

CHASING HUMANITY PILOT (1ST 15 PGS)

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL CRAFT IN AIR - DAY

Through the front window, a runway in the distance grows larger. It's cloudy. The craft cuts through wisps of low clouds.

STACCATO BEEPING. FLASHING RED LIGHT illuminates the window.

View shimmies from side to side, up and down at irregular intervals. Imagine the worst landing you've ever experienced but in an experimental craft that's flown once before.

From the right, JOHN BLAISÉ (late 20s), full head of dark hair, leans in from his copilot seat looking back.

JOHN

We're gonna come in hard. Brace up
best you can when I give the word.

Through a narrow portal, crammed into a small cargo bay are six people. One lies prone amid the others. Bandage on their head, covered in a blanket. Another favors an injured arm slung against their chest. Some wear polo shirt bearing the NASA logo. All bounce around.

John turns back. Looks over the control panels.

ELECTRONIC ARTIFICIAL HORIZON GAGE. The simulated horizon moves up/down. Tilts left/right.

JOHN (O.S.)

Damn computer isn't compensating
like it should.

MARTIN CARTER (early 30s) sits in the pilot seat. Both he and John wear white pressure suits sans helmets in the cramped cockpit. Both wear ear/mic combo headsets.

MARTIN

Didn't plan landing in the middle
of a thunderstorm.

JOHN

You think dead stick--

MARTIN

Yeah while we still got time.

John reaches for the computer control panel and flips a toggle switch. BEEPING and RED FLASHING stop.

Martin tightens his grasp on the control stick. Strains to hold the craft steady.

The vessel smooths out only a bit. Still much shimmy and shaking.

Martin glances over his left shoulder. Back forward.

MARTIN

Now the port stabilizer still isn't responding like it should--

BEEPING and RED FLASHING start again.

JOHN

And the alarm makes it official.

CONTROL CENTER (V.O.)

(through earphones)

Control to Phoenix.

JOHN

Go for Phoenix.

CONTROL CENTER (V.O.)

We got you 'bout five minutes out.

JOHN

Rogers that.

CONTROL CENTER (V.O.)

FYI. Some of the techs here don't think the landing gear will hold up with all the extra weight.

John and Martin give each other a "that's great" look.

JOHN

(mild sarcasm)

Roger that.

ELECTRONIC ALTITUDE GAUGE- ticks downward a few feet every second.

JOHN

Phoenix to Control. You got emergency crews and ambulance ready to roll soon as we touch down?

CONTROL CENTER (V.O.)

Roger that.

MARTIN

Nice of you to say touch.

John looks back into the small cargo bay again.

JOHN
How we holding up commander?

The prone, injured person shimmies side to side under the blanket.

The man leaning against the back wall tries putting on a smile.

COMMANDER
You just get us on the ground and
you'll have our undying love.

John turns back around.

JOHN
(to himself)
That may be the hardest part.

He reaches up.

LANDING GEAR CONTROL- Two toggle switches and series of colored bulbs.

JOHN (O.S.)
Here goes nothing.

He flips on of the toggle switches.

Dead silence.

ACT 1**INT. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY - DAY**

A podium stands in the middle of the stage. The United Nations emblem hangs thereon. Behind this a raised, marble covered background.

CONVERSATION from numerous persons and languages fill the air. Like the beginning of Patton minus the US flag.

John Blaisé walks to the podium. Dark colored folder tucked under one arm. The conversations die down. APPLAUSE RISE. He set the folder down.

He smiles without showing teeth. Nods to the left. Mouths the words thank you. Does same to the right.

Brings fist to mouth and clears his throat. Opens the folder. APPLAUSE DIMINISH.

JOHN

I wish to thank the assembled heads of state, representatives, scientist and learned professionals for this opportunity. But the ultimate thanks goes to those brave astronauts of the space shuttle Constellation...

As the view pans out, the image is actually on a large flat screen TV. It hangs on the wall of a mid-size, nice, but sparse lounge.

INT. LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

As John goes on naming and exalting each member of the Constellation, KANDA (early 30s) sits on small couch against the wall, looking at the TV.

