

THE X-FILES

"Space"

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THE X-FILES

"Space"

CAST

MULDER  
SCULLY

MICHELLE GENEROO  
COL. BELT

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
2ND CONTROLLER  
REPORTER  
LAB-COATED SCIENTIST  
NERDISH SCIENTIST  
YOUNG SCIENTIST  
PARAMEDIC  
PREACHER

THE X-FILES

"Space"

SETS

EXTERIORS:

AIR BASE - ALBUQUERQUE  
CITY PARK - WASHINGTON D.C.  
HOUSTON CEMETERY  
HOUSTON RURAL ROAD  
JOHNSON SPACE CENTER, HOUSTON  
KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FLORIDA  
NEIGHBORHOOD - ALBUQUERQUE  
OUTER SPACE  
RURAL ROAD EMBANKMENT  
RURAL ROAD INTERSECTION  
SHUTTLE LAUNCH PAD - DAY  
TALL HOUSTON HIGH-RISE CONDOMINIUM

INTERIORS:

COL. BELT'S CONDOMINIUM  
/HALLWAY  
/BEDROOM  
/CORRIDOR  
PASADENA APARTMENT  
COL. BELT'S OFFICE  
DATABANK COMPLEX  
ENERGY PLANT  
HOSPITAL ROOM  
HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL  
/ELEVATOR  
/LONG HALLWAY  
/MEN'S WASHROOM  
/RECORDS VAULT  
/PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM  
JET PROPULSION LABORATORY, PASADENA  
MICHELLE GENEROO'S CAR  
MULDER AND SCULLY'S CAR

SPACE

FADE IN:

1 INT. JET PROPULSION LABORATORY, PASADENA - DAY -

1

LEGEND to indicate, over: A BROADCAST FIELD REPORTER looking into the CAMERA, filing a news report. Behind him are 20 SCIENTISTS celebrating as if they've just won the World Series.

REPORTER

I'm here in Pasadena with the NASA mission control team as they celebrate scientific history: the first close up photographic transmissions of Mars from the Viking Observer spacecraft. Photos that --

INSERT NASA PHOTOS of Mars surface geography over:

REPORTER (V.O.)

-- have created something of a stir by revealing surprising geologic information: the presence of large amounts of water locked in Mars' polar ice caps. Water that, some speculate, could have possibly sustained life on the planet. Even more controversial is one image of a land formation --

The now famous image of THE MARS FACE appears on screen, over:

REPORTER (V.O.)

A formation that looks like a sculpted human face. However, NASA officials are denying it as an indication of an alien civilization --

A NASA SPOKESMAN (30s) appears on screen, talking with the Reporter. An on-screen legend identifies him as LT. COL. MARCUS AURELIUS BELT, Viking Orbiter Project Director.

COL. BELT

(smiling)

It's nothing more than a trick of light and shadows. A geologic anomaly. I'm sorry to say the only sculptors at work here are the solar winds that blow across the surface of Mars at 300 miles an hour, ten months a year.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

A close-up picture of The Mars Face comes back on-screen, as sound fades, providing a transition to:

2 INT. PASADENA APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

2

CAMERA PULLS BACK off a photo of the Mars Face, revealing Lt. Col. Belt holding the photo, loosening his tie. He puts the photo down on the top of a dresser, staring at it INTENTLY, doubtfully.

TIME CUT TO:

HIGH ANGLE ON COL. BELT, lying in bed with the lights out, tossing and turning. Sleepless, disturbed. Finally turning and lying on his back, staring wide-eyed at CAMERA; at:

COL. BELT'S POV - of the "cottage cheese" acoustic ceiling. When it suddenly begins to MOVE, the areas of dark and light starting to flow and swirl, not unlike a dust storm battering the surface of Mars.

SHOT - of Col. Belt, fear and confusion playing on his face.

RESUME CEILING

as the grainy acoustic pattern begins to come into resolution, revealing THE MARS FACE staring stone-like down at the Colonel, its grim countenance taking on a bas-relief dimension until -

THE FACE FLIES STRAIGHT AT COL. BELT -- morphing into the image of an otherworldly gargoyle, its gaping jaws and gnashing teeth snapping at the air only inches from the Colonel's. As we go to:

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

3 EXT. KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - FLORIDA - PRESENT DAY (STOCK) 3

The Space Shuttle sits on the launch pad, pointing toward the heavens. A 100 ton skyrocket waiting for its fuse to be lit. We are in the last phase of countdown. Under:

MISSION CONTROL

This is shuttle launch control with T minus two minutes and counting.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER

OTC to CDR, how do you read?

MISSION CONTROL

Loud and clear.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER

CDR Houston, how do you read?

4 INT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER, MISSION CONTROL - HOUSTON - CONTINUOUS 4

LEGEND OVER the central command center for the shuttle operation. An attractive woman, MICHELLE GENEROO, the communications commander, sits at a console wearing a headset. Standing behind her is Lt. Col Marcus Aurelius Belt, the NASA man from the teaser. 15 years older now.

GENEROO

Loud and clear.

MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)

Side hatch close out and white room configuration is complete.

Retracting orbiter arm. All systems go for APU start.

Transfer to internal power.

(beat)

Oxygen vent hood retracted.

CUT BACK TO:

5 EXT. SHUTTLE LAUNCH PAD - DAY - CONTINUOUS (STOCK) 5

Plumes of white steam begin to billow beneath the Shuttle, the bleeding off of liquid O2.

SHOT (STOCK) - The superstructure surrounding the shuttle begins to pull away.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
External tank is at flight  
pressure. Lock your visors and  
initiate your O2 flow. Y'all  
have a good trip.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Roger that. Ten four.

MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Go for auto sequence start.  
Booster hydraulic power units  
have started. Go for main engine  
start. T minus ten seconds and  
counting.

The white plumes have now turned into billowing clouds. 900  
million pounds of raw thrust about to be unleashed.

MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
T minus nine, eight, seven, six,  
five, four, three -

WHEN SIRENS START TO GO OFF. ALARMS and KLAXONS.

MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Abort liftoff. Abort liftoff.  
System failure. Abort liftoff.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. CITY PARK - WASHINGTON D.C. - PRESENT DAY

6

CAMERA FINDS Agents Mulder and Scully sitting on a park bench.  
MOTHERS are pushing baby strollers, KIDS are playing on the  
green swath of lawn.

SCULLY  
What did the note say?

Pulling a small white piece of paper from his sportcoat pocket,  
handing it to Scully.

MULDER  
Just that they worked for NASA.  
They needed to talk to someone  
from the FBI.

SCULLY  
Why the cloak and dagger routine?

MULDER  
I have no idea.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

SCULLY  
You think it's a crank?

Checking his watch.

MULDER  
It's starting to look that way.

ANGLE ON

A WOMAN dressed in slacks, sunglasses and a short suede jacket. She walks past Scully and Mulder, slows, then stops and turns. Mulder, who's already taken notice, makes eye contact with the woman. She walks back in their direction, as:

Agent Mulder rises. Scully a moment later. The Woman approaches them. If we've been paying attention we'll recognize her as Michelle Generoo, the communications commander at Houston Mission Control in the preceding scene.

JOGGER  
My name is Michelle Generoo. I  
sent you the note.

The woman casts nervous glances around the park.

MULDER  
Special Agent Fox Mulder. This  
is --

SCULLY  
-- Special Agent Scully.

Generoo begins walking. Scully and Mulder follow.

GENEROO  
I'm sorry to have to take these  
precautions -- I flew up from  
Houston this morning. I work at  
the Johnson Space Center.

MULDER  
In what capacity?

GENEROO  
I'm the mission control  
communications commander for the  
Space Shuttle program.

Scully and Mulder trade quick glances. Impressive, not to mention unexpected. Generoo, however, communicates this without appearing at all self-impressed. She is direct, somewhat military in her manner.

