

MICA

by

Christopher D. Perham

Registered WGA 2014  
alaskascreenwriter@gmail.com

FADE IN:

300 MILES ABOVE THE EARTH

Hovering. The Earth spins below as sunlight flares just out of sight.

An unseen interview takes place somewhere below.

RADIO HOST (V.O.)

And good morning New York. Welcome to another new year. It's January first, 2020, and today we have a special guest. We're talking to Dr. Evelyn Grace. Welcome, Dr. Grace.

DR. GRACE (V.O.)

Thanks. Great to be here.

RADIO HOST

Now, Dr. Grace, you are the designer of the Universal Space Station, the largest ever constructed.

DR. GRACE

Yes, it's ten times the size of the International Space Station.

RADIO HOST

And you designed its central computer.

DR. GRACE

Yes, the Multiple Intelligence Computer Application. Or MICA, as I affectionately call her.

RADIO HOST

Now, I'm glad you brought that up. It's basically artificial intelligence, is that right?

DR. GRACE

Yes. MICA is designed to run several intelligences. Emotional. Cognitive. Existential. Among others.

RADIO HOST

Aren't you afraid of this technology getting out of control...I mean, we all saw the Matrix.

DR. GRACE

With all due respect, Mr. Vetter, MICA is not fiction.

RADIO HOST  
Can you tell us a little about the  
Pittsburgh Incident.

Silence.

Slowly, a space station comes into view. It's a massive,  
floating architectural masterpiece.

RADIO HOST  
Dr. Grace?

DR. GRACE  
Excuse m--

RADIO HOST  
Dr. Grace? Please. I'm sure the  
world would like to hear about the  
Pittsburgh Incident. Wait. Charlie,  
can we get her back in here?

INT. SPACE STATION - CONTINUOUS

It's mostly dark. Emergency lights strobe. But we can make  
out a figure. Definitely male. Frantic. Running.

He looks behind, but we don't see his face or what he's  
running from.

Suddenly, a flash of light! Fire illuminates him. Well  
built. Good features. Astronaut uniform with a triangular  
**CPS LOGO.**

EXT. SPACE STATION

The fire rages past several windows. Then

He SCREAMS!!

FADE OUT:

Chryon: TWO MONTHS LATER

FADE IN:

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE CABIN

Two pilots in command chairs surrounded by digital readouts,  
switches, levers.

PETE (32) shuttle commander. Intense eyes, focused. He  
squeezes a tennis ball.

PETE  
Attitude up, seven degrees.

JO  
Seven degrees.

JO (29) adjusts a lever through a heavy glove. She's pretty enough to be any astronaut's girlfriend.

JO  
Time to go, twenty-two minutes.

PETE  
Let's get everyone buttoned up for the approach.

JO  
Roger.

Jo's on comms.

JO  
Jackson, get the crew strapped in.

JACKSON  
(on speaker)  
Wilco, Jojo.

PETE  
(switching on comms)  
Houston, this is Protector. Twenty-two minutes to docking.

HOUSTON  
(on speaker)  
Roger, Protector. We're showing your approach visual. Links up. Your vitals look good. You've got three days. Make 'em count.

PETE  
Roger, Houston. We'll be radio silent for the next twenty mike.

HOUSTON  
Houston out.

Pete and Jo relish the silence for a moment.

JO  
Kinda makes you think how lonely this universe really is.

PETE  
Yeah.

The satellite appears as a speck, but grows.

PETE  
There she is, Jo.

JO  
(the brightest smile)  
She's beautiful.

Pete flashes her a smile.

JO  
What?

PETE  
You act like this is your first time.

JO  
Just never gets old.

PETE  
(back to business)  
Alright, just pay attention. Check  
right, 10 degrees, or we'll sail  
past her at fifty miles.

BELOW DECK

Five CREWMEMBERS strap into their seats.

RICK flips through a tech manual. He's disheveled and hard  
from a life in space.

SHAWN  
Put that porn away, Rick. It'll rot  
your brain.

Rick rifles through pages quickly.

RICK  
I found it!

SHAWN  
(piqued)  
What?!

Rick looks up. Slowly, from behind the pages, a stuffed  
rabbit appears.

SHAWN  
What the fuck is that?

RICK  
It's your mom's good luck charm.  
She gave it to me the night before  
we left.

SHAWN sneers. He's a middle-age fireball.

JACKSON  
Shawn, leave him alone...

Shawn doffs a mock salute to Jackson.

JACKSON  
...it's the only sex he's had in  
years.

A few laughs...

VANESSA watches beyond the portal into space. Preoccupied.

ABBY  
There's a whole lotta nuthin' out  
there.

ABBY, the shuttle's engineer, taps several buttons on a panel.

ABBY  
I prefer to keep my eyes inside.

