FROM THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS OF
GREY’S ANATOMY
AND
DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES

DEFYING
GRAVITY

THE FARHER THEY GET FROM EARTH,
THE CLOSER THEY GET TO EACH OTHER.
DEFYING GRAVITY

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

A spectacular view of the heavens....

DONNER (V.O.)
There's a reporter I know who calls
space travel a fool's game.

SLOWLY PAN to reveal MARS - the red planet up close and
personal. And orbiting Mars, A SPACECRAFT from this century.
This is ZEUS - nothing too fancy - a deluxe version of our
present space station, seventy meters long, with a large,
plate shaped space shield at one end.

PUSH SLOWLY toward the planet.... past the ship, as...

DONNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He says that human beings are sixty
percent water. They eat, sleep,
defecate, can't follow directions,
and explode like pinatas when exposed
to the vacuum of space.
(beat)
Lately I've been wondering if the
bastard's right.

A HUGE DUST STORM is visible on the surface planet.... evil
looking even from this distance. SUPER:

DONNER - 2044, MARS

THEN SLAM TO:

EXT. GUSEV CRATER / MARS -- DAY

A HOWLING, SHRIEKING RED DUST STORM that, in a thicker
atmosphere, would blow buildings down.

FIND TWO SHAPES moving slowly, agonizingly through it.
Astronauts in thick space suits, GREG WALKER, 37, and KAREN
LEWIS, 29. Visibly wet and exhausted, through their dust
caked helmets...

WALKER
They're launching, Karen! We gotta
move!

She nods... clearly struggling...

WALKER (CONT'D)
Gusev base... Gusev base...
EXT. GUSEV BASE -- DAY

The storm buffeting a rover and quonset-like structure next to a fifteen foot high Mars Landing craft, Calliope.

INT. CALLIOPE MARS LANDER -- DAY

Two men, a sweating and strained MADUX DONNER, 26, and TED CHO, 30, are doing everything they can to monitor Walker and Lewis -- but the signal is distorted. Filled with static.

    WALKER (RADIO)
    Donner.... read...?

    DONNER
    Barely read you, Walk. You guys need to push it! We gotta get out!

And things are not going well here, at all. The craft creaks and groans from the wind. An alarm beeps a warning, as Ted Cho runs through a launch sequence.

    TED
    ...Coordinates are NOUN 22, 061, 2 niner... HA and HP are NA... We are at t-minus one minute to launch...

    DONNER
    They can't make that, Ted. There's no way...

    TED
    We're gonna hold at one.

INT. ZEUS / FLIGHT DECK - IN MARS ORBIT

The planet in view from the cockpit, where the Mission Commander, MIKE GOSS, 43, sits. He is cool to the point of freezing.

INTERCUT THE ELEMENTS

    MIKE GOSS
    Calliope, this is Zeus. We're showing that the dust is breaching your thruster controls...

    TED
    Yeah, we got an alarm here.

    DONNER
    Zeus, they're a hundred meters out.

    MIKE GOSS
    This storm's on the rise. You need to get off the planet.
DONNER
A football field, Mike. I can go out...

MIKE GOSS
You will not leave the lander! Now continue the damned sequence.

TED
(hesitates, then...)
Pitch is zero, niner, niner. Hydrogen and LOX are go...

DONNER
We can't leave 'em, Ted... we can't...
(into radio)
Karen! Greg! Push!

EXT. IN THE STORM

Walker puts his faceplate directly in front of Lewis'. Lewis is gasping... exhausted, out of it.

WALKER
Look at me, Karen! Look at me! Double time! We gotta move!

Lewis nods... then they start to leap and run in the 1/3 gravity. It's an herculean effort... but they're making headway.

INTERCUTTING

INT. CALLIOPE MARS LANDER

A COMPUTERIZED FEMALE VOICE sounds a new alarm.

FEMALE VOICE
Warning. Launch weather parameters are at minimum. Warning. Launch parameters are at minimum.

TED
Thirty seconds...

DONNER
They're seventy meters out. We can hold... Ted?

TED
Zeus, we're holding at twenty-five.

He stops the launch clock. A beat... then the clock resumes on its own.
MIKE GOSS
I'm overriding your launch control, Calliope. T-minus twenty seconds and counting...

Donner and Ted trade a look - Goss is a prick - then Donner reaches to his side of the control panel and hits a switch. A NEW ALARM beeps as...

FEMALE VOICE
Warning. Liquid hydrogen valve has been manually closed. Launch parameters are at minimum. Warning.

MIKE GOSS
Did you close that valve, Donner?

DONNER
Give them a couple of minutes.

MIKE GOSS
You don't have two minutes!

DONNER
We'll take our chances...

MIKE GOSS
Not on my watch. You will die. The mission will fail. I need that lander off the planet now.

The alarms... the female voice... all closing in on Donner and Ted.

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
Open the damned valve!

Finally, off a silent, burdened look... both knowing that this is a defining, awful moment in their lives...

DONNER
Karen... forgive me....

Then Donner reaches up and pushes the switch to open the valve.

THE LANDER
Blasts off the planet Mars with a horrible, percussive roar...

THEN TO BLACK

HOLD IN BLACK
Then SUPER:

CHLOE - 2050, HOUSTON
HEAR MIKE GOSS (PRE-LAP)
Welcome to Houston and the Agency's training facility. I'm Flight Director, Mike Goss.

INT. TRAINING CENTER / CENTRIFUGE STAGING AREA -- DAY

ON CHLOE BARNES, 27 and attractive in a simple, no make-up way. She stands with twenty other astronaut candidates, a mix of men and women about her age, all wearing orange jump suits. They stand on an observation platform in loose formation... opposite Goss and the instructors. One of them is

MADDUX DONNER, now 32, standing next to TED CHO. He makes eye contact with Chloe - there is clearly something between them - Chloe breaking the look as...

NADIA
That's Cho and Donner. They were the two on the Mars lander.

That from NADIA GHUKOV, a drop dead gorgeous Russian with the steely eyes of a pilot. She stands on one side of Chloe, the other side covered by JEN TAYLOR, an African/Canadian earth mother.

JEN
They just did what they were told to do.

MIKE GOSS
(continuing)
The flight of Cygnus will be the most ambitious in history - seven planets and over six years in space - we aren't going to go easy on you.

MOVE DOWN the line of candidates, passing people we'll come to know, hate, and love: AJAY SHARMA, EVRAM MINTZ, CLAIRE DOUCETTE, STEVE WASSENFELDER - an oddly out of place, pimply 22 year old with a weight problem...as

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
And you'll be competing not only with yourselves, but with many of your instructors. I don't think there's anyone in the program who doesn't want to be on this crew.

Finally land back on CHLOE and JEN. Jen noticing that Donner's eyes are on her friend.

JEN
You know him?
CHLOE
(covers)
Who?

JEN
Donner. He sure looks like he knows you.

And Chloe’s clearly uncomfortable about it.

CHLOE
He doesn’t.

JEN
He’s smiling at you. Smile back.

CHLOE
Jen...

JEN
Don’t be such a tight ass.

CHLOE
No.

Which is heard by all. Goss stops talking. A silent moment — all eyes on Chloe and her profound embarrassment. Then

MIKE GOSS
Excellent. Candidate Barnes has just volunteered to be in the first centrifuge group. Anyone else?

Now Donner is grinning at her. Off Chloe’s embarrassment to

INT. CENTRIFUGE CAPSULE / TRAINING CENTER -- DAY

Chloe in agony, straining against the G’s, as the centrifuge whips her around and around. The pressure and speed building relentlessly, mercilessly, until...

INT. TRAINING CENTER / LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

WHAM! Chloe bursts through the door of this co-ed locker room with separate lavatories. Pushes past Donner and some of the other astronauts, into

THE LADIES ROOM

where she bangs into one of the stalls and pukes. Just a huge heave. Hangs there, over the toilet, collecting herself.

RESUME THE LOCKER ROOM -- TIME CUT

As Chloe comes sneaking back out of the ladies room... finding herself face to face with a gathering of applauding astronauts.
Among them: Ted Cho, Jen, Nadia, Ajay, and, front and center, a grinning DONNER.

CHLOE
Crap.

Then, to make it all a little worse, Donner crosses with a CHARM ON A NECK CHAIN.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Oh no. What's this?

DONNER
An award. First one in your class to heave.

And now Chloe sees that the charm is a SMALL BRASS BUCKET. He gives her a sexy smile, then drapes it around her neck, Chloe resisting their chemistry... but clearly drawn to him.

DONNER (CONT'D)
Everybody'll get one or two. Earn five buckets, you wash out.
(them, more privately)
I think I'm the only guy to make it through without one. You want some tips I could buy you a drink at Dukes.

Chloe looks at him...

CHLOE
You can't be serious.

Then brushes past.

DONNER
I'm being nice. Serious and nice. (she keeps going)
Is there something wrong with serious and nice?

But Chloe will have none of it and continues to HER LOCKER. Tosses the necklace inside it. Jen crosses, as Chloe starts to undress.

JEN
Lighten up, girl.

CHLOE
So light, I'm floating.

