he's gonna live or die.

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

It would have been nice to be in the Hab.
And there ain't no other motel to check
into.

BOWMAN

You have a plan? Any thoughts on how you
might...stay alive?

EXT. HAB (MARS) - ALMOST SUNSET

They're back at the Hab now. We can't quite tell what's going on, but Burchenal and Pettengill are busy doing something noisy and furious in the b.g. Crashing, bashing, breaking. Burchenal flicks open an entrenching tool. Thumbs a button, edge whizzes by like a tiny chain saw. Chews through something and...

GALLAGHER

Yeah...

Behind Gallagher is a whoooosh of flame as Pettengill gets the debris he's piled in the middle of the Hab to light. He's got stacks of additional fuel nearby.

GALLAGHER

We're gonna have a 75 million dollar
campfire.

EXT. HAB (MARS) - 20 MINUTES LATER

The sun sets. First sunset on Mars man has seen. Red upon red upon red. Fire burns behind them. Sky turns black. Fast.

Script provided for educational purposes. More scripts can be found here: <http://www.sellingyourscreenplay.com/library>

A billion stars. And then a METEORITE begins to fall. It's huge. It's red. It EXPLODES.

GALLAGHER

What the hell was that?

BURCHENAL

She ditched the 'B' tank. She must be figuring there's an even chance we'll live through the night.

EXT. SPACE - NIGHT

The Ares lights up and burns for three long seconds. And off.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bowman checks the gauges. Eight liters was burned.

BOWMAN

Hell, what's eight liters?

(answers herself)

It'll either save their lives or I've screwed up getting home and I'll spend the next three hundred years circling this planet.

EXT. HAB - NIGHT

Burchenal pokes at the flames. They're spread out and low. Flickering yellow and blue.

BURCHENAL

I think we'll make it through. There's so little O2, this is gonna burn real slow.

Gallagher picks up a piece of scrap, about to feed it into the flames, then stops, examines it by the light of the fire. It looks like someone took a rasp to it. He gets up, turns on a suit light and looks over the remaining ribs of the structure.

GALLAGHER

What happened to this place? Everything but the titanium supports were just chewed up. Could a dust storm've done this?

BURCHENAL

No prevailing pattern to the damage. I don't know what could've done it.

Nor does it matter right now. They sit back around the fire and relish the warmth. Out in the darkness, past a rise, something catches Robby's eye. A flash, a reflection. Of the fire? On what? And then it's gone. He doesn't bother to mention it. Writes it off.

TWO HUNDRED YARDS AWAY

Behind a hill, AMEE crouches in the dark. Pops up again, looks over, sees the three men and the fire. Lowers back down - you'd swear she was thinking - then silently ambles away.

BACK AROUND FIRE

The weird tableau of three men in spacesuits around a campfire on Mars. A moment then -

GALLAGHER

You still think we had any business coming to Mars? Screwing with stuff? Trying to spread life? You think maybe God's teaching us some hardass lesson?

Pettengill just makes some kind of weird gulping noise and turns away. They let him be.

BURCHENAL

God? You talked to Chantilas too much on the trip over. I don't mean to burst your bubble, but God's the retreat of the ignorant, the weak and the hopeless.

GALLAGHER

I bet you don't believe in Santa. And you're no fun at all at Christmas.

(then)

Not everything gets an explanation you can write down as a formula.

BURCHENAL

Son, I'm a scientist. A geneticist, as good as they come. I write code, just like a hacker. Four elements, A.G.T.P., in different orders, back the genome. And your kidneys work or you grow a sixth finger. I line up unconscious atoms and they give rise to conscious beings. It's like if I stacked up a bunch of rocks in the right order and they become a dog. I do that. I chose when, I chose where, I chose how many fingers. I just don't hold with mystical explanations for science, with organized religion, buildings with different symbols on 'em. You spot God, you lemme know. Till then, I put my trust in my three Ph.D's.

(then)

But I think life's an amazing thing. And I believe that when you get it you should grab it with both hands and live as much of it as you can. Which is why I am not happy about losing it on this damn ugly planet.

Burchenal shuts his eyes. We PUSH IN ON Gallagher looking rueful and...

FLASHBACK - INT. ARES - HYGIENE SPHERE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: MISSION TIME: DAY 32

Gallagher comes in. His timing, depending how you look at it, is very good or very bad. Bowman steps out of the shower. To dry off. It's too late for Robby to stop or recoup. He has to tough it out and try to act like an adult. Bowman sees his discomfort. She's amused.

BOWMAN

It's okay. I had brothers.

GALLAGHER

I have two sisters.

(gives up)

Neither of them were this fine.

Now she colors.

BOWMAN

The only way this works, is if we both
make believe it doesn't matter.

GALLAGHER

I tried. I really tried.
(then)
Maybe I should go fix something.

BOWMAN

(laughing now)
Maybe you should.

He hesitates, leaves. She starts to vacuum dry her hair.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. CAMPFIRE (MARS) - NIGHT

Gallagher's half filled with regret, half annoyed with
himself. Sighs, shuts his eyes, tries to get some sleep.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Place is ragged
coffee on the workstations, techs as
unshaven and beat as the crew on Mars.

RUSSERT

All right, people, we bought ourselves
another eighteen hours in orbit. The
crew's burning pretty much what we've got
on the surface so they don't freeze
solid. So whatever we can come up with...

LOWENTHAL

...has got to work before the sun sets
again tomorrow and they freeze to death
anyhow.

RUSSERT

What else is on Mars?

SCHLISSEL

Rocks. Sand.

RUSSERT

The janitor just built a radio out of a
fifty-year-old Rover mission. Now, what
else is on Mars?

Mars maps come up on all their PIMs. There are things on the
surface. Marked with various symbols. Leftovers from other
missions.

SKAVLEM

We sent a dozen probes even before the
biologics started up. Eight were return
missions.

LOWENTHAL

And they're back.

SKAVLEM

There's a Viking lander...

SCHLISSEL

2,200 kilometers away.

Silence. They all stare at the PIMs. And then Schlissel

turns to a nearby TECH -

SCHLISSEL

S.Y.F.

TECH

Slap your forehead.

SCHLISSEL

We're not the only people who sent stuff
to Mars.

Other overlays come up on the maps. New colors. New symbols.

SKAVLEM

The Twenties were nothing but unmanned
sample return missions. Everyone wanted
to bring back a bucket of Mars rocks.

They find something near the Hab.

SCHLISSEL

There was Euro-Malaysian sample return
mission 2018.

TECH

Checking...

LOWENTHAL

(knows)

It blew up on attempted return.

Looking further afield, they find something else.

TECH

It ain't close, but there's an Uzbeki
S.R.M. that failed to launch.

SCHLISSEL

(argh)

An Uzbeki probe from 2032.

RUSSERT

Is it viable? Can we get plans?

SCHLISSEL

It was built at the Cosmos factory in
Garagin in 2031. (there's more)
The factory closed eight years later. And
then it burnt down.

All right, that's the end of that. And then Schlissel spots
a detail that means something to him.

SCHLISSEL

It was designed by Aleksandr Ivanovich
Borokovski. He was the last of the greats
in the Russian space program.

RUSSERT

Is he still alive??

Schlissel's PIM flickers madly as he mutters at it.

SCHLISSEL

There's no closing date on his bio. He'd
be in his seventies.

RUSSERT

Find him. Somebody get on the line to
Kazakhstan.

LOWENTHAL

This is insanity. A thirty-year-old
lander built in a factory that doesn't
exist anymore.

TECH

Found him!

SCHLISSEL

He emigrated. He runs a deli in Brooklyn.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Low hum of conversation, a bunch of the workstations are vacant, techs sleeping in cots nearby. BOROKOVSKI, in his best suit, 20 years old, comes in led by two NASA flunkies. Unhooks his filtration mask. Vindicated.

BOROKOVSKI

All right, I am Borokovski. I am here.

EXT. HAB (MARS) - PRE-DAWN

Sky's beginning to grow light. Last of the fire flickering out. Nothing left of the Hab but a few metal ribs.

Gallagher stirs. Stiff from sleeping on the ground. Burchenal and Pettengill follow. They've lived through the night. Gallagher walks off twenty paces. When we see him again, he's unlocked the top and bottom of his suit and dropped the trousers to his knees.

GALLAGHER

I'm the first man to piss on Mars.

Burchenal and Pettengill follow suit on the other side of the Hab. A beat, then -

BURCHENAL

Damn.

PETTENGILL

Whoa.

BURCHENAL

You sure get some arc in this low gravity.

