

MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION

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BLACK:

SFX: Computers, chairs, people moving around.

TITLE CARD:

SEPTEMBER 18, 2028

PROJECT HORIZON MISSION CONTROL

AMES, IOWA

FADE IN:

INT. PROJECT HORIZON MISSION CONTROL - DAY

This is a very technically complex room. Despite the large number of screens and control panels everything works in proper sync. There are 18 technicians here and all know exactly what they need to do and when.

At several locations around mission control there is a countdown taking place. It is captioned "Landing Confirmation" and there are 5 minutes left.

There are several observation rooms along the back wall. Two are filled with research/professor types relaxing and watching. There are bottles of champagne and other celebratory signs. A third room, larger, has several rows of chairs and is empty.

JACK BANE, 50, male, Mission Controller, wearing a suit and tie with a cordless headset, monitors the room. Occasionally he will look and nod at some of the technicians in the room as he circles.

CALLY CANE, 24, female, Communication Specialist, approaches him.

JACK

Any updates?

CALLY

Solar stacks called in about 5 minutes ago. Those storms passed out of the zone so they don't expect any flares, most likely, for 49 hours.

(MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION - 2)

JACK
(relaxes)
Great.

PETE OBERN, 34, male, is monitoring his station. Jack walks by and Pete waves him to pause. Pete points at some data in the system and Jack nods and moves on.

TERRANCE YENN, 28, male, is so intent on watching his panel he doesn't realize that Jack pauses and looks over his shoulder.

Jack continues on his circuit and walks near the window to the empty room. He looks inside, his shoulders drop, and he shakes his head and moves on.

DAVE BURLINGER, 20, male, Flight Coordinator, checks the countdown clock.

DAVE
(calmly, clearly)
4 minutes to show time.

There is a general round of applause.

JACK
(lightly)
People, let's show a
little enthusiasm!

CHARLES
I'm showing as little
enthusiasm as possible.

They all laugh and Jack nods. He was asking for it.

JACK
Are the ENT's good?

ANDREA
They are always good.

JACK
C.T.O.?

FREDERICK
We are go.

JACK

A.G.I?

KENT

(giggles)

B.B.Q.!

JACK

(smiles and rolls
his eyes)

I'll take that as a yes,

ANGELA (off)

Three minutes.

JACK

Three minutes and I'm going
to the gallery.

More general applause and lighthearted booing.

KENT

Order some pizza.

Jack walks to the window filled with administrator types and
hooks his head set to a jack in the wall.

JACK

Good afternoon. ladies and
gentlemen. Three years ago
this university was given a
challenge to land a probe on
an asteroid. Not just any
asteroid, but asteroid 897
which is half the size of
our moon and two and a half
times further from the sun
than we are. An asteroid in
the heart of a belt 140 miles
across, made up of countless
asteroids, most uncharted,
from unknown origins. After
just as countless, uncharted
hours, we'll see in 2 minutes
that we have achieved our goal.

(MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION - 4)

DAVE (off)

2 minutes.

Jack unhooks his headset from the gallery and turns to the control team.

JACK

Everyone in position. Two minutes to a new horizon.

There is a genuine change in the room as the operators start to feel the significance of what is about to happen.

AMANDA RYERSON, 24, female, Samples Collector, glances at the empty observation deck and shakes her head.

AMANDA

Not one.

HENRY

One what?

AMANDA

Not one reporter showed up. Every news service in the country, some outside the country, was invited. Not one of them thought it was enough to send someone to cover in person.

HENRY

I know. It's science. Nobody cares about science anymore.

AMANDA

We're landing on an asteroid no one has ever visited. We're going to be examining soil no one has ever tested. We're going to see a horizon no one has ever seen. How can that not be exciting?

HENRY

There's another Kardashian divorce happening.

AMANDA

Like that's never happened before? They have a divorce lawyer on retainer.

HENRY

Yeah, but the 24-hour news people love it. Maybe, if we're lucky, they'll show the first horizon pic after the divorce terms are announced.