JEN
He was making a pass at you.

CHLOE
Not my type.
JEN
The smart, good looking, American hero type.

CHLOE
He left two people on Mars.

JEN
Then tragic American hero - even better.

Jen studies Chloe...

JEN (CONT'D)
You're not gay, are you?

CHLOE
(beat, looks at her)
I'm a geologist who wants to travel to another planet without unnecessary complications.

JEN
A space nun.

CHLOE
A what?

ACROSS THE ROOM - AT THE MEN'S LOCKERS

Ted, and Donner having their own discussion, joined by ROLLIE CRANE, 40, awkwardly endearing, as they check out the women.

TED
A space nun. Either that, or she's gay.

DONNER
She's not gay.

ROLLIE
You have first hand knowledge?

DONNER
Call it an educated guess.

NADIA saunters past him wearing a towel.

DONNER (CONT'D)
But, clearly gents, it's time to move on.

Donner follows.... passing

WASSENFELDER AND AJAY SHARMA - Ajay eyeing Chloe...
WASSENFELDER
Dude... you don't stand a chance.

But Ajay crosses to Chloe anyway, watching awkwardly as she finishes dressing.

AJAY SHARMA
Chloe Barnes. I am Ajay Sharma. We met on the Cape.

CHLOE
Yeah... hi, Ajay.

AJAY SHARMA
I just wanted to say that it is a good thing that you won the bucket.

CHLOE
I'm not so sure about that.

AJAY
Oh no... it is an obstacle that we all must face eventually. You were fortunate enough to face it first.

And now Chloe's eyes move over Ajay's shoulder.... to DONNER flirting with Nadia at the door to the ladies room.

ON CHLOE - jealous. And feeling that Ajay's words apply directly to Donner.

TO BLACK

HOLD IN BLACK

Then super:

CAPE CANAVERAL - 2055

HEAR AN ORCHESTRAL NETWORK THEME - ANNOUNCING:

A VIDEO GRAPHIC - OF CYGNUS

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE
The Flight of Cygnus....

The graphic goes IN MOTION - Cygnus flying a path through the solar system, as WE HEAR THE FOLLOWING in a variety of languages on NEWSCASTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD:

NEWSCASTERS
Five nations, seis anos, sete planetas, und acht Astronauten... un grand tour du systeme solaire... a grand tour of the solar system.

(MORE)
NEWSCASTERS (CONT'D)
The most ambitious exploration in
the history of mankind.

INT. MISSION CONTROL / CONFERENCE ROOM -- MORNING

ON MIKE GOSS, the Mars Mission Commander, now 54, standing
at a lectern...

MIKE GOSS
I'm Flight Director Mike Goss. I'm
gonna introduce the crew, as if you
don't know them already... then open
the floor to questions.

This is the FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE on launch day.
INTERCUT HIS INTRODUCTIONS - not with the astronauts as they
enter - rather, with the astronauts as they spent their last
free moments on earth:

INT. AN APARTMENT BEDROOM -- VERY EARLY MORNING

On a sexy, sweaty, post-coital couple in bed: DONNER, now
36, and NADIA GHUKOV at 33.

MIKE GOSS
Mission Pilot, Nadia Ghukov...

NADIA
Time for one more.

DONNER
Swear to God - it feels like it's
gonna fall off...

NADIA
No pain - no gain. And beside, it's
going to have six years to heal.

DONNER
Only if I wait for you.

Nadia playfully locks onto Donner's neck with her mouth and
mounts him. He winces...

MIKE GOSS
Originally from St. Petersburg, she'll
pilot Cygnus and the Mars lander.

DONNER
Awww c'mon, Nads. Nadia?

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

DR. EVRAM MINTZ, 35, sits on the beach gazing out at the sea
with the eyes of a man who has lived much longer.
He's a lean Israeli/American with a dim view of humanity, having seen just too many people die in war.

MIKE GOSS
Dr. Evram Mintz, our Medical Specialist... a war tested surgeon, he also has a degree in psychiatry.

Mintz raises an almost finished pint of vodka, and drains it.

EXT. JOGGING PATH - DAWN

JEN CRANE, now 34, as she jogs with ROLLIE CRANE, 45, her husband of two years. He's the kind of guy who's everybody's big brother. A lanky, modern Jim Lovell/Tom Hanks who's desperately in love with his wife.

MIKE GOSS
Mission Commander, Rollie Crane... and Jen Crane, our Mission Biologist. They got married in training - Jen calls this their honeymoon.

They both pull up to watch the sun rise. A moving moment for both of them, as they take each other's hand.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH -- DAWN

PAULA OCHOA, 31, and from a poor family in Brownsville, Texas, takes communion from a woman priest. She's a very carefully put together woman. Religious, optimistic, industrious. Hates slackers.

MIKE GOSS
Paula Ochoa, our Payload Specialist and teacher. She'll also pilot the Venus lander.

INT. A DORM ROOM MESSY APARTMENT -- DAWN

The sun's rising but STEVE WASSENFELDER, 27, could give a damn. Still pudgy and pimply, he sits in front of a gaming console playing HALO 23 - something he's been doing all night.

MIKE GOSS
Theoretical Physicist, Steve Wassenfelder.

Shoves a handful of Cap'n Crunch into his mouth.

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
I think he's sponsored by XBox.

The reporters chuckle.
INT. A BEDROOM -- DAWN

Where AJAY SHARMA, 35, and painfully, endearingly sincere, prays in front of a small shrine to a Hindu God, Lord Ganesha.

MIKE GOSS
From Mumbai, Flight Engineer Ajay Sharma. He says he's Hindu, but I swear he worships the spacecraft.

The centerpiece of the shrine is a porcelain figurine of Ganesha, four armed and with the head of an elephant.

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
And still on her way in is our geologist, Chloe Barnes.

INT. AT A BATHROOM MIRROR -- DAY

CHLOE'S at her mirror putting on make-up like it's a foreign substance. All thumbs and rushing. The time and date are projected at the bottom of the mirror; 7:15 A.M., 10/03/55.

BEV BARNES
...beware of new endeavors, Cancer. With Mercury in retrograde and Saturn in your seventh house...

That from a woman projected in the upper left of the mirror. A vid call.

CHLOE
I don't have time for this mother!

MIKE GOSS
Chloe'll be the first human to set foot on Venus, if she makes it here in time for the launch.

Chloe drops her eye shadow brush.

CHLOE
Crap crap crap!

BEV BARNES
Language, Chloe...

INT. INTERNATIONAL SPACE AGENCY / MISSION CONTROL-- DAY

CHLOE is escorted quickly through the busy control room by DONNER. She's awkward, flustered, late. He's covered his hickey with a band aid and is walking... painfully. He works a baseball in one of his hands — an on the job quirk. It'll make sense later.
CHLOE
Had a little trouble getting out the door...

DONNER
On launch day?

CHLOE
Technical difficulties.

DONNER
I can see. Nice make-up.

CHLOE
Nice hickey.

DONNER
You're jumping to conclusions.

CHLOE
You're walking with a limp.

DONNER
A giant leap.

CHLOE
Jen saw you leaving Nadia's when she went out for her morning run.

DONNER
Jen should keep those things to herself.

CHLOE
And you should keep it in your pants. It's launch day.

DONNER
Was I supposed to wear eye shadow?

CHLOE
It's for my mother. Jerk....

Clearly, these two have heat. They head up AN OPEN FLIGHT OF METAL STAIRS to

AN UPPER CATWALK

That overlooks the Control Room floor. Off the catwalk is a huge, glass walled

CONFERENCE ROOM

This is where the PRESS CONFERENCE is being held. The astronauts are sitting at a dais with MIKE GOSS, who turns to Chloe as she enters, introducing..
MIKE GOSS
Chloe Barnes...

CHLOE
Forgot we were leaving today...

Which brings a few chuckles, as she takes her seat. Behind the dais is a vid panel with a live shot of Cygnus orbiting Earth.

Opposite the astronauts, are about twenty reporters - one of whom was in mid-question....

REPORTER
I was asking about sex in space.

Nadia winks at Donner - who has taken a place beside TED CHO and others in the support staff near the door.

MINTZ
We men have all been given reversible vasectomies. And all of us will be wearing kermits...

Mintz holds up a card with small green dots on it.

MINTZ (CONT'D)
...libido inhibitors behind our ears.

CHLOE
Our hands will be on the mission and off each other.

That gets a laugh. Oddly (or maybe not so) Chloe's eyes dart to Donner.

ANOTHER REPORTER
And what will you miss the most?

JEN
Sunrises, sunsets...

WASSENFELDER
My HALO buddies, and in space... there is no pizza.

That get a laugh....

AJAY SHARMA
And no chicken vindaloo, which I will miss greatly. Also I will miss my good friend and mentor, Maddux Donner. He will be with me in mind and spirit.

Donner nods to Ajay, clearly they have a connection.
WILLIAMS
But why are any of you going at all?

TREVOR WILLIAMS - the Anderson Cooper of the BBC presses a question from the front row.

WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Why send hungry, emotional pinatas when probes and rovers can do the job?

From Donner's suddenly set jaw, we understand that this is the reporter he was talking about earlier.