(CONTINUED)



6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

SCULLY  
What brings you --

GENEROO  
-- I have reason to believe  
there may be a saboteur at work  
inside NASA.

Generoo stops, turns, lets this admission hang there. Mulder  
studies Generoo's intense eyes. She seems to be keying on him.

MULDER  
And you have evidence of --

GENEROO  
I don't know. I may.

The woman unzips her jacket, removes an 8x10 x-ray diagram.

GENEROO  
(matter-of-fact)  
Two weeks ago a Shuttle mission  
was scrubbed three seconds before  
liftoff when an APU valve  
malfunctioned. If the flight had  
not been aborted there was a  
great chance the liquid fuel  
system and the orbiter would have  
exploded on the launch pad.

She hands the x-ray diagram to Mulder.

GENEROO  
This was sent to me in the mail.  
It looks like the APU valve may  
have been tampered with.

INSERT - x-ray schematic of a large metal valve.

GENEROO  
The scoring pattern on the  
interior of the fitting indicates  
deep and regular grooves.

SCULLY  
Do you have any idea who sent it  
to you?

GENEROO  
No. No idea. But I can tell you  
the "official" analysis of the  
malfunction was simple mechanical  
failure.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (3)

6

MULDER

Does anyone else share your suspicions?

A difficult question by the look on the woman's face.

GENEROO

(nervous irony)

If they do, they're not talking to the FBI.

SCULLY

Why is that?

GENEROO

Because NASA's image has been tarnished by some recent high profile failures. We're under a microscope and in danger of losing our funding. A rumor of another Shuttle disaster could sink the entire space program.

SCULLY

And you're here because you feel they'd risk lives to prevent the publicity? To save the program?

GENEROO

(carefully)

You have to understand -- what's at stake isn't just the program.

MULDER

(finishing the thought)

It's the future.

Mulder and Generoo lock eyes again. An immediate simpatico.

GENEROO

I believe in the space program. I believe in the people who run it. But there's another launch window in two days and... my reasons may sound selfish, but my fiancée is the Shuttle Commander on that mission.

Off Mulder and Scully's reaction, we:

CUT TO:

7 EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER, HOUSTON - NEXT DAY (STOCK) 7

With LEGEND over, to establish.

8 INT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - ELEVATOR - DAY - CONTINUOUS 8

Mulder and Scully are riding up. The floors BLEEP by as they ascend.

SCULLY

What would motivate someone to sabotage the Space Shuttle?

MULDER

(matter of fact)

Well... if you were a terrorist there probably isn't a more potent symbol of American progress and prosperity. If you were an opponent of Big Science, NASA itself represents a vast money trench that exists outside the crucible and debate of the democratic process. And, of course, there are those futurists who believe the Space Shuttle is a rusty old bucket that should be mothballed; a dinosaur spacecraft designed in the 1970s by scientists setting their sights on space in an ever-declining scale.

SCULLY

(an ironic smile)

And we thought we could rest easy with the fall of the Soviet Union.

MULDER

(smiles)

Not to mention certain fringe elements who accuse the government ITSELF of space sabotage. The failure of the Hubble telescope and the Mars Observer directly connected to a conspiracy to deny us evidence.

SCULLY

Evidence of what?

MULDER

Alien civilizations.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

DING. The elevator doors open. Scully gives Mulder a smirking look before she steps out. A look to match his sly grin.

SCULLY

Of course.

Waiting for them outside the elevator is a NASA PAGE.

9. INT. LONG HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

9

They follow the Page down a long hallway, its walls lined with framed photos of Apollo, Gemini, Mercury space flights, etc. Mulder surveys the walls like a gawky kid.

MULDER

Gemini Eight. Look at that.

Scully looks, not sure which photo he's talking about.

SCULLY

What?

MULDER

Neil Armstrong almost died. Three years before he walked on the moon. They had to make an emergency landing in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

SCULLY

You remember all this stuff?

MULDER

You never wanted to be an astronaut when you were a kid, Scully?

The Page smiles at Scully. Acknowledging one of the classic fantasies of the American male.

SCULLY

I guess I missed that phase.

The Page leads them to a door with a plaque proclaiming it the office of COL. MARCUS AURELIUS BELT, SPACE SHUTTLE PROGRAM DIRECTOR. The Page knocks.

COL. BELT (O.S.)

Come in.

10 INT. COLONEL M.A. BELT'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS.

10

Col. Belt sits behind a large desk, an archetypal figure of an American hero. Scully enters the room as Belt rises from his chair.

SCULLY

Colonel Belt. I'm Special Agent  
Dana Scully and this is Special --

Scully turns to introduce Mulder but finds that he is still in the doorway, looking a little uncomfortable - for Mulder. He smiles a crooked smile, takes a deep breath and enters. He moves to shake the Col.'s hand.

MULDER

Colonel Belt. Fox Mulder. I'm  
a... you were a big hero of mine  
when I was a kid.

COL. BELT

Thank you.

MULDER

I stayed up all night to watch  
your space walk when I was  
fourteen.

COL. BELT

Now we're doing it like it's a  
stroll around the block.

(beat)

How can I help you?

The threesome all take seats. Scully takes the x-ray schematic from her briefcase, pushes it across the desk.

SCULLY

This found its way to the FBI.  
Do you recognize it?

COL. BELT

(frowning)

Sure. It's an APU valve.

SCULLY

Do you have any reason to believe  
the damage to it was part of an  
attempt to sabotage the Space  
Shuttle?

A moment of leaden silence.

COL. BELT

No.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

He looks then to Mulder who feels almost guilty for having to be part of this investigation.

SCULLY

Do you have any reason to suspect sabotage at all?

Col. Belt leans forward in his chair, resting his elbows on his desk in a way that is at once calm and imposing.

COL. BELT

No reason whatsoever. And I strongly suggest that if you have any respect for this program or the people who have devoted their lives to it you will keep those accusations under wraps.

SCULLY

Looking at this evidence -- sir -- would you consider postponing the Shuttle flight until a full investigation could be conducted?

COL. BELT

Look, I don't know where you got this specious artifact but I can assure you that every precaution has been taken to rectify the problem. We've been waiting two weeks for a window to initiate this mission. We've got a payload to deliver.

SCULLY

Col. Belt... was there ever an internal investigation into this matter?

Belt takes a beat for emphasis.

COL. BELT

The part you have here is designed, inspected and installed by over a hundred highly trained scientists. With the security measures we take it would be virtually impossible for a man working alone, even two or four men, to do what you are suggesting.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED: (2)

10

SCULLY

Do your security precautions include screening or vetting of all outside contractors as well?

Col. Belt maintains an air of composure and restraint, despite Scully's firm but polite interrogation.

COL. BELT

Let me assure you there isn't a person at this facility who doesn't want to see that Shuttle go into space, complete its mission and come back to earth like Winged Victory herself.

(checks his watch)

And in about thirteen hours, God willing, you're going to see just that.

Agent Mulder clears his throat, just in case Col. Belt forgot he was in the room.

MULDER

(politely)

Would there be any problem with us watching the liftoff here at mission control?

COL. BELT

Please. Be my guests.

Belt gives them a confident smile, as they rise. Scully and Mulder turn and move to exit. Scully leaning over to Mulder on the way out.

SCULLY

(sotto, sarcastic)

Didn't you want to get his autograph?

As we:

CUT TO:

11 INT. ENERGY PLANT - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY - LATER

11

Mulder and Scully stand with a group of LAB-COATED SCIENTISTS on the catwalk above the massive room, filled with pipes and ducting, turbines and generators. Below them are many more LAB COATED WORKERS.

One of the Scientists is looking at the x-ray schematic.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

11

SCIENTIST

Where did you say you got this?

SCULLY

It came to us anonymously.

SCIENTIST

This is an APU valve alright. I couldn't say it's the same one that came off the Shuttle.

MULDER

But the valve did malfunction --

SCIENTIST

Yes. But our final conclusion was that it was system, not a material one. This doesn't make sense.