AMANDA

Kardashians!

HENRY

Full of sound and fury!

AMANDA

Signifying nothing!

HENRY

Hang on a second.

Henry nods in the direction of the press gallery. Jennifer looks over and one person enters and sits down and opens his phone to take notes.

AMANDA

(disappointed)

That's Glen Glenburry.

HENRY

The fastest blogger in the Midwest.

AMANDA

Thought he was looking for Bigfoot.

HENRY

Turns out it was just a hairy Kardashian.

(MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION - 6)

DAVE
(excited)
60 seconds!

There is an excited murmur in the room then everyone goes silent, hearts pounding, barely breathing. The counter reaches 0:00 and the reading immediately switches to "LIVE FROM 897."

Static over black on the screen.

Cheers from around the room. Professors ready their champagne bottles and glasses.

The image on the screen starts to form and every few seconds another layer of detail comes clear.

Technicians are staring at the screen. Ready to celebrate.

The picture of the surface is becoming clearer. The horizon is close, a crater rim in front, rocks scattered on the landscape and an apparent pile of rocks just over the rim.

The faces on the technicians change from joy to shock. Some of them stand and stare at the screen. The professors hold their celebration. Glen Glenberry drops his phone.

The main screen shows clear details of 897. It's very much like the surface of the moon but it feels tighter since the asteroid is smaller. There are rocks located across the surface. Just over the rim of the crater, facing away and motionless, is a space suited humanoid figure.

EXT. DULLES AIRPORT, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A plane landing.

TITLE CARD:
13 HOURS LATER

EXT. THE CAPITOL BUILDING, WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Cars being hurriedly escorted into the capital.

INT UNDERGROUND COMPLEX HALLWAY - DAY

The heavily secured elevator doors open and Jack, Cally, Dave and AMANDA are being escorted along the hallway by SECURITY.

(MAGNIFICENT DESOLATION - 7)

What few PEOPLE are on this level quickly stand back and let them pass.

TITLE CARD:
THE BUNKER

INT. UNDERGROUND COMPLEX MEETING ROOM - DAY

This room is a sharp contrast to the hallway. The walls are wood paneled, the table is oak and shiny, the chairs are handcrafted leather. The room is dominated by the United States flag and other government symbols.

Despite the size of the table there are three people seated. SECRETARY OF STATE MILLER, 54, male, gray hair and beard. DHS CHIEF CARTER, 37, business suit, and CALVIN BRYANT, 50, male, very conservative.

Jack, Cally, Dave and AMANDA are brought into the room.

MILLER
Dave Burlinger, nice to meet you.

They robustly shake hands.

DAVE
Thank you, sir.

MILLER
I saw you grew up in Dayton,
I went to a conference there
a few years ago. A beautiful
city.

DAVE
Thank you, sir. We're very
proud of it.

Miller turns to AMANDA and shakes her hand.

AMANDA
Glad to meet you, sir.

MILLER
Nice to meet you, to AMANDA
Ryerson. I saw that your mother
(MORE)

MILLER (CONT'D)
is a graduate from Oklahoma
State at Stillwater.

AMANDA
Yes, sir.

MILLER
It's a good school. I graduated
a year after she did.

AMANDA
She loved it very much.

MILLER
As did I.
(faces Cally)
Cally Cane.

CALLY
Yes, sir.

MILLER
I've followed your career
closely. You graduated from
college before what should
have been your high school
prom dance.

CALLY
Yes, sir.

MILLER
You'll go far.

CALLY
Thank you, sir.

Miller turns to Jack and smiles proudly at him.

MILLER
Jack, it's good to see
you again.

JACK

You, too, Mike. How long
has it been?

MILLER

I believe just after the launch.

JACK

Probably, it's been a lot of
miles since then.

MILLER

In very different directions.

JACK

Definitely.

MILLER

I hope we can talk more, but
first, we all have something
more urgent to talk about.