MIKE GOSS
This is a six year mission to seven planets - it's far too complex.

WILLIAMS
And manned flights are sixty percent more successful - I've read the hype. Would you call the last manned mission to Mars a success?

MIKE GOSS
Three of us in this room were there... we'd all say yes.

His eyes go to

DONNER and TED CHO - NEAR THE DOOR - Next to Ted is his wife, EVE WELLER-CHO, 38. She gives Ted's hand a squeeze - and a look that says this has been his cross to bear.

WILLIAMS
Despite deserting two astronauts on the planet's surface.

Donner tenses...

MIKE GOSS
(bristles)
We knew the risks twelve years ago and these people know the risks now.

WILLIAMS
Do they? It seems to me that, aside from your Mission Commander, this is a very green crew.

DONNER
(sotto to Ted)
Know where this is going...

TED
Let him handle it, Donner.
MIKE GOSS
This crew was picked for its skills and compatibility.

WILLIAMS
But clearly not its experience.

MIKE GOSS
You're fishing, Trevor...

WILLIAMS
Then I'll be more specific. I think we in the press were all surprised when Donner and Cho weren't selected.

All eyes now on Donner and Ted... Donner biting his tongue.

MIKE GOSS
They're alternates.

WILLIAMS
But why? Does it have something to do with what happened on Mars?

And Donner just can't help himself.

DONNER
The man just said it didn't.

WILLIAMS
That's not what I heard.

DONNER
You only hear what you want to hear.

TED
Donner...

WILLIAMS
The truth would be nice, for once. I still don't think we have a straight answer. Why haven't the cockpit transcripts been released? I think we'd all like to know what happened.

DONNER
There was a storm. We had to launch...

WILLIAMS
Did you? Or did you and Cho panic and blow out of there to save your own skin?

DONNER
You little....
And Donner makes a dive for him. Tackles him to the floor.

TED
Donner!

WASSENFIELDER
Whoa... Rumble!

The astronauts... and the world... looking on in horror.

INT. A SMALL SIDE ROOM -- TIME CUT

Goss in Donner's face. They are alone.

MIKE GOSS
What kind of a cowboy asshole are you? You jump the BBC on launch day? At the press conference?

DONNER
He's been asking for it since...

MIKE GOSS
He's a noisy motherfucker who sticks his nose where it doesn't belong. But you know what? Handling him is not your job. And it's not your job to talk about Mars, and it's not your job to question my judgment. Your job is to back up Ajay and make sure that ship's running properly. Only, that's not going to be your job much longer... because, as soon as I can get someone else up to speed, I'm getting you discharged from the program.

Donner is stunned.

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
Now get out there and say goodbye to the crew.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CATWALK / CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

Donner emerges from the room, numb. Looks down at the astronauts on the control room floor as they hug goodbye to their friends, lovers, and colleagues.

DONNER (V.O.)
I've always been one of those people who believes that you create your own destiny....

Donner finds CHLOE looking up at him. There's regret in both their eyes... and a strange feeling that they're not done with each other yet.
DONNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
... And, through a few bad decisions, I've certainly made mine.

Donner shrugs to her - so he's a fuck up. Chloe smiles and shakes her head - yes he is. Then she turns away and Donner heads down to the floor. But not before...

Each of them looks back to the other. Missing each other's look by a heartbeat. Chloe passes:

**ARNEL POE AND WASSENFELDER - ON THE FLOOR**

as they say their goodbyes. ARNEL, 25, Mission Programmer and a fellow geek, shares a secret with his astronaut buddy.

**ARNEL POE**
...Your collection's in the vid bank.
All 369 hours of it.

**WASSENFELDER**
Dude...

They bump fists.

**ARNEL POE**
But you gotta crack the code, first.

**WASSENFELDER**
Asshole.

Next to them are

**EVRAM MINTZ AND CLAIRE DOUCETTE**

CLAIRE, 37, and the attractive French Flight Surgeon, gives Mintz a kiss, reacting to the alcohol on his breath.

**CLAIRE**
You're at least a point two. I could ground you right now.

**MINTZ**
But you won't, because you love me... and there's no vodka in space.

Then NADIA passes and we follow her to

**DONNER**

as he arrives on the floor. She leans in and whispers...

**NADIA**
I like fighters. Ladies room in five minutes.

And she moves on... quickly replaced by
AJAY
Wassenfelder and I thought you rocked.

DONNER
Unfortunately Goss didn't. I guess it's a pretty good example of why I'm not on this mission.

AJAY
But he knows that there is no way that I can do this without you. You and me and that ship are a three-way, Donner.

DONNER
(smiles)
A team maybe... a trio...

AJAY
Yes. We are each essential. And you cannot blame yourself for not being chosen for the crew. This is the way it was meant to be.

DONNER
You think so, Aj?

AJAY
I am positive. We all have our individual paths, Maddux. Our challenges and problems to work out. Clearly, your path is here on earth.

Ajay gives him a long, emotional hug...

AJAY (CONT'D)
We are brothers. I will be with you helping always, in spirit.

And Ajay breaks the hug and heads off.

DONNER (V.O.)
And then there are those who feel that it's all mapped out for us by someone or something else. That we really don't have any control at all.

Donner's eyes find

MIKE GOSS AND ROLLIE CRANE

Shaking hands... something dark in both of their eyes. Goss sees the guilt in Rollie's.
MIKE GOSS
They'll know soon enough, Rollie. Your job is to keep them from asking questions.

Rollie nods and moves on. We hang on Goss as he looks over to Eve Weller-Cho. Whatever it is, she knows it, too.

RESUME DONNER - who has been watching (but not hearing) this exchange.

DONNER (V.O.)
It's that kind of thinking that makes me nervous. Because being a human in space is all about control.

INT. UNITY TWO SHUTTLE CRAFT -- DAY

The crew in full pressure suits and helmets, lying on their backs ready for launch. All feeling the importance of the moment. And the fear.

TED CHO'S VOICE (RADIO)
...Eight.. Seven... six...

CHLOE
Is anyone aware that Mercury's in retrograde?

DONNER (V.O.)
There is simply no room for error in space.

TED CHO'S VOICE
...And we have ignition....

HEAR A GIANT ROAR... the craft vibrating.....

TED CHO'S VOICE (Radio)
And lift off...

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

The image of a huge rocket lifting off the pad on the vid screen - it's sound throbbing from the speakers.

DONNER AND TED CHO watch from their stations - Donner aching to be onboard, Ted, the voice of Mission Control.

TED
The first step on the voyage to the planets.

Then find

EVE CHO AND MIKE GOSS
as she approaches Goss' Flight Director station. They watch
the rising rocket for a moment, then

EVE
How many do you think would've gone,
if we'd told them?

MIKE GOSS
That's a weak minded question, Eve.

He looks at her with ice cold eyes. This is a Goss we haven't
seen.

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
But the answer is all of them. Every
single one.

EVE
Thank you. I'll be able to sleep
tonight.

And, as they turn back to the rising spacecraft HEAR

TED
Godspeed, Unity Two... Godspeed...

TO BLACK

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. CYGNUS - AIRLOCK BAY - DEEP SPACE

On a fuzzy, flesh colored image... that slowly comes into focus:

A WOMAN FLOATING, weightless, nude, and nine months pregnant. It's CHLOE - 37, now. Floating eerily, serenely, in a deep blue light... stars visible behind her through the long, thick vista panes. Floating past the wall-racked space suits and EVA packs that she certainly should be wearing. Something is very wrong.

HEAR RADIO CHATTER - stress in the pilot, TED CHO'S, voice.

TED (RADIO)
... T-minus one twenty to burn... HA
and HP are NA. Pitch zero, niner, niner.... Donner, where are you on the thrusters?

EXT. CYGNUS - SECONDARY TRUSS - DEEP SPACE

MADDUX DONNER, at this point in time 41 years old, floats in a full EVA suit, sweating, exhausted, working with a fierce intensity on a thruster.

DONNER
I'll be done in time for the burn.
If you have to, leave me behind.

He looks past the truss to

THE PLANET they're orbiting. Cold, dark... but SOMETHING VERY BRIGHT emerging from behind it.... like the sun emerging in an eclipse. Donner is clearly frightened.

DONNER (CONT'D)
It's coming, Ted. You copy that?
It's coming. Continue the sequence.

TED (RADIO)
(hesitates, then...)
...Stabilizers at one-four-zero...
thrusters - seven-niner-seven...
shield generators are engaged...

DONNER
Oh my God... she's out.

Donner reacting as he sees:

CHLOE, pregnant and naked, floating into an airlock.
DONNER (CONT'D)
Chloe's out. Do you copy? She's entering the aft port airlock. How the hell'd she get out?

CHLOE - IN THE CYGNUS AIRLOCK
She serenely punches a button that seals the airlock doors behind her... then turns to the keypad that will open the iris leaves of the gate into space.

There's something madonna-like about her. Something beatific. Graceful. She looks up through the airlock's window... and makes eye contact with

DONNER - OUTSIDE ON THE TRUSS
It is an electric, intimate moment as their eyes meet. Something that jolts Donner to his core.