SCULLY

What doesn't make sense?

SCIENTIST

(re: the x-ray)

This scoring here. This valve is made out of ferrocyan titanium.

MULDER

You didn't order this analysis?

SCIENTIST

No. I've never seen this before. But we're under outside contract to NASA. They may have ordered it.

MULDER

As a matter of course you wouldn't do a material analysis when a part malfunctioned?

SCIENTIST

Every Shuttle has flown with that same APU valve. We haven't had a problem. To do a material analysis and redesign would delay the program for months. Not to mention the cost.

SCULLY

Who makes that decision?

(CONTINUED)



11 CONTINUED: (2)

11

SCIENTIST  
Col. Belt, ultimately. Based on  
our recommendation.

SCULLY  
Is it conceivable that to avoid  
these costly delays the program  
is being pushed ahead without  
proper material safety  
precautions?

Even the idea, given the history of the Challenger incident,  
makes this group uneasy.

SCIENTIST  
Look, the material we're talking  
about -- you couldn't dent it  
with a jackhammer unless you get  
it up past 500 degrees Celsius.

SCULLY  
Is that impossible?

SCIENTIST  
Well... no. Not if somebody with  
a jackhammer walked through fire  
out there on the launch pad and  
had a whack at it during staging.

The other Scientists nod seriously, chuckle nervously. Mulder  
smiles, nods back as the Scientists file away.

SCIENTIST  
There are a thousand things that  
could go wrong with the Shuttle.  
And about a thousand people who  
make sure they don't. I don't  
know what else to say.

MULDER  
Thanks.

He and Scully move to the railing, looking down over the busy  
plant.

SCULLY  
What do you think?

MULDER  
I think it's amazing how much  
faith we put in machines.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3)

11

MULDER (CONT'D)

(beat)

I can't believe Col. Belt would endanger the lives of those astronauts if he knew there was a problem. He was an astronaut himself.

SCULLY

(re: the x-ray)

What about this? Do you think it's bogus?

Mulder looks down over the energy plant, busy with workers, shaking his head as he wonders aloud.

MULDER

God, I hope so.

Off their exchange of looks we:

CUT TO:

12 INT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER MISSION CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

12

A LARGE CENTRAL SCREEN displays a beautiful night shot of the Space Shuttle on the launching pad. Ghostly streamers of steam rise up from beneath it. It is truly a sight to behold, a miracle of man's will and imagination.

ANGLE ON CONTROL ROOM

With its familiar rows of consoles manned by SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS; a room charged with the nervous energy of anticipation. CAMERA FINDS Michelle Generoo in the center of all this activity, wearing a headset but looking around, finding:

GENEROO'S POV

Mulder and Scully standing at the rear of the room. They nod furtively to her.

RESUME GENEROO

acknowledging them with a look as Col. Belt moves up behind her. Her attention goes quickly to Belt.

COL. BELT

Here we go.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
This is Shuttle Launch Control  
with T minus two minutes and  
counting.

SHOT - A large digital clock turns over to 1:59. (NOTE: THE  
MISSION CONTROL DIALOGUE PLAYS AS A P.A.)

ANGLE ON SCREEN (STOCK)

where the Shuttle sits on the launch pad.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
OTC to CDR, how do you read?

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL  
Loud and clear.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
CDR Houston, how do you read?

RESUME GENEROO, COL. BELT

GENEROO  
Loud and clear.

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Side hatch close out and white  
room configuration is complete.  
Retracting orbiter arm. All  
systems go for APU start.  
Transfer to internal power.

ANGLE ON MULDER AND SCULLY

their tight, nervous faces as CAMERA PUSHES IN SLIGHTLY.

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Oxygen vent hood retracted.  
External tank is at flight  
pressure.

RESUME SHUTTLE, ON SCREEN (STOCK)

As the superstructure completes its pull away from the orbiter.  
(Our music cue tightens like a rubber band.)

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Okay CDR. Lock your visors and  
initiate your O2 flow. Y'all  
have a good trip.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
Roger that. Ten four.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Go for auto sequence start.  
Booster hydraulic units have  
started. Go for main engine  
start. T-minus ten and counting --

THE FACES OF THE OTHER ENGINEERS, SCIENTISTS

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Nine, eight, seven --

ON GENEROO, COL. BELT

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Six, five, four --

ON SCULLY, MULDER

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Three, two, one...

RESUME SHUTTLE

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
Ignition.

As the launch pad lights up like an erupting volcano. A moment of terror before the Shuttle begins to climb off the ground, slowly at first and then gaining rapid speed.

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
We have liftoff of the Shuttle  
Orbiter.

As the Shuttle continues on its swift ascent into the night sky.

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
CDR Houston, betcha y'all never  
seen a more beautiful sight.

ON HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL ROOM

The Scientists and Engineers surrounding Michelle Generoo let out a LOUD CHEER, spontaneous applause.

GENEROO  
Roger that. Ten four.

KENNEDY MISSION CONTROL (FILTER)  
She's all yours, Houston.

CAMERA TILTS UP to Col. Belt clapping his hands with the others, turning to find:

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (3)

12

SCULLY AND MULDER

applauding, too, in the rear of the room.

RESUME SHUTTLE - ON SCREEN

becoming smaller and smaller as it recedes away into the dark night sky.

RESUME COL. BELT

giving his fellow mission control members a confident "thumbs up." CAMERA TILTS DOWN to Michelle Generoo, sitting at her console. She gives a furtive, relieved thumbs up to:

RESUME MULDER AND SCULLY

nodding in agreement.

RESUME COL. BELT

As he NOTICES this exchange between Generoo and the Agents. Making the connection, his jubilant expression turns. As we:

DISSOLVE TO:

13 INT. RENTAL CAR RETURN KIOSK - HOUSTON AIRPORT - NIGHT - LATER

13

Mulder and Scully are standing, waiting behind another CUSTOMER, preparing to return their rental car. The sound of jets passing overhead.

MULDER

Well, I have to say, that almost fulfilled my boyhood fantasy.

SCULLY

Which fantasy is that? Being an astronaut or averting disaster?

MULDER

C'mon, Scully. You've got to admit that was exciting.

SCULLY

(teasing him)

Yeah. It ranks right up there with getting a pony and learning to braid my own hair.

As they move to the counter to sign their paperwork, we see through the window that a car has pulled up outside.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

Exiting in a rush is Michelle Generoo. She hurries inside the building. Mulder and Scully turning on:

GENEROO  
Something's gone wrong.

MULDER  
What happened?

GENEROO  
(quickly)  
Something's wrong with the Shuttle. We had some trouble with the solid rocket boosters but we were able to fix it. We changed watch and I went home to get some sleep. I got a call twenty minutes ago that communication with the Shuttle had gone down.

Off the Agents' fast-rising concern, we:

CUT TO:

14 EXT. HOUSTON RURAL ROAD - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

14

Generoo's car passes at a clip. It is followed momentarily by Mulder and Scully's car.

15 INT. MULDER AND SCULLY'S RENTAL CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

15

Mulder drives while Scully fiddles with the radio.

MULDER  
They have a press blackout in effect. Chances are the media won't know about it.

SCULLY  
(looking ahead)  
She's turning.

16 EXT. RURAL ROAD INTERSECTION - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

16

Generoo's car takes the turn at speed, blazes off. The Agents' rental car seconds the maneuver, speeding off in pursuit.

17 INT. MICHELLE GENEROO'S CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

17

As she depresses the accelerator to the floor, reaching up to adjust her rear view mirror.

As, up ahead, a low-lying patch of fog hangs over the road. As she gets comes within range of this rogue cloud of mist, IT SUDDENLY COMES TO LIFE.

THE WISPY CLOUD BECOMES A NOW-FAMILIAR MARS FACE IMAGE. The terrifying face leaping straight at Michelle through her windshield. Causing her to throw her arms up and shield her face.