(MORE)

They all sit down. The lights in the room dim and a screen
lights up. It has the picture of the figure on the horizon from
897 on it.

MILLER (CONT'D)

In less than an hour this
picture was downloaded by
847,000 people. All of the
news services in the world
carried it and by sundown
128,000,000 copies were
flowing online. Hashtag
astro-ghost. St. Peter's
Square holds 300,000 people.
Estimates are half a million
persons filling the square
and surrounding the Basilica.
Pope Francis calls it the
Picture that Changed Everything.

(MORE)

Miller sits at the table and the lights go back to normal. The
screen stays on.

MILLER (CONT'D)

Every leader from every country has called the President. China, Japan, Mexico, the UK, etc. Even the President of Burundi was asking for information and making suggestions. They're really big on asteroids in Burundi.

JACK

I can't help but wonder if he had any interesting suggestions.

CARTER

I imagine it was the same as everyone else.

AMANDA

When were we on 897?

MILLER

Exactly. I'm afraid even our closest allies have been wondering about that. Even at home that question has come up. There has never been a manned landing there.

JACK

At least not by us.
(they look at him)
At least not by the United States.

CARTER

Are you talking Russia?

JACK

I'm talking the soviet union. After the collapse of the soviet union they opened up their space center, Star City, for anyone to take a look. There were lots of things in their records we didn't know about.

CALLY

Launches before Gagarin.

CARTER

Other attempts to put a man in space first?

JACK

Yes. There were also lots of gaps. Pre-Gagarin launches that could have been manned, but there are no records of Pre-Gagarin retrievals.

CALVIN

Unbelievable.

MILLER

Yes, and the ultra-secret soviets wouldn't have wanted any failures known.

JACK

Yes, there is no definite list of launches for the soviet space program, or their actual destinations.

MILLER

Could that astronaut be Russian?

DAVE

It could be. We've spent the last 24 hours going over every pixel of that image we can get. There are no markers, no tags, no flags, nothing with any language we can recognize anywhere. Could be from Burundi, for that matter.

MILLER

OK, so we have no visual references to go by. Anything else?

CALLY

What about the suit itself?

MILLER

We have had people looking at that, too. Crippen, Young and Ford have examined it as close as possible but there just aren't enough details. If it came from us it could have been from anytime since Apollo. There's no way to tell at this point.

CALVIN

So, what are the options? What do we do next?

MILLER

That's the big question isn't it? Something the President, the whole world, would like to know. We need to get closer.

JACK

We can't. The lander was never designed to cover the surface from any other location. It wasn't designed to be mobile.

CARTER

No drones? Perseverance was equipped with one.

JACK

Because Mars has an atmosphere to fly a drone in. 897 doesn't.

MILLER

What about radio signals? Anything on that angle?

AMANDA

Nothing discernable that stands out. There are space "sounds" that we've picked up. Random signals, mostly natural electronic emissions.

CARTER

We've been sending copies
of what you've got to
international translators
at the CIA, FBI and others.
They agree with you on that.

CALLY

Others?

MILLER

Yes, the same people who
monitor foreign transmissions
looking for possible threats.
Both of us will keep monitoring
the channels.

JACK

Ok, we've ruled out all the
immediate possibilities. So,
what comes next?

MILLER

It's really only one option.
Something everyone in the
world is thinking.

JACK

I hope you're talking about
a second mission.

MILLER

Yes.

JACK

Something able to maneuver
and investigate that astronaut?

MILLER

Yes.

JACK

A robotic mission to 897?

MILLER

(smiles at Cally)
Sort of.

INT UNDERGROUND COMPLEX HALLWAY - DAY

Jack, Cally, Dave and AMANDA are being escorted along the hallway by SECURITY back to the elevator.

CALLY

What if I said I had claustrophobia?

JACK

They'd ask why you had a career that involves spending countless hours in enclosed spaces.

CALLY

What if I said I was afraid of heights?

DAVE

Technically, you're not actually, leaving the ground.