SHAWN  
I'm with you, Abs.

ABBY  
(groans)  
No, Shawn, I will not sleep with  
you.

JACKSON  
Can someone turn up the heat please?

SHAWN  
What? Wha'd I say?

RICK  
Hey, guys. You know there's fourteen  
compartments on this beast?

ABBY  
She is not a beast, Rick. She's a  
lady.

SHAWN  
What, the space station? How you  
figure?

ABBY  
Just look at her out there. Graceful.  
Curvaceous...

SHAWN

It's a hunk of metal.

ABBY

You see Shawn. That's your problem. You only see the exterior. You gotta look beyond the facade.

SHAWN

It's a fuckin' space station. It's not like it's got feelings.

RICK

It might.

Rick peels back a page.

RICK

Here.

SHAWN

(reading)

MICA, the Multiple Intelligence Computer Application, is a state-of-the-art artificial intelligence system. Its designer, Dr. Evelyn Grace, created the system to anticipate, hypothesize, think critically, and empathize to serve its crew more efficiently.

ABBY

Told ya she's a lady.

SHAWN

So why didn't it respond to protocols after the distress call?

JACKSON

We're about to find out.

The crewmembers look uneasy.

SPACE SHUTTLE CABIN

The SPACE STATION looms through the shuttle windshield, slowly growing larger.

PETE

Engage reverse thrusters. Fourteen percent. Thirty seconds. Then push it to twenty.

JO

Engaging.

PETE  
Fifty-six kilometers. Start docking  
sequence delta.

JO  
Delta? Don't you think Bravo would--

PETE  
No, I don't.

JO  
Roger.

Jo draws on a lever.

JO  
Fourteen percent. You okay?

PETE  
Yeah. Just thinking.

JO  
You know, Pete, it's not the end of  
the world.

PETE  
Yeah, but today's just a little harder  
than most.

JO  
You could always call her.

PETE  
And say what?  
(mocking phone call)  
Hey, it's the asshole. No wait,  
don't hang up.

JO  
It's been a year.

PETE  
Seems like ten. I mean, would you  
forgive me?

JO  
Hell no!

PETE  
Thanks. I feel much better.

JO  
Where's she now?



PETE

Iowa.

JO

What's in Iowa?

PETE

Fuck if I know.

BELOW DECK

INTERCOM

(Jo's voice)

ETA 90 seconds.

JACKSON

Alright, let's get our game faces  
on.

Rick puts his earphones in and closes his eyes.

MUSIC.

SHUTTLE CABIN

The station LOOMS in the windshield.

JO

Where's the other shuttle?

PETE

(uneasy)

I have no idea.

JO

It's so dark.

PETE

Reverse thrusters maximum.

Jo pulls the lever back.

PETE

Cut...now.

Pete guides the shuttle in effortlessly.

CLANG. A dead stop.

BELOW DECK

CLANG.

The crew looks around.

JACKSON  
Looks like we made it.

Vanessa is still staring out the window, partially filled now by the space station.

Abby unhooks her harness.

She leans over to Vanessa; touches her shoulder.

ABBY  
A woman needs her space.

Vanessa smiles. The tension loosens.

CARGO HOLD

The crew is geared up. Bubble helmets. Spacesuits.

PETE  
(to the crew)  
We're not sure what to expect, so we'll expect the worst. We've had no comms or links with the station for two months. We're not even sure there's an oxygen supply.

JO  
It doesn't appear that the crew that sent the distress signal is here.

VANESSA  
Where are they?

JO  
We're not sure.

PETE  
Our job is to investigate and find out what happened to the other crew. I will not compromise the safety of this crew, so we'll split up into teams. Keep comms open and don't wander off.

JO  
We've got three days, then Houston wants us home.

SHAWN  
And if we don't find anything?

PETE  
Then that's what we'll report.

SHAWN  
(to Jackson)  
A hundred and fifty billion dollar  
question.

PETE  
Abby...

ABBY  
Sir?

PETE  
I want you to stay with the shuttle.  
You can monitor our comms from here.  
Raise Houston and let them know we  
arrived safely.

Abby acknowledges.

PETE  
And if you find anything, let me  
know. Everybody ready?

Everyone nods.

PETE  
Let's go.

INT. SPACE STATION - DOCKING BAY

The hatch hisses open.

Pete leads the crew through. He holds a bulky recording  
device, waving in front of him like a torch warding off  
vampires.

PETE  
No contaminants present.

Jackson's the last one through the door and seals it.

JACKSON  
(tapping a panel)  
Pressurizing now.

A static hiss.

JO  
Oxygen levels acceptable.

Pete gives the crew a nod.

Rick is the first to take off his helmet. He takes a deep  
breath and smiles. He takes out his rabbit and looks around.