A small sink, cabinet and counter embedded in the wall in the back. A young man and woman sit at a small table adjacent. Both stare at the TV as well.

JOHN (O.S.)

Those who dare venture into space. Knowing the dangers. Accepting the risks. And much thanks must go to the employees of CosmosNow, who rose to the challenge. And to those who believe in what we do. The goals they and our noble astronauts set for humanity and those who stood by us.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)
 Even after all the setbacks,
 failures, trials and errors. All of
 which helped create the Phoenix.

LUKAS BULLOCK (late 50s) stands against another wall. Suit
 and tie. Arms crossed. He too watches the screen.

JOHN (O.S.)
 Flown by ex-astronaut Martin
 Carter, who, under the most
 stressful conditions, piloted the
 Phoenix back to Earth after
 rescuing the crew of the
 Constellation.

John, now in his early 60s, graying hair, glasses, sits in a
 plush chair in the middle of the room, staring at the TV.
 Casual clothes. APPLAUSE from TV.

LUKAS (O.S.)
 And never once you thanked
 yourself.

John remains fixed on the screen. Cocks a smile.

JOHN
 Considering what I said next, it
 would a lowered even more the
 opinion some had of me. Before and
 after.

As they speak, on the TV, the United Nations General
 Assembly gives a standing ovation as the scene morphs into a
 rotating view of the Earth.

The caption "CosmosNow. Serving humanity for the past 30
 years. And beyond..." comes up on the side of the screen as
 a montage of rocket assembly plants, lift offs, construction
 of lunar habitats and Mars outpost roll by.

JOHN (O.S.)
 And of course you cut all that out.

LUKAS (O.S.)
 We only have 90 seconds for the
 promo.

JOHN
 For the best. Don't want to open
 old wounds. Some of those bastards
 are still coming after me.

Lukas smiles.

The young man and woman exchange glances, looks of mild shock.

Kanda doesn't react at all.

John stands, turns to the young man and woman.

JOHN

Your production company's done a fine job putting this together.

The two stand. Gather up their computer tablets.

JOHN

Mr. Bullock here will get with you with all the... the airing details, markets, etcetera, etcetera.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's been a pleasure and honor Mr. Blaise.

YOUNG MAN

And we thank you for the opportunity.

Kandra passes by.

KANDRA

If you'll follow me please.

The trio file out. John moves to the sink. DOOR CLOSING.

JOHN

The Tereshkova arriving back on schedule?

As Lukas speaks in the background, John gets a glass of water, then drinks some.

LUKAS

Yes. Will arrive Luna One at 13:50 next Tuesday. Commander Sakuri's reported issues with some of the water production, waste and rocket control systems but nothing major. Non critical glitches mostly. And some minor structural issues, but...

JOHN

(nodding)

Expected. We learned a lot from the Sagan. Fourteen months in space.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

Mars. Then to Ceres and launching our Titan drone. Back to Mars. Gone farther than any human beings ever have. An historic first!

LUKAS

Should dovetail nicely with the thirtieth anniversary honors.

John points at the now blank TV screen.

JOHN

Bet no more than ten people in that au-gust chamber that day would have thought we'd get half this far.

LUKAS

Might a been less.

JOHN

You might be right.

LUKAS

Still remember Martin telling me of all the looks of annoyance on people's faces when you went on.

JOHN

Pfft! Like they had any plans to colonize space!

The two chuckle. John finishes the water.

JOHN

How's the special project going?

LUKAS

(tries not looking at him)

Good. Good.

JOHN

And the rest of the crew?

LUKAS

(reluctant nodding)

They... they understand.

JOHN

See. I told you. Trust our people. They'll make sure this project will carry on what we've done for the past 30 years.

LUKAS

So... you still want me to go ahead with it?

JOHN

Should dovetail nicely with the thirtieth anniversary honors. Thank you for putting all that together. And... understanding.

LUKAS

You're welcome, but a... still have long way to go. Paperwork you're going to have to go over and approve. Hard part's still ahead.

JOHN

Figures. Always is. But we're use to that. Geez. How many things did we not anticipate. Think about till it happened.

LUKAS

The moon did throw us a lot a curveballs.