The sun's gonna break any minute. Something suddenly hits Burchenal. He yanks up his pants, runs to remains of the Hab. Looks around desperately. Pulls free a metal rib. Turns to Gallagher.

BURCHENAL

Run. Towards the sun.

Robby understands or doesn't bother to ask why. Takes off. Burchenal yanks free a shard of metal. Pounds it into the sand a dozen feet from the Hab. The sun is just breaking the horizon. Robby is fifty yards away.

BURCHENAL

Stop! Left. Left. A little more. Right.
Mark it.

He adjusts his own peg a tad. Robby comes loping back.

PETTENGILL

What'd we do?

GALLAGHER

(approvingly)

Built a directional. Now at least we know where something is.

The RADIO CRACKLES.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Good morning, boys. Martian weather today's clear and cold. Warming to a high today of around sixty.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

She hasn't slept. There's notes and charts and additional HHC's all over the place.

BOWMAN

So...Houston has an idea.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAB (MARS) - MOMENTS LATER

Gallagher, Burchenal and Pettengill have heard the plan. It doesn't impress them.

GALLAGHER

That's it? We walk a hundred kilometers in one day to find a twelve-by-twelve object that's been sitting there for 30 years.

(are you kidding)

That's the best plan they could come up with?

BOWMAN (V.O.)

It's the only plan they could come up with.

GALLAGHER

(reconsiders)

I guess that makes it best.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

There's an I.R. maintenance port on the Cosmos. Your H.H.C. should talk to it. You'll have to reprogram the launch sequence. The bad news is...

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

There's bad news?

BOWMAN

(ignoring him)

...is it's programmed in a forty-year-old dead operating system no one uses anymore. It was something called...Windows.

EXT. MARS - DAY

None of them have ever heard of it.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

We're getting a copy of it from the Smithsonian. We're gonna have to download it to you.

GALLAGHER

Let's worry about it when we get there.
Where're we going?

BOWMAN (V.O.)

I've got coordinates for you.

BURCHENAL

How 'bout something simpler. Like how
many degrees it is off from the direction
the sun rose. We marked it. I'm figurin'
we're within half a degree.

GALLAGHER

Heck, we just gotta pack.

He picks up a satchel of tools. Everything else's burnt to a
cinder.

SAME SCENE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Basic trig has been calculated. A triangle of scavenged wire
stretches with one side along the directional, the other
side points their way across the Martian landscape. They
take a last sighting, and stride off into the distance
getting smaller and smaller and then -

ON the three of them. Pettengill looks doubtful.

PETTENGILL

A hundred kilometers. Sixty-odd miles.
Say two and a half marathons. In twelve
hours. Do we really have a chance in
hell?

GALLAGHER

It took us six hours to go 26 kilometers
last time. We don't have the rebreathers,
we don't have the tanks.

BURCHENAL

Figure you weigh about fifty pounds in
this gravity. We have a chance in hell.
But not much more'n that.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

A messenger is escorted in and taken to Borokovski. He's got
a copy of Windows, fifty years old, and still in the shrink
wrap. Borokovski rips it open, then peers at tech
requirements on the box.

BOROKOVSKI

I will need a computer with a CD-ROM
drive. And a pentium processor.

Nobody moves. It's like asking for a steam engine.

SCHLISSEL

What's a pentium processor?

TECH

What's a CD-ROM?

BOROKOVSKI

(a little defensive)

It was all state-of-the-art in
Kazakhstan. We were cut off.

Still nobody moves.

RUSSERT

We gotta wake up the Director of Dead
Technology at the Smithsonian. And quick.

Assistants scramble. Schlissel comes over to peer curiously
at the shiny silver disk and -

FLASHBACK - EXT. SPACE - ARES - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: MISSION TIME: DAY 132

The ship floats THROUGH FRAME. We hear the familiar CLINK of
POKER CHIPS.

CHANTILAS (V.O.)

Call.

SANTEN (V.O.)

Call.

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

Call.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING SPHERE - NIGHT

Burchenal, Santen, Chantilas and Gallagher are playing
poker. Burchenal fans his cards down. Full house.

BURCHENAL

Kings over queens.

CHANTILAS

That's it. You're the best poker player
in a hundred million miles.

BURCHENAL

Yep.

He rakes in all the chips.

BURCHENAL

And no one'll play for money. What a
waste.

SANTEN

I'm done. See you all in the morning.

Game's over. Santen leaves, Chantilas starts to follow, then
turns and asks, three-quarters kidding -

CHANTILAS

Do you cheat?

BURCHENAL

Compared to what?

Chantilas gives up and leaves.

GALLAGHER

Do you cheat?

BURCHENAL

Only Santen.

That seems fair. Gallagher's putting away the chips when -

BURCHENAL

You know what I miss? A drink sometimes
at the end of the day...Damned hard-asses
at NASA.

Gallagher gets a look in his eye.

Script provided for educational purposes. More scripts can be found here: <http://www.sellingyourscreenplay.com/library>

GALLAGHER

You got enough gear on board to splice genes, right? Glassware, tubing, Bunsen burners...all that kind of stuff?

BURCHENAL

Yep, sure do. Why?

INT. ARES - MAINTENANCE LEVEL - NIGHT

Bowman comes in. Robby moves quickly to intercept her. Blocks her view.

BOWMAN

I came to apologize. You were uncomfortable with a situation the other day, and I made you more uncomfortable for my own amusement. I'm sorry. It's too small a ship for playground games.

GALLAGHER

Okay.

He's done. She can leave now.

BOWMAN

Okay? No witty comeback? No gloating?

(beat)

No explanation for why the temperature in this sphere is up three degrees?

She slithers by him before he can stop her to find Burchenal tending a huge contraption of glass tubing, Bunsen burners and filtration tanks.

GALLAGHER

He's teaching me. About biology. I've developed an interest in...

BOWMAN

...fermentation?

Even when you make it out of high-tech glassware, a still looks just like a still.

BOWMAN

(stern)

You built a still?

GALLAGHER

It's a science experiment. Did you know that an ounce of red wine per day actually benefits your heart?

BOWMAN

(adamant)

So does three ounces of grape juice.

GALLAGHER

Grapes don't grow well hydroponically...So we, ah, used potatoes...

BOWMAN

You're making moonshine vodka on my ship.

BURCHENAL

Well, yes, ma'am. But we ran it through the Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometer

and the impurity levels are very low.

BOWMAN

How's it taste?

Burchenal is the first to realize they're off the hook.

BURCHENAL

It's a little rough.

BOWMAN

Are you going to offer me a drink?

BURCHENAL

Of course. That would be the polite thing to do.

He does. She tosses it back. Woooof.

BOWMAN

That's a little rough. How much have you made?

BURCHENAL

... 'bout three liters.

She considers. Then -

BOWMAN

You're done. Dismantle the science project. Offer equal rations to the crew. Mr. Santen doesn't drink or approve of those who do.

(stern again)

Now tell me the truth. How much were you cutting this?

GALLAGHER

(they're busted again)

About three to one. I can't believe you drank that.

BOWMAN

I learned to fly in the Navy. Wimps.

INT. COMMON AREA SPHERE - NIGHT

Gallagher, Bowman, and Burchenal are there. They've got half a beaker of vodka left. They're all looped and laughing.

BURCHENAL

I spent half of my life trying to make a better potato. And the second half trying to stop it. The things were so damn good they killed everything in their path. Corn, wheat, barley...

(suddenly melancholy)

We fucked up our own back yard, hit the Malthusian wall, and tried to breed our way out of it. Maybe we don't deserve another chance.

Then he shakes it off. Laughs.

BURCHENAL

Don't worry, if we need any help on the surface, I'm allowed to grow us some six-fingered lab assistants.

He cracks up again. He's wasted. Knows it.

BURCHENAL

I gotta go to bed.

He heads off drunkenly. Gallagher gets an idea...

GALLAGHER

I'm in space. I wanna see the stars.

He flails off in another direction. She laughs and follows him...

BOWMAN

Don't go outside.

INT. OBSERVATION SPHERE - NIGHT

A billion stars, two very drunk people, half a beaker of moonshine vodka. She's talking about Burchenal -

BOWMAN

He's okay. I bet there's a hell of a girl waiting for him back home.

GALLAGHER

Three. And a horse. He really likes the horse.

BOWMAN

You're serious?

GALLAGHER

He pines for the horse. You?

BOWMAN

I don't have a horse.

GALLAGHER

That's too bad.

He takes another swig. Offers it to her. She matches him.

GALLAGHER

Can I ask you something very personal?

BOWMAN

Okay.

GALLAGHER

It's about bras and space.

She looks at him.