CUT TO:

18 INT. MULDER AND SCULLY'S CAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

18

As they watch Michelle's car swerve out of control up ahead.

MULDER  
What's she doing?

The astronaut's car finally swerving completely off the road and disappearing down an embankment.

As we:

END ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

19 EXT. RURAL ROAD EMBANKMENT - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

19

Mulder and Scully are scuttling down the embankment where Michelle's car has turned over, its rear wheels still spinning and the engine revving. Mulder is the first one to the vehicle.

MULDER

Michelle!

He drops to the ground, tries to get in the driver's side window but the roof has been flattened.

MULDER

I can see her!

SCULLY

Michelle!

MICHELLE'S VOICE

I'm stuck.

They both hurry to the other side of the car. Mulder is able to flatten himself to the ground and shimmy into the passenger window. Finally the engine quits revving.

MULDER

Give me your arm.

MICHELLE

I'm wedged in here.

SCULLY

Can you move?!

MICHELLE

Just get me out of here.

MULDER

Can you push with your legs?

MICHELLE

I'm pushing.

And after a few tense moments, Michelle's arm appears. Mulder gets a solid foothold, reaching in and taking the woman under her arms, sliding her slowly to safety out of the upended vehicle.

SCULLY

Don't try and move.

(CONTINUED)



19 CONTINUED:

19

MICHELLE  
I think I'm okay.

SCULLY  
We're going to get you some  
medical help.

MICHELLE  
I've got to get back to Houston.

As she begins pulling herself up to her knees, obviously sore  
and bruised from the tumble.

MULDER  
What happened?

MICHELLE  
Something came at me out of the  
fog. I don't know. The next  
thing I knew I was upside down.

Michelle pulls herself to her feet with the help of the Agents.  
They start up the embankment, as we:

CUT TO:

THE LARGE CENTER SCREEN AT HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL

flashing with an intermittent picture of the cabin of the Space  
Shuttle, then flashing back to black in the strobing way that  
is the result of transmission interference.

MISSION CONTROLLER'S VOICE  
OTC, this is Houston. Do you  
copy?

We are:

20 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - NIGHT- CONTINUOUS

20

A MALE CONTROLLER (40s) occupies Michelle Generoo's seat in the  
midst of the other scientists and engineers who are standing  
by, silent and tense.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Your transmission is breaking up,  
Houston.

CAMERA RACKS on Generoo, Mulder and Scully coming into the  
room, moving hurriedly toward us.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

                  GENEROO  
                  (to Mission Controller)  
What's happening?

                  MISSION CONTROLLER  
We've got a malf in the OMS and  
RCF systems. They can't get the  
orbiter in an attitude rotation.  
Temperature's pushing a hundred  
and three in the cabin and we've  
got downlink transmission  
problems.

                  (noticing her bangs,  
                  bruises)  
What happened to you?

                  GENEROO  
I had a car accident. What's  
their position?

                  MISSION CONTROLLER  
Just passing over Eastern Africa.

                  GENEROO  
Try patching them in through the  
Seychelles tracking station.

                  SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
                  (garbled)  
Getting a little warm up here,  
Houston. Sure could use some air  
conditioning.

                  MICHELLE  
                  (depressing intercom  
                  button)  
Hang in there, OCR.

                  SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
We're puttin' on our Hawaiian  
shirts.

Mulder and Scully stand behind Michelle, watching the screen  
strobing from picture to black, picture to black.

                  MULDER  
                  (to Scully)  
The orbiter maneuvering system  
has malfunctioned. Without it  
they can't rotate the Shuttle.  
They need to rotate it away from  
the sun to keep the orbiter cool.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (2)

20

2ND CONTROLLER  
We've got a drop in cabin  
pressure. 21 kilopascals and  
declining.

GENEROO  
(with quiet dread)  
They're going to burn up.

Murmurs, nervous shifting in seats. The pressure in the room  
builds as the pressure in the Shuttle drops.

MULDER  
Where's Col. Belt?

MISSION CONTROLLER  
He's on his way.

GENEROO  
(at her futility)  
Dammit.  
(beat)  
What happened when they went to  
backup?

MISSION CONTROLLER  
Backup systems failed to respond.

GENEROO  
What about telemetry?

MISSION CONTROLLER  
We could not autoactivate.

GENEROO  
Something's interfering with our  
telemetry. Someone's screwing  
with our uplink signals from this  
end.

MULDER  
How can they do that?

CUT TO:

21 EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS (STOCK)

21

Shot of several giant communications dishes pointing toward the  
heavens.

CUT TO:

22 INT. ENERGY PLANT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

22

HIGH ANGLE ON Mulder and Scully, running with Michelle, moving through the maze of turbines, generators and machinery that occupies the lower floor of the giant building. Sprinting toward:

CUT TO:

23 INT. DATABANK COMPLEX - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

23

Long rows of data banks beeping and whirring like an army of diligent workers. When Mulder, Scully and Generoo appear at the end of one of the rows. The Agents have their weapons drawn -- CAMERA TRACKING as they move stealthily, row to row, finding nothing but empty aisles.

Until, suddenly, in the F.G. there is movement. A WHITE LAB COAT FLASHES PAST and is gone. Mulder heads toward the movement, splitting up with Scully and Generoo who continue stalking at the far end of the stacks.

ANGLE ON MULDER

turning a corner quickly with his weapon drawn. But no one is there.

TRACKING TIGHT ON SCULLY, GENEROO

moving carefully past the ends of the stacks of processors, their ears attuned to pick up any abnormal sound outside the buzzing, whirring and clicking of the robotic data banks. When THE LIGHTS GO OUT. THEN A LOUD CLUNK, followed by an ominous winding down of power and machinery.

The room is consumed by darkness. A gigantic power failure.

Scully and Generoo stand rimmed in faint illumination when Generoo JUMPS AND SCREAMS, reacting to A BEAM OF INTENSE LIGHT THAT PINS HER in her tracks. Her heart skipping several beats until she realizes it's just the BATTERY RESERVE FLOODS popping on. Flooding the room and banks of equipment with shafts of hard, bright light. Then both women react to:

MULDER (O.S.)  
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE! DON'T MOVE!  
I'm a federal agent!

Scully and Generoo head off quickly in the direction of the shouting.

ANGLE ON MULDER

his weapon outstretched and trained on someone or something unseen.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

SCULLY (O.S.)  
Mulder...?!

CAMERA RACKING as she and Generoo come racing into the aisle, seeing:

THEIR POV

Standing before Mulder is a NERDISH SCIENTIST holding a clipboard. The Scientist has his hands raised, his lips twitching in fear.

MULDER  
What are you doing in here?

SCIENTIST  
I work here.

GENEROO  
(to Mulder)  
It's okay.  
(to the Scientist)  
Did you see anyone else in the building?

SCIENTIST  
No.

GENEROO  
(urgently)  
We're having a problem with telemetry transmissions. Do you know why?

SCIENTIST  
No idea.

Suddenly the building powers back up again. The rows of florescents blinking to life. The data processors chirping again, their one inch tape spools spinning freely.

MULDER  
Call security. I want a search done of the premises. Nobody comes in or out of this building who doesn't have clearance.

SCIENTIST  
Who are you?

GENEROO  
Just do it.

As we:

CUT BACK TO:

24 INT. MISSION CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT - MINUTES LATER

24

Col. Belt is standing behind the Mission Controller now. He looks very much the worse for wear all of a sudden. Intensely tired. The central screen, which was previously flashing intermittent pictures of the Shuttle cabin interior, has now switched to intermittent images of video static and feedback.

COL. BELT

What's the attitude of the orbiter?

MISSION CONTROLLER

They're flying tail first, sir. With their belly toward the sun.

2ND CONTROLLER

The flash evaporator system is working but it's not enough to cool them down.

MISSION CONTROLLER

Cabin temperature climbing to one sixteen.

COL. BELT

Where's --

Before he can get the words out, Generoo arrives back, trailing Mulder and Scully.

