

Dark Star

December 20, 1972 – Moon Surface – Apollo 17 – Last Mission to the Moon

Classic lunar mission moon footage. We see Commander Eugene Cernan tee up a golf shot. Over crackling audio, we hear, “One small putt for man. One giant shot for mankind.” Whack and the ball disappears into the black moon sky.

From hundred yards away, standing at the crest of a lunar hill, LMV Pilot, Harrison Schmitt stutters out, “Jesus Christ! Gene get over here now! Now!” In a shaky, almost frightened voice, he says to Ronald Evans, still on the landing module, “Ron! Get Mission Control now! Jesus Christ!”

Cutting back and forth between the three, we see that Harrison’s panic has affected them all. They’ve never heard another astronaut FREAK OUT!

Commander Cernan jams the LMV to a low-gravity halt, jumps out and bounces over to Harrison. “Oh my God...” is all that Cernan can say. Pulling back and up and over, WE SEE twenty yards away a space craft stuck in the soft soil of another lunar hill. But even more shocking, is the man in a space suit walking toward them. “The man in the moon...” whispers Harrison.

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2017 (or there about) – Earth – NIGHT 1/HOUR 1

Humanity has jumped forward in space flight technology, though much of the cutting edge work is still in a Beta stage. A round trip flight to Mars was completed—it’s big, red and dusty, not the sexy frontier of past speculation. Now the frontier is elsewhere, and new propulsion technologies enable deeper space and planetary exploration.

NASA is still the primary hub of man space flight activity, though the world has come together to form the International Expeditionary Commission. The G-8 countries, energized by the Mars expedition, have poured money into technological advancement. It’s an exciting time to look toward the stars, much like it was during the Mercury and Apollo days.

At a telescope and satellite array in the Andes Mountains, young astronomers conducting a routine sweep of a quadrant of space, identify something that wasn’t there before. Scrambling to zero in and enhance the data, they wonder if this isn’t a new black hole or some kind of tear in space. Could it be that a previously unidentified star, though small, is or has undergone unexpected implosion? Years before, physicist Stephen Hawkins and hypothesized “miniature black holes” in a paper about thermal radiation. If this is a miniature, it should decay rapidly. SO, given it’s distance from Earth, it may have already decayed completely, and they are just now seeing the beginning of a very short life.

Or have they found a “dark energy star”? Or is this the other end of a worm hole in space, only now visible?

For decades, scientist had found no new star closer to our solar system than Proxima Centauri at 4.2 light years. If they’re analysis is correct, this event is closer by a factor that scares them. What ever it is, this is a BIG FUCKING DEAL.

The world picks up on their discovery and a kind of global hysteria sets in around asking and answering the right questions. Scientists use every means available to collect data, and they use new light-speed gamma radiation projectors to bounce data back to Earth.

All the while, they are WATCHING IT GROW.

And then comes the strange part, a signal. It is so simple, so unmistakable: SOS in Morse code. Regular intervals, strong signal. No amount of double-think and second-guessing can concoct a different conclusion.

Humans from a parallel universe? Humans from a future time? Aliens? The speculation is wild, but the only certainty: S.O.S.

NASA and the IEC decide that they can’t just sit back and watch. They must operate on many fronts, not the least of which is to get closer for a better look.

“Zero-gravity engineering” is the only method of building a craft powerful enough to reach what could be a black hole. A beta design of a ship like this was built at the international space station, which has grown into an inter-locking space complex the size of two international airports. The ship, commonly known as Zippy the 1st, has been test flown once at a cautionary 1/3 of its limits. It passed with flying colors. (The look of the ship and the physics of its operation should feel realistic, rather than fantastic.)

NASA and ICE name a Mission Commander to assemble a crew of pilots, engineers and scientists, plus a journalist who talks her way on board. A small military detachment is also sent put together. The plan is to set up an outpost and perform some experiments, getting as close as they can to the Event itself.

Needless to say, space travel is still an evolving experiment. It’s still IFFY business at the best of times. The Mission Commander was chosen because he’s a veteran; he’s got experience and is closer to the end of his life than many of the other candidates. It’s either the final feather in his cap or a great way to go out. BANG!

Skippy launches successfully and the M.C. pushes the boat forward toward second stage launch as quickly as possible. The entire crew is locked into a cycle of waking hours and sleeping hours much different from the Earth bound circadian rhythms. Long periods of sleep, short periods of waking. Once the cycle schedule is set, and the first groups “goes to bed,” the M.C. initiates the second stage, which pushes the craft to roughly 5/8 the speed of light.