BOWMAN

I don't wear a bra in space.

GALLAGHER

I know.

BOWMAN

Bras are designed to hold your boobs in place on Earth where there's real gravity. Why would I need one in space?

GALLAGHER

Cause it's really fucking distracting.

BOWMAN

You want me to wear a bra?

GALLAGHER

No. Not at all. I'm sorry I ever brought

this up.

The good news is neither of them will remember in the morning. Much. Another round. Then -

BOWMAN

Do you have someone waiting for you back home? Or a horse?

GALLAGHER

With the kind of jobs I've had, it's very hard to maintain any kind of relationship. So...no horses.

BOWMAN

Or maybe you took those jobs 'cause you didn't want anyone waiting for you. Or maybe...

GALLAGHER

No, I like horses just fine.

They've floated very close.

BOWMAN

You know, you're not who I thought you were at first.

GALLAGHER

Is that an insult or a compliment?

BOWMAN

An observation.

They're very, very close. And very drunk. It's when he should kiss her. But he doesn't.

The moment passes. They both know it was there and now it's gone. Drift apart. Feel stupid. Damn.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

MOVING ACROSS the landscape. Miles and miles from where they started, we FIND the three men as they move rapidly across a dry wash, across the bank and up and over a hill. And stop dead at the top.

Over the next ridge, the landscape is covered with algae. Colors like brush strokes on the terrain. Oxblood brown, burnt orange, cadmium yellow.

PETTENGILL

Wattya know.

Pettengill gets down on one knee to examine it. Half inch to an inch high, vibrantly colored. Healthy.

PETTENGILL

Maybe it's the longitude. Maybe it's the equatorial belt...

GALLAGHER

Maybe it doesn't matter 'cause we gotta keep moving or we're gonna die.

Pettengill doesn't argue. Just trying to stay alive is the great scientific mystery right now. They bound down far side and...

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

Borokovski is laboring to install Windows on a 50-year-old computer from the museum. Schlissel and the Tech watch, kibbutz. It crashes. Again.

BOROKOVSKI

Yob tyvou mot!

(Which, by the way, means "fuck
your mother.")

SCHLISSEL

It keeps crashing.

BOROKOVSKI

That was part of its charm. You had to buy programs to check why the program you had already bought was not working.

TECH

People installed this on their computers on purpose? It wasn't a virus?

BOROKOVSKI

The company planned it this way. It was later discovered they owned all the companies that sold you the products to fix the product they had already sold you.

SCHLISSEL

I remember this. The government had to bomb the factory in the end.

Borokovski nods. Windows comes up.

BOROKOVSKI

Look, there we go...

EXT. SURFACE OF MARS - DAY

The ANGLE seems odd. In fact it is. It's from orbit. It's Bowman searching on the telescope.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - MONITOR - DAY

As the picture skitters along the surface and finds them, tiny figures on a landscape. In extreme profile.

EXT. ARES - ORBIT - DAY

A few minutes away from plunging onto the night side.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

She marks their location on the viewscreen, zooms out wide. The Hab and the Cosmos are marked with symbols. The computer pauses, analyzes, then spits them out as a little more than 56 kilometers along their way.

More calculation is done on the screen. They're more than halfway; they've used up less than half the available daylight; their average speed is looking good. They're on time, on schedule and on the right course. So far, so good.

BOWMAN

Ground crew, this is Ares. You're a little more than half. You're doing great.

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

(over radio)
Oh yeah, we're doing fabulous.

As she plunges into darkness, we hear -

BURCHENAL (V.O.)
(singing)
Rollin', rollin', rollin', keep them
doggies rollin'.'

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

They're all exhausted and a little punchy.

BURCHENAL
How long can a man go without food or
water?

GALLAGHER
How long can you go without singing that
dumb song?

Burchenal looks hurt. Walks another few paces. Begins to
sing again. Gallagher turns to Pettengill.

GALLAGHER
There's two of us. And we can stop him
from singing.

Pettengill considers. Then sings along instead. They only
know the one line. It's really annoying.

GALLAGHER
What is that?

BURCHENAL
I have no idea. It's old, though. It's
classic music.

GALLAGHER
I don't know the classics.

This sets Burchenal off. He sings some more -

BURCHENAL
Mars ain't a place to raise your kids

In fact it's cold as hell

And there's no one there to raise them

If you dig.'

GALLAGHER
What the hell is that?

BURCHENAL
You don't know any of the classics, do
you? He was a rocket man.

GALLAGHER
An astronaut wrote that?

BURCHENAL
Never mind.

GALLAGHER
Sing the one about the dogs again.

BURCHENAL
It's about cows.

GALLAGHER

Then why does it say doggies?

All this time, they've been walking across a landscape pigmented with color - steel blue, alizarin crimson, malachite green - the algae varietals everywhere. And then off to the left, the algae stops. Erased, like it was never there, extirpated in a long crooked line.

PETTENGILL

What the fuck?

GALLAGHER

Yeah, what the fuck? You said doggies.

Then he sees as well. They all see. Can't help themselves. They're drawn towards it. Gallagher and Burchenal check their course in the distance before veering off. Pettengill is already heading towards it.

It's maybe 100 yards away. At 50, something indistinct can be seen. Sort of. It's like the line, and the surrounding terrain is out of focus, blurry. At 30, the blurriness comes into focus. It's alive. It moves slightly. You can see through it. At ten, you can see it undulating. Slowly, TOWARDS us. Erasing the algae, the color slowly spreading outwards behind and diffusing. And then we can see...

A billion, a hundred billion...nematodes. Little tiny translucent worms. Eating the algae. Slowly, irrevocably. Advancing.

Pettengill pulls out his entrenching tool. Carefully separates one out. Lifts it up to the light to see. Maybe three inches long, skinnier than an earthworm. One end lifts in the air, a tri-part mouth with little crystalline teeth opening and closing, searching for something to eat.

It's fucking scary. It gets worse when you realize how many of them there are. The line's moved three or four inches closer as they stand there. They take a step back. No one can really speak yet.

GALLAGHER

What...

PETTENGILL

It's a nematode. Or something like one. It's probably this skinny so it defrosts each morning when the sun hits them. Or they'r enot water-based at all.

GALLAGHER

Is it something we sent up by accident with the probes?

PETTENGILL

No.

GALLAGHER

I thought we said there wasn't any life on this planet.

PETTENGILL

We did. We were wrong. Maybe there wasn't when we checked. I don't know. It's not from Earth.

(beat; yow)

And it's not from here.

BURCHENAL

This can't be. This can't be.

Burchenal actually seems kind of upset about it. Gallagher looks at him. Say what? Burch is upset.

BURCHENAL

It can't be here. You don't understand. The odds of there being any other life in the universe are infinitesimally small. The odds that it could survive on something other than its home planet are equally astronomical. The odds that it could travel to another solar system, let alone one where life already existed are...impossible.

GALLAGHER

But it's here.

BURCHENAL

Yeah.

Burchenal seems almost unhappy about this. It rocks his world. In a bad way. Gallagher turns to Pettengill happily and untroubled....

GALLAGHER

Well, it looks like we're not alone in the universe. You just discovered life on another planet, pal.

It takes a moment for this to sink in. Then something hits Robby.

GALLAGHER

Made by God. That's what's stamped on the bottom. That's what Bud would have said. He woulda loved this.

Gallagher gets down on one knee and looks at them. They're kinda horrible, but as he turns to Pettengill -

GALLAGHER

You know what this means? You're gonna be more famous than Darwin. They're gonna name buildings after you. Spacecrafts, cities on Mars...

The enormity of how badly Pettengill has screwed up - that in the space of one day, he's committed murder and discovered life on another planet - begins to dawn on him. He doesn't handle it well. He's fucked up like few people can imagine. He tries to reset, it doesn't work. The worm twists about, starts to eat the metal right off the entrenching tool. He flicks it back to its relatives.

PETTENGILL

Right. Right. Motherfuck. Motherfuck.

And then he says something really odd -

PETTENGILL

Name them after Santen.

BURCHENAL

You hated Santen.

PETTENGILL

Yeah.

He storms away. They're both confused by this. Pettengill finds a rock, sits down behind it. He's obscured except for his head and shoulders.

PETTENGILL

I need a minute or two.

GALLAGHER

You wanna tell Houston?

PETTENGILL

Go ahead. You do it. Just give me a few minutes.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

BURCHENAL (V.O.)

We seem to have come across the, uh, cause of the annihilation of the algae. There's cryptoendolithic life here. Eating it.

INTERCUT as needed with Mission Control and Mars surface.

LOWENTHAL

(concerned)

They're hallucinating.