GENEROO

Somebody's jamming our transmissions.

COL. BELT

I'm going to let them fly by wire. I'm cutting off telemetry.

GENEROO

You're taking a chance those systems are going to come back on-line. What if they don't? We've got to try and bring them down.

COL. BELT

We've got to give them control of the ship. Take the chance that they'll be able to perform the rotation maneuver and deliver their payload.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

Michelle eyes flash with anger at this.

GENEROO

What if we can't regain  
communications?

COL. BELT

(an intense beat, then  
giving the order)  
Abandon telemetry. Go to fly by  
wire mode.

MULDER

(to Scully)

They're cutting off ground  
control of the orbiter. The  
astronauts will be flying the  
Shuttle all by themselves.

SCULLY

Is is going to work?

A look from Mulder is her unspoken answer. As Michelle takes  
the seat of the Mission Controller, putting her headset on.

GENEROO

OTC, this is Houston. How's the  
weather up there?

SHUTTLE COMMANDER

(laconic)

Sunny and warm, Houston. What's  
the forecast?

GENEROO

OTC, we're going to fly by wire  
mode. We're going to abort  
ground control momentarily to see  
if you can bring those systems  
back up.

A moment of dead air.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER

Roger, that, Houston. And leave  
the driving to us.

GENEROO

Y'all be good.

Suddenly the central screen goes DEAD. BLACK.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

SCULLY  
(to Mulder)  
What happened?

MULDER  
They've cut off contact with the  
Shuttle.

Col. Belt sits down had in a chair, puts his head in his hands.  
A moment of... hopelessness? Mulder can't help but fixate on  
this image.

MULDER  
Col. Belt?

Belt looks up, bleary-eyed. Apparently not even aware that  
Mulder and Scully were standing behind him in the center of  
mission control.

MULDER  
Is there anything we can do?

But Col. Belt does not respond. He turns, stares straight at  
the black central screen. Michelle casts a furtive, doubting  
look at Belt, then fixes her eyes on her watch. The seconds of  
silence ticking away.

ANGLE ON THE ROOM

The somber faces of the mission control team.

RESUME GENEROO

looking at her watch.

GENEROO  
Forty five seconds.

No response from Col. Belt. Though beads of perspiration have  
begun on his forehead, his upper lip.

Michelle looks up at Mulder and Scully, a look loaded with  
narrative.

GENEROO  
If they were able to execute,  
they'd have done it by now.

Another tense beat of non-response, before:

COL. BELT  
Go to re-establish uplink.

(CONTINUED)



24 CONTINUED: (3)

24

This puts all the controllers, including Michelle, to work at their consoles.

SHOT - CLOSE ON MICHELLE'S FINGER as it hovers just above a square red button. Before finally depressing it.

The central screen FLASHES momentarily then goes to SNOW.

2ND CONTROLLER  
Video signal's failed on.

GENEROO  
(anxiously)  
OTC, this is Houston. Do you  
copy?  
(beat)  
OTC, this is Houston. Where are  
you?

A collective holding of breaths.

MULDER  
(sotto)  
Come on...

Scully, too, seems to be willing a response. Before:

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
Howdy do, Houston. Looks like we  
finally got this bird to fly  
right.

A LARGE SIGH OF RELIEF from the room, followed by cheering and applause. Including Mulder and Scully.

MICHELLE  
(fighting emotion)  
Can you hear that, OTC?

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
Music to our ears.

2ND CONTROLLER  
Cabin temperature's stabilizing.

Col. Belt moves up behind Michelle, presses the red button to deliver:

COL. BELT  
OTC, this is Mark Belt in  
Houston. How's the team holding  
up?

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (4)

24

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
They're looking good, sir.

COL. BELT  
Y'all get some rest and we'll get  
back to work about 01200.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
Roger, Houston.

COL. BELT  
(weary, to the room)  
Let's get to work on that  
telemetry problem. We've got a  
big day ahead of us.

Belt, looking very haggard, heads off without a word to Michelle or an acknowledgement of the Agents. They watch him go. As we:

CUT TO:

25 INT. MEN'S WASHROOM - EARLY MORNING - SHORT TIME LATER

25

The largish bathroom seems empty except for the sound of someone breathing rather heavily. CAMERA comes around the stalls to find Col. Belt propped against the counter, leaning heavily on both arms. His head is down. AS CAMERA PUSHES IN, finding a man who, when he looks up at himself in the mirror, has a haunted, fearful face.

CUT TO:

26 INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - EARLY MORNING - SHORT TIME LATER.

26

A spare room, lined with rows of folding chairs and REPORTERS. TWO CAMERA CREWS flank a podium. Col. Belt steps to the mike. Finding composure despite his raggedness.

COL. BELT  
-- I know you all have a lot of  
questions -- I'll get to them --

The Reporters clamor and compete to ask Col. Belt questions. CAMERA FINDS Scully and Mulder and Michelle Generoo standing in the back of the room.

SCULLY  
How did he know what he did was  
going to work?

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

MICHELLE

He didn't. They could have died up and there would have been nothing we could do. They'd have been a ghost ship, stuck in orbit.

SCULLY

Why would he take that risk?

MICHELLE

(the sad reality)

Bring those men down without delivering that payload? You're talking millions of wasted dollars. That's all congress would need to shut NASA down.

Michelle's personal ambivalence with this fact, and with Col. Belt's actions, is obvious.

ANGLE ON COL. BELT

COL. BELT

-- as of 0800 hours the crew has been conducting on-board tests and tasks and resting up for their first full day in space tomorrow. I'm happy to say after a beautiful night launch the Shuttle Orbiter has performed magnificently...

RESUME MULDER, SCULLY

exchanged looks at this bald-faced lie. They look to Michelle who gives them a subtle, grave nod before turning and walking away. Standard operating procedure, the looks says. Scully turns to Mulder.

SCULLY

So much for your boyhood hero.

Off Mulder's deflated expression...

CUT TO:

27 INT. COL. BELT'S CONDOMINIUM - EARLY MORNING - LATER

27

Belt enters the front door, dropping his jacket hastily on a piece of furniture and moving straight to a wet bar off the living room.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

ANGLE ON BAR

where Belt pours himself three inches of Scotch. He chugs half the drink in a gulp, staring bleary-eyed out a large picture window where the Houston skyline spires upward. We are on the 30th floor. As the liquor takes hold, Belt's expression changes from bad to worse. He shambles toward --

28 INT. COL. BELT'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING - CONTINUOUS

28

Belt puts his drink down, lies down on the bed, his breathing labored. The impression is that he may be on the verge of coronary. Col. Belt's body shivers, a look of panic crosses his face. His body starts to convulse. Cold sweat tremors. DTs.

And then it happens: Col. Belt is suddenly pinned to the bed, as his panic-stricken expression begins to transform. To morph into a fluid mass, quickly becoming a now familiar image: The Mars Face.

And then something else. With his body pinned back, a ghostly image of Col. Belt lifts up out of his body, sucked from it by some powerful force. It hovers momentarily over his corporeal body before it rises up vertically and floats toward the picture window. Moving...

SPIRIT'S POV

through the window and out into space. Turning back to see its corporeal self still lying on the bed inside the condo... before starting to float up and up over the city. Floating ever higher until we:

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

29 EXT. OUTER SPACE - DAY (STOCK) 29

A beautiful clean POV of the Space Shuttle suspended high above the curvature of Earth. LEGEND over reads: 0700 PASSING OVER CANADA

CUT TO:

30 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - DAY 30

The central screen continues to strobe with feedback and blackness. The video signal still on the blink.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)

Houston, we just heard something weird up here. Sort of a dull thump. Y'all got any ideas about that?

CUT TO:

31 INT. ENERGY PLANT - DAY - MINUTES LATER 31

A YOUNGISH (late 20s) MISSION CONTROL SCIENTIST is running full speed through the maze of machinery.