From Earth the ship just disappears.

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NIGHT1/HOUR2

Needless to say, the problems begin almost immediately. At first, they are mechanical. Then they are professional. And then they get personal.

Speculation grows about conflicting agendas. Factional in-fighting shows its ugly head. Questions about the very nature of the mission start being asked. The conflict and uncertainty and confusion are compounded by the wake/sleep cycle. Each time a group wakes up, things seem even more disturbing than before. Are the other groups in conspiracy against us?

The M.C. struggles to hold the pieces together. He tries to placate the scientists who are starting to believe that they have been duped by the military, who plans this to be a doomsday mission. Their fears are driven, in part, by the fact that the military group just does not interact. Spread among the three different cycle groups, they remain noticeably unphased by the growing anxiety. They stick to themselves and even then don't seem to say much. Don't they look almost *suicidal*?

While communication with Earth continues through this stage of the journey, Earth cannot really affect matters on the ship. Earth doesn't supply any definitive answers, in no small part due to the change in the space-time relationship between the ship and that Big Blue Marble.

Tensions flare even further when they get close to their destination. Things go from deteriorating to WEIRD BAD. The edge of the Event is starting to affect them in ways that were only previously speculative. Every normal point of reference seems to be breaking down. What day is it? Are we moving forward toward the Event? Or away from it? Who was that person in the galley, I've never seen them before? Did I just catch a reflection of myself at a younger time? Older? Odd fluctuations in time occur. The front half of the ship seems to be several minutes ahead than the rear, creating organizational chaos. A man gets text messages from himself or perhaps gets a glimpse of himself walking down the corridor.

And communication with Earth changes as well. It comes. It goes. And when it's there, it's all the more disorienting. One moment everything is fine, the next Earth asks, "Please identify yourself?"

All of this sends people over different edges at different rates. At the extreme, from crazy to catatonic to hysterical. One may find God and see the voyage as a journey to the Gates and St. Michael. Another may find himself living in a different time or a fantasy environment. Even the military troops start to show signs of cracks. (The psychological and physical affects will be wild and as visual as possible, but grounded in human history, mythology and unconscious. Rather than be only internal and claustrophobic here, we could be expansive and unexpected—the platoon leader finds himself fighting a Minotaur somewhere in the ship or somewhere else entirely.)

It is likely that some of the crew begin to die at this point of sudden old age or under mysterious circumstances. One might just simply disappear.

While the M.C. strives to keep the mission on track, he too starts to wrestle with “demons”. Central to this for him is the military platoon. There is just too much of a shroud of mystery. And the mystery is amplified and made dangerous when, while working on a repair, he discovers a secret room built into the ship’s primary structure. The room doesn’t appear on any of the design drawings, nor did he see it in any of his training manuals. But more disturbing is the room’s contents: five powerful neutron-like bombs.

Now they near the cutting edge of what should be the Event Horizon, if it is in fact a black hole. Their sensors are to flummoxed to see into the gravitational Event. This is the moment of no return.

When the M.C. confronts the platoon leader about the bombs, he gets the shock of his life: The platoon was assembled because the military has information that the Event is actually a ship that threatens Earth. The M.C. demands to hear the evidence. He is responsible for the lives of the crew. He should have known from the word GO! But the platoon leader refuses and then ups the ante by saying that the ship must cross the Event Horizon no matter the lives of the crew. (More about the “information” and evidence will be revealed in Night 2.)

This moment can escalate to a number of possible points, one of which might be that, before there is an actual mutiny, they simply lose control of the ship. Or was it sabotage? However it plays out, the ship gets SUCKED across the Event Horizon.

Everything begins to come apart at an atomic level. They are moving toward the Big Bang and the beginning of the universe because they are moving into INFINITY.

And then it STOPS and the whole mess just SNAPS BACK TOGETHER.

They get up, dust themselves off and gather. Systems checks. Medical checks. Check. Check. Check. That’s when they decide to look-see outside the ship. And what they see causes the crew’s collective heart to skip a beat:

It is HUGE but it’s not like any planet they’ve ever studied. Though it could be, but the surface appears just too... manufactured. IT IS A BIG FUCKING SPACE SHIP. AND IT DOESN’T LOOK LIKE A HAPPY PLACE. (See attached image.)

END NIGHT 1

NIGHT 2/HOUR 1 – Outside the Zephyr

A suited astronaut floats against utter blackness. He moves to the left and WE SEE that he is inspecting the ship's hull for damage. Pulling back and back further, WE SEE just how tiny the ship is next to the "alien" vessel.