JOHN

Yeah. But the moon was easy. Dealing with people...that's the tough part. When we started, did you think we'd have to spend what... ten... twenty million a year on security. Armed security.

LUKAS

A sad sign of the times.

JOHN

Wonder who's worse, my fellow intellectuals constantly lambasting me for not doing enough for the Earth or humanity or those whack jobs wanting to storm us thinking we got aliens hold up here.

Lukas cocks a smile.

LUKAS

We plan emphasizing what you and CoNo have done for this planet. The human race.

JOHN

Damn right! Not gonna get old thinking I wasted the last thirty years of my life. Regardless of what those self-proclaimed Earth huggers say about me.

LUKAS

All that said... you not being there when the Tereshkova gets back will raise eyebrows. Perhaps--

JOHN

Lukas. We've been through this. Please don't try talking me out of it again.

Awkward silence. Lukas is almost shamefaced. He relents.

LUKAS

Would it work?

JOHN

No but... part of me does appreciate you trying.

Lukas nods then leaves.

John sits back in the chair, leans back, sighs as if exhausted.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Lukas strides down a hallway away from the lounge. Emerges into another room.

Kendra sits behind a desk facing a computer. Bluetooth phone piece in one ear. She's talking and typing.

Lukas waves at her as he strides by. She waves back.

Enters a modest sized and furnished waiting area.

A man (dressed in a polo and slacks) and a woman (in a blue jumpsuit) stand as he walks up.

WOMAN

Well?

Lukas stops looks around. Man and woman step up to him.

Lukas draws a breath. Speaks in a low voice.

LUKAS

We're still a go for launch.

MAN

Is he's meeting the Tereshkova?

LUKAS

No. I'll be going in his stead with the rest of the press junket.

Disappointment on faces of man and woman.

LUKAS

There's no other way he can get this project off the ground by the anniversary date.

WOMAN

Maybe we can talk to him again.

LUKAS

He's made up his mind. And he's earned it.

MAN

But does he know what he's gonna earn by throwing it away?

LUKAS

Nobody said that's going to happen!
(relents)

Now, if you get any media inquiries about him not being at Luna 1 stick to the story. Let's get to work.

ACT 2**EXT. ENTRANCE TO STEEMS ACADEMY - DAY**

A large well kept SIGN:

STEEMS

Space Technology, Engineering, Exploration, Mathematics & Science Academy

Behind this an arched entrance stands over a road. Brick pillar on each side. Behind this a myriad of buildings. Some older. Some modern. An old air force base shut down after the Cold War John bought at a bargain price.

People walk in and out. Some carry bags or suitcases.

On one pillar a PLAQUE:

Leave you prejudice and any other preconceived notions here. We don't have room for them. Nor does space.

MACKENZIE (MACKI) WILLARD (19) shy, intelligent, eyes full of wonder and life, walks along the sidewalk. Drags a worn, wheeled suitcase behind her. Holds a computer tablet under the other arm. Others with more luggage walk nearby in various directions.

As she walks, she takes in the other buildings and memorials...

JOHN (V.O.)

You're beginning the greatest adventure of your life. From thousands who sought a spot here at STEEMS, from all over the world, you've made it this far. And the challenges are only beginning. The classes are not meant to be easy. Nor some of the rigors of residence life. Everything here has a purpose, designed to prepare you for what's out there. Space is an unforgiving place. It's exploration and colonization are not for the weak of heart. Or of mind.

She turns and walks towards one of the buildings.

EXT. DOORWAY TO RESIDENCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Macki stops. Looks at her tablet then the plaque next to the doorway.

PLAUQE: Rear Admiral Alan B. Shepard Hall

She smiles, then turns serious. Takes a deep breath and enters.

INT. SHEPARD HALL - CONTINUOUS

Through a doorway, people pass by. Some with bags wearing civilian clothes, other in light blue or red coveralls with various patches. CONVERSATIONS and FOOTSTEPS.

Macki appears in the doorway. Stands for a moment looking around inside.

MACKI

Ah. Hi.

INSIDE THE ROOM: Three young ladies turn and look at her. A set of bunkbeds line opposite walls, large window in between.

MACKI

Guess this is where I'm suppose to be. Room 212.