BURCHENAL

Pettengill's a bit overcome. Or he'd be telling you about it himself. But the discovery goes to him.

(baffled; but)

Though he wants to name them after Santen...

SKAVLEM

You're saying there's Martian life.

PETTENGILL

(calling out from behind the rock)

No, that there's life on Mars. We're not saying where it came from. But not Earth. Fuck.

They all disregard that last bit.

GALLAGHER

They're like some kind of translucent worms.

SKAVLEM

You're all seeing these?

BURCHENAL

Oh yeah. They're here. What did you think this was, hypoxia?

They did.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

Conversation's over. Gallagher walks towards the rock -

GALLAGHER

We should get outta here.

Pettengill doesn't respond.

BURCHENAL

Really. We should get going...

Gallagher walks over. We hear a familiar WHINE. Don't recognize what it is at first. Until Gallagher around the rock and sees...

Pettengill's flicked on the WHIZZING CUTTING EDGE of the entrenching TOOL. Shreds his left wrist. Lifts it and rips through his carotid arteries. All but cuts off his head as he falls to the ground. Suit's awash with BLOOD. Overflowing onto the ground and him. BURBLING in spurts. Some hits the worms.

BURCHENAL

Jesus...Jesus God...

Burchenal's joined him. There's nothing they could do. Only watch in shock. It gets worse. The worms come. Pulsating and undulating towards Pettengill. As if some secret message the food is here has spread through the billions of them in burst of knowledge.

A diaphanous, hungry wave crests onto Pettengill and engulfs him. He's covered in translucence as they devour him. Gallagher and Burchenal stagger backwards in horror as a red aureole grows around him as he's eaten. Color spreads out around him in a perfect ever-growing circle. It's a feast.

WIDE

The two of them walk along. Can't tell if they're hurrying towards something or away. They've both figured out what's up. A beat, then -

GALLAGHER

He killed Santen.

BURCHENAL

Yep.

GALLAGHER

Probably figured we were gonna die anyhow.

BURCHENAL

Yep. Figured wrong. For now.

GALLAGHER

(beat; then)

Nobody deserves to die like that.

BURCHENAL

No.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

There's a general buzz of animated scientific debate. One voice cuts through -

LOWENTHAL

We've thawed out three and four-million-year-old organisms from the permafrost in Siberia and they've come back to life. It's possible.

RUSSERT

So even if there wasn't life there, there is now.

SCHLISSEL

And we warmed the place up and sent it something to eat.

LOWENTHAL

It could have sat there for millions of years since Mars cooled. Waiting. Rode in on a frozen meteorite from anywhere. And waited.

A voice chimes in from the corner -

BOROKOVSKI

Like sea monkeys. But not as friendly.

They all consider that. Kinda bizarre but accurate.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

Burchenal and Gallagher trudge onward. Burchenal checks his watch. It's time. Gallagher hands him the radio. Walks ahead. Doesn't want to hear.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Bowman just heard the news. It's like she's been punched. It takes her a moment to recover.

BOWMAN

Copy that, Ground Crew.

Mission Control has heard as well. A beat, then -

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

Requiescat in Pace.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

The sun is way past its zenith. It hangs noticeably lower in the sky. Maybe four or five o'clock. Burchenal and Gallagher plod along. They're beat. There's no singing, there's no banter. They're just trying to keep moving.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Bowman finds them again with 10m scope. Marks it. Computer analyzes their position. The results aren't encouraging. Their average speed has been steadily dropping. There's only two hours left till dark. They've gone 79 kilometers. And they're projected to get 88.5 kilometers before nightfall. They're gonna miss getting to the Cosmos by about an hour.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - DAY

It's worse. They're stumbling. Not keeping in all that straight a line. Having to constantly re-check their position. RADIO CRACKLES.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Ground Crew, this is Ares.

(studiously casual)

How's it goin'?

They look at each other. Is she kidding?

GALLAGHER

We've just done a little over two marathons back to back. We haven't had anything to eat or drink in two days. There are these worms that want to eat us and a mad robot who wants to kill us. Why

do you ask?

He starts to laugh. For some weird reason Burchenal joins him.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

You're not going to like what I have to say.

BURCHENAL

You're going home? Bring us some chicken.

They crack up anew.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

You have to pick up the pace.

They laugh. It's not funny, but they really laugh.

BURCHENAL

We're not gonna make it?

BOWMAN (V.O.)

At this pace, you'll make about ninety kilometers.

Burchenal shakes himself. Digs into some deep reserve. Picks up his speed and shouts -

BURCHENAL

We Sleep Till Brooklyn!

He totters off towards the horizon.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

What was that?

GALLAGHER

Cooper's been singing classic music. I don't know most of it.

BURCHENAL

No Sleep Till Brooklyn!

GALLAGHER

Neither does he. I think he knows one line from each song. We'll try to go faster. We really will...

He's trying to convince himself as well as her. But he does pick up the pace and push after Burch and...

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Borokovski has listened in curiously to this exchange.

BOROKOVSKI

Why is he speaking of Brooklyn?

SCHLISSEL

He's singing classic music to keep his spirits up.

The tech looks at him curiously.

SCHLISSEL

I studied it in college. It's the Beastie Guys. Most of the music we listen to today is based on the ground-breaking work they did before the turn of the century.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - 40 MINUTES LATER

They're stumbling. Literally. Gallagher just stops.

GALLAGHER

You know, I don't care if I weigh 60 pounds on Mars. I am one tired doggie.

Gallagher sits down on a rock. Burchenal collapses nearby. They can't go any further. Burchenal catches his breath.

BURCHENAL

Ten K short.

The sun is a finger above the horizon. Redder than red, breathtakingly beautiful.

BURCHENAL

It's pretty.

GALLAGHER

Too bad we're gonna be dead. I can't keep walking in circles. And there's nothing to keep us warm.

They look around unhappily. Ugly way to die.

GALLAGHER

It's gonna be like trying to live on Mount Everest.

BURCHENAL

What would we do if we were on Mount Everest?

Thinks a long time.

GALLAGHER

I would have brought a tent.

BURCHENAL

If we didn't have a tent.

Robby's so tired he's confused.

GALLAGHER

We don't have a tent.

BURCHENAL

Yeah. Yeah, I know.

GALLAGHER

I'd guess you'd dig a snow cave. Use the snow for insulation. You've seen the 3Ds.

There's a funky-looking hillock nearby. Five feet high, as big around. Burchenal totters to his feet. Goes over and kicks it. It's soft volcanic rock.

BURCHENAL

Let's dig a snow cave.

GALLAGHER

There's no snow.

Burchenal kicks at it again. Gives. He takes out the entrenching tool, hacks at it. Knocks a piece free.

BURCHENAL

Let's dig a snow cave or we're gonna fucking die.

He starts to wail on it. Gallagher staggers over and joins him. The two of them start to flail away like a cross between prehistoric man and giant beavers, desperate as -

EXT. MARTIAN HORIZON

The sun begins to set. 30 miles away, the terminus, the line where night turns to day, begins to advance across the planet towards them. In the dark of the shadow, the FROST forms a dozen feet behind and follows growing, GROWLING - the cold advancing TOWARDS us with a CRACKLING CRUNCHING FREEZING WHINE. It's as if the cold has a sound...

BACK AT HILLOCK

Gallagher and Burchenal can see the darkness approaching. Digging madly. Cackling. Losing their minds. Can't tell who is who as they're silhouetted against the sun, one now inside the hillock throwing rock back as the other clears.

The sun continues to drop. Terminus continues its pernicious HISSING and freezing approach.

Halfway inside now. On his knees, suit light on, Gallagher chops away at the rock. When he's thigh-deep in debris, he backs out, dragging the leavings with him. Burchenal leaps in, replacing him. Dripping in sweat, nutty, but at least they're doing something.

The last of the sun disappears. Their breath is in the air. The darkness and frost reaches them now. The sweat begins to freeze, ice in their hair and eyebrows and stubble. But they've dug most of the shelter. They continue to thrash and chop away. The frost is now everywhere.

Gallagher climbs inside. Burchenal drags a lava boulder over to seal the entrance. Climbs in, hooks his tool into the rock and seals it shut.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

It's not big. The two of them are scrunched into balls. They chop away and pack the debris in the entry tunnel to block the cold. Shaking bitterly. Lips blue...

EXT. MARS SURFACE - NIGHT

Nothing. Darkness. Rocks. And in the midst of it all, our crazy hillock/snow cave.

INT. HILLOCK/CAVE - NIGHT

Gallagher looks up to find Burchenal staring at him. Actually, not exactly at him. At his forehead.