DONNER
Chloe... please don't...

As if in answer, a reassuring smile dawns on her face... then she turns her attention back to the keypad.

DONNER (CONT'D)
No... Chloe! Somebody get down here and stop her! Ted?

But no one can hear him - RADIO STATIC filling his helmet as


ITS RAYS lighting up the ship. Moving across toward

CHLOE - IN THE LOCK as she carefully keys in the code...

And then DONNER'S HANDS find what's been jamming the thruster nozzle. Something curious. A golf ball sized, porcelain FIGURINE HEAD OF AN ELEPHANT, worn and broken off at the neck. Donner seems to recognize it. The elephant head beginning to glow as

THE LIGHT hits it and Chloe's airlock. The iris leaves start to open - to expose her to the vacuum of space. To the searing heat of the light.

DONNER (CONT'D)
Chloe!

Then he, too, is hit by the light. Donner looks to the orb and its blinding brilliance, then his face suddenly changes. Something revelatory in his expression. In what he's seeing. Then there's

A STUNNING BRILLIANT FLASH
INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

DONNER awakens with a small jolt. Breathless. Sweating. THIS HAS BEEN HIS DREAM. And, from the way he sighs, he's had it before. Takes a long moment to compose himself.

He's on a couch in the corner of the room, having been relieved by another shift. Stands groggily, picks up his baseball, and crosses to TED, who's also been relieved, but is hanging on the perimeter.

DONNER
Status?

TED
Off watch crew's in quarters. Rollie's on a walk-through with Solomon. EECOM's working on a small vent leak. No biggy. We should go home - get some rest.

Donner nods... then looks at the live shot of Cygnus orbiting. Remembering his dream. Trying to make sense of it.

DONNER
You're a Buddhist, right?

TED
Raised as one.

DONNER
Where do you come down on fate?

TED
Fate?

DONNER
Predestination. Feeling that the future is somehow out of your control.

TED
Don't believe it. Neither did Buddha.

DONNER
It's bullshit, right?

TED
Bullshit.

DONNER
Right.

Then he manages a thin, disappointed smile and, with one last look to the image of Cygnus, heads off. Hold on Ted...
INT. CHLOE’S BAY -- NIGHT

This is her private quarters. Not huge – but ample. A bed, a desk, some shelves.

CHLOE looks into LENS – speaking into a hidden wall camera at her desk.

CHLOE
So this is night one of day one and we're still in near earth orbit. They want us to talk about anything – about how we feel.

INT. AJAY’S BAY -- NIGHT

AJAY
I am so... proud to be the engineer on this ship. She is my responsibility. My destiny. This voyage with her is my karma. I am in awe and filled with an indescribable joy.

INT. WASSENFELDER'S BAY -- NIGHT

WASSENFELDER
I know you guys are monitoring this. I mean, you tell us it's private, but seriously? So I'm gonna pull down my pants and show you crack....

INT. JEN CRANE’S BAY -- NIGHT

JEN
...feels strange not to be sleeping with Rollie. But it's better for crew morale. And we were celibate for three months last year during the ship orientation -- so we're cool with it. I guess....

INT. CHLOE’S BAY -- NIGHT

CHLOE
Mom, if I ever let you see this, it was a perfect launch, a flawless docking, and the ship's in incredible shape. So much for your horoscope...

And then Chloe reacts to AN ODD, HUMAN SOUND echoing from somewhere deep in the ship. It's chilling. Chloe TURNS OFF THE CAMERA.

And we GO WIDE, as she stands and crosses to her door. Opens it and steps into
THE DORM CORRIDOR

Lit in a deep blue light, it's long and very narrow. Chloe listens... nothing but the whoosh of air in pipes and the deep rumble of the ship. And then, just as she's about to turn away...

THE SOUND AGAIN. A baby crying? Maybe. As Chloe heads down the tunnel... her chest tightening, HEAR

BEV BARNES (PRE-LAP)
... Why you would ever want to do a job that makes you vomit.

FLASHBACK TO

INT. CHLOE'S BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Chloe brushing her teeth, still looking a little green. The time/date function on the mirror tells us it's 08:46 PM on 09/12/50. BEV BARNES is again in the vid call window, looking seven years younger that the last time we saw her.

CHLOE
I'm a geologist, Mom.

BEV BARNES
And we don't have plenty of rocks on this planet?

CHLOE
I want Venus rocks. Mars rocks.

BEV BARNES
Let the robots do it. Look at you astronaut girls - short hair, no make-up, you all look like men.

Chloe fluffs her short hair in the mirror, appraisingly. It is kinda boyish.

BEV BARNES (CONT'D)
And what about sex?

Chloe suddenly feels an unpleasant urge. Disappears from the mirror.

BEV BARNES (CONT'D)
Do they have sex in space? For crissakes, these are your best years...

THE SOUND OF CHLOE SPEWING off camera.

BEV BARNES (CONT'D)
Did you just vomit?
INT. TRAINING CENTER / LOCKER ROOM -- DAY

Jen and Chloe at their lockers.

JEN
Pregnant?

CHLOE
I'm puking in the morning, I'm puking at night. You're the biologist, tell me.

Chloe produces a lunch bag from her locker and shoves it into Jen's hands. Off Jen's look...

CHLOE (CONT'D)
A urine sample. I dribbled a little - sorry.

JEN
You're serious.
(she is)
Yknow, they used to sell tests in drugstores.

CHLOE
I'm not looking for a history lesson. And if I go to my gyno, they'll know.

JEN
So you're not a space nun.

CHLOE
I am now.

JEN
Who's the father?

CHLOE
Don't ask - won't tell.

JEN
And you did it without protection?

CHLOE
We were drunk and he swore he'd had a vasectomy.
(off her look)
Please, don't make me feel any more stupid.

JEN
So, if you're pregnant - what the hell you gonna do?

Chloe's face tell us she doesn't have a clue.
INT. CYGNUS / TRUSS CORRIDOR-- NIGHT - RESUMING PRESENT

Dark and very long - this is the main corridor of the ship. It's on energy conserve mode, now and very creepy.

ON CHLOE moving slowly down it. Listening as she passes bulkhead doors on either side labeled: SECTOR 1 and SECTOR 2. Then the SOUND AGAIN -- ambiguous but strangely human ... and clearly up ahead. Chloe presses on....

So quiet now. Just the hum of the ship. Chloe's breathing shallow and fast... as she approaches the bulkheads to Sectors 3 and 4....

A LOUD METALLIC SWOOSH shatters the silence.

CHLOE jumps out of her skin... then turns to see

ROLLIE and the prep crew commander, SOLOMON emerge from the open SECTOR 4 DOOR. Something furtive between them. Both very surprised to see Chloe.

ROLLIE
Chloe... aren't you off watch?

CHLOE
I'm sorry. I just... heard something down here.

SOLOMON
Heard something?

CHLOE
Yeah... um...

SOLOMON
From your bay?

CHLOE
I know it's weird, but...

SOLOMON
What did it sound like?

CHLOE
(beat)
I don't know. High pitched? (beat)
Probably just the ship, right? Not used to the sounds.

There's an awkward pause.

SOLOMON
Yeah, probably the truss creaking.
CHLOE
The truss creaking.

SOLOMON
It contracts and expands in the shade and sun.

CHLOE
Right. I'm sure that's what it was.
The truss...
(beat)
Anyway...

ROLLIE
You should go back to your bay, Chloe.
Get some rest for tomorrow.

CHLOE
My thoughts, exactly. 'Night guys.

She turns, and heads back up the corridor, clearly disturbed.

HOLD ON ROLLIE AND SOLOMON - something dark and unspoken - then to

INT. CYGNUS / FLIGHT DECK-- DAY

Paula Ochoa looks into camera with a big smile, Nadia and Rollie programming the ship's controls in the b.g.

PAULA
Hola, estudiantes! Bienvenidos a Cygnus! Live from the flight deck of Cygnus, this is our first broadcast from space!

Yes... a bilingual broadcast from space. Actually trilingual. Paula is also signing for the deaf. It is both incredibly good willed... and obnoxious.

INTERCUT WITH

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

Paula's is the largest of the many images - most of Cygnus' interior - displayed on the room's huge vid screen.

PAULA
The astronauts who prepared Cygnus are on their way home, so we finally have the ship to ourselves. I'm going to give you a little tour.

DONNER AND TED CHO watch from their stations, as Paula repeats the above in Spanish.
DONNER
Will somebody please change the channel?

This gets some laughter and some hisses.

PAULA
At the moment. We're on the Flight Deck, which is where we control the ship. Mission Commander Rollie Crane and Pilot Nadia Ghukov are programming the rocket burn that will send us on our way to Venus.

As she continues in Spanish, find...

CLAIRE DOUCETTE - the Flight Surgeon at her station, monitoring a screen split into eight sections, each section monitoring the vitals of one astronaut. She reacts as something puzzling appears in two of the panels. Keys her mic.

CLAIRE
Flight, this is Surgeon.

ACROSS THE ROOM - MIKE GOSS
Responds from his station.

MIKE GOSS
This is Flight.