32 INT. DATABANK COMPLEX - DAY - MINUTES LATER 32

Mulder and Scully stand with Michelle Generoo and A DOZEN TECHNICIANS in lab coats who are crawling through the innards of an extended bank of processors. When --

The Young Mission Control Scientist appears at the end of the aisle. Winded.

YOUNG SCIENTIST

They've got an oxygen leak onboard the orbiter!

33 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - DAY - MINUTES LATER 33

Michelle moves up behind the Mission Controller, Mulder and Scully ten steps behind her.

MISSION CONTROLLER

We got problems. O2 leak in the main tank.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

33

GENEROO

What did they say happened?

MISSION CONTROLLER

They don't know. They just heard a thump.

2ND CONTROLLER

An astronomer in Winnipeg just spotted a gaseous cloud about a mile long trailing in our orbit.

MULDER

(to Scully)

That's the liquid O2 leaking into space. It's exactly what happened to Col. Belt on his Apollo mission.

GENEROO

How much time do we have?

2ND CONTROLLER

Hard to know without accurate telemetry data. We're doing the calculations but it'll be just a guesstimate.

GENEROO

Where's Col. Belt?!

MISSION CONTROLLER

We can't find him. He was due here ninety minutes ago to begin payload deployment.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)

Houston? We're up here kinda wondering. When do we have to start holding our breath?

Michelle's mind is racing, playing out options like a computer. Dire looks are traded around the room. When Mulder puts his hand on Michelle's shoulder.

MULDER

We'll go find Col. Belt.

CUT TO:

34 INT. NASA CORRIDOR - DAY - MOMENT LATER

34

Mulder and Scully exit an elevator, begin striding briskly as we TRACK WITH THEM.

SCULLY  
Why does she need Belt?

MULDER  
She doesn't know how serious the leak is.

SCULLY  
It's an oxygen leak! Even I can figure out what happens when they run out of oxygen!

MULDER  
Col. Belt's been up there in the same situation. He'll know better than anybody what to do. He's got to make the decisions.

SCULLY  
Then where the hell is he?!

CUT TO:

35 EXT. TALL HOUSTON HIGH-RISE CONDOMINIUM - DAY - LATER

35

To establish Col. Belt's building. CAMERA PANS UP.

CUT TO:

36 INT. CONDO HALLWAY - DAY

36

Agent Mulder POUNDS on Col. Belt's door. Scully stands beside him.

MULDER  
Col. Belt --

No response.

SCULLY  
I'll go get security to open the door.

She starts away just as THE DOOR OPENS. Mulder reacts to the sight of Col. Belt, unshaven, still in the same wrinkled clothes. He looks like hell.

MULDER  
Col. Belt. Are you alright?

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED:

36

COL. BELT  
I wasn't feeling well.

Scully looks at Mulder. The outrageous irony.

MULDER  
They need you down at Mission  
Control, sir. There's been  
another accident.

Through his foggy eyes, a dim light of genuine concern. As we:

CUT TO:

37 INT. MISSION CONTROL - DAY - LATER

37

Michelle is seated at her console, a look of absolute focused intensity. The central screen still has no continuous picture.

MICHELLE  
OTC, is your Orbital Maneuvering  
System still operational?

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Roger, Houston. We're ready for  
re-entry. Just say the word.

All eyes are on Michelle. She looks at her watch. Then all eyes turn to see:

ANGLE ON COL. BELT, MULDER AND SCULLY

entering the room. Col. Belt is still in his wrinkled clothes. His general appearance does not inspire confidence. Michelle rises as they approach.

COL. BELT  
How bad is the leak?

GENEROO  
We have no way to determine --

Belt doesn't hesitate. He reaches down and presses the intercom button.

COL. BELT  
OTC, how much condensation is  
there in your cabin?

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Windows are getting a little  
steamy.

(CONTINUED)



37 CONTINUED:

37

GENEROO  
Carbon dioxide buildup.

COL. BELT  
Okay, OTC... you're going to be fine. I want you all to get into your spacesuits and depressurize the cabin. I want you to vent that CO2.

A beat. Hushed murmurs circle the room.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Roger, Houston. And then what?

COL. BELT  
I want you to stay in those suits and prepare to use your emergency oxygen systems.  
(a beat)  
Then I want you to prepare to deploy your payload.

Michelle is stunned by this.

GENEROO  
Those are men up there!

She and Belt stare gravely at one another. Then she stalks past him, moving swiftly to exit the room. Belt does not watch her go.

COL. BELT  
OTC, do you copy?

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Roger, Houston.

Mulder and Scully watch Col. Belt sink down in the chair where Michelle had been sitting, his eyes meeting no one's.

A beat, then Mulder and Scully move to find Michelle.

38 INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

38

Mulder and Scully enter the corridor. CAMERA RACKS FOCUS on Michelle at the end of the hallway, walking briskly until:

SCULLY  
Michelle!

Michelle stops, turns.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

CLOSE ON MICHELLE

her eyes red and teary as Mulder and Scully rush to her.

MICHELLE  
They're going to die.

MULDER  
You don't know that.

MICHELLE  
It's absolutely unconscionable.  
Putting that payload before those  
men's lives.

Michelle wipes her tears.

SCULLY  
What is the payload, Michelle?

MICHELLE  
(violating an oath)  
It's a department of defense  
surveillance satellite.

MULDER  
Are you sure?

Michelle gives Mulder a look.

MICHELLE  
What do you mean?

MULDER  
What is so important about  
delivering that payload?

MICHELLE  
I --

Mulder is onto something but it's not clear quite what.

MULDER  
Maybe this mission was never  
meant to be completed. Maybe it  
was doomed from the beginning.

SCULLY  
And Col. Belt knew about it?!

MULDER  
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (2)

38

MICHELLE

Then we've got to stop him!  
We've got to pull them out of  
orbit --

As she starts to move, Mulder reaches out and stops her.

MULDER

No! Wait! We don't know for  
certain. And even if he is  
involved, he still may be the  
only man who knows how to bring  
them back alive.

(off their confusion)

I need access to your records  
vault. We've got to hurry.

39 INT. NASA RECORDS VAULT - DAY - MINUTES LATER

39

Mulder and Scully enter the vault. Rows of shelves lined dense  
with files. Mulder starts scanning the indices, side stepping  
down the aisle, trying to find something.

SCULLY

What are we looking for?

MULDER

Diagrams. X-ray schematics like  
the one that was sent to  
Michelle.

SCULLY

(re: the enormity of  
the material)

Where do we start?

MULDER

Find the files for this Shuttle  
mission.

TIME CUT TO:

40 INT. RECORDS VAULT - DAY - SHORT TIME LATER

40

Mulder sits amid strewn files carpeting the floor. He is going  
quickly through files and then discarding anything except what  
he is looking for.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

CLOSE ON MULDER

as he grabs a thick set of files labeled: SHUTTLE CHALLENGER, 1986. He starts to go through them as we:

CUT TO:

41 EXT. SPACE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

41

GOD'S POV of the Space Shuttle as a TWIRLING SATELLITE is birthed out of its cargo bay. It is one of the most amazing shots ever taken in space.

CUT TO:

42 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

42

Col. Belt sits center stage. The central screen in the room still does not have continuous picture.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
Payload delivery is complete,  
Houston. Awaiting your orders.

Michelle is moving up the aisle toward Col. Belt.

COL. BELT  
Systems check for re-entry de-  
orbit burn.

SHUTTLE COMMANDER (FILTER)  
(suddenly excited)  
Holy God! There's something  
outside the ship. THERE'S  
SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE SHIP!!

The rolling thunder of panic spreads through Mission Control. Col. Belt rises to his feet, shouting:

COL. BELT  
NO!

Standing defiantly, his fists clenched. Everyone, especially Michelle, stares at Col. Belt. Stunned. A moment of absurd silence before Belt seems overcome by the same malady he earlier experienced in his condominium. The cold sweats. DTs. He grabs the console with both hands to steady himself, as we:

CUT TO:

43 INT. RECORDS VAULT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

43

Mulder is still on the floor amid the pile of files when Scully appears at the end of his aisle, something in hand.