GALLAGHER

What? Is this some kind of cartoon moment where you're imagining I'm a giant chicken and you're going to eat me?

BURCHENAL

It's melting

GALLAGHER

It's a Wizard of Oz moment?

BURCHENAL

The ice on your forehead is melting. The rock's really insulating us. We might not freeze to death.

GALLAGHER

Oh. Good.

And then the enormity of what's gone on hits them. And the exhaustion. Adrenaline is gone. Gallagher physically droops. Burchenal follows.

GALLAGHER

I've never been this tired. I've never hurt this bad. You think dead is worse than this?

BURCHENAL

Hell, we'll probably know soon. Shut up. Rest.

GALLAGHER

We oughta probably tell someone we're not frozen solid. Yet.

Burchenal checks his watch.

BURCHENAL

We're on the nightside, can't reach Houston. Bowman's dayside for another forty-five.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Common viewscreen shows ground crew's projected position. Darkside of the planet. Estimated temperature of -20 degrees fahrenheit and falling. The room's downcast. And bewildered...

SKAVLEM

Not a word before it got dark.

-25 degrees. -30 degrees.

RUSSERT

They're dead. Or dying. Let's get Bowman home.

SKAVLEM

She's gonna wanna waste a pass trying to get them on the radio.

RUSSERT

Let her. She's got five and a half hours before the orbit starts to decay. If she has to do this so she can concentrate later on, so be it.

Skavlem gets busy on the radio with Bowman -

SKAVLEM

Ares, this is Houston...

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Their breath condenses on the ceiling. Freezes. Then falls down. It's snowing. They've got their own weather system. Gallagher watches it fall. Burchenal seems kinda pissed.

BURCHENAL

No, I don't know why the worms are here. No, I don't know why we're still alive.

GALLAGHER

There's gotta be a reason.

A moment, then -

BURCHENAL

You're talking about faith, son. Faith is another way of saying I know something you don't know but I can't tell you 'cause it's a secret. But I don't know why I know it.

(agitated)

I live in the real world. I've lived there my whole life. I'm comfortable there.

GALLAGHER

We're not in the real world. We're on Mars.

(softly)

Nobody gets in a rocket ship to outer space without some kind of faith. Do they?

Burchenal doesn't answer. Not directly. But he looks like a third grader busted in some elaborate story he can't keep up.

BURCHENAL

If you think I'm gonna have some kind of weak-ass epiphany for you right here in this cave, you're wrong. Now, why don't you get that light outta my eyes and let me try to rest.

Gallagher's satisfied. Lowers the light to a dull glow, leans back against the rock and...

EXT. ARES - DAY/NIGHT

The ship slips into darkness.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bowman reaches for the mike, begins -

BOWMAN

Ground crew, this is Ares. Do you read?

(off no response)

Ground crew, this is Ares. Do you read?

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

The radio lies on the ground. The green light flickers with her transmissions. But little signal seeps through the rock. What there is is MUFFLED and INDISTINCT.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Zzzzz zzz, zzz zz, zzzzzz?

And Gallagher and Burchenal are fast, fast asleep.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Time's passed. Bowman has searched with the 10m scope. IR, thermal. She picks up the occasional footprint. Tracks their progress. Finds some odd rock configurations. And...nothing. They're just gone. Finally, she gives up. Picks up mic sadly for one last time -

BOWMAN

Ground crew, this is Ares. It was a pleasure and an honor to serve with you,

gentlemen.

Sits quietly a moment, then turns off the screen. Brings up a new image. Shows her current fuel status, position and projected path. She begins to work on getting home.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - NIGHT

Dead quiet. The two small moons shine faintly. A rime of ice covers everything. The hillock shimmers in the feeble light. The rock entrance is sealed over with frost.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Gallagher and Burchenal breathe shallowly. The inside of the cave is covered in white flaking hoarfrost. Lips are blue. Skin is pale. Gallagher's eyes open. Something's wrong. Doesn't know what. And then he realizes the air moving in and out of his lungs isn't doing him any good at all. The door is caked shut with ice. There's no air.

He moves badly, uncoordinated, but manages to chop and shove it open. Fresh ice cold air rushes in. Burchenal awakes. Only half-responsive. Gallagher grabs him, drags him out.

GALLAGHER

Breathe! Breathe!

EXT. MARS SURFACE - NIGHT

Cognizance returns. Burchenal looks at his watch.

It doesn't make any sense. Three hours have passed. Three hours...

BURCHENAL

Son of a bitch. Son of a bitch. We've been asleep for three hours!

Gallagher desperately hauls out the radio.

GALLAGHER

Ares, this is ground crew. Ares, this is ground crew.

BURCHENAL

Forget it. She's dayside again. If she's even still here.

(then)

We gotta get to Cosmos.

Burchenal looks around. Oh God...It gets worse.

BURCHENAL

Can't see the landmarks.

Gallagher starts to madly scan the night sky.

GALLAGHER

We gotta keep moving.

He yanks out his HCC. Mutters rapidly into it. We see the map appear. Hab/Cosmos line marked. Then a star chart for Mars on this day and time. He calls for it to change to a horizon projection. The machine freezes, computes. Brings up a horizon. It matches what Robby sees. And highlights a star sitting just above the horizon that will lead them on their way. Canis Minor. They start to run...

A beat. AMEE rises up silently from behind a rock and watches them go.

EXT. MARS - SURFACE - NIGHT

The two men run. Lit by the two moons Phobos and Deimos - Fear and Terror. It's unbelievably cold. Plumes of breath light up around them as they go. Following the star on the horizon. Across a valley, over a ridge. Over a dune. Scrambling.

Up and over the next long, long gradient. They lose the star over this false horizon as they climb. There's something odd, however. A faint broad wash of light coming over the lip. They crest the rise to reveal -

VALLEY

Completely covered in phosphorescent algae. Pale green and glowing. A mile across, a mile wide. If they weren't rushing for their lives, it would be worth stopping to stare.

Across the vale Canis Minor sits directly in the center of a small mountain pass. They're about to dash onward when something - intuition, it's hard to say what - hits Burchenal.

BURCHENAL

Stop.

GALLAGHER

What?

Burchenals' not quite sure at first. But won't enter the algae. Walks left, walks right. Kneels down.

The algae glows. Otherworldly. And then movement. In the f.g. a worm, green, glowing and filled with algae, slithers through. And then another. And another, indistinguishable from the plants around them they've imbibed.

And then as Burchenal plays his light out across the valley we realize it's entirely full of worms. Gallagher takes an appalled step back. They're fucked.

GALLAGHER

We're fucked.

Burchenal considers for a moment. And yeah, probably has that epiphany. Then-

BURCHENAL

(re the pass)

Get to the closest point you can safely.

I'm gonna go down to that end.

He starts to run to the far end.

GALLAGHER

What are you gonna do?

Burchenal's far enough away now that his voice comes over the SUIT RADIO.

BURCHENAL (V.O.)

I'm gonna distract them.

GALLAGHER

You're gonna distract the worms??

BURCHENAL (V.O.)

Yeah.

Perhaps Gallagher ought to give this more thought. But he doesn't. Maybe it's the exhaustion. Maybe it just never would have occurred to him. Burchenal disappears into the darkness and the distance. Gallagher waits. Then -

BURCHENAL (V.O.)

You ready?

GALLAGHER

Yeah.

BURCHENAL (V.O.)

Good. Lemme know when it starts to clear.

Gallagher doesn't get it. But a moment later, a shiver runs through the worms. And they start to undulate away. Towards Burchenal. Pulsing faster and faster until it's clear in a moment or two, like a giant amoebae withdrawing, he will have clear access to the pass.

BURCHENAL

at the far end, is five hundred yards into the worms. They know. They've told each other. And they're coming in pulsating waves. Towards him. At the epicenter. He gags. And hears -

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

(stunned)

It's clear.

Burchenal tries to turn around. He's mired now. And they're up to his waist. It's a fucking nematode feeding frenzy.

BURCHENAL

Good.

He can't even lift his feet. They're beginning to cover him now. He can see the color of his suit spreading around him as they devour it.

BURCHENAL

(then; oddly calm)

You were right, son. There's gotta be a reason. This can't just be an accident. I don't know what the worms're doing here or how they got here. But science don't explain it. And it pisses me off to no end.

Gallagher turns. He can see now what Burchenal has done. A tiny glowing figure can be seen 1000 yards away. Gallagher's speechless at first...

BURCHENAL

I'm gonna have to turn off my radio in a sec. So you don't have to hear me screaming like a girl.

GALLAGHER

What have you done??