Inside, a debate rages among the department heads, the M.C. and the platoon leader. The scientists are dumbfounded by the discovery and furious at being played for fools. The M.C. tries to get the group to focus on the facts and getting back to Earth. No one has any idea how to get back across... whatever the boundary should be called, because now it seems clear that they are not in a black hole, or at least not one they can understand.

The argument rages, accusations fly until the platoon leader makes clear that they aren't going back, that they are going to board the vessel. If there is any getting home, he says, this is the only way. This only foments more yelling. How does he know this? What isn't he telling them? He stonewalls them no matter how loud they shout. He doesn't flaunt it, but it is VERY CLEAR that the platoon leader has the upper hand. He might even show sympathy for their anger and confusion saying something like, "If I knew that telling you more wouldn't upset the mission and jeopardize Earth, I would. But nothing you can say will make me sacrifice so much. You were chosen for this mission to make it a success." And the head scientist might demand, "So what, our part in this fucking play is over?"

"For most of you, yes."

Needless to say, these words don't placate much of the group. What were once divided cliques, now form a unified front to take control of the mission.

From here to the end of Hour 2 of Night 1 three primary movements build to a climax:

1. A mutiny forms and hatches a plan of how to take control of the ship and simultaneously figure out how to get home.
2. The military platoon readies the ship to dock with the Vessel and makes preparations to execute their plans.
3. The M.C. tries to out-manuever both to save all from destroying each other... and the mission? After all, they did find what could be an alien ship and a threat to Earth. So during this time, he will try to also discover more about the Vessel and attempt to defuse the bombs.

As the Zephyr positions to dock with the Vessel, these three forces will climax in a fire-fight that will leave many dead. When the dust settles, the platoon leader will be dead, but the platoon will still control the ship. A young staff sergeant will step into command. He is clearly not totally prepared for this sudden promotion but pushes the mission ahead.

Once they are securely docked (we will learn how they plan to do this earlier), a group of the remaining crew boards: the platoon, the M.C., the head scientist and a couple of others.

Inside the Vessel, they navigate dark corridors until they step into utter darkness...

[By this point, you've figured out that this is probably a trap. IT IS! The vessel is much like a sand spider that hides at bottom of a sand cone waiting for prey to slide down its slopes. The movement of *life* stirs the spider to attack. In our case, the movement of *life* awakens the Vessel. (NOTE: This is not a vessel of killer spiders. This is just an analogy.) The exact trigger will be figured out later.]

...then they notice a dim light ahead. They follow it cautiously, tracking the floor ahead of them with their flashlights. As they near it, the light intensifies to rich amber—easy on the eyes. [It's no wonder spiders build their webs near light!]

Entering the light, they pedestal of complicated design. It is producing the amber glow. On top is a three-sided object that is pulsing rhythmically. They notice that the object hangs over a void of similar shape.

S.O.S./S.O.S/S.O.S./S.O.S./S.O.S. “It's the beacon,” says the M.C. as everyone starts to wait for the other shoe to drop. [In Hour 2 we will learn what S.O.S. really stands for but not here.]

The head scientist steps up to the pedestal and without hesitating pushes the object down. The signaling stops. “Help has arrived,” he says, as the room they're in comes to life.

IT IS VAST. Three-times the size of the Astro Dome but square. Laced with brilliant amber light, built of perfectly machined rectangular segments filling each side of the square.

The group spreads out in wonder. None would have guessed that this is where they would end up, and a few are beginning to ask themselves “why destroy this?”

One of the grunts notices something on the floor and realizes it is a letter. The letter E. “hey, look at this,” he says, stepping back and seeing more. Up WE GO high over his head and we see carved into the floor in giant letters the words
SLEEPING BEAUTY.

As the group stares at the words in disbelief, five sections of the wall opposite them push outward with a hiss and tilt at an angle. Each piece appears to be a solid piece of amber colored material. And each piece immediately begins to disintegrate, sending millions of amber colored particles into the air. As the particles rise, the room begins to brighten, as though lights were turning on elsewhere in the Vessel.

And here is what they begin to see: Five human bodies emerging from the wall sections: Two women and three men. The material encasing them disintegrates more rapidly now and when they are about 2/3s free, they each gasp for air in unison and open their eyes.

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NIGHT 1/HOUR 2 – The Finale

We open here on space. WE SEE the Anomaly and move toward but then it just disappears and as we move faster WE SEE the Vessel. Moving right through the outer hull, WE SEE that it is now coming to life. WE FLY through it seeing other bodies emerge, systems start up and general organization begin. IT is truly vast and WE REALIZE that there are thousands of beings on board. It is a like a city.