SCULLY

Mulder! I found it!

She moves to him, kneeling to see an X-RAY SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM. The same APU VALVE diagram Michelle gave them.

SCULLY

It's the same diagram that was sent to Michelle.

(holding up the envelope it was removed from)

Ordered by Col. Marcus Aurelius Belt. He knew about the faulty valve, Mulder. He's the one who sent it to Michelle in the mail.

Mulder's suspicions being borne out. Then Mulder holds up a similar diagram for Scully to see.

MULDER

This is from the Challenger. It's a diagram of the O-ring fitting that failed. Dated January 21, 1986. One week before the Space Shuttle blew up.

(turns the diagram over)

The analysis was ordered by Col. Belt.

SCULLY

He knew about the Challenger defect. Oh my god.

When, suddenly, Michelle Generoo appears. Horror stricken.

GENEROO

Col. Belt's collapsed!

MULDER

(leaping up)

Where is he?

CUT TO:

44 INT. COL. BELT'S OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

44

Michelle bursts in with Mulder and Scully trailing. The office is empty.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

GENEROO

He was just here!

When they all hear a noise from somewhere in the room. Mulder hurries over to Belt's desk.

ANGLE ON DESKTOP

Scrawled on the desk blotter, in large jagged letters, are the words: HELP ME. Accompanied by quiet WHIMPERING.

CAMERA DOLLIES with Mulder as he moves around the desk, finding Col. Belt balled up under it. Quivering and fearful. As we:

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

45 INT. COL. BELT'S OFFICE - DAY - RESUME

45

Col. Belt is still shaking and quivering under the desk. Mulder, Scully and Generoo watching, alarmed and confused by what they see.

COL. BELT  
Help me.

MULDER  
Help you what, Colonel?!

TWO PARAMEDICS enter the room pushing a gurney.

SCULLY  
He's having some kind of seizure,  
Mulder.

MICHELLE  
(grave, determined)  
I'm bringing that Shuttle down.

Michelle starts out of the room, HALTED by:

COL. BELT  
NO!

The Paramedics have gotten to Belt now, pulling him out from under the desk and maneuvering him over to the gurney.

COL. BELT  
It's out there!

Col. Belt starts to thrash and resist as the Paramedics get him lying down.

MULDER  
Strap him down.

SCULLY  
Give him 10ccs of Vikran --

MULDER  
No.

SCULLY  
He's going to hurt himself,  
Mulder!

Michelle doesn't know what to do. She stands ready to bolt from the room.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

MULDER  
He's trying to tell us something.  
Col. Belt --

MICHELLE  
Those men are up there running  
out of oxygen --

COL. BELT  
(through the pain of  
his seizures)  
They... don't have to... die.

Mulder moves right over Col. Belt who is now secured to the gurney with hand and foot straps. Another strap around his mid section. He strains against his holds, against some unseen force from without.

MULDER  
Colonel Belt. I want you to  
focus --

Mulder is holding his index finger up eight inches from Col. Belt's face.

MULDER  
Focus your breathing. Focus your  
pain right here.

PARAMEDIC  
(to Scully)  
Blood pressure's 175 over 120 and  
rising.

SCULLY  
You're risking an aneurysm --

MULDER  
Focus! You're focused right  
here!

Col. Belt's seizures start to lessen as he concentrates with pained intensity.

MULDER  
You're going to save those  
astronauts. You're going to tell  
us how.

COL. BELT  
The Shuttle ... it won't survive  
re-entry --

(CONTINUED)



45 CONTINUED: (2)

45

MICHELLE

He's lying!

Scully's eyes shoot from Michelle to Mulder. Is Belt lying?

MULDER

How do you know it won't survive?!

COL. BELT

The fuselage... the fuselage has been damaged. Silicone - tiles - destroyed --

Michelle takes a step back in the room - caught now by her own sense of creeping doubt.

MICHELLE

How does he know!?

MULDER

(as focused as Belt)

How was it damaged?

COL. BELT

I'm responsible.

MULDER

Did you sabotage the Shuttle?

Belt struggles, strains to maintain his focus.

COL. BELT

No. But... I couldn't stop it.

MULDER

Stop who?

PARAMEDIC

Heart rate is 174.

SCULLY

You're going to kill him, Mulder!

Agent Mulder ignores her, remains fixed and focused on Belt.

COL. BELT

(frightened now)

They don't want us to know. They don't want us to know.

MULDER

Who?

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: (3)

45

CAMERA IS PUSHING INTO COL. BELT'S HORRIFIED EXPRESSION.

COL. BELT  
It came to me. It lives in me.

DISSOLVE TO:

46 FLASHBACK SEQUENCE - BLUESCREEN EFFECT (EXT. SPACE)

46

Col. Belt is in a space suit, floating in the darkness of deep space. A tether fastened to his suit is attached to an imaginary spacecraft o.s. When - out of the blackness - a fog starts to spin and boil, materializing into THE MARS FACE. It leaps out at Col. Belt, causing him to recoil, his horrified expression visible through the helmet of his space suit, as we:

DISSOLVE BACK TO:

47 COL. BELT'S FACE - PRESENT TIME (INT. BELT'S OFFICE)

47

Wearing the same horrified expression.

COL. BELT  
Help me! It's coming back!

As Col. Belt's face MORPHS ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY INTO THE MARS FACE - the same effect we saw earlier in the bedroom of his condominium.

ON MICHELLE'S FACE

Her recognition of:

MICHELLE  
That's the face I saw in the fog!

RESUME MARS FACE

Morphing back into Col. Belt's natural, yet twisted expression. When, suddenly, a JOLTING SEIZURE WRACKS Col. Belt's body.

RESUME ROOM

Mulder and Scully both recoiling from this vision.

PARAMEDIC  
We're losing him.

They go into action, bringing out the electric defibrillation pads. One Paramedic rips open Col Belt's shirt while the other hastily applies conduction gel.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

47

The electric pads are placed on his chest and Col. Belt's body SPASMS when the juice hits him. As:

ANGLE ON DOOR

The Mission Controller dashes into the room.

MISSION CONTROLLER

They've just run out of oxygen.  
They've got exactly thirty  
minutes on their emergency backup  
systems.

MICHELLE

(to Mulder and Scully,  
restrained panic)

They're going to suffocate up  
there - I've got no choice but to  
bring them down. It's the only  
chance we've got.

She's right. And Mulder and Scully can only watch, helplessly, as she runs from the room. Followed momentarily by the Mission Controller who is fixated for a moment on the image of Col. Belt, as the Paramedics continue to try and revive him. Then the Mission Controller exits, too. As we:

CUT TO:

48 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - MOMENTS LATER

48

Michelle is at the central console. On the central screen the random strobing of transmission interference continues. Michelle puts on her headset.

GENEROO

OTC, this is Houston Mission  
Control, do you copy?

SHUTTLE COMMANDER

Roger, Houston. Thought for a  
second that was an angel speaking  
to us.

Michelle smiles stiffly, fighting emotion.

GENEROO

OTC, we're bringing you down. We  
want you to instigate de-orbit  
burn and begin deceleration.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

48

SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
Roger, Houston. Kinda hoping you  
were going to say that.  
(beat)  
Activating OMS rockets. All  
systems go for re-entry.

Michelle closes her eyes, bows her head. Is she doing the  
right thing? Is she doing the only thing she can?

CUT TO:

49 INT. COL. BELT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

49

The Paramedics continue to work on Col. Belt as Mulder and  
Scully hover. Then one Paramedic responds excitedly to:

PARAMEDIC  
We've got vital signs - we've got  
pulse!

Col. Belt's eyes flicker momentarily.

PARAMEDIC  
He's back.

SCULLY  
You've got to get him to a  
hospital.