BURCHENAL

Finding out there's things I don't understand. That science don't know squat about. Maybe even the damn Earth's worth saving. Someone's gotta give it a try. Gotta find out about these worms. Go, get off this fucking planet.

During which we've CUT TO Gallagher, 'cause you don't want to see this.

BURCHENAL (V.O.)

There's two women in Missoula, one in Bozeman. Tell them each they were my last words. And make sure my horse gets sold to someone who knows how to ride.

(then)

Oh, my Lord...

RADIO GOES SILENT. Across the distance we can see a figure, now entirely coated in luminous worms, writhing wildly. Gallagher leaves his light on, starts to run. As Robby flees, we PULL BACK, FURTHER and FURTHER until he's just a tiny figure in the landscape - until we are AT what was Burchenal. The frenzy is all but over.

The phosphorescence is gone in the center of the circle. The edges are the color of his suit. Then blood red for forty yards. Bits of bone white. And then right in the dead center, as we watch; gray, spreading, spreading as what was once Burchenal's brain is food for worms.

EXT. MARS SURFACE - NIGHT

Gallagher scrambles up, steeper and steeper, to the edge of the valley and the ridge line. From the top he can see the way below is his prize - the Cosmos. Checks his watch, hopefully, desperately triggers the radio.

GALLAGHER

Ares, this is ground crew. Ares, this ground crew. Do you copy?

EXT. ARES - NIGHT

Above him somewhere in the sky.

INT. ARES - MAINTENANCE DECK - NIGHT

Bowman is locking out parts of the ship to conserve power on the way home. At first she's not sure she really heard that. Rushes across the room to the radio interface.

BOWMAN

Ground crew?! Status??

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

Me. Alone. The worms just ate Burchenal. Thought you might be gone.

(shaky)

Guess you promised you wouldn't leave...

BOWMAN

Robby, I'm...still here.

They both know he's caught her still here sheerly by happenstance.

GALLAGHER (V.O.)

I'm about a kilometer from the Cosmos. It's in sight. Call you when I'm there.

EXT. RIDGE LINE (MARS) - NIGHT

Gallagher heads down. Bounding down the hill. No algae on his side. He leaves a trail of phosphorescent footprints as he goes. They grow fainter and fainter as he descends.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bowman comes rushing in. Too fast. Slams up into a wall.
Resets. Belts herself in.

EXT. COSMOS SITE - NIGHT

It's been sitting there for 30 years. As he approaches, the solar panels turn and track towards his light. It's still waiting. Sits on six over-built legs. Sample return vehicle launches off the base. Liquid fuel tanks, sample return container the size of a large trash can. We hear -

BOWMAN (V.O.)

How you doing?

GALLAGHER

(unsettled)

It's really cold. My fingers aren't sure they want to work.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

You can do this.

(then)

The maintenance port has a cover. It should be marked.

Gallagher looks it over. Minor stumbling block...

GALLAGHER

Yeah. In Cyrillic.

Finds it anyhow. He flexes his unresponsive fingers, and after a try or two, unscrews the cover, reveals an IR port.

GALLAGHER

Got it.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

All right, I'm gonna download this to you.

Gallagher yanks out his HHC. Dozen adapters in the back. Finds the one that fits the old modem port on the jerry-rigged radio.

GALLAGHER

Go.

Plugs it in. Stuff flashes. On the HHC, Windows comes up, the Cosmos LaunchMaster program, Cyrillic crudely relabeled in English. Unplugs the modem so he can speak again.

GALLAGHER

It's still got power.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

You should be able to run diagnostics.

There's a diagnostics check and launch check. He hits diagnostics. The two talk, link up, and - a Windows error screen comes up on the HHC:

"Warning - your system has become busy or unstable. Press Ctrl-Alt-Delete to exit programs and reboot."

GALLAGHER

I know now why it didn't launch.

(says the magic words)

Control alt delete.

Reboots in the blink of an eye. Systems check positive.

GALLAGHER

It's looking good.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Okay, this thing only has two settings. On and off. One sends it all the way back to Earth. As you don't have air, food or water, that would be bad.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Bowman is calculating madly as she goes on. Trying to sound calm. She's anything but.

BOWMAN

We want just enough lift for escape velocity. With the weight you left at and the suit...I peg you at 165. It was designed to take 200 pounds of rocks home. Tanks are seven liters each. You need to take two liters out of each tank. There's a central purge; you're gonna have to be exact.

EXT. COSMOS SITE - DAY

As she continues -

BOWMAN (V.O.)

And you better try to find something to put the fuel in and get it the hell away from there, as we don't want it to go up when the rocket goes off.

Gallagher considers. Yeah, it all makes sense. But how?

CUT TO:

EXT. COSMOS SITE - MINUTES LATER

Gallagher, using the few tools he has left, has unbolted the sample return container. Measures its width -

GALLAGHER

I need you to do some math. A cylinder 50 centimeters wide, how deep is six liters?

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Eleven and three quarters centimeters.

He measures and scribes in the line.

GALLAGHER

Somewhere, Mr. Plummer, my 10th-grade math teacher, is cackling like a son-of-a-bitch.

Under which, he slithers underneath, opens the main purge and fills the big steel bucket with rocket fuel. It looks just like the guy at Texaco, working on your car. Lugs it away from the Cosmos.

GALLAGHER

Now what?

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Launch diagnostics. Avoid pressing anything that says ignition.

He runs it - seals are good, pumps are good, engine's ready. And the ignition power force, all 300 volts of it, is dead as a doornail. The program suggests the replacement part number. And suggests he order it quickly. Checks again. Answer's the same. He slumps down, sits beside SRM. He ain't going nowhere. Just sits there. Can't move. Can't speak. After all this, he's fucked. Stares out into the distance. Finally -

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Gallagher?

GALLAGHER

No. No go. There's enough power to run the computer, but not enough to launch.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

How much do you need?

GALLAGHER

I need 300 volts at six amps. And I've 28 volts running the computer system. Ignition battery's stone cold.

Beat.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Is there anything you can use?

GALLAGHER

Let me look around and see if I see a high voltage source....No, just rocks. In fact, everywhere I look, there's just fucking rocks. And more fucking rocks.

Then, as he tries not to break down -

GALLAGHER

I'm gonna die here.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

She's shook. She knows he's right. Not a damn thing she can say. Tries to maintain. Barely. Looks up at one of the screens. In four minutes she's back on day side orbit. And then home.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. COSMOS SITE - NIGHT

Gallagher steadies himself. Picks the radio back up. He's just babbling to keep himself sane for a little while.

GALLAGHER

I didn't come here to be a citizen. I came as a tourist. You know, visit Mars, check out the sights. Go home.

Bowman tries to do the right thing. Whatever the hell that is...Takes a breath, wipes away an errant tear, tries to be calm for him.

BOWMAN

Is there anything you want me to do?

GALLAGHER

(thinks; then)

Tell all of Burchenal's women that they were the only one. Sell his horse to

somebody nice.

BOWMAN

For you?

GALLAGHER

No.

Then, burbling up, unplanned...

GALLAGHER

I shoulda kissed you.

There's a long beat. Yeech. He shouldn't have said anything.
Then -

BOWMAN

Yeah. You shoulda kissed me.

Gallagher can't believe it. He could kick himself.

GALLAGHER

(to himself)

Okay. This is like all the worst parts of high school math and the beautiful girl you're too stupid to tell you're madly in love with. And then, I get to die. What a shitty day.

(into radio)

Commander Bowman, I am really sorry I didn't kiss you. Really, really sorry.

He pauses. Only half a beat, but...

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

She bursts from the darkness into the light of day side and is gone. RADIO turns to STATIC...

EXT. COSMOS SITE - NIGHT

When he goes on -

GALLAGHER

Loved you madly, shoulda said so.

It's too late. She never hears. STATIC. He realizes she's gone. Puts the radio down. He is very, very alone.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

She sits there, just gut-shot for a moment. Picks up the mike.

BOWMAN

Houston, this is Ares, commencing return sequence.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY

On all the PIM's her return trajectory is plotted. She's to come all the way across the day side, enter night, begin acceleration and slingshot around the backside of Mars and head home.

SKAVLEM

Copy. Ares, beginning return

She steels herself then reports the rest of the news -

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Ground crew, reduced to Gallagher,
reached Cosmos, failed second
diagnostics. No joy, no launch. While
crew member is still extant, mission
commander declaring him E.O.M. Commencing
return.

There's silence in Mission Control. Not everyone has
followed the circumvention.

TECH

What was all that?