Our boarding party is standing around a table with the five bodies that first emerged. (We will call them The Five.) They are in a room, again perfectly square, the walls of which are divided into squares. At about eye-level, three bands of squares on each wall are oscillating. It's not clear what they are showing. (We'll learn a bit later.)

Our team is clearly out of their depth here. We see this most in the military team's expressions.

The leader of The Five (let's call him #1) is saying, "You may not believe us now but you will eventually. It is true, we are you're children. Our world is yours but in the very distant future. But in our time, the Earth was dying. In the many centuries between you and us, scientist scoured the galaxies for another Earth. Millions of planets searched but none could sustain life as we know it."

#2 chimes in, "As much as we kept looking, we were running against time, and we had no where to go. Except into Time."

#3 continues, "We had already mastered time and space but not on this massive a scale. While this craft was being built, a war was fought over the selection of who would go and who would stay. Thousands were willing to die fighting rather than being left behind to watch death approach slowly. It was the death of Earth and a terrible experience to endure."

#1 begins again, "When we departed Earth, we didn't know if or where exactly we would arrive. However, we knew that if we did, you would come, because we are your children."

The M.C. says, "The S.O.S... a signal, a simple language that we would understand as one of our own."

But of course, none of the team is ready to believe that this is possible. The conversation will continue to fill in details of the Earth of the future, the technology behind the flight and that those from the future new they needed to hide inside an Anomaly in case the landed in the wrong place—to blend in as it were. The Five explain that the Vessel contains what they call The Five Pillars of Society: Arts, Technology, Law, Business and Religion. Each of The Five are heads of the Pillars.

When the conversation breaks up, our team is offered a tour of the Vessel or to return to their ship to digest this unbelievable story. Most opt to return, but the M.C., the head

scientist and Co-Pilot decide to explore the Vessel with the guidance of #3 to help make the experience more real.

From this point on, the hour will move very quickly toward the climax. Here are the essential beats:

- The military will stick to their mission. They will argue with the other crew members, but ultimately succeed at detonating their nuclear devices.
- Sadly the detonation has little effect on the Vessel, except that it kills all of the crew, except for the M.C., the head scientist and the Co-Pilot. However, The Five now distrusts their motives and puts them into a brig.
- There is little hope of escape when #3 appears. She subdues the guards and releases our group. She explains, “I am the Sleeper. The opposition that lost the war secretly planted me. What #1 didn’t explain was that the war was actually about whether or not to disturb our own past. To alter our parents and ancestors. The have that wanted to give our lives over to a fate we had created lost that war. I was raised to accomplish one mission. Destroy the Vessel should it actually find Earth’s past. This group destroyed our Earth, our time. They’ll do the same to yours. We can stop them. We must move quickly. We have a slim chance of succeeding.” She then rushes them along a path to who-knows-where.
- The Sleeper and our group sneak through the ship but are spotted, and the chase begins. The head scientist is killed before the group reaches its destination: An escape ship. They barricade themselves against their pursuers.
- But it’s only big enough for one person. The Sleeper explains, “One of you is the Message. One of you will, must make it back to Earth and plant the evidence of this threat, this Vessel. So that in time, someone will know. And the other must stay.” The M.C. realizes, “This was what the platoon leader knew. Destroying this ship was his mission. But how will you destroy this ship?” “A plan was built into the ship by its builders. You may have noticed that the Five Pillars of Society contained here does not include the sixth: Labor. The builders were left to watch the Earth turn into a dead planet. The plan was their final farewell to this group.” “But what if they stop you?” The Sleeper replies, “They can’t because the vessel is its own detonator. I do nothing now but wait to pass on to the next life.”
- The pursuers have almost breached the cabin lock. “It is time. The Message must leave. Please choose.” The three exchange looks and we CUT to the exterior of the Vessel as a small craft slips into space, glides away from the Vessel and then in a flash of light vanishes into space.

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December 20, 1972 – Moon Surface – Apollo 17 – Last Mission to the Moon

We see Commander Eugene Cernan and Pilot Harrison Schmidt glide down the moon-hill slope and bounce to a stop. They get out and stare at the mysterious figure that approaches them. As the three move together, sunlight reflect off of the “alien’s” visor.

They stop feet from each other and the “alien” salutes in common military fashion. WE PUSH in on the “alien’s” visor until we can see that it is...