CLAIRE
I've got a couple of weird EKGs from Rollie and Ajay. They're similar - so it's probably a glitch. I'm going to have Evram adjust the contact points on their med bands - just advising.

MIKE GOSS
Keep me posted.

Then he turns to

EVE WELLER-CHO - who has been monitoring from her post behind him. Crosses.

EVE
Could be a transmission problem.

MIKE GOSS
Could be.
(into mic)
FIDO, what's the max time we have left in orbit?
FIDO  (Flight Dynamics Officer)
We need the Venus burn in thirty
hours and sixteen minutes. It's a
pretty hard window.

Off their dark concern...

**INT. CYGNUS / BIO-LAB -- DAY**

A bay filled with isolation tanks, incubators, and scientific
equipment. Also a large hydroponic tank with many, many
small plants growing out of it.

Chloe and Jen tend small tomato plants as...

JEN
My Rollie strange?

CHLOE
Strange last night. He and Solomon
acted as if I'd caught them doing
something.

JEN
Doing something.

CHLOE
You know what I mean. Doing something
professionally sneaky.

JEN
Sneaky?

CHLOE
Skulky.

JEN
Honey, you are digging yourself into
a very deep hole.

CHLOE
I'm just asking you if you've noticed
anything...

JEN
No! And what were you doing down
there anyway? We were supposed to
be in quarters.

CHLOE
I... thought I heard something.

JEN
You heard something in your bay that
was coming from the other side of
the ship? What? Was it like an
explosion? A siren?
CHLOE
You didn't hear anything strange last night?

JEN
No.

A beat, then Chloe sighs...

CHLOE
It was probably just the truss expanding. I dunno. I haven't been sleeping much....

PAULA enters with AJAY, still doing her show. We notice that they direct their remarks to cameras mounted on the walls of the ship. Big Brother. Paula signs as Ajay enthusiastically explains that...

AJAY
... Our grav suits contain nano fibers that are pulled toward the deck electromagnetically. But anything without the fibers, like Jen's tomatoes, will float.

Jen accommodates him by pulling a small, green tomato off one plant and sending it floating across the room.

EVRAM MINTZ sticks his head in.

MINTZ
Sorry to interrupt. I need to check Ajay's med band.

AJAY
Is there a problem, Evram?

MINTZ
We think it's just an adjustment.

A beat. Then...

AJAY
I'm sorry, Paula.

PAULA
It's okay Ajay. Gracias por su ayuda.

Ajay heads out as Paula resumes her show...

PAULA (CONT'D)
Y este es nuestro Bio-Lab.
INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- DAY

Mike Goss, and Eve Weller-Cho, are standing behind Claire Doucette at her station - all eyes on Claire's screen. This is the POV of DONNER, who leans over to TED CHO -

DONNER
What's up with that?

TED
Glitch in Rollie's and Ajay's med bands. They're trying to get a clean read.

AT CLAIRE'S STATION - Claire's in communication with Mintz.

CLAIRE
That's not clearing up anything, Ev.

INT. CYGNUS / MED-BAY -- DAY

Mintz has both Rollie and Ajay stripped to the waist - adjusting a thin blue band around their torsos.

MINTZ
Now?

CLAIRE
Negative.

ROLLIE
Would you please relay that this is a complete waste of time? I have work to do.

RESUMING CLAIRE'S STATION

EVE
Why don't they try a couple of new bands?

CLAIRE
Ev... try fitting them with new bands.

Eve glances nervously over to Ted and tries to smile. Goss lets his eyes drift up to

THE VID SCREEN - where Paula has moved on to

THE OBSERVATION DECK

PAULA
...our favorite place, the Observation Deck, where we look at our amazing
(MORE)
PAULA (CONT'D)
universe, and also watch movies and
YouTube from our data bank.

The view out the large vista pane is stunning. Paula hits a
switch and the vista pane instantly clouds over, becoming a
vid screen. She moves over to

WASSENFELDER, who is busy typing into a projected keyboard,
the screen in front of him a mass of code and numerical
strings.

PAULA (CONT'D)
This is our physicist, Steven
Wassenfelder. Looks like he's doing
something very complicated. Can you
tell us what you're doing, Steven?

WASSENFELDER
You probably don't want to know.

PAULA
No. We would very much like to know.
(into camera)
Probably calculating a trajectory.
Muy dificil!

WASSENFELDER
Really, I don't think...

PAULA
Don't be so condescending. Diganos.
Tell us.

WASSENFELDER
Well actually I'm trying to crack a
512 bit encryption code....

Paula smiles into camera, impressed, signing furiously.

PAULA
A hah!

WASSENFELDER
... To get to the porn my friend
loaded into the bank.

Paula's hands stop.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

GOSS sighs as the room reacts around him.

MIKE GOSS
What's the delay to air?
SOMETHING IN BACK

Thirty seconds.

MIKE GOSS

Then you've got twenty to put a lid on it. And Ted?

TED

Sir?

MIKE GOSS

Give our boy genius a spanking.

The lightness in the room dissipates quickly as Goss turns his attention back to

CLAIRE'S SCREEN - which has two EKGs running across it. Claire freezes the screen and points out...

CLAIRE

See that blip there? Between the S1 wave and the S2? It's a mid-systolic ejection murmur.

EVE

And both of them have it? That's impossible.

And yet there's something in her look to Goss that says it's not impossible at all. That she and he know the cause. He's not giving up yet.

MIKE GOSS

These are the old med-bands - let's see what the new ones say.

CLAIRE

These are the new ones.

(beat)

We're going to have to do a heart scan before I can clear either one of them for flight.

Off Goss and Eve...

TO BLACK

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. CYGNUS / MEDICAL BAY -- DAY

Rollie is lying down, under a thin bridge that is the scanner. Mintz types in the settings on a projected keyboard, as Ajay awaits his turn.

ROLLIE
This is insanity. We both had flight physicals three days ago. The scans were perfect.

MINTZ
Rollie, I'm just as mystified as you are, believe me.

AJAY
And believe me. Every person on this flight has been chosen to be here. To be tested. There are obstacles that each of us, individually and collectively, must overcome in order to begin anew. Ganesha does this for us. This is a challenge that we will overcome. I belong here. Rollie belongs here. This will work out.

Mintz and Rollie look at each other, nonplussed. Then...

MINTZ
Deep breath, Rollie....

A BEAM OF LIGHT scans down his torso.

INT. CYGNUS / OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Chloe, Jen, Paula, Nadia and Wassenfelder are gathered - Chloe and Paula comforting a freaked out Jen. Wassenfelder sits in his corner working on cracking the porno code.

PAULA
It's just not possible for both of them to come down with heart murmurs. Not a chance.

CHLOE
Has to be equipment error.

JEN
It has to be. I mean, right? You said Mercury's in retrograde. Maybe this is a Mercury in retrograde thing.
NADIA
I'll notify Mission Control.

CHLOE
A suggestion already made by my mother. She can't understand how the Agency, which is ostensibly in the planet and star business, can ignore astrology when planning missions.

WASSENFELDER
She has a point.

NADIA
Don't be insulting. You're a physicist.

PAULA
He watches porno.

WASSENFELDER
A theoretical physicist. I welcome variables of all kinds.

He waggles his tongue at Paula, then continues to work on the code.

PAULA
You disgust me.

NADIA
And we should be concerned with alignment of the planets?

WASSENFELDER
In one context, we already are. We have only twenty-eight hours to leave Earth orbit or we miss Venus.

NADIA
We can hit Venus if we leave in a week.

WASSENFELDER
Sure - with a max burn that will consume 10,000 pounds of liquid hydrogen.... and we'd be late enough that, if we actually want to land on Venus, we'd have to miss Mercury at her apogee. Which doesn't sound too important, until you realize that we need that to alter our trajectory around the Sun, so we can slingshot and hit Mars - I won't even get into the outer planets.

(MORE)
(beat)
So you see? We're hopelessly dependent on planet alignment. As believed the ancients who came up with astrology. Who's to say that it's not all connected?

CHLOE
You will never be introduced to my mother.

JEN
But what you're saying is that we have to use Rollie and Ajay, or we scrub the mission.

WASSENFELDER
Unfortunately, I'm not.
(slams his keyboard)
Damn... Thought I had it.

PAULA
It's a 512 bit encryption code. You won't break it in a hundred years.

WASSENFELDER
Wrong. I did get it.

He hits a key and the vista pane clouds over and becomes a giant vid screen.

A WOMAN IN LINGERIE appears on screen doing a slow strip tease.

CHLOE
Do you mind?

Wassenfelder turns it off with a confused sigh.

WASSENFELDER
Wasn't interested in it anyway. Must be the kermit.

CHLOE
Why are you not saying that we have to use Rollie and Ajay or scrub the mission?

Nadia answers for him.

NADIA
Because he knows there's a service pod leaving for the space station tomorrow morning. The alternates could be on it.
She smiles at Chloe and Jen.

NADIA (CONT'D)  
(to Jen)  
Hello, Ted.  
(Chloe)  
Hello, Donner.

Said in a way that clearly suggests that they've had prior relationships with these men.

CHLOE  
Don't you dare go there...