SCHLISSEL

Gallagher made it to the Cosmos, won't
launch, he's alive, she's gotta leave
him.

TECH

Whoa.

BOROKOVSKI

Da...

EXT. COSMOS SITE - NIGHT

Gallagher sits there. And sits there. Alone beyond
imagining. Hope gone. Just staring 1000 yards out into the
distance. Not looking at anything. Waiting to die. He's
given up.

And then...he shakes himself out of it. Just feels foolish
he's let himself go this far. Gets up. Done with feeling
sorry for himself.

GALLAGHER

Well, this can't get any worse. I guess.

Grabs himself to stay warm. Hops up and down. On one of the
hops he ends up facing the direction he came from. There's
something green and phosphorescent coming over the ridge.
They've tracked him. Footprint by footprint.

He looks closer. It's not just the ridge. They're down in
the valley with him. The ones in the front are back to
translucent, not glowing anymore. They're hungry for
something new. He gets down low to silhouette them against
the sky. There are already four or five hundred thousand on
this side of the hill. And they're coming. Faster.

GALLAGHER

I guess I was wrong. It can get worse. A
lot fucking worse.

(shouts at them)

Forgive me if I don't feel like getting
eaten before I die!

They don't really respond. Except the ones in the front who
rear up, and seem to listen or sniff for him. And gnash
their little crystalline teeth. They split now to come at
him from two sides. Gallagher gets caught in a dry-heave.

GALLAGHER

Oh, man...

Sees the bucket of rocket fuel. Lot closer to them than it
is to him. Gathers his nerve, runs, grabs the bucket. Drags
it twenty feet back. Then tilts it, carefully pouring it out
in a ring around himself and the Cosmos. Worms closing in as
he goes. Leads a fuse of fuel back towards him. Lights it.

It burns low and yellow in the oxygen-depleted atmosphere. Doesn't look like much. Certainly not a defence. First worm gets near it. Unsure. Bewildered. Pulls back. But his compatriots are behind him, still coming. No choice. He advances. And...POOF. VAPORIZES in burst of red-orange as he touches the flame.

And the next...And the next. Like little sparks. Gallagher watches, puzzled by this...And then it hits. Right as the ring of flame is about to die out. The main wave touches the ring of fire. And...they do burn. And SCREAM. Little WORM SCREAMS that multiplied by tens and hundreds of thousands begin to pierce the air.

GALLAGHER

That's for eating the Hab! And killing Cooper, you slimy worm fuckers!

Rolling waves of flame. Half plasma. Flying blobs of burning worms rain down like napalm. One lands on and torches the cobbled-together radio. It's so damn hot for a moment Gallagher panics, thinking everything might explode. Then it drops to embers and the wave burns over the hill like a wild fire.

Gallagher does a dance of triumph. However short-lived. Then it hits him -

GALLAGHER

How do you burn like that without oxygen??

There's a BLAST of flame from the far side of the ridge that rattles rocks and Cosmos. Knocks him to the ground.

GALLAGHER

Holy shit...Holy shit!

Gallagher stares with wonder over the hill. He figured it out. There's a couple of dozen worms, unburnt and thrown free. He picks one up, looks at it.

GALLAGHER

You motherfuckers stole all the oxygen.
(realizes)
And you can give it back. Motherfuckers.
I gotta tell someone. It could work. It could work here...

He turns, looks - the radio is still burning. He snatches it up, scorches him. Tries to put it out. It's cooked. Deceased. He's devastated. Drops to his knees.

GALLAGHER

No!! Not after all this. No!!!

It ain't gonna work ever again. All the shouting isn't gonna make a difference. He knows the answer, he knows how to save the species and there's no one he can tell.

As he stumbles back onto his feet, he's jarred the switch that links to AMEE's display. it comes on, shows:

AMEE'S POV

The fire on the far side of the ridge. She's approaching it. And fast.

BACK TO SCENE

Gallagher stares at it for a moment...

GALLAGHER

My day is not getting better, is it.

There's a look on his face somewhere between inspiration and fear. Like he's got an idea. But it might be a really, really bad one...

EXT. MARS SURFACE - NIGHT

AMEE skitters along. Moving fast. Climbs up and ever so carefully peers over the ridgeline.

AMEE'S POV

The Cosmos down below. And beneath it, his feet sticking out as he works on something, Gallagher. He messed with her once; she recognizes him. If she could bare her teeth like an angry dog, she would. AMEE considers for a moment. Makes her move.

EXT. COSMOS SITE - NIGHT

She comes down the hill. Twelve, sixteen, twenty-foot strides. Doing forty or fifty miles an hour easy. And all but silently. Gallagher hasn't yet responded. And then she's all the way to him. She rears up to strike and -

And Gallagher, in his skivvies, bursts up from where he's buried himself in the sand, avenging, entrenching tool high over his head, already swinging as AMEE wheels back around and...He chops off both her eyes. Sidesteps as she rushes him blindly and backhands her in her electronic Marine cranium from behind.

Whatever he's hit, the jolt stiffens his arm, throws him off. The tool stays embedded. She runs headlong into the Cosmos. Smashes, stumbles, falls. And before she can get back up to her feet...He wraps the sleeve of his shirt around his hand, rescues the entrenching tool and deals a death stroke to the silver arachnid.

GALLAGHER

Robust real-time response to the environment, my butt.

Gallagher grabs his satchel of tools and begins to unbolt her as fast as he can. Checks his watch. Whatever he's racing, there's only minutes to go.

Deep within the electronic entrails of AMEE, he dredges up her Esource. Size of a soda can. POWER CELL that runs her for year and a half. HUMS as he removes it from its shielded container. It's 280 volts.

GALLAGHER

Work.

He rips open a panel on the Cosmos, yanks out the dead cell and hooks the new one in. It doesn't fit. He's got nothing left but a couple of wrenches and a tube of epoxy. Glues it in place.

Runs the launch Diagnostics on his HCC. It flickers, goes to yellow, flashes on and off to green. He yanks back on his suit. Grabs a handful of the uncharred worms and seals them in the container that held the Esource.

Stuffs it in a side pocket. Looks at the top of SRV. Wedges

himself under some cables and wiring on the top.

GALLAGHER

This oughta be interesting.

Checks his watch. It's now or never.

EXT. ARES - DAY

The ship is just about to enter the darkside.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Bowman's got her suit on. Screens show the apogee launch and a slingshot around the backside.

BOWMAN

Houston, this is Ares. I am go for return ignition.

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

Copy that, Ares, you are go for return.

She slides into the darkness.

EXT. COSMOS SITE - NIGHT

Gallagher watches the second hand come around, takes a deep breath, and...

GALLAGHER

Fuck you, Mars.

...slaps the helmet shut. Hits ignition. Nothing happens. Then the GRINDING of thirty-year-old PUMPS. And then a GIANT flaming ROAR. And it launches.

Gallagher, epoxied to the top, is pinned flat. Face squashes, eyes bulge. Ship starts to glow friction. Thirty-year-old paint chips off like tiny shooting stars burning away as this reverse comet leaves the atmosphere.

We can hear him roaring at the top of his lungs as the ROCKET BLOWS by and...

MARS

pulls away in the b.g. Rapidly contracting. FROM FILLING the FRAME, TO a red circle below. Atmosphere thins, the friction and flame decrease and disappear.

SKY

turns from deep red to maroon to black as he blows through the clouds into the outer reaches of the Mars atmosphere and beyond. The ENGINES STOP. Fuel's expended. And...

Quiet. He comes skittering back from the edge of blacking out. He floats silently, orbiting the planet, slowing receding into the distance. Until he's...gone.

EXT. ARES - NIGHT

We see Bowman THROUGH the front viewport. Unhurried. Making the last of her preparations. Downhearted and slow. Then -

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

She's strapped in now. Counter on a screen is ticking down. 13, 12, 11...She tries to allay her horror at what she's doing. Reaches for the mike.

BOWMAN

Robby...

(no answer)

If you can still hear me...I'm so sorry.
And I shoulda just kissed you.

EXT. COSMOS SITE

Radio, three-quarters cooked, lays there on the still-smoking ground.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Countdown continues. Nine, eight, seven...Then just breaking the horizon way out in front of her, a shiny metallic speck breaches into the light. It's a man, glued to thirty-year-old spacecraft. Four, three...She slams down an abort button, as with the other hand she twists the radio over to the suit-to-suit frequency.

BOWMAN

Gallagher...

No response.

EXT. COSMOS

Gallagher is sucking on a few useless raspy breaths. He can see her, ten kilometers away. Barely hanging on.

GALLAGHER

No. Air.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

They stare up at the screen awaiting her return ignition.