CALLY

What if I moved to Burundi?

AMANDA

Now that might work.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

TITLE CARD:
13 MONTHS LATER

There are hundreds of sensors and cables hooked up to a figure standing in the center of a pad. There are very few indirect lights in the room, a bluish tint to everything, creating a very sanitized environment.

In the center of this menagerie is Cally. Every inch of her skin is covered and she cannot make a move, or a thought, without it being picked up and monitored.

CALLY (V.O.)

You think I'd be used to this
by now, wouldn't you?

(hums briefly)

Hey, AMANDA?

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

This room is much smaller than the Horizon's Mission Control yet just as complex.

Dave and AMANDA are stationed at a single console monitoring information they are getting from Cally. AMANDA is wearing a headset and keys the microphone whenever she talks to Cally. Cally's voice can be heard on the speakers.

AMANDA

Go ahead, Cally.

CALLY

What's the weather like outside?

AMANDA

Last time I heard it was 38
degrees in the shade.

CALLY

That's a heat wave compared
to 897.

AMANDA

By several hundred degrees,
I imagine.

CALLY

A tropical paradise.

AMANDA

Tomorrow we'll go for a swim.

DAVE

Safe bet there's no sharks in
those waters.

The main door opens and Jack walks in with Miller, VICE-PRESIDENT MICHELLE DAWSON, female, 55, and two ASSISTANTS of hers.

JACK

So, here it is Madam Vice-President. This is almost the center of our operation. The center, or rather, the heart, is a few hundred yards due east. Using virtual reality technology no one has ever seen before, for all intents and purposes, Cally will be standing on asteroid 897. As she stands, moves, looks around here the semi-A.I. will be looking around there.

DAWSON

She'll be walking on another World from our own.

JACK

Yes. She will see what it sees a few seconds behind, then it comes to us.

Cally starts humming.

DAWSON

That is astounding. I have to admit I'm quite jealous.

JACK

While I'm not sure about her position, physically, I can't deny I envy what she will be able to do.

DAWSON

(hears Cally's voice)
What is she doing?

JACK

Well, there are moments with not much happening so she will sing to fill the time.

CALLY

Daisy, Daisy, give me your
answer true, I'm just crazy
over the love of you. It
won't be a stylish marriage,
I can't afford a carriage,
but you'd look sweet, upon
the seat, of a bicycle built
for two.

Tracy and Dave look at their monitors giggling. Jack is not so
lucky and is biting his lip.

DAWSON

(knowingly, winks)
Interesting choice.

Jack sighs in relief. Jack turns back to the controls and scans
the room.

JACK

Ok, we are in final count.
Dave, are we go?

DAVE

We are go.

JACK

AMANDA, are we go?

AMANDA

We are go.

JACK

Cally, are we go?

CALLY

(pause)
We are go.

JACK

Cally, you get everything
first. All the info from
897 comes straight to you,
then to us, then to the
world. No pressure.

CALLY

A walk in the park.

Dawson waves at Jack indicating she'd like to talk to Cally.
Jack nods and gets her an extra microphone.

JACK

Cally, someone here would
like a word with you.

CALLY

George Clooney?

JACK

Vice-President of United
States Michelle Dawson.

DAWSON

(to microphone)
Good morning, Cally.

CALLY

Good morning, Vice-President.

DAWSON

How are you feeling?

CALLY

A bit overwhelmed, I have
to admit.

DAWSON

I can't say I blame you.
You're going to be part
of a number of firsts.
Including being the first
to find out how an astronaut
got on an asteroid 140,000,000
miles from earth. With over
7,600,000,000 people watching,
our hopes, dreams and our
future, are all with you.

CALLY

Thank you, ma'am.

DAWSON

I'm sure Clooney will be
watching, too.

EXT. SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

There are now two probes on the SURFACE OF 897 - DAY. The original, smaller probe is sitting unmoving with its cameras and sensors pointed to the astronaut.