NADIA  
Nothing like old boyfriends to make a trip interesting.

Which holds a double meaning for Chloe. Is her dream for real?

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- DAY -- PRESENT

WITH MIKE GOSS, EVE CHO, and the FIDO as they climb the steps toward the conference room.

FIDO  
We'll need to sterilize the service pod, do flight physicals, upload their profiles to the ship...

MIKE GOSS  
I'm not making a decision until we hear from Claire.

FIDO  
We can't push the Venus burn...

MIKE GOSS  
I get it. We have 27 hours to leave earth orbit or wait six years for the next window.

They head into the conference room -- Eve glancing down at her husband on the floor. Clearly upset.

ON TED CHO AND DONNER

Very on edge. Donner really working the baseball in his hands, as he looks up at the conference room.

DONNER  
If there's something wrong with Ajay and Rollie...

TED  
Don't even think it.
But, of course, that's all he's thinking.

DONNER
When I asked you about fate last night...

TED
I don't believe in fate - I'm a Buddhist.

DONNER
I didn't tell you something.

TED
What?

DONNER
I've been having a dream about this mission.

TED
And...?

DONNER
You and I are both on it.

Hold on their look... then to

INT. MISSION CONTROL / CONFERENCE ROOM -- DAY

Claire facing an imposing group of Mike Goss, Eve Cho, the FIDO... and several very high ranking officials. She uses a laser pointer to highlight areas of the men's scans being shown on the vid screen.

CLAIRE
This is calcified plaque... here... here... and here. It's on their aortic valves which is causing the stenosis. I don't know how it got there, or why it wasn't there 3 days ago, but I've checked the results five times and it's real.

MIKE GOSS
Can Mintz remove it?

CLAIRE
He has the equipment and skills - but the men would need time to recover and might never recover fully.

AN AGENCY MAN
Isn't this similar to what eliminated the first mission commander?
CLAIRE
That was arterial blockage - but his plaque appeared suddenly, just like this.

AN AGENCY MAN
And the odds for three occurrences...

CLAIRE
Off the chart.

A chill runs through the room.

MIKE GOSS
Put a med team on it, Claire. Check for everything - diet, environment, viruses, run the genomes of the men -- hell, run the entire crew. We have to know what's causing this.

CLAIRE
I can't clear these men for space travel.

MIKE GOSS
I think we got that. You're excused.

Goss turns to the FIDO.

FIDO
I'll have Launch get the pod ready.

MIKE GOSS
I want a few more minutes.

The FIDO nods and heads out behind Claire. Nothing more is said until the door is closed behind them. Then the mood is instantly contentious.

EVE
You don't need more time, Mike. We know damned well what's causing this, and they're going.

MIKE GOSS
This is our mission. I'm not gonna let that... thing - dictate our crew. Wassenfelder's bad enough...

EVE
We don't have a choice. You think for a moment that I want to send my husband?

MIKE GOSS
That makes two of us.

(MORE)
MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
And Donner for a hundred reasons.
Who's to say it won't give them heart murmurs?

EVE
There are no guarantees, Mike. None.
We're in uncharted territory here.
But this seems to be what it wants.
And whether you want to face it or not, it has more say in this mission than we do.

And Goss doesn't like that at all.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

All eyes on the conference room, as Eve Cho emerges. Crosses down the stairway to her husband and Donner.

EVE
You're both going to need immediate physicals. You'll have tonight to get your personal things in order, then launch in the service pod tomorrow morning.

Said like a prison sentence. Donner unable to hide his excitement.

DONNER
Report to Medical now?

EVE
Yes, Donner, leave us.

He heads off... leaving Ted and Eve alone. This is a difficult moment for both of them.

TED
This wasn't supposed to happen.

EVE
Oh, Ted... you don't know the half of it.

(beat, her eyes hardening)
We need to see the new Mission Commander upstairs.

Said in a way that chills, Ted. He looks up to see Goss and several of the higher ups looking down at him from the catwalk. Whatever this is... it isn't good.

MUSIC UP as our characters get the word....
INT. CYGNUS / TRUSS CORRIDOR-- DAY

Mintz and Rollie move solemnly down it, into THE OBSERVATION DECK

where the crew has been waiting.

ON JEN... as she makes eye contact with her husband... and

AJAY as his eyes meet Mintz's. Both get the same crushing answer. Both utterly devastated. Ajay slowly shaking his head in utter disbelief.

INT. SPACE AGENCY MEDICAL FACILITY

Donner under a more deluxe version of the scanning device used on Cygnus for Rollie. The BEAM OF LIGHT traces across his naked body...

INT. MISSION CONTROL / CONFERENCE ROOM

Ted is seated across from everyone except his wife. Eve sits at his side... as Mike Goss gives Ted some incredible news. We can't hear what Goss is saying -- but Ted is clearly floored. Incredulous. He looks to his wife for confirmation.

She nods and takes his hand.

THE OBSERVATION DECK - RESUMING

As Jen stands numbly and crosses into her husband's arms.

Ajay stands... Chloe and Wassenfelder try to comfort him... but he's not hearing anyone or anything. Moves slowly - like a dead man walking - out of the room.

THE MEDICAL FACILITY - RESUMING

As Donner pulls on his pants. CLAIRE enters...

CLAIRE
Clean bill of health, but the pants stay off.

DONNER
Excuse me?

CLAIRE
You need your vasectomy, Donner.

DONNER
I don't understand.

CLAIRE
Your sterilization. It's painless.
DONNER
I know. I had it done when I got back from Mars.

Claire rechecks the image on her vid pad.

CLAIRE
Not according to your scan.

Off Donner - blown away by this revelation, to:

THE CONFERENCE ROOM

And the even more blown away Ted Cho. He just sits there in silence... then

TED
When are you planning to tell the crew?

MIKE GOSS
In forty-one days. When you get to Venus.

And off Ted's look to Eve...

TO BLACK

END OF ACT THREE
ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. EARTH ORBIT / CYGNUS

The ship floating over her home planet, moving from daylight into night.

INT. AJAY'S BAY -- NIGHT

Ajay talking into camera; his personal log. He is numb with pain. And, as he speaks, applies paint to his face. A long red line from his brow to the beginning of his nose....

AJAY
I have always believed that this was my mission. My ship. That I was traveling on the path that Ganesha wanted for me. That this... that out here... were where my challenges and obstacles would be. I feel so... lost, now.

He now paints the end of his nose white... and white from the corners of his eyes out.

AJAY (CONT'D)
I cannot understand this - I cannot. Who needs this path more than I?

Ajay lets the question hang.

EXT. DONNER'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

A modern block of base apartments. Simple, clean design. The street empty and dead quiet at this time of night.

Find a lone man heading up the walk -- a brief/bag slung over his shoulder -- a baseball in his hand. Donner. He pauses for a moment to look up at THE NIGHT SKY. Tantalizingly close. And disturbing. HEAR

DONNER (PRE-LAP) Give them a couple of minutes.

MIKE GOSS (PRE-LAP) You don't have two minutes!

INT. DONNER'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Donner slumped on a couch watching A VID SCREEN - playing a recording from:
INT. MARS LANDER -- DAY

Time readouts and other technical data stream in the corner of the screen -- but this is clearly a cockpit camera view of Donner's moment of reckoning.

Watching the final moment of the video:

DONNER
We'll take our chances...

MIKE GOSS (RADIO)
Not on my watch. You will die. The mission will fail. I need that lander off the planet now. Open the damned valve!

The alarms... the female voice... all closing in on Donner and Ted. Finally, off a silent, burdened look... both knowing that this is a defining, awful moment in their lives...

DONNER
Karen... forgive me....

Then Donner reaches up and pushes the switch to open the valve. AND THE CRAFT BUFFETS from the launch.

HOLD ON DONNER as he sits watching from his couch. Numb with pain and self-doubt. Then he stands, and looks at the room around him. Bachelor astronaut shit. His life.

And bile rises in his throat. Deep seated frustration and anger. Then he suddenly starts pulling things off the wall shelves, throwing them into a pile on the floor.

INT. TED AND EVE CHO'S KITCHEN -- NIGHT

Ted and Eve at the table, looking emotionally worn.

EVE
It's strictly need to know, Ted. You can understand that, can't you?

TED
I'm your husband. I trained the people on that mission. I'm having a hard time, okay? (beat) How long has Rollie known?

EVE
A couple of months. He had to be briefed on procedure. You'll get yours via private uplink as you fly.

A THREE YEAR OLD BOY enters, looking sleepy... clearly their son. Ted swallows his emotion... smiling at the boy.
TED
Hey, nunchuck. Why don't you come and help Daddy pack, then I'll put you to bed.

Ted and Eve trade a look. Their child barely bridging the chasm of betrayal.

INT. CYGNUS / FLIGHT DECK -- NIGHT
Quiet. Solemn. Rollie sits in his commander's seat, Jen in his lap. Something very tender about this as they look out at the stars.

JEN
Maybe I could request a replacement. Come back on the pod.

ROLLIE
There's no time for that. And six years... it's really not that much. I'll be CAPCOM - we'll talk every day.