SKAVLEM

She should be clearing. Starting the burn.

She's not showing. Still not showing. And then...

SCHLISSEL

There's secondary object in orbit.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

Bowman has flipped a set of joysticks/collectives out from underneath the dash in front of her. She's shouting at the computer.

BOWMAN

Reroute. Orbital maneuvering. Power the OMS, power the R.C.S. I need roll, pitch, yaw, X, Y, Z. Now. Goddammit now!

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

They've figured out what's up. Some are thrilled, others are freaked.

LOWENTHAL

No! No, there's no fuel for maneuvering.
Stop her!

Skavlem shakes his head. Not a chance. Nor would she listen to him.

BOROKOVSKI

She is going to burn fuel to rescue this

man without enough to come home?
(very Russian of her)
I like this girl.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

Which is exactly what she does.

BOWMAN

I want ten milliliter bursts. Now!

And puff, puff, puff...

EXT. MARS ORBIT - NIGHT

Ares, bit by bit, dives down into a smaller orbit to catch up with the Cosmos.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK

Bowman grabs the whole orbital maneuvering assembly, yanks it out of the flight deck, turns and rushes from the sphere.

EXT. COSMOS - ORBIT - DAY

As he watches it come closer, he's depleted what little air there was in the suit. And starts to die.

INT. ARES - MEV DECK - DAY

It's now an empty docking port. Bowman careens in. No artificial gravity here. Floats as she shouts at the computer.

BOWMAN

I want a 180 degree. Now!

EXT. ARES - ORBIT - DAY

Puff, puff...The ship turns end over end. As...

INT ARES - MEV DECK

Kate plugs the maneuvering deck in with one hand, slaps an oxygen bottle on and her helmet shut.

BOWMAN

Seal this level! Open the dock.

Clips herself in just in time as the DOORS behind her SLAM shut and the giant doors in front of her open. Air purges. And in front of her, 300 yards away, is the Cosmos.

BOWMAN

Gallagher! Gallagher!

He doesn't respond.

EXT. COSMOS - CLOSE ON HIM

Because he's unconscious or dead. His head lolls there.

INT. ARES - MEV DECK

There's no time left for subtlety. Bowman yanks a device off the wall. It looks like a 40mm rifle with a power cable. Points it at him. Triggers it. It's a huge laser pointer. Lights him up. Shouts to the computer.

BOWMAN

Hard Dock!

The ship pauses, like it's thinking. And refuses.

ANNUNCIATOR (V.O.)

Object out of range. Emergency braking
will commence in seven seconds.

Ares turns off the pointer. Kate throws it angrily aside. There's a linear acceleration track on the side of the wall with a line thrower attached. She clips in. Grabs something the size of a medicine ball with seventy nozzles sticking out of it in her free hand. And shouts -

BOWMAN

Last acquisition. Line release. Full
velocity.

And it does. The linear accelerator wrenches her violently along the track and hurls her into space. REEL and a line behind her WHIR. It's like the world's largest angler has cast her into the void.

EXT. ORBIT - DAY

Tumbling, she half-regains her bearing, holds out the mini-thrust ball. Shouts something at it. FIRES. Drags her by the arm towards Cosmos. She hits it. Twisting, flailing, way too hard. Half knocks herself out. Recovers, clips in with the tether on her suit. Gallagher is completely insensate.

She shouts something in the silence we can't hear. The reel in the ship starts to spin. So damn fast it's smoking.

The Cosmos is reeled in, oscillating wildly at the end of the line. The Ares, giant by comparison, is about to swallow up the tiny SRM and its two passengers. At 45 mph.

INT./EXT. ARES - MEV DECK

Dock comes careening at them. They're both going to be squashed like bugs.

Bowman slashes loose the line. And fires everything left in the portable thrust engine at once. Blue plasma flares. Her arm is wrenched wildly, pulled from its socket. But...

The Cosmos spins 180 degrees as they plunge through the opening of the port into the Ares. They're on the lee side as the Cosmos hits the far side of the dock like a freight train.

BOWMAN

Seal! Emergency atmosphere. Now!

The DOCKING DOORS SLAM SHUT. The room is buffeted in white mist. She grabs an emergency cutting tool, hooks it into the front of Gallagher's suit. Rips it open from stem to stern. He's limp, unresponsive.

BOWMAN

No. Not after all that, dammit. No.

She checks, he has no pulse.

BOWMAN

Dammit, no!

A first aid station is bolted into the wall. She grabs him by the shirtfront, launches them over there. Takes out a pair of pre-gummed HEART PADDLES, slaps them onto his chest and FIRES them.

Gallagher is thrown entirely across the room by the current.
Slams into the far wall. Opens his eyes. Starts to breathe.

GALLAGHER

Hey, I knew you wouldn't leave without
me.

(beat)

You promised.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

They're all stunned. And freaked. They've got a serious
problem now.

BOWMAN (V.O.)

Mission Control. This is Ares. Recovered
ground crew. Request recalc and
reconfiguration for return flight. Orbit
is stable but diminished.

The scientists have been figuring madly. And they don't like
what they're coming up with.

LOWENTHAL

We can get 'em back. Slowly. Fifty extra
days. And we're not going to be able to
support food and and air for two people.

Russert nods. Motions to Skavlem.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

Bowman and Gallagher listen as -

SKAVLEM (V.O.)

...that travel has been increased by
approximate two months. Concern is that
available life support is untenable for
duration and current crew strength.

Gallagher's unimpressed. Worms tried to eat him, robots
tried to kill him and they're worried about this? Feh.

GALLAGHER

Scientists. Scientists sent us here.
Scientists figured the whole thing out
with Mars. I hate to bring this up, but
they got us into this whole mess in the
first place. Hell, they shouldn't be
allowed to drive 'cause they miss the
turnoff as they consider the
ramifications of the internal combustion
engine.

He picks up the mike.

GALLAGHER

Hey, guys. How 'bout we come about
halfway home and you send a ship with air
and food and stuff to meet us? In the
middle. And we don't have to get all the
way back. Huh?

INT. MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT

Schlissel nods. That'd work. As Russert, Lowenthal and the
big guys start to talk this over, Borokovski motions to
Schlissel and his new friend the Tech.

BOROKOVSKI

I know where there is a rocket in
Uzbekistan. For cheap. A friend of mine
has kept it.

INT. ARES - FLIGHT DECK - DAY

OUT the window, Mars drifts by in the view port. Bowman
looks at it kinda sadly.

BOWMAN

So much for saving humankind and living
on Mars. I guess the worms took care of
that.

GALLAGHER

The worms are not our enemy. They're our
friends.

He's pulled the container out of his pocket. Unscrews it to
show her the little slimy monsters. She recoils in horror.

BOWMAN

You brought them back? Are you insane??

GALLAGHER

It's okay, I'm pretty sure they don't
like titanium.

(then)

We're gonna live. On Mars. Hell, maybe
even back on Earth. Maybe anywhere we
want. And the reason we're gonna live, is
the damn worms. Yeah, they ate all the
algae, and damn near everything else, but
they store and excrete oxygen.

She finds this hard to believe. But he explains.

GALLAGHER

That's why we could breathe. You should
have seen these suckers burn when they
went up. I had some time to think about
this. I was in orbit for six minutes
before you found me. I shoulda been dead.
But the air locked in the suit was almost
pure O2. 'Cause of the worms. We didn't
just find a new place to live on, we may
have saved our old one. Toxic waste,
they'll eat it. Poisonous landfills,
they'll eat it.

She's still trying to absorb all this. It's been a long
couple of days.

GALLAGHER

God's got a sense of humor. He's giving
us another chance. If we can all get
along this time. Burchenal knew somewhere
that it wasn't the science, it was about
having something to believe in. Bud
always knew. Wonders of the deep. We just
had to go to Mars to remind ourselves of
what we should have been able to see back
on Earth. It's not all about us. We can't
kill everything and survive.

Bowman looks back at Mars. Astounded. Believes.

BOWMAN

You wanna tell them back on Earth the

species is saved and we're gonna live?

GALLAGHER

How should I know, I'm the janitor.

(then)

Look, Commander...I just fought off half a million screaming nematodes, and a killer robot and glued myself onto a rocket to get offa Mars, and I was wondering...

BOWMAN

If you could kiss me?

GALLAGHER

Yeah.

BOWMAN

Yeah.

He does. She kisses him back. They continue for a long damn time. Finally, they break apart and...

BOWMAN

It's an extra fifty days back.

GALLAGHER

Gee, wonder what we'll find to do with ourselves.

As she starts to laugh...

FADE OUT.

THE END