The second probe is sitting not far off. It is larger, more active, with several arms extending from the center. There are two large treads that indicate some mobile object attached to the probe.

CALLY (V.O.)

Well, unless anyone has
any better ideas, I'm going
to go for a walk.

JACK (V.O.)

And the world walks with you?

INT. VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally makes slight movements in the chamber.

EXT. SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The mobile body on the lander activates and starts to move off the edge.

INT. VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally bends at the knees.

EXT. SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The treads on the mobile body extend from the edge of the lander.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

They all pause at what is about to happen.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally leans forward.

EXT. SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The treads reach the SURFACE OF 897 - DAY.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally raises her arms in triumph.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot body stands and raises its arms.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Dawson leads the team in a round of applause.

DAVE
Loud and clear.

AMANDA
Clear as a bell.

JACK
Congratulations, Cally.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot body shakes its arms.

CALLY (V.O.)
I feel awesome!

JACK (V.O.)
You deserve it.

DAWSON (V.O.)
Cally Cane, making a first
step on an asteroid.

The robot moves forward a few inches.

CALLY (V.O.)

The surface feels, um, looks,
pretty firm. I don't think
there will be any trouble
moving around.

INT. LANDER COMMAND - DAY

JACK

Ok, Cally. Sounds good. Find
your goal.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally slowly looks around.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot scans the horizon. It contacts the astronaut several
yards away and focuses on it.

CALLY (V.O.)

I got it.

AMANDA (V.O.)

Reception is good.

JACK (V.O.)

Whenever you're ready.

After a pause the robot starts heading towards the astronaut.
Cally's point of view, the robot's cameras, is limited and every
bump the robot hits looks much bigger on screen.

CALLY (V.O.)

You'd think they'd use wide
screen high-res cameras,

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Looking at the blurred and broken images from 897.

JACK

At this distance we knew something was going to be lost. Trust me, the sensors are picking up so detailed information it'll take years to examine it all.

CALLY (speaker)

It'll take seconds for me to fall flat on my mechanical face.

DAWSON

Duly noted. Remember, the world is listening.

Jack knows what she means and swallows hard. AMANDA and Dave look at each other glad they haven't spoken unprofessionally.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot approaches the astronaut from behind. It stops ten feet away and starts to scan it from head to foot.

CALLY (V.O.)

I'm looking for any kind of identifiers. Letters? Symbols? Wait a minute.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

JACK

What have you got?

CALLY (speaker)

There's a series of numbers on the wrist collar,

Everyone snaps to attention to examine the find.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

There is a short series of letters and numbers on the wrist collar of the glove. NNN-11-09.

CALLY (V.O.)

November, November, November,
dash, one, one, dahs, zero nine.

INT LANDER COMMAND

JACK

November, November, November,
dash, one, one dash, zero, nine.
Correct?

CALLY (speaker)

Correct.

Everyone in command is either writing the code down or entering it into computer systems and searching for it. Dawson's assistants are looking for it on their cell phones.

AMANDA

Nothing on historical, language,
or cultural data.

DAVE

Tech sheets are coming up empty.

JACK

Ok, pass it over to the full
team at Horizons. Keep digging.

JACK

Ok, Cally, nothing on that from
this end for now. Is there anything
else you can find?

CALLY (speaker)

Affirmative.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally adjusts her position.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot circles the astronaut. On the opposite wrist collar, helmet collar and chest panel are the same series of letters and numbers. The faceplate on the helmet is closed and reflective so there is no sign of whatever is inside.

Cally gasps seeing her reflection, the robot, in the faceplate.

CALLY (V.O.)

The same sequence on several
locations.

JACK (V.O.)

Anything else? Anything familiar
or unfamiliar?

CALLY (V.O.)

No. For all intents and purposes
it looks like something we use.
The build is humanoid, five
fingers on the hand, two feet.
Just a bit less of everything.
Not as bulky, fewer connects.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

JACK

(deep breath)

Cally, gently touch the chest
plate. See if there is any response.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally lifts her right hand and slowly moves it forward.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The right appendage on the robot lifts and gently moves to the
astronaut, pauses, then brushes the chest plate of the
astronaut.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Everyone is tense, staring at the display screen for several
seconds, waiting for a response.