They move to begin rolling the gurney out of the room. Col.  
Belt's eyes open, roll and try to find focus. Mulder is  
walking next to the gurney as they wheel it toward the door.

MULDER  
(with gently urgency to  
Belt)  
They're bringing the Shuttle down -

Col. Belt is non-responsive, still out of it.

MULDER  
(continuing)  
You said the Shuttle would burn  
up on re-entry. Is there anyway -  
is there anything they can do -

Belt, again, either cannot or will not respond. Mulder keeps  
following the gurney out into the hall. Scully trailing  
behind. When - Col. Belt raises his hand slightly, beckoning  
Mulder close. While moving sidestep alongside the wheeling  
gurney Mulder bends in close to Col. Belt's face.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED:

49

COL. BELT  
(with great difficulty)  
Change the trajectory...

Belt swallows hard, battling his condition.

MULDER  
(is that all?)  
Change the trajectory --

COL. BELT  
Change the re-entry trajectory to  
thirty five degrees.

With this information, Mulder takes off running in the opposite direction down the hall. Running at a full sprint. A moment of indecision for Scully as she continues to follow the gurney, before she breaks into a sprint after him.

CUT TO:

50 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - CONTINUOUS

50

Michelle and the other mission controllers are sitting, fidgeting, checking their watches, rapt in their own private silences.

2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
T minus 45 seconds to ionosphere  
re-entry and temporary  
communication blackout.

As Mulder bursts in the room, rushing down and then across to Michelle at the center console. (Scully will follow.)

MULDER  
(winded)  
You've got to change the re-entry  
trajectory.

GENEROO  
What?

MULDER  
You've got to change it to thirty  
five degrees.

2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
T minus 30 seconds to ionosphere  
re-entry.

MULDER  
Col. Belt --

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

50

2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
T minus twenty seconds.

MULDER  
It's your only shot --

GENEROO  
I can't -- we'd have to change  
the landing site - we'd have to  
inform them before the blackout --

2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
T minus 10 seconds to blackout.

GENEROO  
(spins, shouts)  
I need to know what the weather  
conditions are in Albuquerque!  
Are we go for an emergency  
landing?!

MISSION CONTROLLER  
Weather in Albuquerque...  
(a beat, waiting for a  
response in his  
headphone)  
Landing conditions go in  
Albuquerque.

2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
T minus five seconds to blackout.

Michelle looks at Mulder, she must make one of the most important decisions of her life with only five seconds to make it. She turns to her console, then resolutely:

GENEROO  
OTC - this is Houston. I want  
you to change your re-entry  
trajectory to thirty five  
degrees. You'll be landing at  
Kirtland Field in Albuquerque.  
Do you copy, OTC?

The only response is a GARBLED ONE.

2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
Ionosphere re-entry. Temporary  
blackout in effect. Twelve  
minutes to re-establish.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (2)

50

                  GENEROO  
Did they get that transmission?!  
                  (no one can answer)  
Dammit!

All eyes go to the:

LARGE DIGITAL CLOCK - reading 10:13.56

CUT TO:

51 EXT. KIRTLAND FIELD - ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO - DAY  
(STOCK of EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE TO DOUBLE)

51

With LEGEND over emergency vehicles racing across the long flat runway.

DISSOLVING TO:

LARGE DIGITAL CLOCK - reading 10:25:00. We are:

52 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - RESUME

52

Mulder and Scully standing behind Michelle at the center console.

                  GENEROO  
How much oxygen do they have left?

                  MISSION CONTROLLER  
Sixteen minutes.

                  GENEROO  
OTC, this is Houston. Come in OTC.  
                  (nothing)  
OTC, this is Houston. Come in OTC.

                  2ND MISSION CONTROLLER  
Albuquerque's picked up the Shuttle on radar!!

                  SCULLY  
                  (to Mulder)  
They made it.

Did they? Or is it wishful thinking? Everyone continues to hold their breath.

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

52

                  GENEROO  
OTC, this is Houston. Do you  
copy? --  
                  (beat)  
OTC --

                  SHUTTLE COMMANDER  
Houston, this is OTC. Know  
anyplace good to eat in  
Albuquerque? Thought we'd meet  
you for dinner.

A CHEER GOES UP IN THE ROOM. People are jumping up and down,  
hugging each other. Scully is hugging the Mission Controller.  
Michelle is hugging Mulder.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO - DAY (STOCK)

53

TWO LOUD SONIC BOOMS as the Shuttle breaks the sound barrier en  
route to landing.

CUT BACK TO:

54 INT. HOUSTON MISSION CONTROL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

54

The celebration continues as THE CENTRAL SCREEN comes back to  
life. Just in time to feature a beautiful shot of the Shuttle  
coming out of the sky, heading in for a landing.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. KIRTLAND AIR BASE - ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. - DAY (STOCK)

55

As the Shuttle comes swooping in like - well, like Winged  
Victory herself - touching down on the flat, hardpan runway.  
This image:

DISSOLVING TO:

CLOSE ON TELEVISION MONITOR

featuring the same perfect landing. CAMERA PULLS BACK to  
reveal we are:



56 INT. HOUSTON HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

56

Col. Belt lies propped up in a hospital bed, oxygen tubes protruding from his nose; beeping monitors the only other presence in the room. His eyes become liquid as he watches:

RESUME TELEVISION MONITOR

the image on-screen changing to a shot of MICHELLE GENEROO, standing by herself in front of her console at Houston Mission Control. She is addressing an o.s. reporter.

GENEROO

The Space Shuttle touched down today at 10:56 Central Standard Time. The Orbiter delivered its payload after just 13 orbits and returned to Earth without incident. We at NASA are looking forward to our next Shuttle mission and to further successful explorations of space, for mankind and for the future of mankind.

RESUME COL. BELT

as the tears begin to roll. Then, without warning, the monitors at bedside start to beep faster. An alarm goes off. Col. Belt's expression changes to one of fear as his body begins to quake. And then it begins to happen again - his features begin to MORPH into the MARS FACE.

The ghostly spirit begins to lift from his body - but this time Col. Belt fights it. He rips the tubes out of his nose and the monitors from his chest and arms. Staggering out of bed and toward the plate glass window which looks over the night skyline of Houston. Thirty stories up.

Col. Belt continues this supernatural wrestling match as he approaches the window, moving faster and faster -

COL. BELT'S POV

moving quickly to the window - too quick - because the next sound we hear is BREAKING GLASS. THE CAMERA is suddenly out in mid-air -- only this time, instead of rising upward into the heavens, there is a moment of perfect stillness - perfect silence - and the CAMERA BEGINS TO DESCEND toward the busy street below. As we:

DISSOLVE TO:

57 EXT. HOUSTON CEMETERY - SOME DAYS LATER

57

Michelle Generoo stands with A UNIFORMED MILITARY MAN. They are holding hands with their heads bowed. CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL BACK to reveal we are, of course, at a funeral. Standing beside Michelle and her fiance are several other UNIFORMED MEN.

A PREACHER is intoning a low and reverent eulogy. Near him are Agents Mulder and Scully.

PREACHER

-- for Col. Marcus Aurelius  
devoted his life to the  
exploration and understanding of  
space - learning its mysteries  
and experiencing it not just for  
himself but for humanity. Lord,  
take this man's body and let it  
rise up to your heavens, higher  
than he could ever go as a man.  
Let him know the true nature of  
the universe that he sought to  
learn --

But the Preacher is drowned out by A LOUD AND GROWING RUMBLE.  
All parties present look up into the sky where -

THEIR POV (STOCK)

A formation of jet fighters pass overhead.

RESUME FUNERAL

The Uniformed Men all salute the planes passing over. Michelle Generoo does the same.

ANGLE ON MULDER AND SCULLY

with their hands at their side, watching the jets. When they look over at Michelle, she is:

ANGLE ON MICHELLE

as she drops her hand to her side. Then she looks over at them and raises another salute - to Mulder and Scully. As we:

FADE OUT

THE END