A pause... something weighing on Rollie.

ROLLIE (CONT'D)
Jen... forgive me.
(off her look)
I want you to know that I was going to be there with you.

JEN
Be there with me?

ROLLIE
Yeah.

JEN
For what?

ROLLIE
(beat, covering)
For... everything. Just remember that. And remember how much I love you.

It's a tender.. but oddly cryptic moment. Jen reaches up behind his ear and pulls Rollie's kermit off. Then pulls hers off, as well, sticking them on the console.

JEN
Show me.

She flips off the switch to the cabin lights... then they kiss tenderly, deeply.
INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

Mike Goss and the rest of the control room can see this on one of the panes on the vid screen. They're moved.

MIKE GOSS
Let's kill the flight deck cameras and give the Mission Commander some privacy with his wife.

A sentiment shared by all. The screen goes dark.

INT. AJAY'S BAY -- NIGHT

The painted Ajay moves to the shrine he's built for Ganesha. Says a silent prayer, then removes the porcelain effigy of the God.

He looks at it for a long moment... his face etched in failure and resignation. Then he takes a deep breath of resolve. Tucks Ganesha into his grav suit and leaves the bay.

EXT. DONNER'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT

Donner is a man possessed as he hauls photos, clothes, books, and space memorabilia... his life.... out onto the lawn. A large pile gathering.

INT. TED CHO'S SON'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

His son has a wall shelf loaded with toys. Many of them space oriented. Ted has pulled his son up onto his hip, and they're carefully considering each toy.

TED
Now there's not much room in my sleeping bay, so maybe it should be something small.

The boy considers... then picks out a small, compact lander model. Ted looks at the model with a pain that he can't hide.

TED (CONT'D)
This is the lander Daddy piloted on the Mars mission.

BOY
I know.

TED
(a pause, then)
Good choice.

Eve watches from the doorway. Feeling oddly apart. Responsible. And now, she finally releases... Allowing the tears to flow.
INT. CYGNUS / FLIGHT DECK -- NIGHT

Rollie and Jen remove the last of their grav suits... and begin to float weightless in their embrace. They float in effortless beauty, silhouetted against the stars outside.

INT. CYGNUS / TRUSS CORRIDOR-- NIGHT

Ajay moving down it... stopping in front of a metal scissor door. Opens it to reveal a complex control panel and a vid screen. Ajay starts entering instructions.

INT. DONNER'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Donner clears out a dresser... dumping two drawers into one, the easier to carry. Then opens the bedside table drawer and pauses.


Hang on Donner....

INT. FLIGHT DECK

Rollie and Jen naked now. Just shadows. Making weightless, balletic love. And, finally, back to

EXT. DONNER'S APARTMENT

As WHOOSH - Donner lights his life on fire. Bitterly watches it go up in flames... looking at

THE BASEBALL in his hand. Contemplating throwing it in. Then deciding he can't. Pockets it and turns his back on the fire... heading toward his car.

INT. CYGNUS / OBSERVATION DECK -- NIGHT

A casual gathering. Everyone but Jen, Rollie and Ajay. Some eat their protein bar dinner.

NADIA
The way I see, they're lucky. You can't call an ambulance on the surface of Mars.

WASSENFELDER
You realize that this points to a common cause. I mean, there's no way that it occurred randomly. It could be viral, environmental, maybe something they were eating... we were eating.
He contemplates his protein bar, disappointed.

MINTZ
They're looking into everything.
Claire's going to be monitoring all of us closely.

Chloe reacts to the SOUND FROM THE NIGHT BEFORE - only this time it chills her even more. Clearly the sound of A BABY CRYING. Chloe looks to the others.

CHLOE
You guys hear that?

PAULA
What?

THE CRYING AGAIN... very clear to Chloe. Freaking her. But she can see no one else is hearing it. Chloe stands... makes an excuse.

CHLOE
Y'know... I'm gonna check on Ajay.

WASSENFELDER
Tell him I got the porno up and running. He can pull off his kermit and enjoy.

As she exits,

FLASHBACK TO

INT. DUKE'S -- NIGHT

This is a cowboy dive with oldies on the playlist and astronauts at the bar. Chloe sits on a barstool sipping water nervously as AJAY approaches.

AJAY
Chloe...

CHLOE
Hey, Ajay.

AJAY
I see you're drinking water, but, if you would like something stronger, I would like to buy it for you... even though I don't drink.

CHLOE
That's sweet, Ajay... but I'm meeting someone... Jen...

Who is quickly moving in...
JEN
Scram, Ajay. Girl talk.

AJAY
Oh... certainly. Maybe next time.

And he moves off as Jen slides onto the stool next to Chloe.

JEN
Somebody's got a boyfriend. If that's vodka, drink up.

Chloe is instantly relieved by the implied message.

CHLOE
Thank, God... I'm not pregnant?

Jen hands her a PINK LITMUS STICK. The end is blue.

JEN
No, you're pregnant. You're just not going to have the baby.

Chloe deflates.

CHLOE
Last time I looked, it was the law.

JEN
Chloe. Look at me. There are ways to take care of the problem.

CHLOE
(a pause)
I don't know...

JEN
There were at least a thousand qualified applicants for your slot. Getting into this program was winning the lottery.

CHLOE
I know... I just...

JEN
You can't give it up for a lust screw. You can't.

Chloe looks to her for a long moment.

JEN (CONT'D)
I know of a guy.

CHLOE
Let me process here a little...
JEN
I know a guy. When you're ready, say the word.

Another moment, then...

CHLOE
I need some air...

She stands and heads out.... passing

DONNER - AT THE DOOR

DONNER
Hey, Chloe.... look...

CHLOE
Not now.

And she's out the door. HOLD on Donner, then from his side..

AJAY
Dude... you don't stand a chance.

INT. CYGNUS / TRUSS CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Chloe moving slowly down it. Freaked out. Hearing A BABY CRY again. Is she crazy? And, once again, the sound leads her to the bulkhead to SECTOR 4. The crying coming from behind the door.

There's a security palm print pad next to the door. Chloe presses her hand to it -- but the door does nothing. A puzzling moment... then

A PERSON - a shadow - far down the corridor - maybe a hundred meters away - catches Chloe's eye. It could only be...

CHLOE
Ajay?

But he doesn't answer. Just disappears through an airlock door, that seals with a metallic swoosh.

Off Chloe to

INT. FLIGHT DECK -- NIGHT

Still dark... but Jen and Rollie have finished and are cuddled in his command chair in their grav suits.

JEN
You think we were the first?

ROLLIE
Not even close. But it is a very elite club.
JEN
You think anyone was watching?

She looks to the cabin's camera, Rollie realizing...

ROLLIE
Damn.

MIKE GOSS (radio)
Cygnus.. This is Control.

Rollie flips on the cabin lights, thinking the worst.

ROLLIE
Go ahead, Control.

MIKE GOSS
Do I have permission to turn on the Flight Deck cameras?

ROLLIE
(relieved smile to Jen)
You do, sir... and thank you for your discretion.

INTERCUTTING

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

Goss is at his station, looking up at the vid screen. The flight deck camera comes back up... but there are a couple of other blank screens.

MIKE GOSS
We didn't want it to wind up in Wassenfelder's vid bank.
(beat)
Listen, we just had the cameras and the operation control for the airlock corridor go offline. Can't seem to get them back up.

Rollie checks his console.

ROLLIE
Yeah, that's what I'm seeing here. I'll get Ajay down there to take a look.

CHLOE (O.S.)
Actually, I think he's down there already.

Jen and Rollie turn to CHLOE, who stands by the entrance to the flight deck.
CHLOE (CONT'D)
I just saw Ajay entering the airlock corridor. I tried to follow, but I couldn’t open the door.

INT. AIRLOCK CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Ajay floats, weightless, in the deep blue light... chanting the Gavatri Mantra. His painted face, calm with a detached resolution, is deeply disturbing.

Lowers the helmet of the large EVA suit he’s wearing over his head. Clearly preparing to leave the ship.

TO BLACK

END OF ACT FOUR
ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. CYGNUS / AIRLOCK CORRIDOR -- NIGHT

Ajay, still chanting, and now fully dressed in his EVA gear, punches in a code at the airlock we saw Chloe exiting at the opening of the show.

The inner leaves open.... and he floats inside the lock - only one gate between him and the void of space.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

The activity upped considerably from the last time we saw it. Some very tense faces. Among them

The EECOM and GNC systems engineers, both working feverishly.

EECOM
Flight, I'm showing an EVA pack up and running.

MIKE GOSS is pacing at his station...

MIKE GOSS
Dammit, he's going for a walk. How soon until you can override his instructions?

EECOM
Working on it. Give us five minutes.

MIKE GOSS
If he's in the suit, we don't have five minutes.
(beat)
Where the hell is Donner?

FIDO
On his way in.

MIKE GOSS
And the time to Venus burn?

FIDO
Six hours, nine minutes...

CLAIRE DOUCETTE - at her station.

CLAIRE
Ajay's heart rate and BP are spiking.