CALLY (speaker)

Nothing.

Everyone sighs.

JACK

What can you tell us about
the face plate?

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

Main camera on the robot closes in on the face plate.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

CALLY (speaker)

It also is pretty standard.
Two snaps on top, two snaps
on bottom. Side hinges.

JACK (speaker)

(pause)

Open it up.

Dawson stands and walks closer to the main display. Dave's hands shiver and he gets a tight grip on his chair. AMANDA puts her hand over her heart and gives a silent prayer.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally takes a deep breath.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot reaches up and unsnaps the face plate.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Everyone's eyes are locked on the display,

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot lifts up the face plate.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally shivers.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Everyone nearly collapses from the relief.

On the main display screen, it is seen that the helmet is empty.

CALLY (speaker)
Nothing.

DAWSON
Nothing.

General relaxing from the crew.

JACK
Ok, Cally, look at the boots.
Anything there?

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot distances itself from the astronaut and looks down.
The boots are bulkier than the rest of the body.

CALLY (V.O.)
They look...swollen...compared
to the rest of the suit. As if--

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

DAWSON
As if what?

CAVE
Ashes to ashes...

AMANDA
As if whatever was in there
died and turned to dust?

CALLY (speaker)
Yes.

JACK
(takes control)
Alright, another mystery to
add to the list. For the time
being let's try and answer
another big question.
(pauses)
Where was he headed?

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally turns her head to one side.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot turns it's camera to one side. It is now facing the direction the astronaut was headed.

CALLY (V.O.)
There's a second rim, a crater
within a crater.

JACK (V.O.)
Proceed slowly.

The robot slowly moves closer to the rim. It stops a few feet away from the edge and the camera tilts down.

CALLY (V.O.)
Oh, my.

In the valley beneath them is what used to be a small encampment. There are 25 small structures, a few square yards each, set in a circle. There are various debris scattered on the ground outside of each building.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

DAWSON
Everything we thought we
knew changed.

DAVE
First contact?

JACK
Approach with caution.

AMANDA
Into the Twilight Zone.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

Slowly the robot approaches the first building, examines debris in front of it, then enters a gap in the wall. There is no roof,

rough edges where part of the walls were taken out, and more debris spread inside.

CALLY (V.O.)

Not sure what's going on here.

DAWSON (V.O.)

Any signs of former inhabitants?

CALLY (V.O.)

No. No hints.

JACK (V.O.)

Try the next one in the circle.

CALLY (V.O.)

Affirmative.

The second building is bigger but the results are the same. The robot enters, scans the interior, then exits.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

The third building on the monitor, is smaller and intact. It is dark inside. Before entering the robot turns the lights on and there is a moment when it reveals an astronaut suit laying on the ground. Cally instinctively jumps back and gasps.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

JACK

Ok, hold on.

AMANDA

Cally, ok, you've gone off the charts.

CALLY (speaker)

Yeah, I got it.

DAVE

I hope no one looks at my charts, either.

JACK

Not just your charts. Whew.

DAWSON

All right, big scare.

JACK

Cally, can you give us a
closer look?

CALLY (speaker)

Affirmative.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 BUILDING 3 - DAY

The robot camera closely scans the suit. The suit is flat giving the impression there is nothing inside. Also, the helmet is detached.

CALLY (V.O.)

It looks just like the other
suit. Pretty standard in design
but a thinner material. The
markings are the same.

JACK (V.O.)

Anything else inside the structure?

The robot does a 360-degree scan.

CALLY (V.O.)

Not a thing.

JACK (V.O.)