ADAYA SINGH (19) stops unpacking and walks up. Speaks with an Indian accent.

ADAYA

Yes. The 212. I'm Adaya.

Macki tucks the tablet under the other arm. They shake hands.

MACKI

Makenzie. Macki for short.

The two other ladies step up. MELLYSSA ROBERTSON and YOLANDA WORMALD (both 18). They shake hands and introduce.

YOLANDA

Might as well get comfy.

She gestures towards a set of bunkbeds. The bottom one's empty. Macki moves towards it.

YOLANDA (O.S.)

Gonna be our home for the next year or so.

Mellyssa walks up to her. She speaks with a slight southern accent.

MELLYSSA

Hope you don't mind me calling top bunk.

MACKI

No. No. Not at all.

She eyes the bed. They're narrow. Hardly room for one. Adaya steps next to her.

ADAYA

Suppose to simulate what you get once you get spaceside. Same with stowage.

Macki turns to one of the two cabinets at the foot of the bunk beds. The open door reveal some small drawers, cubby holes and space to hang a few garments.

Mellyssa step up to the one adjacent already full.

MELLYSSA

Reckon they wanna get us use to living on the moon or Mars from the get go. Even for those who won't be going there.

Macki moves to the empty cabinet. Props her suitcase next to it.

MACKI

You... don't want to go extraearth?

MELLYSSA

Well... right now, got my eyes set on nanobot research. STEEMS' gotta kick butt facility I'd love to get my hands on--

BRIELLE (O.S.)

In a couple of years you might change your mind.

All four turn to the door.

There stands BRIELLE ROCHE (early 20s), hands on her hip in a pose of authority. She has the mentality of a head cheerleader and brains of a card carrying member of MENSA.

Behind her ANDREI (ANDY) KOZLOV (early 20s). Handsome, genial, standing a head taller. A best friend type of guy.

Both wear light blue coveralls. Their last names above the left breast, various patches here and there.

Brielle has a noticeable one on her right chest: Sheppard Hall's emblem and words Resident Hall Coordinator emboldened around it.

BRIELLE

On behalf of the crew of Shepard Hall, let me welcome you to the greatest journey of your life.

Relaxing her stance, she walks in.

BRIELLE

I'm Brielle Roche, your Res Hall Coordinator. My crew and I are here to get you situated. So if you have any questions, let us know. And this is...

Andrei steps up.

Adaya and Mellyssa exchange looks and raises eyebrows, then back to him.

He speaks with a noticeable Slavic accent.

ANDREI

Andrei Kozlov.

MACKI

Relative of Cosmonaut Fyodor Kozlov?

ANDREI

Why yes. My great grandfather. My compliments. You know your history.

Macki smiles, hides her embarrassment. The other ladies hang on his every word.

ANDREI

And I'm here to act as a... a guide for your first weeks at STEEMS. Although I don't know the answers to every exam --nor how to get them-- I'll do my best to help you!

All chuckle.

BRIELLE

Okay. We got your first indoc meeting at sixteen hundred hours.

ANDREI

That's 4 o'clock for those unused to the 24 hour thing.

BRIELLE

Right. So you better learn it. Meetings in Yager Hall. Got lots to go over. From there well go to the Ride Center get you issued your mandatory coveralls. Change, then dinner. After that, a general meeting.

MACKI

Wow. Cramming in a lot.

BRIELLE

Got to. We're not saving any of you for the prom.

Macki and Yolonda exchange looks, as if overwhelmed.

BRIELLE

Then we break down into smaller groups back here for more indoc by my crew, me and a few of your future instructors. Everyone get sent their class schedule?

The four ladies nod, say yes in one way or another.

BRIELLE

Great! First starts at o-seven hundred tomorrow. So with that...

She points at each lady in turn.

BRIELLE

Adaya Singh... Mackenzie Willard...Yolanda Wormald and Mellyssa Roberston... I've got others to welcome, so see you again at sixteen hundred.

The ladies are stunned she knew each of their names.

YOLANDA

How did you...

BRIELLE

An exercise designed to increase memorization. Mandatory by the way.

Stunted looks form the ladies.