MIKE GOSS
(keys a switch)
Cygnus, have you made contact?
INTERCUTTING

INT. CYGNUS / FLIGHT DECK -- NIGHT

Nadia is now in her seat, working with Rollie...

NADIA
Negative, Control. Rollie's running through the channels. It look like his COM's off.

MIKE GOSS
Does anyone know if Hindus commit suicide?

DONNER (O.S.)
They don't.

Goss turns as DONNER arrives - hurriedly, deeply concerned.

DONNER (CONT'D)
At least, I don't think they do. Where is he? Let me talk to him.

MIKE GOSS
He's got his COM turned off.

DONNER
Then that's not good...

CAPCOM interrupts with an advisory...

CAPCOM (RADIO)
Cygnus, be advised that you're coming up on daylight in ten, nine, eight....

INT. THE AIRLOCK -- NIGHT

Ajay punches in the open code, with his thick, gloved hands.

CAPCOM (RADIO)
...seven...six....five...

THE GATE LEAVES slowly iris open...

CAPCOM (CONT'D)
...four...three...

EXT. CYGNUS / EARTH ORBIT -- NIGHT/DAY

Ajay floats outside... and is hit by the FIRST RAYS OF DAY. His face paint eerie, in context. The only emotion that we can read is.... one of breathless rapture. Tears coming to his eyes. Hold for a long moment, then

DONNER (V.O.)
Space travel is a fool's game.
INTERCUT WITH

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM

Ajay's small figure now visible outside the ship on the giant vid-screen. Eve Cho joining Donner at Goss' side.

EVE
He's moving away from the ship.

DONNER
Ajay... please don't...

DONNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Human beings are sixty percent water.

INT. CYGNUS / OBSERVATION DECK -- DAY

Wassenfelder, Chloe, Paula, and Jen watching through the vista pane, as Ajay floats away.

DONNER (V.O.)
They sleep, eat, defecate, can't follow directions, and explode like pinatas when exposed to the vacuum of space.

CHLOE
What's he doing?

PAULA
Putting himself in orbit.

Chloe can barely breathe.

CHLOE
Oh, Ajay....

WASSENFELDER
Wherever he's going, I hope he makes it.

Paula, standing beside him, actually puts her hand on his shoulder, sharing the sentiment.

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- NIGHT

The entire room looking at the wide shot of Cygnus over earth. You can just make out the astronaut - a small gleaming dot drifting up. Drifting away.

EECOM
Flight - We've just been able to override his programming. We have control of the airlocks.
MIKE GOSS
Did you copy that Cygnus?

INT. CYGNUS / FLIGHT DECK -- DAY

ROLLIE
We see that here, too.

NADIA
I go out. I go out and get him.

ROLLIE
We want to go out and get him. Do you copy?

Goss is silent... thinking....

DONNER
Let her go, Mike....

NADIA
I can get him!

DONNER
Let her go.

Then...

MIKE GOSS
Negative. I'll eat the loss of an EVA suit - I can't afford to lose another crew member.

The entire room deflates. Donner is numb... Goss turning to him.

MIKE GOSS (CONT'D)
You and Cho lift off in two hours - get your ass in gear.

But this is a different Donner. This is a Donner who has burned his past. His jaw slowly stiffens. His eyes hardening with resolve.

DONNER (V.O.)
That reporter's right about every single item... except the initial premise.

DONNER (CONT'D)
That's it?

MIKE GOSS
That's what?

DONNER
You're just going to let him die?
MIKE GOSS
I have six hours to get a fifty billion dollar mission on its way to Venus. I don't have time to screw around with Ajay, Donner. Don't piss me off.

All eyes on them. The room quiet. Then Donner just hauls off and decks him with a wicked punch.

DONNER
When I get back, I quit.

Donner turns to the EECOM.

DONNER (CONT'D)
Harry, what's he got left in that suit? Eight hours?

EECOM
Give or take.

Then Donner heads out, leaving a smiling room behind.

DONNER (V.O.)
Man belongs in space because of exactly what he brings into the void.

AJAY - IN SPACE

Floating high above Cygnus with an incredible view of Earth. Emotional. Living his dream.

Ajay reaches down and pulls up something tethered to his suit. The figurine of Ganesha. Showing it the view.

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL -- DAY

A booster rocket lifts off, a brilliant torch aimed at the sky.

INT. SERVICE POD CAPSULE - LIFTOFF

Donner and Ted pulling G's.

DONNER (V.O.)
We carry the baggage of our past... our fears, our superstitions and our failings.

INT. CYGNUS / OBSERVATION DECK

CHLOE
Mercury went direct two hours ago.

PAULA
Too late for Ajay.
WASSENFELDER
No, it's not...

DONNER (V.O.)
But we also carry our hopes and our dreams. The hard lessons learned from our lives...

And he nods out to

THE SERVICE POD - THEIR POV

moving along the length of Cygnus... toward the distant glowing dot that is Ajay... riding on top of the ship's giant shield.

CHLOE
Donner....

INT. MISSION CONTROL - CONTROL ROOM -- MORNING

The Vid screen showing Donner and Ted's pod clearly moving toward the wrong end of the ship. Goss, Eve Cho, and the entire room watching.... Goss nursing a sore jaw.

MIKE GOSS
Donner, Cho... you will dock your craft to Cygnus now.

INTERCUT THE ELEMENTS as

INT./EXT. SERVICE POD

DONNER
Unless you can override these controls, Mike - I think we're making a little detour.

ON CHLOE - hearing that...

EVE CHO can't hide the pride she feels...

DONNER AND TED trade a smile.... then look out to

AJAY - SITTING ATOP THE SHIELD

not more than twenty feet from them. Making eye contact.

Donner signals 41 with his fingers. Ajay reaches down to his suits control panel and turns his COM.

EECOM
They're on 41.

Mission Control, CHLOE and our astronauts on Cygnus listen in as...
Ted pulls the small craft to within a few feet of Ajay -- Donner and he almost eye to eye as...

DONNER
It's an amazing view, isn't it?

AJAY
Ganesha and I have been enjoying it very much.

He reveals the murti of Ganesha. Donner, of course, recognizes it from his dream.

DONNER
Ganesha...

AJAY
He is the Lord of Obstacles... but also of New Beginnings.

DONNER
Then maybe you guys would like to hitch a ride back in. Start something new.

AJAY
This is my path, Donner. Right here. All the way to Venus.

DONNER
Correct me if I'm wrong, but, if you stay out here, don't you have to start all over in the next life?

Ajay doesn't respond.

DONNER (CONT'D)
You're always saying we each have our lessons to learn -- our obstacles to overcome. Maybe this is your big one, Ajay. Maybe you overcome this and you take a big giant step toward nirvana.

Ajay's eyes meet Donner's, welling with emotion...

AJAY
You don't understand...

DONNER
I think I do. My path is here now. With these people, on this ship. Your path is now on Earth.

(beat)
But we can't do it alone, Ajay. You, me, the ship... we're a three-way. We need each other.
A long pause....

DONNER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
For all our faults, whether we guide our own destiny or are guided by it, we are resilient. We can adapt.

AJAY
There is something I must do first.

It is huge moment of relief...

IN MISSION CONTROL - a soft cheer tempered by Goss' cool.

ON THE CYGNUS FLIGHT DECK - High fives and, between Rollie and Jen, an emotional hug.

ON THE OBSERVATION DECK - Wassenfelder and Paula in a once in a lifetime embrace....

CHLOE looking out the vista pane at Donner's pod. Deeply moved by what he's just done.

DONNER (V.O.)
We can find redemption in simple acts of humanity.

INT. DONNER'S BAY -- NIGHT

Donner looking into the lens. Finishing his personal journal; this is what we've been hearing.

DONNER (V.O.)
I've never heard of a robot or a probe capable of doing that.
(beat)
So, if space travel's a fool's game, then I guess that's what I am. But I've never felt more alive, or more human.

A pause, then he pulls something up into frame. HIS BASEBALL. Gives it a slow twist and pulls his hand away.... the ball rotating slowly as it floats.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. THE EARTH IN SPACE -- DAY

The same size as the baseball. CYGNUS enters frame, still in orbit. The service pod is gone.

MISSION CONTROL
Cygnus, you are go for a Venus burn in five... four.. three... two
INT. FLIGHT DECK

The crew in pressure suits and helmets, strapped into their seats... feeling the big push as

NADIA hits the burn button on the console.... and the ship heads off into space.

Visit each of their faces...

TED - burdened with his knowledge. His responsibility.

JEN - tears welling in her eyes.

PAULA - saying a silent prayer.

WASSENFELDER - enjoying the ride.

MINTZ - wishing he had a drink.

CHLOE - thinking about that baby cry... stealing a glance over to

DONNER - The father who hasn't a clue. And then Chloe smiles... somehow comforted that he's here.

Then to

EXT. EARTH ORBIT

The home planet... as AJAY'S FIGURINE OF GANESHA comes into view in the foreground... moves past, THE CAMERA PANNING WITH IT to reveal that the figurine has been attached to the very top of Cygnus' shield.

Riding the front of the ship like a hood ornament. The Lord of Obstacles and New Beginnings, leading them all toward Venus.

TO BLACK

END OF SHOW