Ok, let's move to number 4.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 BUILDING 4 - DAY

Building 4 is in the same condition as building 1.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 BUILDING 5 - DAY

Building 5 is smaller but half of it has been destroyed.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 BUILDING 6 - DAY

Building 6 had been almost completely torn apart with debris scattered outwards.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

CALLY (V.O.)
Wait a minute!

The robot, between buildings, raises the camera high and looks around.

JACK (V.O.)
What have you got, Cally?

CALLY (V.O.)
Just an idea. I was thinking about the debris fields around these structures. It's scattered in all directions at random. Different sides of the structures, different amounts of damage. It doesn't seem like it was just abandoned or left to rot. It wasn't dismantled either. It's as if, when you put them together, there was some sort of battle here.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Everyone is looking at the scans they've downloaded.

DAVE
Magnificent.

DAWSON
Desolation.

JACK
A battlefield?

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

Scanning the structures from the robot's view it does look like a battlefield.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

CALLY (speaker)
There was a battle here.

JACK (speaker)
It sure does resemble one.
Let's find out more.

CALLY (speaker)
There's no going back.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot approaches building 7, which is almost completely intact, pauses, then enters and scans the interior.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Everyone stares at the screen.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 BUILDING 7 - DAY

In one corner, partially shadowed, is a metal table. On top of it, covered in a sheet, is the figure of a body. The lights on the robot switch on. Even with more light there are no more details.

JACK (V.O.)
Cally?

CALLY (V.O.)
Yes?

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

JACK
As carefully as possible
remove that sheet.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally doesn't move a muscle for several moments. Her hand moves up and forward.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The appendage of the robot moves up and forward. The gripper carefully drabs the edge of the sheet and slowly pulls back.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

They are all breathless.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

Cally with draws her hand.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 BUILDING 7 - DAY

The sheet pulls away and slowly falls to the ground. On the table is a skeleton, bones, dry, lifeless, but a humanoid skeleton. The robot scans the bones closer.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

They are slowly recovering from the surprise. Dawson approaches Jack.

DAWSON

We need to talk.

Jack nods and they all move to the center of the room.

JACK

Cally, are you able to
hear us?

CALLY (speaker)

Affirmative.

JACK

Good. You're the final say.

DAWSON

When this whole project started
several years ago, you called it
New Horizons. It turns out that
was a very prophetic title. I
think, right now, the day everything
changed is even more appropriate.
Who knows what it will be called
tomorrow?

(pauses)

Options?

JACK

Go through the...place...one structure at a time. Examine every single one of them.

DAWSON

Power and time restraints?

JACK

None.

DAWSON

Good.

(to Dave)

Options?

DAVE

Well, in a lot of cultures, well, on our world, towns are often built surrounding some monument or something. A fountain, a statue, some sort of town square. I think that's the best chance for finding definite information.

DAWSON

Good

(to AMANDA)

Options?

AMANDA

Just a curiosity, really. That skeleton. It looks human, or humanoid, but that's for biologists to decide. I can't help but wonder how it got that way. It's just a skeleton, that would indicate that any flesh on the body rotted away at some point. How does that happen when there's no atmosphere?

DAWSON

A decayed alien body, in a destroyed settlement, on an asteroid more than 100,000,000

(MORE)

DAWSON (CONT'D)
miles from Earth, that used to
have an atmosphere. Cally? Options?

CALLY (speaker)
I think the best way to solve
the mystery is to go back.
Find out who these aliens were
and where they came from. Like
Jack said, most often cities,
communities, from many cultures
are usually built around something.
I think if there's a road map
from some alien sun to here it
will be in the center of town.
Let's go there.

They all nod in agreement.

JACK
Whenever you are ready, Cally.

CALLY (speaker)
What else have I got to do?

They all return to their stations and check their equipment.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot camera scans the area. orients itself, then rolls
towards the center.

As it travels there are a few more signs of habitation. Pieces
of equipment long since shut down, piles of broken items,
general destruction.

The robot comes around a corner to the center of town.

CALLY (V.O.)
Dave was right.

There are four posts holding up fabric of some kind creating a
cover in the center. Underneath it is what was once some type of
lander. A module sitting a few feet off the ground on struts.
Sensors, cameras, shattered windows, an open hatchway and a
broken ladder.

JACK (V.O.)

See if you can find any
kind of identifiers. Any
hints as to what planet
or star they came from.

The robot slowly moves closer than comes to a complete stop. The camera scans several mounds on the far side of the lander.

CALLY (V.O.)

More bodies.

(MORE)

There are three suits mostly covered in dust and sand. Two of them have shattered helmets. the third has an arm outstretched and is holding a metal bar. From this angle it is impossible to see inside the broken helmets.

CALLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It does look like a battlefield.
That one against the other two.
Broke open their helmets, killing
them, but also died after.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

AMANDA

They were in suits. A battle
that took place after they
lost the atmosphere?

DAVE

They fought to the very end.

CALLY (speaker)

Should I swing around and get a
closer look at them.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

JACK (V.O.)

As you circle it, okay. Just
start at the ladder, the entrance
entrance to the lander, then work
your way around clockwise.

CALLY (V.O.)
Affirmative.
(MORE)

The robot moves into the shadows of the tent.

CALLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
There's something on the landing
strut. Looks like a plaque of
some kind.

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

Dawson takes a deep breath and stands next to Jack.

JACK
Close in on it.

CALLY (speaker)
It's sitting at an angle. I'll
have to squeeze in to see it.
(MORE)

The view on the monitor closes in on the lander. There is a patch there. It is a different material then the strut and is more reflective. Shapes and letters are on the surface but the shadows and reflections still make it hard to read.

CALLY (CONT'D)
Going to silicone lighting.

EXT SURFACE OF 897 - DAY

The robot is adjusting the camera position to get a better view.

JACK (V.O.)
Affirmative, Cally, take your time.

The lights switch on.

CALLY (V.O.)
(screams)
NOOOOOO!

INT LANDER COMMAND - DAY

At the same time the light goes on the screen goes blank and they jump up from Cally's call.

JACK
CALLY? What happened?

The screens from the asteroid go blank and there is silence.

AMANDA
She's pulling herself out of
the chamber.

Jack, Dawson, all start running with AMANDA.

INT. FACILITY HALLWAY - DAY

They burst out of the command room and sprint down the hallway.

INT VIRTUAL CHAMBER - DAY

There is a brief pounding at the door and it is opened by ASSISTANT CRAZE, male, 25, and they rush to where Cally is seated. DOCTOR HINES, male, 55, is helping her into a chair, checked her vitals, trying to calm her. Cally is wide eyed, sweating profusely and breathing rapidly. Some of the sensors and wires from the virtual reality

HINES
Okay, Cally, you're here.
You're safe.

Cally doesn't react. She shakes uncontrollably. AMANDA heads over the equipment and starts typing in numbers and commands. Jack, Dave, Dawson and her assistants surround Cally and Doctor Hines.

JACK
Cally? Cally, what happened?

HINES
Steady, slowly, let her take
her own time.

JACK

(calmly)

Okay, Cally, you're here, safe
and sound on Earth, you're home.

DAVE

Breath deep, Cally.

At the virtual reality control panel AMANDA is reviewing what Cally saw. She reads something, sits back, in shock.

HINES

Okay, Cally, your breathing is
steady, your heart rate calming.

CALLY

(mumbling)

They... They...

Still in shock, unable to speak, AMANDA stands. She pulls the monitor from the panel and walks to the rest of them.

DAVE

Did you get it?

DAWSON

What did she see?

JACK

What does it say?

AMANDA shows them the picture on the monitor. They look blankly at it and have no idea what to do.

CALLY

They... They...

(MORE)

On the screen is a slightly blurry but readable image, the last thing Cally saw. It is a plaque mounted on the lander strut. One symbol is human, the other is planet Earth. In bold letters it reads "WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND."

CALLY (CONT'D)

They were us!

CUT TO BLACK: