

DEEP IMPACT

WRITTEN BY

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Deep Impact

1 SPACE

1

Deep, dark. Stars, distant planets, silence. The universe spreading out before us in all of it's terrifying mystery. Inviting, seductive. The dark edge of an infinite lethal precipice daring us to jump.

It BLURS. OUT OF FOCUS. And back. Brilliant, SHARP. The soft CLICK of a SHUTTER. It hangs open for an eternity. Then, CLOSES. The WHINE of film advancing. We're in a --

2 STATE PARK IN VIRGINIA - NIGHT

2

With a pretty girl, SARAH, no more than fourteen, taking photos of the night sky through her small telescope. She's surrounded by a dozen other telescopes, three or four feet long, reflectors and refractors.

TEENAGERS, a few adults, all take pictures of the night sky using cameras attached to their telescopes. The SHUTTERS open, close. The camera motors ADVANCE.

The teacher, MR. PERRY, supervises.

WE MOVE TO:

LEO BIEDERMAN, whose interest in the sky is almost equal to his interest in Sarah.

LEO

Matt Sheperd?

Sarah doesn't look up from her telescope.

SARAH

He asked me. It's just a party.
He's nice.

LEO

To you maybe...

PERRY

What's the bright one?

Perry, behind Leo. Leo returns to his telescope.

(CONTINUED)

LEO
Mizar, it's a double star.

PERRY
And the one next to it?

LEO
Alcor.

PERRY
And the one next to that?

Leo stares through the telescope, hesitates. Finally...

LEO
I don't know.

SARAH
It's Megrez.

LEO
No it's not.

SARAH
You said you didn't know.

LEO
I know where Megrez is. I'm talking
about the other thing.

He stands up for Perry to take a look. So does Sarah,
through her telescope.

LEO (CONT'D)
South, about ten degrees.

Leo can't help but glance down as Sarah's jeans part from
her lower back when she leans over the telescope.

PERRY
(eye in the viewer)
Probably a satellite.

LEO
(distracted)
Huh?

As Perry starts to walk away.

PERRY
(an afterthought)
Take a picture and send it to Dr.
Wolf.

SARAH
It's Megrez.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:(2)

2

LEO
It's not Megrez.

Leo looks through his telescope at this distant light,
SNAPS the shutter, and --

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

3 REMOTE OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

3

And then, the black begins to OPEN. A platform moving,
dim white running lights glide along the smooth circular
sides of the massive dome above us.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

A huge telescope swings slowly into place beneath a crystal clear night sky.

SUPERIMPOSED ON SCREEN, A SINGLE WORD: "SKYWATCH"

Silhouetted against the brilliant stars, a man, plumes of white breath escaping into the bitter desert darkness, MARCUS WOLF. He releases the telescope from its clamps. LOOKS DOWN at the mirror as it swings into position. Wolf steps off, walks back to the --

4 OBSERVATION ROOM - NIGHT

4

FLICKS off the white running lights as he goes, bathing the scene in red. Studies the sky on a large computer (no one looks through an eyepiece anymore). He picks up an envelope leaning against the monitor. In it, photographs of the stars and a group shot, Perry and his kids. Leo and Sarah hold up a sign: LEE HIGH SCHOOL ASTRONOMY CLUB. Wolf grabs a slice of congealing pizza from a picked-over Domino's box, shuffles the kids' photos. Not much of interest. Stops at one. A beat. Turns it over, finds the scrawled coordinates indicating its location in the sky. Intrigued, he walks back into --

5 THE DOME - NIGHT

5

Controls the telescope with the kind of simple buttons you find on a hospital bed: Up, Down, Left, Right. The huge motors GRIND as the telescope moves.

The sky changes above us as he jogs back to - -

6 THE OBSERVATION ROOM

6

The image on the monitor rotates, LOCKS into place. He compares the screen to the photo. Smiles.

WOLF

Hello, do I know you? ...where
are you going in such a hurry...?

Taps in a command, the cursor squares on one area of the image, ENLARGES. He stares, enters the ascension and declination directions and observation time. Numbers race by, trajectories, speed. Finally...

WOLF (CONT'D)

...oh shit...

Drops his slice of pizza into the trash, swings around to his open laptop. Double clicks on his AOL folder.

The familiar AOL gateway graphic POPS up.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

6

The modem CLICKS on, a DIALTONE, followed by rapid DIALING. He rolls back to the mainframe, hunts around for an empty disk, slaps it in, begins the download.

The modem SQUAWKS. A BUSY SIGNAL. The modem disconnects then CLICKS alive again. Dials the back-up number as Wolf EJECTS the downloaded disk from the mainframe. Wheels back to his portable, just in time to be met by...

VOICE (VO)

All circuits are busy, please try
your call again later...

The modem CLICKS off, the screen returns to the AOL gateway.

WOLF

Perfect...

He grabs a manilla envelope, quickly addresses it to: "CAROLYN SHOEMAKER Ph.D. Department of Planetary Sciences, University of Arizona, Tucson." Finds the photo, checks the back for Leo's name. Where the disk label has a blank space, he writes "WOLF-BIEDERMAN" --

7 OMITTED

7

8 OMITTED

8

9 OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

9

A battered Jeep Wrangler. Wolf leaps in, ROARS off down the mountain. The observatory looms behind him.

10 TRUCK - NIGHT

10

A trucker, MCCLOUD, in the cab of a semi, a six-pack of Jolt Colas on the seat, the RADIO BLARING country.

11 WOLF'S CAR - NIGHT

11

Wolf listens to Puccini. The Jeep speeds around the snowy mountain curves shakily as he attempts to dial his portable cellular phone and stay on the road.

12 TRUCK - NIGHT

12

Puccini collides with Garth Brooks as McCloud guzzles his Jolts. A long cigarette ash dangles from his lip.

13 WOLF'S CAR - NIGHT

13

Wolf drives. The phone held to his ear. A distant RINGING.

(CONTINUED)}

13 CONTINUED:

13

WOLF

...come on...come on...

And finally, a voice answers.

WOMAN (VO)

You have reached the Department of Planetary Sciences. If you know the extension number of the person you are trying to reach, enter it now...

Wolf holds the phone down in front of him, trying to dial the numbers, steer, and keep an eye on the road all at once. Dialing wins out.

14 TRUCK - NIGHT

14

The cigarette ash fills the screen. We know it's going to drop. We wonder when...

MCCLLOUD

...Oh fuck...!

His hand dances wildly, searching for the hot ash.

15 A MONTAGE OF ACCELERATING IMAGES

15

Wolf's Jeep rounds the bend in the wrong lane. McCloud's hand digs between his legs, the ash burns his fingers as Wolf's lights BLIND him. Wolf SCREAMS. McCloud YANKS the wheel, the semi SKIDS.

MCCLLOUD

...Jesus...!

The collision is a ballet of destruction, the drama of two bodies trying to occupy the same space at the same time.

The mass of the truck dominates the Jeep. The Jeep's small frame has nowhere to go but back into itself. Abstractly, this is sculpture, at the moment, this is death.

Flying glass is everywhere. The Jeep's canvas roof SHREDS and flails. Its engine pushes the steering column up into the cab. The semi shoves the Jeep up and through the guardrail, twisting metal and wood BURSTING out into space.

The Jeep SURGES end over end, down the side of the mountain, towards the snowy woods, a hundred yards below.

The MANILLA ENVELOPE WITH THE COMPUTER DISK soars out of the rags that were the Jeep's roof. For a moment it lands at the foot of a snowy evergreen. An EXPLOSION and a massive rush of air send it further into the wintry forest.

16 ON THE ROAD ABOVE - NIGHT

16

McCloud falls from the truck cab, drags himself up, stumbles to the edge of the cliff, picking his way through the strewn glass and metal. Grabs a road sign for support, blood runs down his face. He stares through the twisted guardrail down into the canyon at the burning wreckage until:

A second EXPLOSION drives him back from the edge and we PULL AWAY. Finally able to read the large yellow road sign lit by the fire below..."Watch For Falling Rocks."

DISSOLVE TO:

A title is superimposed on screen:

WOLF-BIEDERMAN MINUS TWO YEARS, FIVE MONTHS, NINE DAYS, THREE HOURS.

17 MOUNTAIN NEAR TELESCOPE - DAY

17

A brilliant summer day, hot, bright. Two state highway trucks are parked, orange cones, warning signs. A SUPERVISOR takes a drink from a greasy water cooler perched on the tailgate. Walks past the caged windows of a parked Department of Corrections bus. Crosses the road to the repaired guardrail and the roadside sign above it, "Watch for Falling Rocks". Yells below.

SUPERVISOR

Three o'clock. Let's go...

His voice CARRIES US DOWN the rocky hillside to the canyon floor below where a YOUTH OFFENDERS PRISON CREW, rough Teenagers in orange jumpsuits, pick up trash. The crew looks up the hill, starts back for the road.

A SURLY TEEN GANG GIRL turns to go, spies one last piece of weathered manila envelope tucked under a pile of decomposing branches and leaves. Spears it. Brings it up to her jam-bag. Stops. A name, faded, almost illegible.

Pulls it off her stick, brings it closer. An address:

"CAROLYN SHOEMAKER Ph.D. Department of Planetary Sciences, University of Arizona, Tucson."

CUT TO:

18 OMIT

18

18A LIMESTONE CLIFFS - NIGHT

18A

The headlight of a helicopter settles down into the swirling dust of a massive construction sight. Hundreds of workers, train tracks, massive drills, four story earthmovers. Entrekin hops out, shakes the hand of a hard-hatted man.

(CONTINUED)

ENTREKIN

No excuses, Parnell, all I want to
know is are we going to be ready
on time?

They walk out into the huge site, dodging heavy equipment.

FOREMAN

We'll be ready.

Lunch in a garden restaurant. JENNY LERNER 29, seated with her mother ROBIN, 55. Robin has a slight air of bohemia; if the women her age in the restaurant are dressed for business, she's more relaxed. She's also a lot more drunk. Jenny is lovingly concerned. Instead of looking at her daughter, though, Robin studies her watch.

ROBIN

At this moment, right now, the pretty little girls, the twins, oh what are their names? His sister's grandchildren...

JENNY

Emma and Susanna. Mother...

ROBIN

They're walking down the aisle, spreading flowers, dropping the rose petals, everyone is smiling at them.

JENNY

Mom, is this really a good idea?

ROBIN

Yes. And now she's walking down the aisle, and she stands beside him, and the priest...

JENNY

Judge, it's not a church wedding, mother.

ROBIN

And the Judge says, blab blah blah, sickness and health, blah blah blah, do you, Jason Lerner, take Chlorine...

JENNY

Chloe, her name is Chloe.

ROBIN

Of course it is. And Jason is saying, lie lie lie lie lie, 'till death do us blah blah blah blah... And she says yes and he says yes and it's kissy kissy and congratulations, Jenny...

The weight of what is happening hits Jenny. She can't believe it.

JENNY

No...

(CONTINUED)

ROBIN

(you understand, don't
you?)

That's right, the nuclear family
just exploded.

JENNY

As of this moment, I now have a
stepmother who is two years older
than I am.

ROBIN

After fifteen years... Fifteen years,
I can't believe how much it hurts
me... Jenny, fifteen years, you'd
think I'd have been past the pain,
Jenny, it hurts me so much I'm
embarrassed.

Jenny studies her mother. She realizes something.

JENNY

When was the last time you slept
with him?

ROBIN

That's none of your business.
(after a considered moment)
The hell with my deadline. Have a
Martini.

Jenny signals the Waiter for the bill. He brings it over.

JENNY

It'd be a lot of fun to get drunk
with you, Mom, but...

ROBIN

(you don't have to say it)
I know, I know, I know.

JENNY

I'm sorry about this.

ROBIN

We'll get over it. I love you.

JENNY

I love you, too.

She pays the bill in cash.

ROBIN

Let me.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY
No. Goodbye, Mom.

And Jenny leaves.

AT THE DOOR OF THE RESTAURANT: She goes to the Maitre d' and gives her a twenty.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Call a cab for my mother, would you, Sue?

20 MSNBC RECEPTION - DAY

20

Jenny comes in from lunch, in a hurry. Behind the receptionist is a television tuned perpetually to the news. The ANCHOR is TIM URBANSKI, 46.

TIM
Tragedy struck today as a charter aircraft carrying an Army unit returning from duty in Japan crashed this morning into the waters of Puget Sound outside of Seattle...

21 MSNBC STUDIO - DAY

21

Jenny walks into the desks behind Urbanski's overlit anchor desk. It's half-set, half-work area. We see Urbanski's back, the cameras pointed at us, the blazing lights. Jenny dumps her purse into a desk drawer, the preoccupied researcher, BOBBY RHUE. Bobby gets up and walks with Jenny.

BOBBY
Would you sign a petition to get a new coffee machine?

JENNY
Would you call every hospital between Washington and Baltimore to see if anyone has admitted a Holly Rittenhouse in the last few days? Where's Stuart?

BOBBY
They started early today.
(what he wants to talk about)
The coffee is bitter. I hear that's why Bob Campbell is leaving.

JENNY
(this is important)
Bob Campbell is leaving?

(CONTINUED)

BOBBY

I hear he's going to San Diego to
be an anchor.

JENNY

And you told me...

BOBBY

Because I have faith in you, and
because...

He gives her the petition.

JENNY

Don't forget the hospitals.

BOBBY

I never forget anything.

She signs the petition on the run and hustles past the
windows of the Day Care Center where toddlers play.

Stops at the glass-walled conference room overlooking the
studio floor. Tries her best to enter quietly.

22 MSNBC CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

22

The staff meeting's already in progress. A long table
filled with an odd mix of impeccably attired and perfectly
coifed on-air personalities interspersed with casually
dressed couldn't give-a-shit senior staff. The meeting is
run by STUART CALEY, late fifties, holding a piece of fax
paper disdainfully. Behind him is a wall of monitors tuned
to competing news outlets. Some have a large Starbucks
coffee, some have Evian.

STUART

White House Press office says that
Secretary of the Treasury Rittenhouse
is resigning because his wife is
sick.

That illicit a round of cynical hoots. IRA MOSKATEL is
business news, 40's.

IRA

Sick, my ass!

Jenny squeezes into an empty seat on the outer ring of the
room. BETH STANLEY, 40's, attractive, the senior White
House correspondent, smiles back at Jenny, shakes her head
in mock disapproval.

STUART

So who passed Rittenhouse the
hemlock?

(CONTINUED)

BETH

AFL-CIO wanted him off the Council of Economic Advisors for not supporting the Pension Bill. President's going to need Labor next fall.

MARIANNE

State's still fuming about the Trade Office screw-up at the G-7.

MARIANNE DUCLOS: English, International news desk. JEFF WORTH, 50's.

WORTH

Pentagon's been unhappy with his readiness reduction proposals.

BETH

Greenspan dislikes him.

STUART

Christ, who didn't this guy piss off?

IRA

(grins)

No wonder the wife's sick.

That gets a few laughs. Jenny cuts in from the back.

JENNY

She's not sick, she's a drunk.

STUART

How do you know?

But she's not going down easy, stands her ground.

JENNY

I had breakfast with Mike Woodward over at Treasury.

(her notes)

Mrs. Rittenhouse started drinking a couple of years ago when her husband had a series of affairs. Stepped it up last summer when their son died of leukemia. Word at Treasury is she's got liver damage, may even need a transplant.

That shuts them up. Beth sneaks a smile back to Jenny.

BETH

You want to do something on the price the wives pay?

(CONTINUED)

WORTH

That's tired.

STUART

Look into it, Beth. What else,
Ira?

As Ira begins his report, Beth looks back to Jenny,
whispers. We listen to both conversations at once.

BETH

Mike Woodward, wife,
three kids?

JENNY

He's been asking me
out for months, so I
let him have a breakfast
and hit him up on
Rittenhouse.

(then)

Bob Campbell is leaving.
The midnight Saturday
anchor shift is opening
up.

BETH

Why would I give up
the White House for a
graveyard weekend slot?

JENNY

Not for you, for me.

Beth stares at the younger, attractive Jenny. Smiles.

BETH

No. We'll talk about this later.
(answers Stuart)
Very calm, the President will be
back from Camp David tomorrow.

STUART

Ira, business news?

Jenny isn't giving up on Beth yet.

IRA MOSKATEL

Pentagon's getting ready
to issue a report on the
costs of the President
bringing all military
personnel back Stateside.
Maybe there's a connection.

WORTH

Defense isn't commenting
but everybody over there
seems pretty tense.

MARIANNE

NATO's certainly not happy
about it.

STUART

Let's go around: White
House?

(CONTINUED)

JENNY
Beth...

BETH
Keep working on
Rittenhouse.
(smiles)
Maybe Mike's available
for dinner.

BETH
(then)
Usual background,
administration officials
who've resigned under
similar circumstances,
usual.

Jenny's clearly unhappy.
Beth's attitude is good
humored and indulging,
that of a mentor and a
friend.

BETH (CONT'D)
Try to find Mrs.
Rittenhouse, see if
you can get her to do
a stand-up. The good
wife, loving kids, throw
in the family pooch if
they've got one. Take a
cameraman from the pool.

STUART
Lead with the Pentagon again, follow
with the famine.
(looks around)
Jenny, get some famine statistics.
Maybe we can do a world hunger series.

BETH
She's on Rittenhouse for me.

JENNY
I can do both, Stuart.

That gets a smile and a head shake from Beth.

STUART
Great. Okay, that's it.

Everyone stands, gathers papers. Jenny dogs Beth out into:

(CONTINUED)

IRA MOSKATEL
A lot of market activity
in Florida construction
right now.

STUART
That's not a headline.

IRA
You asked.

STUART
Pentagon?

WORTH
Internationally deployed
units continue to be
recalled home. At this
rate, everybody'll be back
in ten months. Congress the
is going nuts, rumors are
the President plans to cut
the Pentagon budget in
half.

STUART
International: Marianne?

MARIANNE
Europe calm, Pakistan
bloody, Japan elections,
Nigerian famine.

JENNY

Beth...

BETH

(laughs/smiles)

Oh god, Jenny, please... Look, this is how it works. You've done your two years in research, now do three as a segment producer, five on air doing domestic features, a couple as a Bureau Chief in some cholera ridden hellhole, and then, I'll quit if they don't give you a weekend anchor shot.

Jenny stares at her, uncertain.

JENNY

Are you protecting me, or just holding me back?

BETH

(smiles)

Yes. Rittenhouse tape and text by four, we'll drop in my reverses for the five o'clock.

Beth walks into the Day Care center. We see her lift her daughter through the window.

BETH (CONT'D)

Caitlin! Hello Sweet Pea...

Jenny hangs back. Pissed. Spots Stuart.

JENNY

Stuart...

He's on the move to his office, reading, barely looks up.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Bob Campbell's Saturday slot is open. I hear he's leaving. I'd like to sub for him.

STUART

Anchor?

JENNY

I think I'm ready.

STUART

I don't.

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

He disappears into his office. She crosses to her desk.

23A INT. NASA SHUTTLE PREP BUILDING - NIGHT

23A

A shuttle surrounded by gantries, and men and women in furious preparation to send the rocket into space.

A new point of view, taking in the scene. TRACK from the new point of view.

ON THE ASTRONAUTS

We HEAR the echo of old cowboy boots on the hard concrete floor.

This should be like Norma Desmond's return to the Paramount Stage in "Sunset Boulevard". While the Astronauts are suspicious, all around them the older NASA hands stop what they're doing, wherever they are, and begin to applaud.

PARTENZA

That's him.

SIMON

Unbelievable.

BAKER

How long has he been out of the saddle?

MONASH

They don't trust us without him.

TULCHINSKY

We should give him a chance.

MONASH

And if he blows it?

TULCHINSKY

You have a point...

RETURN TO THE MAN'S POV

We HOLD BACK and SPURGEON TANNER enters frame. Tanner walks proudly into the applause, knowing that to acknowledge the support of the old hands is to give them encouragement. We come around him as he walks ahead to greet a man in the crowd who is coming out to him, MITCH HEFTER, in his sixties, another old engineer.

HEFTER

How have you been, Fish?

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

I didn't know how much I missed this place until just now. It's good to be back.

HEFTER

I was against it. But they need your help.

TANNER

I know. Let's meet the crew.

And he walks forward, and from a safe distance we see him shaking hands with everyone, and we see that Monash is reluctant, and Tanner knows it.

(CONTINUED)

A new face, SHEILA MARTIN, African-American, late-30's, at the anchor desk. We hear and see her live on the various monitors scattered throughout the room. Jenny and Bobby walk through the room.

BOBBY

I tried the hospitals,
no Rittenhouse...

JENNY

The rehab hospitals?

BOBBY

I know my job. I called
every one from Florida
to Connecticut.

JENNY

Is there a maid, is
there a driver?

BOBBY

Patricia Ruiz,
Rittenhouse's Secretary,
was dropped from the
payroll.

JENNY

(The first good news
of the year)
I'll bet she's happy
about that.

They reach her desk. Where we find, ERIC VENNEKOR,
twenties, handsome. He's made himself comfortable at her
desk, watching cartoons.

MARTIN

The President today
announced the cancellation
of another aircraft carrier,
the Ronald Reagan. At the
White House, our Beth
Stanley.

ON TV: PRESIDENT TOM BECK, in
an Oval Office Photo Op:

BECK (ON TV)

Defense conversion will
require us to re-imagine
and re-invent the way
government works.

BETH (ON TV)

Senator Barbara Boxer of
California had this
response.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY
Who are you?

ON TV: SENATOR BOXER in the
Capitol.

ERIC
Eric Vennekor, your
new cameraperson. The
pool sent me over.

BOXER (ON TV)
First the massive troop
redeployments and now the
cancellation of a second
carrier. The President
has been playing with the
Treasury as though he
doesn't have to answer to
Congress, and I'm very
disappointed.

JENNY
Could you please get
your feet off my desk.
(she grabs her
coat and the
remote and changes
the channel)
Time to run.
(to Bobby)
You didn't happen to
get Mrs...

BETH
The President was quick to
respond.

INSERT PRESIDENT BECK

BOBBY
Ruiz, you're meeting
her for coffee,

BECK
I am not canceling the
carrier. I'm saying that
there's new technology
which would lower its
construction costs and I
want to give it more study.

ERIC
There's plenty of room
in the van.

ON TV: Beth is on her feet,
asking him a follow-up
question.

JENNY
Good. Follow me.
I'll take my car.
After I see Ruiz we go
to Rittenhouse's place
and either surprise
him or find out what
the maid knows. You
grab a couple of pretty
shots of the house,
and I'll let Beth tell
me what the story is.

BETH
But what about the three
billion dollars already
committed to the ship?

BECK
We'll save it for a rainy
day.

ON TV Beth in front of the
White House, a standard shot.

BETH
This is Beth Stanley,
reporting from the White
House.

They are watching Beth on the monitor.

BOBBY
You're getting a little too good
at this.

JENNY
Come on.

And they go.

24 OMIT
AND
25

24
AND
25

25A INT. CAPITOL REFLECTING POOL LUNCH

25A

Jenny and MRS. RUIZ, a fifty-ish career secretary, a decent person, very wounded by something. Eric's leaning against the van smoking, parked illegally over by the steps. Office workers eat lunch outdoors in the warm weather.

RUIZ

I've been with the Secretary since he was Governor of Connecticut. I came with him to Washington. I moved here because I was dedicated to his career. I trusted the man. And then he fucked me.

JENNY

He what?

RUIZ

No... I didn't have sex with him... or I should say, I didn't have sex with him, but somebody sure did. And it was about to come out, so he resigned. But since I was hired from outside the government pool, I don't get conveyed to the next Secretary, so now I'm out a job. Because he couldn't keep his hands off of women.

JENNY

Do you have proof?

RUIZ

He thinks he was so clever. He had a private phone line installed in his office. Nobody else could answer it. I picked it up once, said "hello"... and it's nobody home. It rings, he shuts the door. Why not hang a sign?

JENNY

Do you have a name?

Ruiz balks. Her years of loyalty hard to shed.

RUIZ

This is what I get for talking to the press. I am selling my soul right now, I can feel it, I can feel it. I name a name and get someone into trouble.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

So you know her name?

RUIZ

Just her first name. Oh my God,
I'm going to say it...
(a beat)
Ellie.

Jenny writes, suppresses a grin, this is great.

JENNY

Just Ellie? Nothing else?

RUIZ

I think the President knows her,
too. I overheard the Secretary
talking to him about her. Isn't
Washington sick?

Jenny nods as if agreeing, but frankly, right now,
Washington is pretty damn great.

RUIZ (CONT'D)

I almost feel sorry for him.

JENNY

Sorry for the man who cost you
your job?

RUIZ

Thank you. That's a reality check
I'm going to cash right now.

Half-million dollar homes on a beautiful cove by the bay. Huge trees, gravel lined drives, azaleas. Jenny and Eric climb out of a MSNBC van, look down the rolling lawn to a lovely brick Colonial.

ERIC

You drive like a maniac.

JENNY

Thank you.

ERIC

Have you ever seen a Scottish cameraman naked before 3:00 p.m.? It's a custom...

Eric grabs his camera gear. He follows Jenny down the lawn.

26A EXT. ON THE DOCK - DAY

26A

LILY is a pretty ten year old, stuffing a sailbag.

JENNY

Hi.

LILY

Can I help you?

JENNY

We're looking for your mom.

LILY

My Mom's sick, she's not here.

Jenny studies the scene on the dock: duffel bags, travel gear, freeze dried food, several cases of ENSURE.

JENNY

I love boats. Looks like you're going on a long trip.

LILY

Uh huh.

JENNY

That's exciting. Where are you going?

ALAN RITTENHOUSE, a patrician in his fifties, comes out of the boat.

RITTENHOUSE

She's going up to the house. Lily, please.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

Lily, what a pretty name. Jenny Lerner, MSNBC, Mr. Rittenhouse...

RITTENHOUSE

Lily, do as I say.

Eric shoulders the camera.

RITTENHOUSE (CONT'D)

What do you want from me?

JENNY

We want to talk to you about your resignation.

RITTENHOUSE

My wife is sick, she is in the hospital. This is why I resigned, everybody knows that.

JENNY

Sir, we can talk about your wife, or we can talk about Ellie.

RITTENHOUSE

Turn your camera off. If you want to talk, turn it off.

Jenny gives the okay to Eric. He puts it down.

JENNY

We know everything.

RITTENHOUSE

Nobody knows everything.

JENNY

We know about the secret phone line. The whispered calls to the President. A Secretary of the Treasury keeping his entire department in the dark about what he's really doing. A cover story about his resignation that's just been blown. You want me to keep going?

RITTENHOUSE

And you're just going to break it?

JENNY

That's what we do for a living. You keep secrets, we expose them. Democracy in action, sir.

(CONTINUED)

RITTENHOUSE

Congratulations, now you've got the biggest story in history. Good luck to you. Personally, I think it's a mistake to run it, but, hey, what the hell, why not? What difference does anything make anymore?

(beat)

I know you're just a Reporter, but you used to be a person, right? I wanted to be with my family. Can you understand that?

Rittenhouse turns away from Jenny and walks over to Lily who has been curiously watching the exchange. Rittenhouse takes Lily's arm and they quickly leave the dock together.

27 OMIT
THRU
33B

27
THRU
33B

Jenny's driving her Honda, talks into a microcassette recorder as the sun sets over the mall.

JENNY

(figuring out the story,
making notes)

Okay, so... It's obvious. The Secretary of the Treasury resigns because of a mistress named Ellie. The President knows about this. But why... the people... the Secretary of the Treasury... the President... whoa... the President of the United States has a girlfriend named Ellie, and the Secretary of the Treasury is pretending to have an affair with her, and he resigns... and the President buys him a yacht?

(she's got it, now she's
pretending to be on air)

MSNBC learned today that a shocking sex scandal has rocked the White House and the Treasury Department. In the still unfolding drama, sources within the Treasury Department have confirmed...

BOOM! The recorder flies out of her hand and SMASHES against the window as her head WHIPS forward. She's been RAMMED from behind, looks in her rear view mirror.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

A dark domestic sedan, two men in the front seat. They RAM her again. She's not stupid, this is serious. She tries to speed up but the car ahead slows down. She tries to pass, but the car beside her won't move, its male passenger motions for her to pull over.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Oh no... Shit...

She pulls to the side of the road, the three escort cars surround her. A man in a grey suit opens her car door.

GREY MAN

If you would please, ma'am.

JENNY

Who the hell are you?

FBI badges. He points inside the sedan.

(CONTINUED)

GREY MAN

Please...

It's not a request. She steps out cautiously, he opens the passenger door of his sedan. She climbs in as a younger man hops in behind the wheel of her Honda.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: (2)

34

JENNY

You guys wouldn't have a warrant
or anything, would you?

But nobody answers, nobody even looks at her as the convoy
pulls away and disappears into the heavy traffic.

35 OMITTED

35

36 OMITTED

36

37 KITCHEN HALLWAY LATE - AFTERNOON

37

Jenny is brought down a long, oppressive concrete hallway,
overhead pipes, conduit, ducts. Is lead into a --

38 HUGE UNDERGROUND INDUSTRIAL KITCHEN LATE - AFTERNOON

38

A few men are there, waiting. MORTON ENTREKIN steps
forward, 40s, hip, Southern, shirtsleeves. The kitchen
counters are covered with food from an interrupted luncheon
clean-up.

ENTREKIN

Morton Entrekina, Ms. Lerner.

He offers his hand. She thinks about this, then takes it.
Everyone is watching her, no one gives anything away.
There's another few jars of that damned Ensure. What's
going on?

JENNY

MSNBC... They know what I am working
on... they expect from me and I
think they should.

ENTREKIN

People knew about the Manhattan
Project and they kept it secret.

JENNY

And that was just the creation of
the atom bomb.

ENTREKIN

You do understand. Hundreds of
thousands of people kept that
secret. That's how we won World
War Two. Thousands are keeping
this secret.

JENNY

I'm a reporter.

ENTREKIN

With no concern for national
security?

(CONTINUED)

Jenny is thoroughly confused, trying desperately to figure out what he's talking about without revealing her ignorance. But he's not watching her, he's still waiting. An FBI agent picks luncheon meat off a large deli platter, eats. What the hell is going on?

The double doors BURST open and PRESIDENT BECK enters followed by Secret Service Agents. To say he enters doesn't quite explain it, his presence seems to proceed him, as if he's the dawn sun just breaking the horizon.

BECK

Ms. Lerner, Tom Beck. I understand you've come into a little information.

Jenny stands there as if slapped. Beck offers the smile that got him elected. Holy shit, the water's suddenly very deep.

ENTREKIN

Ms. Lerner was just expressing her lack of enthusiasm for matters of national security when journalist competitiveness is at stake.

Beck nods, seeming to agree with Jenny. The reasonable, understanding father, the legislative compromiser. Jenny's staring at him. He's not unaware of the effect he's having on her. She takes a deep breath, plays her only card.

JENNY

(fighting now to collapse in front of the man)
At this moment Mr. President, I am not interested in using Ellie to further my career.

When she says the word Ellie, the President studies her. He wants to speak to her as someone he can trust.

BECK

So what do you know about E.L.E.?

When Jenny hears the phrase E.L.E. something snaps into place. She realizes she has a card to play for the first time since she was taken here.

JENNY

I know you should have chosen a better cover story than a sick wife.

Beck looks unhappily to Entrekkin.

(CONTINUED)

BECK

You see? What did I say?

Entrekin holds up his hands, guilty as charged.

BECK (CONT'D)

We always thought that the deadline for going public was the publication of the budget. We've spent more money than we could hide. But the budget comes out in two weeks. I don't suppose I can convince you to sit on this for two weeks?

JENNY

There's no such thing as two weeks in the news business.

BECK

And I can't appeal to your sense of what's in the nation's best interest.

JENNY

I always thought the truth was in the nation's best interest.

Beck and Entrekin look at each other.

ENTREKIN

Should we hold her?

BECK

What if we went public in forty-eight hours? That's doable, isn't it?

ENTREKIN

It'd be very difficult.

BECK

If she knows, how many days before The Post or CNN break the story? This was never going to be a secret as long as you wanted it to be, Morton.

(back to Jenny)

If you give us two days, you get second row center at the White House press conference. And from what I know about your career, that's a promotion.

She considers this. She has to play a big card.

JENNY

I want exclusivity.

(CONTINUED)

BECK

Now you listen to me, Ms. Lerner. This is a Presidential favor. I'm letting you go because I don't want another headache and I'm trusting you because I know what this can do for your career. Somehow, we have each other over the same barrel. But who really has the power in this room?

He's scary, and they're eye to eye. But she is still strong enough for one last volley.

JENNY

I want the first question.

BECK

Want?

JENNY

May I? May I have the first question?

BECK

(the political pro)
See you on Tuesday, Ms. Lerner.

Jenny rushes into the newsroom, most of the desks are empty, save for a small news staff, the anchor out front, and a cleaning crew. She tosses her stuff down, throws herself in front of her computer, types in ELE.

BEEP...BEEP! The screen comes alive with hits. Paint companies, an exterminating outfit in Atlanta, an upholsterer in Boise, a website for Ella Fitzgerald.

She jumps to information on Ellesmere Island and it's snow blasted Eskimo settlements. Nothing's right.

She then has a thought and types in E.L.E. The search reveals a single hit: E.L.E. -- see University of California at Berkeley, Department of Paleontology.

JENNY

What does Paleontology have to do with anything?

Next hit -- Department of Paleontology. A list of sub-headings: Invertebrate Paleontology, Vertebrate Paleontology, Oceanographic Prehistory, Hominid Paleontology (see Department of Anthropology), Extinction Studies. That stops her. She clicks on "Extinction Studies". Up comes a graphic with the dinosaurs and the comet, and the definition: E.L.E. -- Extinction Level Event.

She clicks the hot word, "Extinction" and up comes: "The act or fact of dying; death, decease, demise, dissolution, passing, quietus, rest." We're close on Jenny when we hear --

BETH

Hey, look who's working late.

Jenny is petrified, but covers.

JENNY

Hi.

(CONTINUED)

BETH

How're we doing on Rittenhouse?

It's Beth, carrying her daughter, Caitlin, briefcase slung over one shoulder. She's on her way home.

JENNY

I... Uh... No sign of his wife, not yet, we're working on it. We'll get her.

BETH

Is she missing?

JENNY'

She's not available for comment.

BETH

I know it's a dull story ...

JENNY

Yeah ...

BETH

I'll find something more exciting for you next time.

JENNY

Great.

BETH

Are you okay?

JENNY

Yes.

BETH

Come to dinner with us?

JENNY

I have to meet my Father.

BETH

Then I'll see you tomorrow. Say goodnight, Caitlin...

CAITLIN

...'night...

What Beth hasn't seen is Jenny's computer screen: a full color and text encyclopedia page, illustrated dinosaurs, a comet, extinction.

40 OMIT

40

40A INT. HAYS ADAMS DINING ROOM - NIGHT

40A

A great old wood paneled bar. JASON LERNER is about sixty three; an international lawyer, serious and somewhat guarded. His relationship with his daughter is civil, and terrible. CHLOE WEBBER, his new wife, is just two years older than Jenny. She is not a joke, which makes this more painful. Of course she is lovely, but she is a serious person, too, not unlike his daughter.

JASON

Here she is. Jenny...

(CONTINUED)

And Jenny comes into the room, looking like she just found out the world is coming to an end. The more deeply she stares into herself, the more her father and mother-in-law read this as hatred of them. The Waiter arrives.

WAITER

Would you like a drink?

JENNY

A big Martini, up, big.

JASON

I missed you yesterday. It hurt me very much that you didn't come to the wedding.

CHLOE

(making peach)

Jason, you promised. Jenny I wanted you to have something.

She hands her a blue box from Tiffany. Jenny stares at the box, as though she's never seen a present.

She gives him no reaction. Indicates another round for him and Chloe. The waiter leaves. Jenny handles the box without comprehension.

JASON

Jenny, you should open the present.

Jenny opens it numbly. Two pearl earrings. She shakes her head, but not about this.

CHLOE

You can always exchange them if you don't like them. I know this is hard, but I want you to be happy.

JENNY

Happy.

The drinks arrive. Jason lifts his glass. While Jason is talking, Jenny downs the Martini.

JASON

Alright. I want to forget about yesterday, and I want to say how important it is to me that we're together now.

But Jenny had finished her Martini in the first five words of the toast, and she's staring deep into herself.

JASON (CONT'D)

Are we going to have an evening or not?

(CONTINUED)

CHLOE

I know you hate me. I know you want to say something terrible to me. I know you want to ask me what my major is, or how long I've been driving, or if my mother let's me cross the street by myself. But my parents were divorced too. You have to get over it. Life goes on.

Jenny looks at her, and starts to smile, and then laughs to herself.

JENNY

Life goes on.

(a beat)

Dad, you have to get back with Mom. She's all alone in the world, and she needs you.

JASON

Jenny, I got married yesterday.

(to Chloe)

I'm sorry for the way my daughter is behaving.

CHLOE

(she's not happy)

It's not your fault.

JENNY

I have to go. I'm not a bad person. I'm really not. I know you think I am and I don't hate you. I have to go.

Jenny gets up and leaves. We stay with Jason and Chloe. She picks up the earrings.

(CONTINUED)

40B OMIT
AND
40C

40B
AND
40C

41 OMIT
THRU
44

41
THRU
44

45 EXT. WHITE HOUSE EARLY EVENING

45

The press corps is in full force. Reporters every ten feet, each with a backdrop of the White House. We TRACK ALONG, hearing them all say essentially the same thing.

BRENT HUME

President Beck begins his address
in fifteen minutes...

COKEY ROBERTS

The White House has maintained a
complete blackout on the purpose
of tonight's speech...

FRENCH REPORTER

Le President a demande ace que les
televisions du monde entier...

AFRICAN REPORTER

Hotuba itatafsiriwa kwa lugha mia
moja na ishirnini...

46 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

46

Jenny shoves her way through the tangle of reporters and
cameras, makes her way slowly. Uncertain where to go.

BETH

Jenny...?

Beth coming through the crowd. Shocked to see Jenny.

BETH (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

Beth stares down at Jenny's White House credentials.

(CONTINUED)

BETH (CONT'D)

Stuart sent you without telling me?

JENNY

(trapped)

No, I a... I was going to talk to you about this but...

BETH

(she's pissed)

If Stuart thinks he can push me out of the White House after all these years --

ENTREKIN

Ms. Lerner?

Morton Entrekin interrupts, takes Jenny's arm.

ENTREKIN (CONT'D)

Hi, Beth...

Pulls her to the front of the room. Beth is left behind, stunned. Watching them go. Jenny steals a look back.

ENTREKIN (CONT'D)

He'll find you for the first question, after that, you're on your own.

Entrekin rips a "Reserved" sign off a chair dead center. Plops the dazed Jenny into it and is gone. All around her, seasoned reporters stare; Hume, Roberts, Thomas, Lowenstall. But nobody's staring harder than Beth, taking her seat three rows back on the side.

STOFSKY

Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen...please!

It's the Press Secretary, standing at the lectern in front of the White House seal, trying to get their attention.

STOFSKY (CONT'D)

The President will begin by addressing the nation. Please hold your questions until he's finished his remarks.

The room quiets as cameras swing to find President Beck and his entourage entering.

STOFSKY (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States.

(CONTINUED)

Still cameras WHIR, electronic flashes POP. Beck takes the stage, smiles warmly to the assembled.

BECK
Hello everybody.

ASST DIRECTOR
Ten seconds Mr. President...

Beck finds Jenny. Nods. Straightens himself up.

ASST DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Five...four...

Counts down the last three on his fingers.

BECK
Good evening. A few minutes ago, the United States Ambassadors to every country in the world told the leaders of those nations what I am about to tell you. It's complicated and it's going to take a little time, so I hope you'll bear with me and listen to what I have to say. A little over eight months ago two American astronomers, Marcus Wolf and Leo Biederman, working alone on a mountaintop in Arizona, saw something in the night sky that gave them great concern.

46A INT. BIEDERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

46A

The Biederman family is watching.

LEO
Nobody say anything.

BECK (ON TV)
They saw a comet, and the comet was, well, there was a remote possibility that the comet was on a path that could bring it into direct contact with the Earth.

47 MSNBC NEWSROOM - NIGHT

47

The President's on every monitor, but the newsroom EXPLODES. People leap for phones and computers, it's bedlam.

STUART
We need astronomers,
astrophysicists, geologists,
climatologists!

(CONTINUED)

IRA MOSKATEL
Where the hell is Science!?

MARIANNE
Paris, London, Tokyo, Tel Aviv...
everywhere, hell yes!

The CAMEP A roams through the chaos.

WORTH
Who was that guy at Berkeley, did
the Hale-Bopp stand-ups?

IRA MOSKATEL
And graphics, I need graphics!

(CONTINUED)

The President continues, teleprompter feeding him his words.

BECK

Now, we get hit every day by rocks and meteors, some of them are the size of cars and some of them the size of your hand. But the comet we discovered is the size of New York City from Central Park to the tip of the Island, about seven miles long. Put another way, the comet is larger than Mount Everest, and weighs five hundred billion tons.

The room stirs, reporters stare at each other. Jenny's rapt, she knew the punch line, but not the joke.

BECK (CONT'D)

Chances are, this thing will miss us, because comets aren't on railroad tracks, they're sliding and side-slipping through space. But this one is too big for us to just cross our fingers and hope it scoots on by. So tonight, I want to tell you what I can about what we're doing to take care of the comet before there's even a chance it might hit us. And if the grown-ups of the world don't mind, right now I want to talk to the children of the world.

49 NEIGHBORHOOD CHICAGO BAR - NIGHT

49

Everyone watches as the speech continues. The BARTENDER reaches for a bottle of the oldest scotch on the shelf and starts to pour tall drinks without comment. A SMOKER reaches into his pocket and takes out a full pack of cigarettes. He blithely holds it open and EVERYONE at the bar reaches for one.

50 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

50

The President walks to a large monitor on stage with him. Projected on the TV, we see a NASA film about the comet.

BECK

Comets begin far out in space. They're what's left over from the creation of the solar system after the planets were formed, billions of years ago.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BECK (CONT'D)

These chunks of space debris are
in an orbit around the sun, very
much like our own, but every now
and then; one of them is bumped, a
bit like a billiard ball

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (2)

50

BECK (CONT'D)
 on a pool table, and it gets knocked
 into a new orbit.

51 MSNBC NEWSROOM - NIGHT

51

People are screaming on the phones. A few are in shock,
 still watching the set, Bobby's one of them.

MARIANNE
 We've got stand-ups on line;
 Beijing, Rome, San Paulo, Cairo,
 Berlin...
 (yelling out)
 Anybody know how big the one was
 that wiped out the dinosaurs!

A musician sets up a portable keyboard to begin composing,
 Worth frantically gives him instructions.

WORTH
 Something majestic, mysterious,
 with a fanfare for intros and a
 theme for longer promos ...

The CAMERA finds Stuart and Ira hunched over a computer
 monitor with a graphic artist working on a comet graphic.

STUART
 It's hitting the goddamn earth!

IRA
 That's what he's saying!

STUART
 It'll scare the shit outta
 everybody!

52 NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

52

The streets are alive with people, people pouring outside,
 some with binoculars and long lenses on their cameras,
 everyone looking up, to see the comet.

53 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

53

BECK
 Now, if the comet passes around
 the sun and were to hold to it's
 present course, then sometime on
 August 16, 2000 there's a chance
 we might have an impact.

Jenny's sitting there with her notebook, what's she going
 to say when the time comes?

(CONTINUED)

BECK (CONT'D)

So for the past eight months, the United States and Russia have been building the largest spaceship ever constructed; it's being built in orbit around the earth. We call it the Messiah. I want to emphasize that some scientists argued that there was no reason to spend the time and money to intercept something that probably won't hit us, but we decided not to take that risk. And right now, a team of American astronauts, and one Russian, are at Cape Canaveral in Florida. In two months they will leave on the Shuttle to board the Messiah; this is the crew that will stop the comet.

THE MONITOR CUTS TO:

54 CANAVERAL SHUTTLE PREP BUILDING - NIGHT

54

Five men and one woman in new flight suits.

BECK

I'd like the world to meet some extraordinary people. First is Mission Commander Oren Monash. Commander, would you introduce us to your Team?

MONASH

It'd be an honor, sir. Executive Officer Andrea Baker, Navigator Mark Simon, Medical Officer Gus Partenza, from Russia, Nuclear Specialist Colonel Mikhail Tulchinsky, and Rendezvous Pilot Surgeon Tanner.

BAKER has the relaxed confidence of a woman who has never failed at anything. SIMON is black, military. TULCHINSKY, being Russian, shows his life on his face, every woman, every smile, every heart-break.

ASTRONAUTS

Hello, Mr. President.

BECK

Captain Tanner, you flew six Shuttle Missions and were the last man to walk on the moon, weren't you sir?

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

Yes, sir. But Oren will be doing most of the flying on this one. I'll just be taking us down to the comet surface.

Monash is smiling for the camera, but something's going on behind his eyes. Jealousy? Pride? Frustration?

(CONTINUED)

BECK

It's good to know we're going to have your kind of experience up there. Godspeed to you all. We're counting on you.

The cameras' red lights go dark at the Cape. The astronauts drop their public personas, pull off their mikes.

MONASH

Goddamn dog and pony show.

Monash shoots a look to Tanner, starts off.

TANNER

Are we having a problem, son?

MONASH

...No problem...

But he doesn't look back. Tanner watches him go.

55 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

55

Beck's back at his podium.

BECK

I want to let the children know that you're going to hear a lot of people worrying about this. Some of your Moms and Dads, grandparents, even your big brothers and sisters... well, they might be scared. So I'm telling you to tell them, everything is going to be okay. I promise.

56 UNIVERSAL CITY WALK - DAY

56

The big TV screen, the President. People pour out of the Cineplex to watch as the word spreads.

57 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

57

Beck drops the smile he'd used for the kids, looks directly into CAMERA, suddenly hard, tough.

BECK

Now I want to talk to the grownups. We know that the threat of an apocalypse is going to give some people an excuse for lawlessness. As of this evening, I've placed the National Guard and the Army on full alert.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BECK (CONT'D)

We will not tolerate any disruption of our way of life. Our society will continue as normal. Work will go on. You will pay your bills.

As the CAMERA moves in slowly on Beck, Jenny shifts in her seat, preparing for the biggest moment of her life.

BECK (CONT'D)

There will be no hoarding. There will be no sudden profiteering. I am freezing all wages, all prices. I have instructed the Secretary of the Treasury to close the nation's financial markets. All stock, bond, interest and commodity rates, all currency exchange rates and precious metal prices will remain fixed at today's prices. What a bottle of water cost you yesterday, it will cost you tomorrow. Anyone selling something for more than it cost this morning will be arrested. Anyone rioting, anyone looting, anyone.., well, that person is going to be shot on sight.

(let's it sink in)

Now I'll take a few questions.

All hands shoot up in the air, questions are shouted. The sound of Nikon MOTORS and SHUTTERS is like jungle noise in a Tarzan movie. Jenny tries to be heard, but she's a novice, buried by the regulars.

BECK (CONT'D)

Ms. Lerner?

Who? The press room regulars look around. Jenny. It's her moment in the sun, she stands.. Man, is she nervous.

JENNY

Jenny Lerner, MSNBC. Mr. President, why wasn't the announcement made sooner?

Chaos reigns, anchors move into place, ready themselves for when the press conference ends. But Stuart's head has snapped around to stare at the screen, his mouth open.

MARIANNE

Jenny Lerner?

IRA

Son of a bitch...

58 CONTINUED: (2)

58

But Eric and Bobby are grinning in back, loving it.

59 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

59

BECK

Until we knew that a rocket could
be built and the comet intercepted,
there was no reason to alarm the
planet.

Beth's staring at the back of Jenny's head, if she had an
ice pick she'd bury it in her scrawny skull. Everyone
raises their hands for the next question, yelling.

BECK (CONT'D)

You have another question, Ms.
Lerner?

She didn't really. She fumbles nervously. The press corp's
near mutiny, the fix is in and they know it.

60 OMIT

60

AND

AND

60A

60A

60B INT. ROBIN'S MAGAZINE OFFICE - NIGHT

60B

Robin and her STAFF, putting their magazine together,
watching Jenny on TV as she asks a question. Some look
from Robin to the set and back, as she is comprehending
that her daughter has just moved up in the world.

JENNY (ON TV)

Is there a connection between the
comet and the recall of American
troops from abroad?

Beck's not happy with that question.

BECK (ON TV)

Our fighting men and women are
coming home because we felt it
prudent in light of domestic
security concerns, to have them
available, although I certainly
hope we don't need to use them.
(looks for next question)

Joy and Robin share a smile, her mother's daughter.

60C INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

60C

Jason and Chloe watch Jenny on TV.

JENNY (ON TV)

Mr. President! Sir! One final
question!

Now they understand why she was behaving so strangely at
the bar.

61 OMIT
AND
61A

61
AND
61A

62 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

62

Beck smiles, points to her again. Now it's not only Beth, the entire Press Corp's sharpening their long knives.

JENNY

MSNBC has learned that Secretary Rittenhouse did not leave for the reasons your administration announced. Isn't it true sir, that not everyone in your administration is convinced that the Messiah will save us?

Beck gives Jenny a hard look.

BECK

Secretary Rittenhouse served this country with full devotion, and resigned for personal reasons. We have more important things before us than to consider the petty soap opera of Washington. I promise you, Ms. Lerner, and all of you, those in this room and those hearing my voice, that all of us, at some point in the next eight months, will entertain our worst fears and concerns. But I promise you, life will go on. We shall prevail. There will be no Armageddon!

The questions erupt again. Beck nods to Jenny, she smiles, sits. This part of their deal concluded.

BECK (CONT'D)

(pointing)
David.

REPORTER

Exactly when and how was the comet discovered?

BECK

Two scientists searching the skies found the comet and while racing from their observatory to alert the world, were killed in a car crash. That was thirteen months ago. It took another five months for their papers to be discovered.

The questions erupt again.

(CONTINUED)

BECK (CONT'D)

Sally?

ANOTHER REPORTER

Sir, what's the comet's name?

BECK

Since Marcus Wolf and his colleague
Leo Biederman discovered the comet
we named it for them: Wolf-
Biederman.

63 BIEDERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

63

Leo and his family watch in their suburban living room.
His father, DON. Mother, ELLEN. Little sister, JANE.

DON BIEDERMAN

Leo Biederman?

They watch in shock. Their phone begins to RING.

DON

He means you doesn't he?

REPORTER (ON TV)

How much notice did you give other
world leaders?

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN

Shhh... I'm trying to listen!

BECK

Our ambassadors were given briefing papers this afternoon, and instructed to convey them to their host countries. The Russians, with their expertise in nuclear propulsion systems, were told last year.

Now the DOORBELL joins the phone that's still RINGING. Jane looks at all the grown-ups not answering either, confused. Hops off the couch, heads for the front door. On the TV, President Beck concludes the questioning.

BECK (CONT'D)

Thank you all.

Beck steps back from the podium, heads for the door as reporters continue to SHOUT questions.

Six year old Jane stands beside Leo.

JANE

The front door's for you.

Leo turns away from the set, walks to the still open front door, still in shock. It's Sarah, breathless. Excited.

LEO

I'm not dead.

SARAH

Dr. Wolf? From astronomy club?

LEO

I think maybe so.

Leo looks past her to the residential street and a crowd outside. The Hotchners are on the lawn behind Sarah.

SARAH

I think it's neat. Nobody on our block ever discovered the world was going to end before.

LEO

It's not going to end.

SARAH

Well it's still really neat.

65 WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - NIGHT

65

It's clearing out, fast. TV rushing to stand-ups. Print phoning copy desks. Jenny stands, still at her place in the second row of the now almost empty room. Savoring it, this moment, everything she's worked for.

Turns. Beth's there. Doesn't say anything. Turns, and walks away. Leaving Jenny alone. Jenny wants to feel ashamed, or guilty. But she doesn't. She's where she's always wanted to be.

66 OMIT
THRU
67

66
THRU
67

67A LEO'S SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - DAY

67A

Everyone is cheering and clapping for Leo on stage. Mr. Perry's there moderating. Leo's parents. The local press is in full force. Sarah's with her girlfriends.

LEO

It was really just luck, I guess, that I found it. Anyone could have. As far as we know, what happened was that Dr. Wolf saw the comet in my photograph so he shared the discovery with me. Then he was killed in that crash and everything got mixed up in Washington so the President thought I was dead too.

KID

How does it make you feel having your name on it?

(CONTINUED)

LEO

Well, I don't want anyone to think that I'm trying to take something away from Dr. Wolf, because, you know... I'm not.

One of Sarah's friends nudges her, shows her a Newsweek: Leo on the cover with his telescope.

STUDENT

Are you sorry you found it?

LEO

No. If I hadn't taken that picture of the comet, and it hadn't gone to Dr. Wolf at the observatory, who knows what would have happened?

Sarah leans forward, calls out a question.

SARAH

Are you scared?

LEO

I have a history test tomorrow. I'm scared of that.

Appreciative laughter and applause from the student audience and the press. Another kid, a smartass showing off.

HAROLD

You know you're going to have sex a lot more now than anyone else in our class.

That gets a chorus of adolescent HOOTS and APPLAUSE.

LEO

Really?

Perry intercedes good-naturedly.

PERRY

Thanks for your sexual insight Mr. Thurman, you can sit down now.

But all the attention only spurs the kid on.

HAROLD

Famous people always get sex, Mr. Perry. That's one of the main reasons it's good to be famous.

More applause, Perry smiles, Harold takes a bow to his adoring peers. Leo sneaks a look out to Sarah. She's smiling back. All this talk about sex. Her friends notice, grin. Sarah notices them noticing.

68 OMIT

68

68A INT. MILITARY BAR - NIGHT

68A

Simon, Tulchinsky, Monash, Baker, and Partenza are sitting at a table in a crowded military bar. The juke box is playing. The Astronauts are deep in a somewhat drunken huddle. Monash is upset.

MONASH

Frank Gifford was a great football player, but I'd bust his ass if he played against me now.

PARTENZA

I wish I'd been to the moon, I respect everyone who went there, but this isn't the moon.

SIMON

All of his training was for a stable surface, the moon didn't have two pound dust particles ejecting at three hundred feet a second.

MONASH

This isn't about ego.

BAKER

Of course it is, it's all about ego... but sometimes the ego is right. '

SIMON

And dust particles...

PARTENZA

(drunker than the others)

The moon, the moon, the moon wasn't spinning when he landed on it, the moon didn't have a fourteen hour rotay... Rotational period, seven hours of sun, seven hours of darkness, it was light all the time when he landed on the moon. He could see. We're not going to be able to see.

SIMON

You can't see now anyway.

TULCHINSKY

Don't worry...
(in Russian)
We can do it.

BAKER

What?

TULCHINSKY

We can do it.

And then we hear a familiar Voice.

TANNER

I woke up this morning and I realized that none of you want me here. You don't even really know who I am. I walked on the moon, but I didn't belong to you. I belonged to your Daddies. Now, if I ask you to ask your Daddies what I meant to them, to explain to you what I'm doing here, that's only going to make things worse. So what do we do?

MONASH

You haven't trained for this mission. We respect you...

TANNER

I appreciate that...

MONASH

But you're here...you're here because the powers that be think we need someone familiar on the trip. You're here for public relations.

TANNER

I'm here because the powers that be know that I am the only one on this mission who has ever landed on the moon and I have five hundred landings on aircraft carriers...

MONASH

We've trained...

TANNER

On flight simulators. And this is not a video game, son.

69 LEO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

69

Leo's little sister JANE changes the channel on the TV. On every station there's a comet graphic, some in the manner of Chuck Jones, others are Soviet Realism, Moebius, computer enhanced photos of the real thing. This is all that anyone is watching or talking about. She lands on a documentary.

NARRATOR

Fifty thousand years ago, a 300,000 ton meteor landed here in Arizona.

JANE

I want Xena! Where's Xena?

The phone's RINGING. Ellen answers it.

69 CONTINUED:

ELLEN
Jane, please, it's not
on anymore,
(into phone)
No... I don't think
so, he really can't.

DON BIEDERMAN
Who is it?

ELLEN
Primetime Live again.

Jane changes channels to find POLITICALLY INCORRECT.

BILL MAHER (ON TV)
Is the sky really falling? Do we
really think the world is coming
to an end? And how can we trust
Russian nuclear rockets when the
Russians can't figure out how to
get phones to work in Moscow?

GOLDTHWAITE
I love the comet! I want to die!
I want everyone to die! You know
how you hate it when you leave the
room and you know everyone is going
to talk about you? That's one
problem that the comet's going to
take care of!

BILL MAHER
I think they only say lovely things
about me.

GOLDTHWAITE.
Leave the room.

Changes channels again. LETTERMAN.

DAVID LETTERMAN
A drum roll. So here it is,
tonight's top ten list: the ten
things you'll miss least when the
world ends. Ten, Broccoli. Nine,
Iraq. Eight, commercials for Grey
Poupon...

And again:

CHARLIE ROSE (ON TV)
The Messiah Mission, too little too
late? Not all scientists agree
with NASA's plan for destroying the
comet.

(MORE)

{ CONTINUED }

CHARLIE ROSE (ON TV) (CONT'D)

Joining us tonight are Morton
Entrekin, from FEMA, and from The
University of Arizona's
Interplanetary Sciences Department
Dr.s Gene and Carolyn Shoemaker --

70 SARAH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

70

Sarah and her folks watch, Vicky now pregnant.

CHARLIE ROSE (ON TV)

Mr. Entrekin, the Shoemaker's have
been critical of the science
suggesting that this mission is
feasible or necessary.

During this Sarah gets up and walks to the front door.

(CONTINUED)}

CHUCK HOTCHNER
Where are you going?

ENTREKIN (ON TV)
Every scientific endeavor
has risks Gene.

SARAH
Out front.

GENE (ON TV)
The margin of error on the
comet's trajectory suggests
that it could easily miss
us by a tenth of an
astronomical unit, that's
ten million miles.

CHUCK HOTCHNER
It's midnight.

SARAH
I don't think there's
anyone in the world
who isn't watching
television. I want to
be the only one who's
outside.

ENTREKIN (ON TV)
Are you suggesting we just
wait and pray?

CAROLYN (ON TV)
The comet is traveling at a hundred
thousand miles an hour. The Messiah
has to catch up, hold onto it, set
the bombs, and get off. We've never
attempted anything remotely this
complex in space.

71 LEO AND SARAH'S STREET - NIGHT

71

Sarah comes out of her house. The street is deserted, TVs
dance in every living room window. A SOUND. Wheels on
pavement. Leo rollerblades across the street under the
streetlight.

SARAH
Hi...

Leo stops, smiles. Watches her approach.

LEO
You're not watching TV?

SARAH
They just keep saying the same
things.

She stares above her at the stars.

SARAH (CONT'D)
It looks so peaceful.

A beat as he joins her staring at the night sky.

LEO
The only reason I joined astronomy
club was because of you.

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

Really?

LEO

You liked the stars and I figured if you liked them they must be worth looking at.

SARAH

That's so nice.

This is too close for them, too emotional.

LEO

We got invited to the White House.

SARAH

Of course. You're an important person now.

LEO

We're going to see the launch with the President. My whole family.

SARAH

That's so neat.

LEO

Yeah.

She smiles, he can be very disarming.

SARAH

You've changed.

LEO

No, I haven't.

SARAH

Your braces.

LEO

(he grins, no braces)
I got them off today.

They don't know what to say. Look up again to the stars.

72 OMIT

72

WOLF-BIEDERMAN INTERCEPTION 9 MONTHS 7 DAYS, 4 HOURS 12 MINUTES. IMPACT 13 MONTHS 7 DAYS, 10 HOURS, 46 MINUTES.

72A EXT. HEFTER'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY (OLD SCENE 74)

72A

A pleasant house near Houston. The backyard is filled with about FORTY PEOPLE, THE ASTRONAUTS, THEIR FAMILY, including their PARENTS and their CHILDREN.

(CONTINUED)

Running around are TEN OR TWELVE CHILDREN.

The CAMERA tracks through the cluster of people, and we hear packets of conversation. The mood, fueled by beer and chips, is happy. Music plays in the backyard speakers.

MIKHAIL TULCHINSKY is with TWO VERY PRETTY WOMEN.

PRETTY WOMAN

A nuclear reactor in space? Isn't that dangerous?

TULCHINSKY

No, no, no. This is all Russian design, Russian science, the same people who designed Chernobyl.

He waits for the response he wanted, horror.

TULCHINSKY (CONT'D)

Well, Chernobyl almost worked.

And the camera goes to: SIMON and his fiancée, WENDY. She's showing off her diamond ring to another GROUP OF WIVES AND FRIENDS.

SIMON

Wendy, I'm going to marry you, but the day we get back I can't just go to the church.

WENDY

The church will come to you, Simon. You're all invited.

The camera finds GUS PARTENZA, with ANDREA BAKER, and her husband, DAVID, and their toddlers, BRITTANY and ALICIA. David holds the squirming Brittany.

DAVID

What happens when you set off the bombs?

Baker tries to answer, but Brittany squirms away.

(CONTINUED)

BAKER

Well, as, long as we plant the
bombs... We have seven hours...
Brittany! Brittany, come back
here... As long as we plant the
bombs and... Brittany...

Partenza answers for her.

PARTENZA

We have seven hours to plant the
bombs and get off the surface
before the sun heats it up.

(CONTINUED)

We leave them and find Monash and his wife MARIETTE. He is seated, she is standing and he is talking to the Baby in her very large belly. As he narrates, he follows the curvature of her belly to her breasts.

MONASH

Oren Junior! Here are your orders:
upon your first entering into
earth's atmosphere, proceed directly
along the exterior of the mothership
to the twin storage tanks for
refueling.

MARIETTE

He's not a rocket-ship... he's a
Baby, Oren, your Baby, our Baby.

MONASH

I know.

They kiss. Brittany, free again, runs past us leading the camera to Tanner, talking to his two grown sons, DWIGHT and STEVE. They're both in uniform.

TANNER

When my father went to war in 1942,
he didn't see me or your grandmother
for three years. I was eight when
he left. You boys were what, four
and six when I went to the moon?
(they nod)
You saw me go into space seven
times, didn't you?

DWIGHT

Yessir...

TANNER

And I came back every time, didn't
I?

(MORE)

TANNER (CONT' D)

(they nod)

Your mother and I used to play a game when she was still alive. The game was, if there was a chance I might not be coming back, she wouldn't say it, and I wouldn't say it. But this time, I want to say it to you.

TANNER (CONT' D)

(a beat)

This time I probably won't be coming back. You know that?

SONS

(quietly)

...Yessir...

The three men stare at each other. Don't see Mitch Hefter come up behind them.

HEFTER

Another beer?

TANNER

Thanks. You remember my boys don't you, Mitch?

HEFTER

(handshakes all around)

Sure I do...

A LITTLE GIRL SNAPS their picture.· Tanner smiles, wraps an arm around his two boys.

HEFTER (CONT'D)

What'd you think of the crew?

TANNER

Heroes all. The finest group I've ever had the privilege of serving with.

HEFTER

Off the record.

Tanner looks to his sons, then:

TANNER

They've been trained in ways I'll never understand.· They're smarter and in better shape than we ever were in the old days. They're sober, they're serious.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TANNER (CONT'D)

(looks to his sons)
I guess I'd be a little happier
about this whole thing if I thought
that any of them were as scared as
I am.

HEFTER

They're not afraid of dying, they're
afraid of screwing up on TV.

Two CATERERS wheel out an immense cake in the shape of the
earth. People APPLAUD, the children are dazzled.

HEFTER (CONT'D)

Fish, would you do the honor?

We see that Monash is uncomfortable with Tanner getting
the spotlight. Mariette settles him. Tanner raises the
knife to the cake. A few people with cameras are ready to
snap the picture. He hesitates. Hefter motions with his
hand: Cut the cake. Tanner raises the knife. He can't.

TANNER

Is this supposed to be a joke?
Cutting up the earth, is that
supposed to give us good luck?

HEFTER

Fish, do it for the kids.

We see how desperately the children want the cake. They've
surrounded Tanner. Everyone is watching him. He takes the
knife and uses it like a trowel, smearing the icing until
everything is a swirl. He looks to the children.

TANNER

You know what this is?

A Kid shakes his head, no, very soberly.

TANNER (CONT'D)

It's the comet. And what do we do
to comets?

He plunges a hand into the comet, and the children do the
same, laughing. Hefter gives him a look, and the Astronauts
are unhappy with his sudden mania. Tanner sees the earth
destroyed, the coast lines wrecked.

74 OMIT

74

WOLF-BIEDERMAN...INTERCEPTION 8 MONTHS 9 DAYS, 6 HOURS, 1
MINUTE. IMPACT 12 MONTHS, 9 DAYS, 12 HOURS, 35 MINUTES.

75 OMIT

75

THRU

THRU

81

81

81A INT. WHITE HOUSE OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

81A

The President, Entrekin, aides, Leo, and the Biedermans,
watch the Shuttle launch on TV. Jenny's on a stand-up in
front of a large NASA wall mural.

JENNY (ON TV)

We're now only minutes away from
the launch of the Shuttle Atlantis
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENNY (ON TV) (CONT'D)
and the beginning of the historic
Messiah Mission...

HEFTER (VO)
Okay, all flight controllers, we're
at T minus 3 minutes and
counting... give it a close look.

CAPCOM COLWELL
APU's look good, LOX and LH2 are
pressurized.

A shot of the Atlantis on its pad. The President makes
his way to a glass jar of M&Ms and grabs a handful.

TIM (VO)
Who's voice are we hearing now,
Jenny?

JENNY (VO)
Tim, that's Flight Director Mitch
Hefter, former Gemini and Apollo
astronaut...

Leo tries to concentrate on the TV but can't help staring
at his surroundings, the Presidential Seal, the desk.

BECK
Who's your book agent, Leo?

LEO
Sir?

BECK
You're writing a book about this
aren't you?

LEO
(not sure where the leader
of the Free World and the
Commander in Chief is
going)
I have a book report due on Tuesday.

BECK
So you're not going to write a book?

LEO
I don't know.

BECK
What kind of American are you?
You're famous and you don't want to
get rich from it? You'll kill the
economy.

(CONTINUED)

LEO

I...

BECK

I'm issuing an executive order,
Leo; when the President makes a bad
joke, would you laugh?

LEO

(smiling)
Yessir.

BECK

(referring to M&M's)
Green?

LEO

Blue.

BECK

Everything's is going to be okay,
you know that, don't you?

LEO

Yessir.

BECK

Thank you.
(the countdown is past ten)
Here we go.

ASSISTANT FLIGHT DIRECTOR

Flight, we're go for autosequence.

HEFTER

Good luck and Godspeed, Atlantis.

CAPE (V.O.)

... Three... Two... One... Liftoff!

The Shuttle lifts off the pad in a burst of painfully hot light. The big ship ROARS above, tearing into the night sky. Everyone in the room watches, and then applauds. The President puts his hands on Leo's shoulders.

82 OMIT
AND
82A

82
AND
82A

WOLF-BIEDERMAN INTERCEPTION: 8 MONTHS, 8 DAYS, 6 HOURS, 1
MINUTE. IMPACT: 12 MONTHS, 8 DAYS, 12 HOURS, 35 MINUTES.

(CONTINUED)

ROBIN

Well, and what are you doing here?

JENNY

I've been busy, and I haven't been paying attention to you.

ROBIN

I've been busy, too. This is the last issue of the magazine...

JENNY

No!

ROBIN

(lightly mocking Jenny's shock)

Yes! The advertisers are calling, up and canceling. Why would anyone support a magazine devoted to old, expensive, beautiful things when all the attractive young women are on television spreading panic?

JENNY

That's not fair! The news is good, the mission is going to succeed.

ROBIN

I stopped watching the news. Does anything I do have any effect on anything that happens in space?

JENNY

I mean... but... the whole world is watching.

ROBIN

The whole world minus one. For years I've always been a little ashamed of what I do, worrying all day about whether this piece of furniture is real or a fake, or whether that painting is better than this painting. No, now that no one has the time to buy antiques, old, beautiful things, it means that I actually have a sacred purpose. It's like the Russians who saved the old palaces when the Germans were coming; they didn't have time to cart everything away, so they chopped out a bit of the floor and cut away a few feet of

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

curtain, and when the war was over they built everything back from the pieces. I'm saving the pieces now, keeping a record. If the comet does hit, and they want to know what the world looked like, they'll be looking at the work I'm doing today.

JENNY

Mother, listen to me! The comet is going to be turned away and everyone is going to be so relieved that they'll spend money like the world really is coming to an end.

ROBIN

That's pretty to think so.

HEFTER (ON COM)

You're right on the numbers,
Atlantis.

On the monitors, a huge docking device fills the view. But Tanner's not watching, he's staring out the side at something they're passing but we can't see. Whistles softly.

TANNER

...Jesus, that's big...

Partenza and Tulchinsky follow his gaze.

PARTENZA

Whoa...no shit...

BAKER

Contact in three meters
...two...one...
(a little nudge)
We're here.

(CONTINUED)

85 CONTINUED:

83

HEFTER (ON COM)
Well done, Atlantis...

Monash turns around, grins.

MONASH
Wow.

Tanner still staring out the porthole.

TANNER
...Sweet mother of God...

84 OUTSIDE THE ATLANTIS

84

WE PULL AWAY from Tanner in the window, out past the Shuttle, past the spindly, solar panel arms of the Station to find --

85 THE MESSIAH

85

Docked and tethered to the Space Station. It's massive, a 747 next to the Shuttle's Cessna. Workers float in space, putting the finishing touches on its assembly.

85A OMIT

85A

85B OMIT

85B

THRU

THRU

85D

85D

(CONTINUED)

Tulchinsky is in the cargo hold, checking the loaded nukes in zero gravity. Monash is on the intercom.

MONASH (ON COM)
How we doing, Mikhail?

TULCHINSKY
Nukes prepped and stowed.

MONASH (ON COM)
Let's get moving.

Tulchinsky grabs a handhold, pulls himself along the cargo compartment, through the hatch into the living quarters. Past the toilet, shower, galley. Pulls himself into the aft compartment.

It's tight but functional, conduit, switching panels, bundles containing thousands of wires. Monash is up front with Baker and Simon. Tanner buckling up in back, Tulchinsky sets himself down with Partenza in front of a complex set of monitors and oscillators that bank up to the ceiling.

PARTENZA
Nervous?

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

Just not used to the back seat.

PARTENZA

It's not so bad. View stinks.

Monash turns in his seat, looks back at Tulchinsky.

MONASH

Colonel, let's see what this baby
can do.

Tulchinsky grins. Punches commands into his keyboard.

PARTENZA

Hope you're right about this thing
working, Mikhail.

TULCHINSKY

Just between you and me...

TANNER

Oh, shit...

TULCHINSKY

Orion burn in ten...nine...eight...

The rapidly moving pattern on the oscillator gets closer
and closer to a straight line.

MONASH

Hold onto your hats, boys and girls.

TANNER

It's not my hat I'm worried about.

87 THE MESSIAH IN SPACE

87

The nuclear reaction EXPLODES against the backplate,
lighting up the darkness with a tremendous, BLINDING pulse.
The Messiah takes off like a bat out of hell, CATAPULTED
out into space. Disappears among the stars.

88 VIRGINIA PARK - NIGHT

88

Snow on the ground. Leo and Sarah look through his
telescope. IN HIS EYEPIECE, the Orion pulses.

LEO

There it is!

He steps back so she can look. She looks.

SARAH

It's beautiful Leo...

(CONTINUED)

Now she takes his hand. Still looking.

LEO

What if it doesn't work? What if the world ends?

SARAH

The world is not going to end.

LEO

(delights in tormenting her)

It could, it could, let's just say the comet hits... how do you not want to die?

SARAH

You are morbid.

LEO

Think about it, maybe the comet is a great way to die. No time to think, squished like a bug. I'd rather die like that than by drowning.

SARAH

Leo!

LEO

And even if it doesn't hit us on the head, even if it lands somewhere else, the heat from the comet as it passes through the atmosphere burns up all the forests in the world.

SARAH

I don't want to talk about this, Leo. It makes me sad. It makes me think about all the things I'll never get a chance to do... Shakespeare in London and ... hiking in Colorado and... even... Disneyworld, just a nice time with my Mom and Dad and... and love. I'll never get any of that now. So just shut up.

LEO

I'm sorry.

SARAH

It's not your fault.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SARAH (CONT'D)

We're too young. It's all wrong now, because I don't have time for you to figure things out, I don't have three years for you to wake up and know what you feel about me.

LEO

What do you mean?

SARAH

That's just it, you have to ask. Because you're still just a little kid, part of you. And if the world is coming to an end, we don't have time for that.

LEO

What?

SARAH

(exasperated)
You love me and I love you.

And she runs away from him.

88A OMIT

88A

89 OMIT

89

THRU

THRU

98

98

WOLF-BIEDERMAN INTERCEPTION: 2 DAYS, 14 HOURS 22 MINUTES.
IMPACT: 4 MONTHS, 2 DAYS, 4 HOURS, 22 MINUTES

99 OMIT

99

AND

AND

100

100

101 CARGO BAY

101

Tulchinsky, Baker and Partenza load aluminum encased bombs into the MOLES, already mounted on the SLED. Metal, wires, radioactive warnings. It's demanding work with no gravity.

MONASH (ON COM)

How's it coming?

(CONTINUED)

BAKER

Inserting the last nuke now.

When it CLICKS in place, the digital readout BLINKS ALIVE.

Stuart leads the staff meeting. Ira, Worth, Marianne, Beth, Tim, Jenny. Jenny sits at the grown-up table, quiet, lost in her own thoughts.

STUART

Beth, White House reactions.
Marianne, all the world watching.
We have enough satellite space?

WORTH

Seventy-eight up-links.

STUART

Tim, Mission Control in Houston.
(Tim looks up, surprised)
Ira, the science guys lined up?

IRA

If they've got a PhD, we own them.

STUART

This is the most important story
of our lives. Let's not fuck it
up.

The end of the meeting, people start out. Jenny looks up.

JENNY

...Stuart? What about me?

People stop, is she finally going to get her comeuppance?

STUART

You're on the anchor desk and
don't you ever hold back a story
for two days.

JENNY

I'm sorry but, the President...

STUART

The hell with the President. He has
no right making deals with a reporter
who has no authority to accept his
terms. I probably would have held
the story, but that would have been
my decision and not yours. And I
would have protected you. It was
your scoop. You own the story.
Don't do that again.

JENNY
Thank you, Stuart.

STUART
Yeah. Okay.

Monash lines the Messiah up with the tail of the comet, following a computer path in the cockpit.

BAKER

Auto trajectory, two thousand feet,
R-dot .3, 5 X, 2 Y...

Monash guides it expertly, a high tech video game.

BAKER (CONT'D)

A thousand feet, point 3, 3 X, one-
point-five Y...
(a beat)
Go for auto trajectory.

Monash reaches up, locks it on with a BEEP.

BAKER (CONT'D)

We're on... Disengage the Orion.

TULCHINSKY

Orion disengaged. You're on
chemical propellant.

MONASH

Look, Fish, I can do this if you
want.

Monash slides out of his seat, let's Tanner slide past.

TANNER

I'll keep that in mind.

Monash goes. Tanner pulls out a decades old shot of a mother and seven year old son, sticks it on the console.

TANNER (CONT'D)

On the Mississippi River, in Mark
Twain's time, there were riverboat
pilots who only knew a few miles
of the river. Conditions changed
so much, you couldn't know the
whole trip. Floods, sandbars,
fallen logs, it was all a
riverboat pilot could do to know
his little piece of the puzzle.

SIMON

What the hell is he talking about?

(CONTINUED)

PARTENZA

Summer job he had last century.

Tanner finishes strapping himself in.

TANNER

For the next few hours, this is my ship.

(flips toggles)

Starting the approach.

104 OMIT

104

AND

AND

105

105

105A THE CARGO BAY

105A

The now fully suited astronauts check their gear in buddy groups. Tulchinsky with Partenza. Simon with Monash.

TULCHINSKY

Helmet lights.

PARTENZA

Your sublimator looks good, Mick.

TULCHINSKY

Visors down.

They test the gold face shields on their helmets. Lights mounted on the side of the helmets CLICK on.

TANNER (ON COM)

Disengaging auto...now. I'm eyeballs out from here on in.

MONASH

How come that doesn't make me feel better?

SIMON

Cameras on.

105B IN THE COCKPIT

105B

Baker checks the helmet cams. Each monitor marked with a name. WE SEE the cargo bay from the HELMET POVs.

BAKER

Okay, we're going live. Mikhail, wave for the folks back home.

Mikhail waves as he floats around.

TANNER

Andy, I need you on the laser. She looks up, Christ.

Ahead, a floating three dimensional mine field of every imaginable size of rock. Tanner nudges one, THUD. It's like playing dodge ball with really big, slow rocks.

(CONTINUED)

BAKER

My God, look at the size of that
thing. It's as big as a house.

106 INT. MSNBC - NIGHT

106

Jenny is walking across the studio with an ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT

Your father is on the phone.

JENNY

Tell him I'm not here.

DIRECTOR (ON STUDIO COM)

Jenny, forty-five seconds...

ASSISTANT

That's great. You're on live,
Jenny.

Jenny gets into her chair.

DIRECTOR (ON STUDIO COM)

In ten, nine, eight...

The Assistant goes to a phone.

107 JASON'S APARTMENT NIGHT

107

JASON

Thank you.

Jason is looking at the TV, as the final logo sequence and music of the intro to a MSNBC SPECIAL REPORT... Then:

JENNY (ON TV)

Tonight we have the first pictures
from the Messiah as it begins its
descent to the comet Wolf-
Biederman...

108 MSNBC STUDIO

108

The fuzzy helmet cam shots of the astronauts waiting in the sled are intercut with the Messiah's approach shots of the comet. Bobby approaches Eric in the wings, whispers.

BOBBY

How's she doing?

ERIC

Okay so far...

109 BIEDERMAN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

109

The Hotchners and Biedermans watch MSNBC together. Vicky Hotchner now very pregnant. Leo and Sarah hold hands.

(CONTINUED)

110 INSIDE THE MESSIAH COCKPIT

110

Tanner's looking for a place to land. There's lightning, floating debris. They BANG around, the emergency lights FLICKER on, then off. The sun's just setting on the surface below, the outgassing only beginning to settle down.

TANNER

Use primary thrusters.

BAKER

Jesus Christ...

She's scared, they're taking quite a beating from the jets.

TANNER

How are we doing back there?

On the helmet cams we see the boys bouncing around in back, it doesn't look fun strapped to a sled. Like riding a bull.

PARTENZA (ON COM)

Peachy...

111 COMET SURFACE - DUSK

111

The Messiah approaches a small flat zone wedged between a crater and a cliff. The long shadows of the sunset stretch across the rugged landscape below.

112 IN THE COCKPIT

112

Rocks bounce off the windshield and hull.

TANNER

Hold on tight. Descent rate.

The Messiah descends over the comet, outgassing jets send up streams of fine carbon, obscuring the landing site. The BANGING and CHOP is getting worse.

BAKER

Three feet per second... two...

TANNER

Fire tether pitons.

113 COMET SURFACE

113

Umbrella shaped pitons shoot out from the underside of the ship, blast down into the surface. The cables pull TAUT as winches draws them down to the comet's surface and onto the spindly landing gear. A high speed surface jet FIRES, shoving the bow port (front left) section of the ship up and YANKING the piton up out of the ground, with a SNAP.

114 IN THE COCKPIT

114

The Messiah BUCKS up from the force, tilts precariously back. The horizon disappears below.

TANNER

Whoa...

Tanner's trying to hold it. Baker checks frantically.

BAKER

Tether two, not engaged!

115 OUTSIDE THE MESSIAH

115

It noses up, a horse rearing back with three legs tied to the ground. The stern CRUNCHES LOUDLY into the surface.

116 IN THE COCKPIT

116

The astronauts cling to the sled on the helmet cams.

PARTENZA (ON COM)

What the fuck was that?

Tanner tries to hold the nose up as it dips to the right.

TANNER

Override on the forward jets.

Baker is flipping overhead switches.

BAKER

You got 'em...we crunched the aft pod.

117 OUTSIDE THE MESSIAH

117

It edges down to the left front where the tether came loose. It's a meter from the surface, going to slam hard. A jet fires from the undercarriage. The ship slows but still HITS.

118 IN THE COCKPIT

118

The bronc riders get tossed around some more on the helmet cams as they rock back to the stern again, a tethered teetertotter.

TANNER

Cross-feed aft. I need all the jets.

BAKER

Cross-feed aft...pressure's holding.

119 OUTSIDE THE MESSIAH

119

They fire the starboard aft jet. The ship disappears in the ejecta of the comet, steam and carbon dust. Slowly levels out, the three remaining tethers finally going. TAUT.

120 IN THE COCKPIT

120

Baker watches the artificial horizon on the instrument array.

(CONTINUED)

120. CONTINUED: 120

BAKER
She's leveling out...

121 IN THE CARGO BAY 121

PARTENZA
Pretty much like the simulator
back at Johnson, huh boys?

MONASH
Son of a bitch doesn't know what
he's doing.

122 IN THE COCKPIT 122

Tanner still has the stick in a death lock. Baker looks
shell shocked. Holy shit... A beat.

TANNER
Houston, this is Messiah, we've
landed.

123 UNIVERSAL CITY WALK - NIGHT 123

A CHEERING CROWD watches the huge pixel vision screen. A
fuzzy, space transmitted image of Tanner and Baker.

TANNER (ON TV)
...we've landed...

124 THE BIEDERMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT 124

The families cheer, applaud. Sarah hugs Leo.

ELLEN
Oh, thank god...

125 COCKPIT 125

Tanner and Baker work. Locking in computer coordinates.

BAKER
Depressurizing bay.

TANNER
Opening payload doors. Don't let
that little bit of gravity down
there go to your heads.

126 OMIT 126
AND AND
127 127

128 UNDER THE MESSIAH - NIGHT 128

The huge doors open and the Astronauts float down. We see what is ahead: The dead terrain of the comet.

The sled floats a few feet above the shale strewn surface.

129 IN THE COCKPIT 129

Tanner reaches up above him, HITS a button.

TANNER

Start the clock.

A red LED SNAPS on, above it an embossed tag "Sunrise". It's counting down, 6:47:14...:13...:12...

130 ON THE SURFACE - NIGHT 130

A small blast from the chemical propellant and they fly by with the sled, skimming over the surface.

PARTENZA

Looks like all you did was dent a fender, Fish. Dad's gonna be mad when we get home.

The comet is mostly very old terrain, worn smooth by eons of travel, hilly in places, craters. All sizes of rocks float past them, have to be batted away. The weather is made even stranger by the frequent gas lightning above. Graphic heads up displays are projected onto the inside glass of their helmets, indicating the composition of the substrata layers beneath them.

131 IN THE COCKPIT 131

A cross-sectional computer image of the comet emerges. Tanner and Baker watch as computer images are joined by overlays of geological schematics detailing fault lines and possibilities for nuclear warhead placement. The clock counts 5:21:39...

The computer stops, zeros in. Circles coordinates.

BAKER

We've got your first location.
Range two meters above point Alpha
16, bearing 224.

132 OMIT 132

Jane is sleeping in her mother's lap. All watch Jenny on MSNBC, doing VO commentary for the footage from the comet.

JENNY (VO ON SET)

What we're looking at now is...God, isn't that an amazing picture? They're setting the MOLEs in place now, and the MOLEs are, well, they're what they sound like. The MOLEs are drilling machines that burrow to a depth of one hundred meters, and then they wait to be detonated. Of course the MOLEs in your backyard don't carry 5,000 kiloton warheads. Although it feels like they do sometimes, doesn't it?

The MOLE comes to life, the auger head digs slowly into the surface. Monash reels out control line.

SIMON

Ooh, look at that baby dig.

MONASH

Fish, tell the guys at JSC their mole works like a charm.

SIMON

Like butter baby.

PARTENZA

Go get 'em, boy.

Baker and Tanner work at the computer, get the mapping coordinates for the final 2 MOLEs. Look unhappy.

TANNER

Dammit...

BAKER

Christ, that's over four miles away.

(CONTINUED)

Tanner goes to the helmet cam monitors.

TANNER

The computer's calculated the last two MOLE, locations, guys. Range 4 miles. Target One: bearing 166. Target Two: bearing 168.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED: (2)

On Simon's helmet cam we see Monash look up.

MONASH (ON MONITORS)
How long's that going to take?

TANNER
At least an hour.

There's a beat. Everybody knows what that means.

MONASH (ON MONITORS)
An hour?
(dry WASP)
An hour? Darling, that gives me
no time at all to go home, get
dressed and be at the theater on
time for the curtain. What were
we thinking when we made these
reservations?

Tanner and Baker look at the clock. 1:49:47...:46...

136 A SMALL MONITOR ROOM AT JSC

136

Monitors, a few sofas, very governmental. The families of the astronauts watch MSNBC, hold each other's hands. MSNBC has added a sunrise clock on screen, not very comforting. Jenny's on camera, interviewing Dr. Van Sertma.

JENNY (ON TV)
What happens if they don't get off
of the surface in time?

VAN SERTMA (ON TV)
The sun striking the comet will
cause the temperature to rise three
hundred and fifty degrees in only a
few minutes and activate the high
speed gas jets. If that happens
it'll be like trying to work in a
mine field.

137 COMET SURFACE - NIGHT

137

Monash and Simon angle the sled to the final location.

MONASH
We're on Target Two, Messiah.

138 ABOUT TWENTY YARDS AWAY

138

Partenza and Tulchinsky drill at Target One. A trail of debris rises out of the hole, shoved up by the MOLE.

PARTENZA
How's our time?

The clock. 00:36:34...:33

TANNER
Getting tight. 36:30.

(CONTINUED)

139 CONTINUED:

139

BAKER
It's taking too long.

140 ON THE COMET'S SURFACE

140

Simon and Monash Work above their final MOLE hole. Feed out the control line, read the digital depth LED.

SIMON
MOLE 4 running true, at 26 meters.

MONASH
Son of a bitch...

SIMON
What?

MONASH
It's stuck.

141 MONASH AND SIMON

141

Monash looks down the hole. All he can see is debris.

SIMON
Try backing it up.

142 IN THE MESSIAH

142

Tanner and Baker watch all this on the helmet cams.

BAKER
What's your depth?

MONASH (ON COM)
Sixteen meters.

TANNER
That enough?

BAKER
No, it'll just blow pieces off the surface.

TANNER
That's not deep enough.

MONASH (ON COM)
No shit, thanks for the insight.
Blow three pitons, back the sled off.

143 ON THE SURFACE

143

Simon releases all but one piton, shoves the sled away.

PARTENZA

Mole three at depth. Coming your way.

Simon screws a pitch into the surface, attaches a line to hold him in place. Monash is using the MOLE control line as a tether, they're stirring up carbon as they work.

MONASH

I'm going in.

SIMON

The hole?!

MONASH

See if I can free it up.

Monash goes in feet first, using the line as a rope.

They watch Monash's helmet cam as he descends into the hole. Like dropping into a small well, his helmet lights illuminate the dark, veiny walls close around him.

MONASH

How's my time?

TANNER

24:10.

BAKER

Another six minutes and they won't have time to get back to us.

A beat. Tanner leaps for the pilot's seat.

TANNER

Blow the tethers.

She realizes what he's thinking.

BAKER

We go get them and we may not have enough fuel to get back off the surface.

TANNER

Blow the goddamn tethers!

146 IN THE COCKPIT

146

TANNER

Calculate exactly how much prop we need to get off this rock! Shut us down when we hit it.

She TYPES into a keyboard. Numbers rush by. A BEEP.

BAKER

Got it!

147 OUTSIDE THE MESSIAH

147

The aft thrusters ignite and the ship moves away fast.

148 OMIT

148

149 IN THE HOLE

149

Tulchinsky and Partenza arrive. Monash works his way down to the top of the MOLE. Braces himself against the walls, gets his feet on it.

MONASH

Give it some juice.

The MOLE shimmies a little, shakes, but doesn't move.

MONASH (CONT'D)

Hold up.

It stops, Monash rocks it back and forth with his boots.

MONASH (CONT'D)

Try backing it up again.

150 IN THE MESSIAH

150

Baker's computer BEEPS.

BAKER

That's it.

TANNER

Little more, little more...

She looks at the fuel usage whizzing by.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

BAKER

Shut it down!

TANNER

They always put extra in the tanks!

Baker leans across, shuts it down. A beat, Tanner knows she was right.

TANNER (CONT'D)

We have a visual?

Across the valley. The yellow sled.

BAKER

Straight ahead one hundred yards.

151 IN THE MOLE HOLE

151

Monash kicks and shakes the MOLE, tugs up on the feed line.

MONASH

...Come on... you bastard. Time?

TANNER

11:04. Figured we'd better pick you kids up after school. Check your six...100 yards.

152 ON THE SURFACE

152

Partenza looks, sees the Messiah hovering in the distance. Notices the sun striking the hilltops on the other side of the valley. Checks over his shoulder at the coming dawn.

PARTENZA

I think we'd better hurry, boys.

MONASH (ON COM)

One more time, Mark.

153 IN THE HOLE

153

The MOLE struggles, RUMBLES and then...begins to DIG.

MONASH

It's going!

154 IN THE MESSIAH

154

Baker stares at the dawn horizon.

BAKER

I don't think they've got 10 minutes.

The sun is rising between two mountains, it's going to pour straight down into the valley, right where they are.

155 ON THE SURFACE

155

Debris is shooting up from the hole.

SIMON
MOLE's at forty-two meters.

TANNER (ON COM)
Sun's rising behind you, coming up
fast.

Partenza sees the rapidly shrinking shadows. They move much faster than earth. Everywhere it strikes, the surface gets unstable. Rocks fly, jets explode.

TULCHINSKY
Face shields down!

The three men on the surface down their gold shields.

156 IN THE HOLE

156

Monash is pummeled with debris shooting up from the digging MOLE. Pulling himself up the control line as fast as he can. No way he has time for his face shield in this mess.

157 ON THE SURFACE

157

The sun marches closer and closer. Now only thirty yards away, jets explode like mortars in the heat.

SIMON
MOLE's at depth and armed!

158 ON THE MESSIAH

158

Tanner and Baker watch the sun's approach with alarm.

TANNER
Get the hell out of there!

159 ON THE SURFACE

159

Partenza screams back into his headset.

PARTENZA
Oren's still in the hole!

Simon stares into the hole, sees the top of Monash's helmet.

SIMON
Another three meters!

PARTENZA
Oh, Christ...

The sun is only yards away.

(CONTINUED)

159 CONTINUED:

159

SIMON

Oren, come on, go...go...!

160 IN THE HOLE

160

Monash grabs the line. Pulls hard, propelling himself up much too fast, like a missile. Shooting out onto the --

161 SURFACE

161

Heading straight up into orbit. Partenza grabs his passing boot and is pulled along until Partenza's tether catches. They bob in space, the light gravity slowly bringing them back down. Monash staring out in shock.

PARTENZA

Get us down!

Simon grabs the tether line, pulls them back, spinning them slowly as they come. Partenza looks up, realizes.

PARTENZA (CONT'D)

Oren, your face shield!

Monash looks down, what? Just as his face rotates full into the blinding sun. Screams in pain.

MONASH

Ahhhhhh...AAHHHH...!!!

Monash claws at the helmet, trying to get to his blinded eyes. They get him back to the surface, SLAM his shield DOWN, drag him behind them to the sled. The sun hits them as they FLOP Monash on top, lash him down. The ground begins to boil and steam.

MONASH (CONT'D)

My eyes...oh god...my eyes...

TULCHINSKY

Gus, come on! Come on...!

It's only yards around the sled to Partenza's seat but the sunblasted surface is cracking, EXPLODING. He's trying to cross a jet minefield.

TANNER (ON COM)

Get out of there!

Partenza dodges one, sees a clear spot, steps and BOOM! A jet explodes into his chest. Rocketing him up like a human cannonball.

TULCHINSKY

Gus...Gus...!

Partenza's sling-shot out into space hundreds of feet.

162 ON THE MESSIAH

162

BAKER
We're losing one!

Tanner leaps to look. Partenza's helmet cam has a quickly diminishing view of the comet below.

BAKER (CONT'D)
He's got escape velocity. A
thousand feet and climbing.

162A PARTENZA IN SPACE

162A

He watches the comet recede.

163 ON THE SURFACE

163

They're looking up, frozen. Jets EXPLODING all around.

TANNER (ON COM)
Mikhail, Mark, get the hell out of
there!

Simon fires the sled and they head for the Messiah.

164 IN THE MESSIAH

164

The sun works its way across the valley, closer and closer to the Messiah.

TANNER
Houston, all MOLES are at depth,
nukes hot and ready. We lost
Partenza to explosive outgassing.
Monash is injured.

165 IN THE SMALL ROOM AT JSC

165

The families stare at the TV, in shock. Hold each other.
The sun clock now blinks 0:00 on the screen.

166 MSNBC STUDIO

166

Jenny and the MSNBC staff watch the Messiah pictures.

167 UNDER THE MESSIAH

167

Tulchinsky helps load the GROANING Monash onto a hoist.

SIMON
Retract hoist one!

Monash is pulled up into the Cargo bay. The sun now fully striking the Messiah. Rocks and jets shoot all over the place. Tulchinsky SNAPS onto another hoist.

(CONTINUED)

TULCHINSKY

Retract four!

Tulchinsky starts up. Simon connects himself.

(CONTINUED)

167 CONTINUED: (2)

167

SIMON

Retract two!

The hoist starts and BOOM! A rock SLAMS into Simon's forearm, hard. Sends him swinging like a kid on a rope over a river SLAMMING into the underbelly.

168 IN THE COCKPIT

168

The hull vibrates from the rocks like POPPING corn.

TANNER

Firing primary thrusters.

BAKER

Payload doors are still open!

TANNER

Close them as we go!

BAKER

Is Oren with you, Simon? Is Oren on the ship?

TANNER

We're going now!

169 UNDER THE MESSIAH

169

The ship fires its thrusters. Lifts up, the men still dangling below.

170 IN THE COCKPIT

170

It's choppy. Rocks BANG. Tanner steers as best he can.

170A EXT. THE MESSIAH

170A

The ship flies off.

171 IN THE CARGO BAY

171

The three men are being reeled in through the now closing doors. A final rock EXPLODES up through the doors, SHATTERS a light. Tulchinsky releases himself, swings Monash over safety.

SIMON

I think my arm's broken...

Tulchinsky reels Simon in. Releases him.

TANNER
Repressurize the cargo bay.

BAKER
Cargo bay repressurized.

Tulchinsky comes in out of his EVA suit.

TULCHINSKY
We have to go get Gus.

TANNER
There's not enough time.

TULCHINSKY
He's going to die out there!

Something SLAMS into the underbelly, sends them careening off to the left as Tanner wrestles the stick.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

TULCHINSKY (CONT'D)

We can still find him, he has a beacon!

TANNER

I don't have time to argue with you. Sit down and shut-up.

The ship BUCKS and SLAMS through debris.

TULCHINSKY

Turn it on! Turn on the fucking locator!

BAKER

We barely have enough propellant to get out of the coma!

TULCHINSKY

We can't just leave him. We have to go back.

TANNER

If we go for Gus, we all die...!

172A INT. CARGO BAY - CONTINUOUS

172A

Monash hears this.

TULCHINSKY (ON COM)

We can't just leave him in space.

MONASH

Tulchinsky, listen to Tanner. It's his ship now.

172B IN THE COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

172B

Tulchinsky slowly lowers himself into a seat. Leans his head back, exhausted, tears run down his face.

173 MSNBC STUDIO

173

It's very quiet on the set. Finally, Jenny:

JENNY

This has been such an indescribable day, hasn't it? Where do you begin? The Messiah has lifted safely off the comet, and so we're cheering for that, but Gus Partenza is dead.

(CONTINUED)

173 CONTINUED:

173

His photo appears behind her.

JENNY (CONT'D)

He was...everyone who knew him loved him. Even more than that, they liked him. It's hard to report the news when you're torn between excitement and sadness. I can't even imagine how they feel on the Messiah.

174 INTERIOR MESSIAH

174

The astronauts are floating silently in the living quarters. Monash is lying on the table, Baker works on his eyes with the med kit. It's painful. Tanner speaks quietly to Baker.

TANNER

Bad?

174 CONTINUED:

174

Her look says it all. Tanner goes back to checking Simon. Partenza begins to cry softly.

175 ROBIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

175

Robin watches in silence.

JENNY (ON TV)

They're going to set off the bombs in thirteen minutes, well, less than thirteen now.

(beat, she's reflecting)

We're supposed to see a large increase in the comet's brightness as dust from the explosion is hit by the rays of the sun.

176 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS CITY WALK - DAY

176

The crowd watches Jenny on MSNBC.

JENNY (ON SCREEN)

(she's looking off camera)

Do we know if that's going to be visible to the naked eye or only on telescopes? ... We don't know. We do? Oh... naked eye. You'll see the brightness. We will, we'll see it together.

177 MSNBC STUDIO

177

On the monitors we see images from around the Messiah.

TANNER (ON TV)

Prepare to remove safeties and fire.

TULCHINSKY (ON TV)

Safeties removed...

JENNY

After the death of Dr. Gus Partenza and with Oren Monash injured,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

177 CONTINUED:

177

JENNY (CONT'D)

Spurgeon Tanner is now in command
of the mission.

178 BIEDERMAN HOME

178

The Biedermans and Hotchners are still watching together.
The comet as seen from the Messiah fills the screen.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Okay, this is what's coming next:
the radiation burst is going to
wipe out the transmission from the
Messiah, just for a minute, maybe
a little longer, so don't panic
when the picture goes out.

(CONTINUED)

179 INSIDE THE MESSIAH

Tanner, Baker and Tulchinsky are now up front.

TULCHINSKY

Weapons armed.

Tanner looks over at Partenza's helmet cam, only space in and out of heavy static.

TANNER

We're detonating the bombs now,
Gus.

PARTENZA

...okay...

He's very distant. None of them know what to say. A beat.

TANNER

Unlock firing switches.

Tanner and Baker unlock switch guards, exposing red "fire" switches, side by side in the console.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Three... two... one... NOW.

180 THE COMET

180

Light shoots from the MOLE holes, then BLINDING WHITE.

181 MSNBC STUDIOS

181

The screen fills with static. Tanner's breaking up.

TANNER

Weapons detonation... confirmed...
10:04, Zulu ...time, 24 Augu...,
...99.

182 IN THE MESSIAH

182

Debris is hurled from the comet. SLAMS into the Messiah, shuts down the electrical system. FLIPS them sideways, BURSTING lights and a stern cargo WINDOW. ALARMS sound.

BAKER

Decompression in area six!

Tulchinsky leaps up out of his chair, pulls himself along the blender that's now the Messiah's interior, SLAMS against pipes, floors, ceilings. THROWS himself against the cargo hatch door, trying to close it and not be sucked out.

The static is beginning to clear.

JENNY

Now we're just waiting for the picture to come back. This is hard. Twenty seconds.

Slowly, the view of the comet from the Messiah returns.

The comet's surrounded with debris, breaking into two pieces, one five times larger than the other. A huge CHEER erupts, the staff CLAPS, CRIES, they hug each other. Beth holds her daughter Caitlin.

CAITLIN

What happened, Mommy?

184 UNIVERSAL CITY WALK - NIGHT

184

It's Times Square on V-J Day, bedlam, joy.

185 ON THE MESSIAH

185

Tulchinsky struggles the last few inches, gets the sucking hatch door closed, the wheel turned. Smoke, wires exposed, Simon extinguishes a small fire.

Baker looks to Partenza's helmet cam, only STATIC.

186 OMIT

186

187 BIEDERMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

187

They watch the set, the dust, the two comets in space.

HEFTER (ON TV)

Messiah, this is Houston... Messiah can you respond...

Everyone is elated, hugging, except for Leo. Sarah holds him, tears running down her face, but he's still watching the TV, worried. Slowly, she realizes.

SARAH

...Leo...?

But he doesn't answer, something's wrong.

187A OMIT

187A

187B WHITE HOUSE OFFICE - NIGHT

187B

The room's crammed full of electronic gear, computers. The President, Entrekin, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs SCOTT, other aides and advisors. No one says a word. All are turned toward Bekey, a phone to his ear. Waiting.

IVAN BEKEY

(into phone)

...I'm still here

Listens for a long beat. Then hangs up, slowly turns to the President. He doesn't have to say it, they all know. The President stares at his feet, the weight of his job too great today. Then finally, quietly:

BECK

Your people ready, Morton?

(Entrekin nods)

General?

SCOTT

Yes, sir.

The President nods, heads for the brightly lit Oval Office next door.

187C MSNBC - NIGHT

187C

Champagne, smiles, relieved tears. The President appears on the monitors, his voice cutting through the celebration.

BECK (ON TV)

Good evening.

He takes a long time to say the next thing. The staff quiets, turns to watch. The President's grim expression slowly sucking the joy from the room.

(CONTINUED)

BECK

You know what just happened.
There was one big comet, and now
there are two. And they're both
headed to earth.

188A MSNBC STUDIO - NIGHT

188A

We MOVE SLOWLY through the faces, then onto the long wall
of monitors; every station carrying the speech.

BECK (ON TV)

Let's call the big one Wolf and
the smaller piece, Biederman.
Wolf is six miles wide, Biederman
a mile and a half. Separately or
together, they are capable of
destroying life as we know it. We
have lost communication with the
Messiah spacecraft although we
continue to track it visually. It
left the comet under power and has
made course corrections under
power. The ship is coming home.
We don't know how many are alive.
We don't know their condition.

He takes a moment. All stare, the words sinking in.

BECK (ON TV) (CONT'D)

Now we have to make some decisions
together. What do we do? You have
a choice, we have a choice right
now. Ever since the comet was
discovered, we've been hoping and
working for the best, but we've
also been planning for the worst.
Our strategy has been two-fold.
First, our Strategic Missile
Command is preparing to coordinate
with the Russians a massive strike
of Titan missiles to intercept the
incoming comets. If we can deflect
these comets only two degrees they
will bounce harmlessly off of our
atmosphere and head out into
space...

188B IN THE BIEDERMAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

188B

They watch the speech. Sarah clinging to Leo.

BECK (ON TV)

Unfortunately, the Titans cannot
be launched until the comets are
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BECK (ON TV) (CONT'D)
only a few hours away and while we
are confident the Missile attack
will succeed, it is only prudent
that we now take cautionary steps
to insure the continuation of our
way of life. To guarantee that
there will be enough of us left to
rebuild a new world in the unlikely
event that the comets do strike the
earth...

The CAMERA moves in slowly on the President.

BECK

So, in the soft limestone of Missouri, we've been preparing a network of immense caves, and they're almost finished, and we can put a million people in them, and that million people can survive there, underground, for two years, until the air clears and the dust settles. The cave is more than a dormitory, it's our new Noah's Ark: we're storing seeds and seedlings, plants and animals, enough to start over. On August 10, we're going to hold a national lottery...

The faces of people watching; in Times Square, in Chicago, Seattle, Houston and San Francisco.

BECK (ON TV)

A computer will randomly select eight hundred thousand Americans, to join the two hundred thousand scientists, doctors, engineers, teachers, soldiers and artists who have already been chosen. Other countries are preparing similar caves along whatever lines they feel are best to preserve their ways of life. This is ours.

Robin is watching alone.

BECK (ON TV)

Beginning tonight, and continuing until the crisis passes, I am declaring a state of Martial Law. The Armed Forces and the National Guard are working with local law enforcement. A national curfew begins at midnight tonight. Wherever you are, go home. Stay off the roads after sunset. Crimes against persons or property will be dealt with swiftly and harshly.

BECK (ON TV)

News stations around the nation
are being faxed copies of the
lottery procedure as we speak and
they'll be broadcasting the
details to you in a few moments...

Worth takes off running for the fax, Ira following.

The President takes a break and stops reading copy. He tries to unburden his heart.

BECK (ON TV)

I... wish... no, wishing is the wrong word right now. That's not what I mean. Look... I believe in God. A lot of you don't. At times like this, it would just be obscene to use faith as a weapon. But I still want to offer a prayer and I've been trying to find the right one. So let me offer this. It'll pray for our survival, mine included, because I believe that God hears all prayers... but I also believe that sometimes His answer is No. May the Lord lift up His divine countenance upon you, and give you peace.

We hear a murmur of AMEN from the people in the Oval Office, or wherever we see this, if on a monitor in MSNBC.

The Presidential Seal's on the monitors. Jenny's camera light CLICKS ON. She looks off, all formality gone.

JENNY

Do we have the fax yet, Stuart?
(Stuart shakes "no")

Worth and Ira reappear from the hall, running. Worth carries a sheet of paper overhead, rushes it to the anchor desk. Jenny reads it as the crowded studio waits, silent.

JENNY (CONT'D)

My God... Stuart, how old are you?

DIRECTOR (ON STAGE COM)

Jenny, in five, four...

STUART

Fifty-five...

Her camera light blinks RED. She slowly turns to camera.

(CONTINUED)

188H CONTINUED:

188H

JENNY

We now have the details of the national lottery.

(reads)

Those of you who have been pre-selected for the Ark will be notified within the next few minutes...

188I UNIVERSAL CITY WALK - NIGHT

188I

We MOVE ACROSS the stunned faces, watching Jenny.

JENNY (ON TV)

For the rest, on the night of May 14, those who's social security numbers have been randomly selected by computer will be notified. All phone systems will be turned off for 72 hours beginning on May 13th. The only phones that ring will be those of the people selected...

188J INT. ROBIN'S TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

188J

Robin watches her daughter deliver the news on TV.

JENNY

While some Americans over fifty years of age have been pre-selected for the Ark due to their expertise in a necessary field of study, no men and women over fifty in the general population will be included in the lottery...

188K INT. JASON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

188K

Chloe gives Jason a look. I don't know about you, but I will survive.

JENNY (ON TV)

The evacuation of those who have been selected for the Ark will take no longer than two days beginning on May 18th...

188L THE BIEDERMAN'S - NIGHT

188L

The phone RINGS. Everyone looks. It RINGS again.

ELLEN

...Hello...?

JENNY (ON TV)

During this two day period, no unofficial travel will be permitted.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENNY (ON TV) (CONT'D)

Those selected will be taken by
bus and train to the underground
Ark site by military personnel...

Ellen hangs up slowly, turns back to the room.

ELLEN

We've been pre-selected.

All turn to Leo, they know why. Chuck leaps up, rushes
for the front door.

VICKY

Chuck...? Where're you going?

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Our phone! They could be calling!

And he's gone. They look among themselves, they all know
the Hotchner phone isn't ringing across the street.

JENNY

You are being notified now because
there is still time to construct
your own shelters in basements and
backyard pools. Civil Defense
teams have been formed in every
town and city in America with a
population over five thousand.
They will distribute supplies and
organize group shelters in
underground parking facilities and
other appropriate sites.
Construction plans, equipment
lists and locations for securing
the necessary provisions along
with information on how to grow
your own food underground and how
to purify water are now available
free of charge on the Internet at
WWW.FEMA.Com.

Jenny stops reading. It's silent. She sets the fax down
slowly, looks directly into camera.

JENNY (CONT'D)

That's all there is.

189 OMIT

189

189A INSIDE THE MESSIAH (OLD SCENE 198)

189A

Monash strapped down, gauze covering his eyes, in pain.
Tanner and Baker work on the radio, Tulchinsky at the Orion,
Simon pours over schematics, his arm now roughly splinted.

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

The interior camera circuitry is shot. Andy, can we get back into the cargo bay to reroute the video junctions?

BAKER

Starboard cargo porthole is blown. We could try to get in there with the EVA's but there's not much left in the life support packs.

SIMON

We should be able to raise Houston on the low band when we get closer.

TANNER

The Orion still functioning?

TULCHINSKY

System check was okay, but I don't know about the radiation shielding.

TANNER

So, if we fire it up, we beat the comet back to earth, but we may start glowing in the dark. Anybody?

A silent beat, then from the corner, hoarsely --

MONASH

Let's go home...

189B SPACE (OLD SCENE 199)

189B

The Orion fires against the backplate, the Messiah picks up tremendous speed, leaves the comets behind.

189C OMIT (MOVED TO 18A)

189C

189D THE ED SULLIVAN THEATER --NIGHT

189D

David Letterman on stage, talking to his audience.

DAVID LETTERMAN

The comets are such great set-ups for a joke, but the problem is that we're the punchline. So here's my last top ten list. Ten: be grateful to the crew of the Messiah for everything they tried to do. Nine: Make peace with your enemies. Eight: Be strong for the children. Seven: Try to help someone you don't know. Six: Don't get crazy.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAVID LETTERMAN (CONT'D)

Five: Don't be selfish. Four:
Love your friends and family.
Three: Love your friends and
family. Two: Love your friends
and family. One: Love your
friends and family...

Slowly, he walks off stage.

189E EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - DAY

189E

Jenny walks with Robin.

ROBIN

I have to say it's liberating
knowing that I won't be called. I
don't think I've ever been happier.
I've even stopped smoking.

JENNY

What are you going to do with all
of the money you save?

ROBIN

Do you know that the National
Gallery is saving all of the art?
They're shipping it to the caves.
I gave them the most beautiful
eighteenth century desk from New
England, and all of my Sheraton
silver. I really felt like I'd
protected something when I gave
them to the museum. You should
see my apartment now. After all
these years collecting, there's
nothing there now, it's
practically Japanese.

JENNY

It doesn't seem fair that I got
selected. I'm not a doctor, or a
scientist.

ROBIN

People need continuity. You're
someone everyone knows. People
trust you.

JENNY

But I can't help you.

ROBIN

Don't worry about me. I'm going
to be happy as long as I know that
you're going to live. Have you
spoken to your father?

(CONTINUED)

JENNY
 (reflexive anger)
 No.

ROBIN
 The world he lives in is coming to
 an end, Jenny, you don't want him to
 die with bitterness in his heart.
 Talk to him.

JENNY
 Why?

ROBIN
 (the answer is coming)
 When your Father and I were young,
 I used to think of us as the
 perfectly matched pair: he was the
 most graceful man in the world,
 and he always said I was the most
 beautiful. But this is what the
 comet has taught me; that grace is
 deceptive, and beauty is passing.
 Don't leave all the unfinished
 stuff of your life to the comet.
 Don't let the comet take away your
 dignity. You're better than that.

They keep walking.

189F INT. MSNBC - NIGHT

189F

A scientist's being interviewed by Tim at the anchor desk.

VAN SERTMA (ON TV)
 It is impossible to say what is
 happening on the Messiah now!
 From the telescopes orbiting the
 earth, yes, we see evidence that
 they're using the nuclear
 propulsion system, but who knows
 what kind of damage it sustained
 when the comet exploded?

The CAMERA finds Jenny and Eric watching this from a corner
 of the studio. They drink a couple of beers.

VAN SERTMA (ON TV) (CONT'D)
 The Russians are very pessimistic
 about this. Radiation
 contamination, overheating: the
 Orion system is just as likely to
 blow up as it is to work.

TIM (ON TV)
 That certainly isn't good news.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY
(amazed at the stupidity of
what Tim just said)
"That certainly isn't good news?".
What a genius.

VAN SERTMA (ON TV)
No one is taking seriously the
extent of the risks here.

TIM
What do you think the world should
be doing?

VAN SERTMA (ON TV)
I don't know.

TIM
(to the camera; time for a
commercial)
Thank you. Now this.

ERIC
(to Jenny)
What do you think the world should
be doing? Does everyone do what
they didn't have time to do, or
what they were afraid to do? What
happens to everyone's morals?

JENNY
Morals? Eric where are you going...

ERIC
In social crisis, there's a
collective unconscious yearning
for the disaster everyone pretends
to fear...

JENNY
Eric, why don't you just ask?

ERIC
Ask? What? What do you want me
to ask?

JENNY
If the world is coming to an end,
why not just have sex.

There it is.

ERIC
No, no, no, Jenny, keep this in
the abstract as much as you can.
It's much sexier to be vague.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERIC (CONT'D)

The longer we talk about abstract morals, and the weirder the conversation gets, the longer and more twisted your sentences, the more I know what you'll be like in bed.

JENNY

Well, that's quite a long and twisted sentence you've got there.

ERIC

Maybe that should tell you something...

They burst out laughing at the absurdity of this conversation. He kisses her. They look at each other and start laughing again.

190 OMIT

190

WOLF BIEDERMAN IMPACT: 4 WEEKS, 2 DAYS, 21 HOURS, 19 MINUTES

190A LEO AND SARAH'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

190A

Leo rides his bike up the street fast, knapsack slung over one shoulder, standing on the pedals. The neighborhood's transformed. Every driveway has sprouted a tricked-out SUV: brush guards, twin Jerry cans, CB whips. Yards have six foot chain link fences, now guarded not by neighborhood mutts, but by gnarled Junkyard dogs. Chainsaws fell prized family trees, drop them into the street for firewood. Sandbags piled in front of doors.

Inside open garages, weekend warriors build bulk storage where the Buick used to sit. Fill the shelves with cases of canned goods, fifty pound sacks of flour, drums of oil. Propane storage tanks are the new yard ornaments of choice.

Leo rides his bike up the Hotchner driveway, to the garage where Chuck Hotchner is carrying a drill. Leo comes up beside him as they pass Chuck's dirt bike, standing just inside the garage.

LEO

Mr. Hotchner?

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Who did I think I was going to be when I bought that bike?

LEO

Well, every kid on the block wants one now, and every Mom on the block hates you for it.

(CONTINUED)

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Thank you, Leo, that's the best news I've had in years. Give me a hand.

LEO

Yes, sir.

They go around to the porch where Chuck takes his drill to a steel bar over the window. Sarah's mother, Vicky, nurses the baby on the porch. She has a little portable TV, with a small screen. This plays in the background. We may see it or hear it:

JENNY (ON TV)

Nationally, authorities report that record numbers of Americans are taking their own lives, with more than twelve hundred suicides in the past twenty-four hours alone...

(riot footage)

It was another day of rioting for building supplies throughout the East. In Florida, a mob attacked and killed a Miami rental yard operator who was charging five thousand dollars an hour for backhoe and tractor rentals. Marines had to intervene to stop the violence...

A big Deere combine plowing through green corn.

Leo grabs the heavy bars going up over the bay window. He's startled by a big BOOM! Coming from a few doors down.

LEO

What was that?

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Bob Smith's using dynamite to dig a shelter in his backyard.

Down the block a huge dust mushroom cloud rises behind a ranch house. Guess this passes for normal now. Chuck drills the bar into place.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY (ON TV) (CONT'D)

Farmers in the Midwest continue to harvest their crops prematurely, even though Department of Agriculture officials are now threatening to impound farmland found to have been harvested early...

(a beat)

In Arizona, the stand-off between Army Rangers and the Armageddon Domsday Militiamen entered its fifth day...

LEO

Uh... Mrs. Hotchner...

VICKY

Sarah's on the hill.

190B OMIT

190B

190C HILLTOP - DAY

190C

Leo runs up to the pretty hilltop. He finds Sarah sitting under a tree, the city spread out below them; they see the burning FIRES, hear the SIRENS, and the GUNSHOTS.

LEO

Where were you today? I've been looking everywhere for you. How come you weren't at school?

SARAH

My Father said I didn't have to go. He said there's no point.

Leo digs two wedding bands out of his pocket.

LEO

I have a point.

SARAH

Those are wedding rings.

LEO

Yeah, I got 'em from Jeremy Landers' dad, he needed a Coleman lantern. Look at them, don't you get it? I figured it out.

SARAH

What?

(CONTINUED)

LEO

If you marry me, I can get you into the Ark. You'll be safe. I went to FCDA! They said that if you and I got married, then you're my family, and I can take you.

SARAH

What about my parents? They're not your family, I can't leave my parents.

LEO

You don't have to. I'm the famous Leo Biederman and I haven't used my fame for anything, but I got them to bring your family too, because we're going to be married.

She looks at him. He's so young.

SARAH

You're a sophomore in high school. And you're asking me to marry you so I can hide in a cave for two years.

LEO

So you can live. So we can both live. So we can have children.

SARAH

But we are children. Really, we're just children.

LEO

Marry me, Sarah, please, marry me. It's the only way you'll survive.

She studies him. He's changed. She understands something.

SARAH

You love me. You know it, now, don't you?

LEO

Yeah. I love you.

She leans in, and kisses him. His lips first, then his cheeks, his eyes, his neck.

He kisses her back, still unsure, a boy. And then she slowly begins to unbutton his shirt. If he thinks she's coming with him, we might see from the way she kisses him that for her, this could be goodbye.

190D OMIT		190D
THRU		THRU
195		195
195A STREETS OF AMERICA - NIGHT		195A
We move into windows...		
195B TOWNS AND CITIES - NIGHT		195B
Americans rich and poor wait by their phones.		
195C NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT		195C
We hear a phone RING. Everyone in the apartment rushes.		
	FATHER	
	Hello? Yes... Yes, this is he...	
195D A PANORAMA OF AMERICAN WINDOWS AT - NIGHT:		195D
Families by the phone; all waiting.		
195E REMOTE FARM HOUSES		195E
Some phones RING. Some don t.		

(CONTINUED)

195F SUBURBS

195F

Other phones RING. Others don't.

196 OMIT

196

196A LEO'S STREET - NIGHT

196A

The street's deserted, inside every brightly lit window a family waits for their phone to ring.

Leo stands on Sarah's lawn in the dark. Inside her living room bay window, he can see the Hotchners waiting. Their phone isn't ringing.

196B OMIT

196B

THRU

THRU

201

201

Jenny at the anchor desk. The dress around the newsroom has become very informal. No more coffee cups and Evians, now it's beer and wine. And everyone, absolutely everyone, smokes.

JENNY

Confusion over Civil Defense food distribution erupted into riots again today in Denver, and a number of other cities across the country.

Film of EMPTY PRISONS.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Prison guards in California walked away from their jobs, and released prisoners on their way out. It's feared this trend will spread nationally.

Ira stands in the hallway, looking through Stuart's office window. Stuart's inside in a suit and tie, packing up a few mementos, that's it. Worth stops beside Ira, a beat.

(CONTINUED)

202 CONTINUED:

WORTH

He tell you where's he going?

IRA

Home...

WORTH

Where's that?

IRA

He didn't say...

In the studio, Jenny continues. Film of RIOTING on screen.

JENNY

On the other side of the country, rioting continued for the second day at the Lorton Reformatory outside Washington, D.C. Prisoners there had heard of the inmate releases in California, and wanted to be set free as well.

203 OMIT

203

204 THE COMETS

204

Continue their journey towards Earth. They're getting closer and closer. The sunlight striking them, warming the ice. The long comet trails lengthening.

205 MESSIAH COCKPIT

205

Tanner watches this on the computer monitor. Something catches his eye. He's not sure, makes some notes, a small sketch. Floats back into the crew quarters. It's a mess, hanging wires, blackened debris, broken equipment. The lights are low. Baker, Simon and Tulchinsky asleep.

Tanner grabs a foil pack, sits across from Monash. Tanner squeezes the foil pack into his mouth. He wipes Monash's lips. This is tender. They talk quietly, not to waken anyone else.

TANNER

None of you children brought any real books to read, did you know that? I brought Moby Dick and Huckleberry Finn, and Baker and Simon had never read them. I'm afraid to ask you. Have you ever read Melville or Twain?

MONASH

I'm a child of the movies, Fish.

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

You got a shitty deal, Oren.

MONASH

Don't worry about me. Really...
don't worry about me.

(reaches to Tanner and brings
him closer, so no one can
hear)

Y'know, all my life... you know what
it's like for guys like us, you and
me, we're the same... be the best...
be the best. I gotta wife. I'm a
father. I see little flashes of
light, and color, I go to sleep and
dream, but there's a part of me which
is always awake now, so I... I get to
see myself dreaming. I'm seeing
things differently.

(pause)

How come they call you Fish?

TANNER

Spurgeon, Sturgeon, Fish. That took
about fifteen minutes of my first
day at Annapolis.

MONASH

Your boys went there?

TANNER

Yeah. Good men. Both of them. I
don't see them as much as I used to
when Mary was alive, she was always
better at keeping the family together.

Monash senses Tanner's unhappiness.

MONASH

You don't have to talk about it.

TANNER

You're married, you know what it's
like. Every marriage has its good
years and bad...we ended on a great
one. Anyway... Let's get started.

(CONTINUED)

MONASH

On what?

Tanner pulls out a copy of Moby Dick. We can fade out on this.

TANNER

You have a child at home, a boy or girl, and that child needs a Daddy who knows about books, so here we go, Moby Dick, chapter one. "Call me Ishmael. Some years ago never mind how long precisely having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on the shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world..."

MONTAGE:

205A INT. ROBIN'S TOWNHOUSE NIGHT

205A

On Robin's TV: Jenny, then VIDEO FOOTAGE OF LOOTERS.

JENNY (ON TV)

In Columbus, Ohio looters continue to set fire to abandoned stores. The fires have been left to burn since many firefighters are no longer reporting for work.

CLOSET: Beautiful dresses. Robin's hand in frame takes out one dress, then another, then puts them back and takes out a beautiful antique robe.

ON A MAKE-UP TABLE: Make-up, lipstick, perfume. Robin's hand picks up the lipstick.

JENNY (O.S.)

Throughout Latin America's major cities, business districts have been abandoned to looting gangs. Military patrols have not succeeded in stopping the violence, and food and medical shortages in outlying areas have become critical. Emergency airlifts have been ruled out as too dangerous.

205B EXT. LEO AND SARAH'S HILLTOP - NIGHT

205B

A torch. People climbing a hill. More torches.

Leo with his parents.

Sarah with her family.

ROBIN'S TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

JEWELRY CASE: A collection of beautiful pieces, earrings, rings, necklaces, a locket. Robin holds up different earrings. She chooses something beautiful. She tries on rings, puts rings on a few fingers of each hand. She puts on a heart shaped locket.

JENNY (O.S.)

More street fighting in Moscow as food and fuel shortages continue. One observer at the U.S. Embassy describes the scene as pure anarchy. A group of Moscow officials chartered a helicopter to get out of the city, but when angry rioters heard about it they shot the chopper down. No one survived the crash.

(CONTINUED)

LEO AND SARAH'S HILLTOP - CONTINUOUS

IN THE LIGHT: Leo and Sarah are brought to each other. A CLERGYMAN is there. Sarah is beautiful, flowers are in her hair. Leo is in a suit that's too small for him.

The CLERGYMAN. His Bible.

JENNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

In Europe, rioting continues as the EEU general evacuation plan has fallen apart due to continuing disagreements among participants.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JENNY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Meanwhile, because the national health services in many of these countries have stopped providing services, hospitals have become armed encampments to keep from being over-run by angry citizens.

(a beat)

Refugee camps, like this one near Syria, continue to form along national borders as nation after nation refuses passage to those seeking safer ground before the missile hits.

The rings. Don has the ring.

Parents are crying.

CLERGYMAN

... to love..., cherish..., so help...

JENNY (O.S.)

The government in Mexico has outlawed the private use of gasoline and diesel fuel after a round of severe price-gouging. In Mexico City, residents are fleeing to higher ground on foot. Several thousand people were trampled when police tried to re-route the crowds from main streets leading out of the city.

ROBIN'S TOWNHOUSE CONTINUOUS

The TV is turned off.

LIVING ROOM: For the first time in the sequence, we see Robin in full frame. She puts on music.

She lights the candles in the living room.

LEO AND SARAH'S HILLTOP CONTINUOUS

CLERGYMAN

... till death do you part?

LEO

I do.

ROBIN'S TOWNHOUSE CONTINUOUS

The room is beautiful, she was right when she told Jenny that this was one of the most beautiful rooms in the world.

(CONTINUED)

She sits down and pours an old red wine into a large glass. She is in a chair beside a photograph of Jenny and Jason, when Jenny was a child, on the beach.

LEO AND SARAH'S HILLTOP CONTINUOUS

CLERYMAN

Do you... Sarah...

SARAH

I do.

Leo kisses Sarah.

ROBIN'S TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Robin drinks her wine and closes her eyes. She is at peace.

206 OMIT
THRU
209

206
THRU
209

210 OMIT
THRU
216

210
THRU
216

217 AN ARMY BUS - NIGHT

217

Making it's way slowly down Leo's block, more fortress than transportation. Inside, the haunted, passing faces of the already chosen. On top, soldiers. The Biedermans and Hotchners are on the sidewalk, suitcases beside them. Other families stand sullenly on their lawns.

The bus stops, soldiers pour out of the bus in full battle gear, form a perimeter. It's precise, frightening. A young LIEUTENANT with a clipboard jogs over.

LIEUTENANT

Biederman?

DON BIEDERMAN

That's us.

LIEUTENANT

ID's please.

A small line; Ellen, Jane, Don, Leo and Sarah, the Hotchners. He checks IDs, shines his flashlight in their faces. Sends them to the bus. Don carries two suitcases.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)

Only one suitcase.

DON BIEDERMAN

It's our family photos, keepsakes.

LIEUTENANT

Only one suitcase is going, sir.
I don't care which one.

Don looks to his wife, stricken. Leo sets his bag down.

(CONTINUED)

LEO
I don't need my stuff, Dad.
(shows his ID)
This is my wife, Sarah. Here's
our notarized marriage license.

The Lieutenant takes it, reads. Nods toward the bus.

LIEUTENANT
...okay. Get on.

Leo and Sarah smile at each other. Start for the bus.
The Lieutenant signals to his men.

LIEUTENANT (CONT'D)
That's it, let's go.

They close in behind Leo and Sarah. Leo turns, the
Hotchner's have been left behind.

LEO
The Hotchners are coming, too.

The Lieutenant turns his small flashlight back on, studies
the list. There's a long, torturous wait.

LIEUTENANT
H..o..t..c...?

LEO
.h..n..e..r.

LIEUTENANT
Not here.

He starts off again. Leo stops him again.

LEO
They have to be there! FCDA [ficda]
sent their names to the White House!

LIEUTENANT
They aren't there.

LEO
Check again... please!

The Lieutenant's getting annoyed, looks again. A beat.

LIEUTENANT
They're not on the list.
(to his men)
Let's go...!

LEO
They're here! They have to be!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEO (CONT'D)

(to the Hotchners)

I put you on the list, they said
you were on the list. Sarah, I
put them on the list!

CHUCK HOTCHNER

(it hits him)

We're not on the list.

VICKY

But... You said...

CHUCK HOTCHNER

We're not on the list...

VICKY

But Sarah, and the baby...

LEO

Sarah can come.

VICKY

Tell them the baby is yours...
Tell them the baby is yours.

LEO

(to the Lieutenant)
This is our baby...

LIEUTENANT

Oh, come on... I can't do that!

VICKY

What do we do?

SARAH

(help me, please...)
Mommy... Daddy... I don't want to
leave you...

Don Biederman is behind Leo.

DON

Leo, just grab her, get her inside!

Leo and Don hold onto Sarah, she pulls back.

SARAH

I can't!

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Sarah... Sarah... You have to go.

He tries to push her onto the bus.

(CONTINUED)

LIEUTENANT

Come or stay, girl... this bus is
moving out!

LEO

I'm not going without you!

SARAH

I can't leave my family!

VICKY

Sarah! Get on the bus.

SARAH

I don't want to leave you!

CHUCK HOTCHNER

You don't know what you're doing,
Sarah...

LEO

Listen to them! You'll die if you
stay here, you know that!

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

(resolute)

If I die, I'll live on in you, in
your memory.

Tears run down Leo's face. She leans in, kisses him.

SARAH (CONT'D)

If you love me. You'll go...

The bus STARTS. She stares into his eyes.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Please...

Leo backs slowly away from Sarah, anguished. She nods, encouraging him to keep walking. He's to the bus door, Don pushes him up on board. The Lieutenant climbs on. The bus doors close. It PULLS AWAY.

(CONTINUED)

Leo rushes to the back window, stares out at Sarah, his hand smashed against the glass, as if to touch her. She waves, her mother sobs in her father's arms. And Leo's gone.

Jenny's Assistant takes us through the now sparsely populated MSNBC. Only a few desks are occupied, most have gone to be with their families. She KNOCKS on Stuart's old office door, now Worth's. He hasn't done anything to personalize it. Jenny has her feet up, Eric's there, Ira. They're watching footage of the interior of the Ark on a monitor.

ASSISTANT

Jenny...

JENNY

Here I am.

ASSISTANT

It's for you. It's the coroner's office.

Everyone is quiet now. Jenny takes the phone.

JENNY

(apprehensive)

This is Jenny Lerner.

(listens)

Yes. Yes. Robin Lerner. Yes. My mother. Sixty-one. Yes... That was her address, yes... What time?

Everyone is watching her. She's crying while she talks.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I'll be right there. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

She hangs up the phone. Everyone in the room knows that something awful just happened. Jenny walks out.

217B OMIT

217B

217C INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

217C

Jenny and a CLERK at a counter where she collects Robin's things, the rings, necklace, and earrings she put on before she died. Everything fits in a manila envelope.

CLERK

Sign here. And sign here.

JENNY

That's it?

CLERK

You'll need to make arrangements. The funeral homes haven't been very responsive in the last few weeks. Everyone's waiting to see what happens.

Jenny can't talk. She goes outside.

217D EXT. MORGUE - NIGHT

217D

In the rain. Cabs pass by. There's one that's free. It stops for her. She's about to get in when her father pulls up in his car and opens his window.

JASON

Jenny! Come with me.

Jenny whips open his passenger door.

JASON (CONT'D)

Come with me.

JENNY

You're too late, I already took care of it.

JASON

Jenny, get in the car.

(CONTINUED)

JASON (CONT'D)

It wasn't my fault.

JENNY

I don't give a shit, go tell Chloe.

JASON

She left to be with her parents,
they're scared. She'll come back, I
hope.

JENNY

You deserve it. You deserve to be
alone!

He gets out of his car.

JASON

No, no, I don't. Get in the car.

JENNY

Don't you dare get out of that
car.

Jason reaches to her, but she pulls her hand away and the bag she is holding opens up, spilling jewelry. Jason gets out of the car, he chases the locket, but Jenny grabs it.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Don't touch it! It's mine.

Now he's soaking in the rain, too.

JASON

Well. So. I'm sorry for you.

JENNY

I feel like an orphan.

She gets in the cab and leaves Jason in the rain.

(CONTINUED)

218 OMIT

218

219 LEO'S BUS - NIGHT

219

Leo and his family are on the crowded bus. Leo stares out the window, lost, empty. Outside, soldiers try to hold back a mob jamming the entrance the bus can force it's way through a set of heavily armed gates between tall fences topped with razor wire. The whole area's lit up like Monday Night Football.

SECTION LEADER

Welcome to the Ark. I'm the section leader for Orange 254. Remember that, that's what we're going to be calling home for the next two years. Please gather your things and follow me to the orientation gallery.

They file off the bus. Leo steps down into the --

220 LIMESTONE CLIFF STAGING AREA - NIGHT

220

People everywhere, heavily armed soldiers, trucks, GUNSHOTS, CHOPPERS coming and going. Animals are unloaded from railroad box cars not just cattle and sheep; lamas, pandas, tigers, peacocks, ostriches. Noah's Ark.

(CONTINUED)

Huge piles of palletted grain are moved by forklifts, large wooden crates move past marked "National Gallery" and "Library of Congress". A PA system BOOMS:

PA SYSTEM (VO)

Please proceed in an orderly fashion to the orientation gallery for medical examination and inoculation. Please proceed in an orderly fashion...

They do as they're told, frightened, confused. No more in control of what's happening to them than the cattle being herded beside them.

SECTION LEADER

There are a million people living here. Two hundred food service centers. You'll be eating freeze dried beans and vegetables, and fish sticks, a lot of fish sticks...

Ahead, massive doors open into the cliffs. The dark tunnel's uninviting, ominous. Leo stops. His father realizes.

DON BIEDERMAN

Leo...?

LEO

I'm not coming.

A beat. Jane and Ellen turn back.

LEO (CONT'D)

I have to go back for Sarah.

(CONTINUED)

ELLEN

Leo, come with us right now.

LEO

I'm going back for her, we're going to make it.

ELLEN

We're fifteen hundred miles from home.

DON

It's beyond everyone's control.

LEO

She's my wife.

JANE

Please don't go.

LEO

I'll see you again. I'll see all of you again.

Don pulls out money, and he pulls off his watch and his ring.

ELLEN

What are you doing? Don't let him go.

DON

He'll need something for trade. And take this...

He gives Leo his Swiss Army knife.

DON (CONT'D)

I'm sorry your childhood was stolen from you like this.

Leo hugs them all and begins to back up.

LEO

Mom, Janie... I love you...

His little sister waves softly. Leo turns away, walks fast, not daring to look back. Disappears into the crowd.

221 OMIT
THRU
232

221
THRU
232

233 RICHMOND - DAY

233

FROM A HELICOPTER we fly into the city center, past abandoned cars and looted stores, there's trash everywhere, on the streets, stacked in vacant lots, find CIVIL DEFENSE WORKERS shepherding a crowd into an underground parking garage.

WOLF BIEDERMAN IMPACT: 1 WEEK, 3 DAYS, 6 HOURS, 47 MINUTES

They remind you of nothing so much as refugees; pushing shopping carts overflowing with their belongings, walking beside their overloaded cars pioneers heading west.

And finally, WE FIND Sarah, carrying her baby sister. Vicky drives their stuffed to the ceiling Astro Minivan, her father pulls a cart loaded with mattresses.

They follow the crowd down into the parking garage, past a distribution area manned by CD volunteers handing out blankets, crates of freeze dried food, Ensure.

Vicky pulls the van into the first vacant spot. Other families are already setting up camp.

SARAH

...Home sweet home... I'll start unloading the van.

Hands the baby to her mother. Vicky looks to Chuck bleakly.

VICKY

Oh god...

Chuck wraps an arm around her, hugs her.

Jenny is on the newsroom floor, talking to Worth.

JENNY

They're working completely by press release now. I don't feel like a reporter anymore.

WORTH

What about Entrekkin?

Ira is coming over.

JENNY

He hasn't taken my call in two weeks.

IRA

Jenny.

JENNY

Yeah?

IRA

Your Father is here.

And there's Jason.

JENNY

Excuse me.

And she goes to him.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Hello, Jason.

JASON

I can't stay long, I'm leaving the city, but I wanted to show you something. I wanted to show you that you're not an orphan. I have proof that you're not an orphan. Look.

He takes a few photographs out of his Jacket pocket. These are pictures of Jason and Jenny when Jenny was a baby. These are pictures of Jenny and Jason on the beach, at a beach house. These are not snapshots, they're black and white, beautifully exposed and printed; a great camera, a good photographer.

JENNY

Where's Mom?

JASON

Behind the camera.

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

She took these pictures?

JASON

Yes. She was an artist. You don't remember when they were taken?

JENNY

I'm five years old here. How would I remember that?

JASON

I don't know.

Jenny is deeply moved by the pictures, but she can't show her father how much they mean to her.

JENNY

How come I never saw them?

JASON

You'd have to ask your mother. We were alone on the beach. She would have been in the pictures, but there was no one else to hold the camera. It was a good day for all of us.

(a beat while Jenny studies them)

Goodbye, Jenny.

And he turns, and walks away.

JENNY

Goodbye.

And he's gone.

234 OMIT

234

235 INSIDE THE MESSIAH

235

Tanner is studying the comets on the monitor, makes more notes, taps into the computer. Heads into the main cabin.

TANNER

Could I bother everyone for a minute?

Tanner brings up the comets on the cabin computer.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Take a look at the big one.

(points)

The outgassing at perihelion has created a vent a half mile wide and at least two miles deep. Comet gets closer to sun, sun melts ice, ice turns to steam, we get a big hole.

(...so?)

How many nukes we have left in back, Mikhail?

TULCHINSKY

Four.

TANNER

If we can get the remaining bombs in that vent there shouldn't be anything left of that comet bigger than a suitcase. We can't do anything about the little one, but it might give them a chance.

Baker realizes what he's talking about, holy shit.

(CONTINUED)

TANNER (CONT'D)

Without the arming codes, we'll have to wait to set the bomb timers until we get close enough to earth to raise Houston.

Tulchinsky looks to Tanner. Doesn't get it.

TULCHINSKY

We may not have enough life support left in the EVAs to get back into the cargo bay for the nukes, much less to work down on the comet.

SIMON

And we sure as hell don't have enough propellant left in the Messiah to maneuver much. How do we get back off the surface once we're down?

MONASH

We don't.

Simon and Tulchinsky look at the others, realize.

SIMON

To get the nukes into the vent...

TANNER

We have to put them there.

Tanner shows them his sketch, arcs and ellipses, the Messiah going into the vent. There's a long beat.

TULCHINSKY

So, if we fail, we'll never know, and if it works, we'll never know?

Tanner nods. Another long moment. Finally:

BAKER

Look at the bright side, we'll all get-high schools named after us.

A moment of silence.

(CONTINUED)

BAKER (CONT'D)

I have to admit something. I
feel despair.

MONASH

Yep. Me too, despair, over here.

OTHERS

Despair... Uh huh.

TULCHINSKY

Well, I'm Russian, despair in
Russia is already an improvement
over normal feelings. And in
Russia, for such feelings. I...
well... we have a cure.

He brings out a bottle of vodka. Water in the desert.

MONASH

Drinking and driving, Commander?
What do you think?

TANNER

We could hit something.

They pass the bottle.

236 OMIT
THRU
244

236
THRU
244

(CONTINUED)

- 245 OMIT 245
- 246 EASTBOUND TRUCK - NIGHT 246
- Leo's in the back of a stake bed truck. It's dark, cold. The truck's filled with men, women, children.
- Leo looks up into the crystal clear night sky. The comets are white hot points of light with long vapor trails, the image from medieval manuscripts. He smiles, closes his eyes.
- 247 OUTSIDE THE RICHMOND PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT 247
- Sarah fills sandbags with other members of the underground garage tribe. Slowly, she looks up. The comets. Leo. She closes her eyes. Whispers quietly...
- SARAH
I love you, Leo...
- 248 IN THE BACK OF THE TRUCK - NIGHT 248
- Leo's face still turned to the sky, eyes closed. The truck PULLS AWAY underneath us, disappearing up the dark road.
- 248A VANDENBERG AFB - DAWN 248
- Brilliantly lit Titans sit on their launch pads, ready to go. Suddenly, rockets IGNITE. ROAR off into space.
- 248B BAIKONAUUR-CIS - NIGHT 248
- We're looking STRAIGHT DOWN at a closed missile door. The door SLIDES open, revealing a Titan below.
- WE CRANE down as the huge metal hole in the desert floor begins to belch white exhaust. The Titan LAUNCHES.

248C CAPE CANAVERAL - DAY

248C

Peaceful, calm. Miles of uninterrupted horizon abruptly
PIERCED by more Titans, ROARING up out of the sea.

248D INSIDE THE MESSIAH

248D

The radar begin to BEEP a warning. Baker swings to it.

TANNER

We're not alone.

BAKER

Titans?

TANNER

That'd be my bet.

SIMON

Peashooters.

MONASH

At least they're trying.

248E SPACE

248E

The comets from the point of view of the missiles.

248F AND FROM THE MISSILES POV

248F

The comets are immense, and from this angle we finally
understand the futility of what is about to happen.

One by one the tiny missiles STRIKE the surface. Pebbles
smashing into two very large ponds.

248G MSNBC - NIGHT

248G

Across the monitors, the faces of people watching; in
Beijing, and Nairobi, London and Rio. Eric, Beth, Caitlin,
Worth, Stuart, Ira, Marianne, Bobby. On Jenny's monitor, a
graphic representation of the missiles striking the comet
surface.

JENNY

Here's what you're looking at:
all the Titans have hit their
targets, but we still don't know
if they've made a difference.
Comets have to travel for awhile
before the radar tracking
stations can see if they have
been pushed to a safe course
that'll bypass the earth. So,
one more time, we have to wait.

248 WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

249

Entrekin, the President, and Bekey.

BECK

You're sure?

IVAN BEKEY

Plus or minus a few hundred miles.

The President nods, crosses the hallway and into -

250 OVAL OFFICE

250

The cameras already in place. He heads for his desk.

251 RICHMOND PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

251

The camera TRACKS through the underground village to find Sarah and her family watching with everyone else on the communal TV. Beck sits behind his desk in the Oval Office. Takes a moment.

BECK (ON TV)

The Titan missiles have failed.
The comets are still headed for
earth and there's nothing we can
do to stop them.

251A INT. MSNBC - NIGHT

251A

People gasp, cry, try to hold back their emotions.

BECK (ON TV)

We have now been able to calculate
the comets' final trajectories and
we have determined where they're
going to strike. So this is it.
If the world does go on, it will
not go on for everyone.

(takes a moment)

The smaller of the two comets,
Biederman, will hit first.

252 IN THE BACK OF THE EASTBOUND TRUCK - NIGHT

252

The truck's stopped, everyone crowded around a tiny portable set getting crappy reception. Leo stands to one side.

BECK (ON TV)

Somewhere in Eastern Canada,
probably in the waters off the
coast of Nova Scotia. In just
under twelve hours at 4:35 PM,
Eastern Daylight time.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

252 CONTINUED:

252

BECK (ON TV) (CONT'D)
(sudden impatience)
Can we get a map? Can somebody
get me a map right now?

253 IN THE OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

253

Entrekin and Bekey grab a big office globe from over by the
fireplace. Haul it on camera.

BECK
The impact of the comet is going to
be disastrous. There will be a
very large tidal wave moving
quickly through the Atlantic Ocean.
It'll be 1200 feet high traveling
at eleven hundred miles an hour,
faster than the speed of sound...

254 MSNBC NEWSROOM - NIGHT

254

Everyone stands around watching; terrified. Eric moves to
the anchor desk, takes Jenny's hand.

(CONTINUED)

254 CONTINUED:

254

BECK (ON TV)

As the wave reaches shallow water, it's going to slow down, but the wave height, depending on the depth of the shelf off the coast, will be anywhere from a half mile to two miles high. Where the land is flat, the wave will wash inland six hundred to seven hundred miles.

254A OMIT

254A

255 RICHMOND PARKING GARAGE - NIGHT

255

BECK

The wave will hit New York City forty minutes after impact. Boston, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Washington, all will be destroyed... If you have any means of getting away from the path of this wave, leave now.

They don't have to be told twice, everybody is getting the hell out of the garage, and fast. Sarah and her family leap into the Astro Minivan. People SCREAM, run, a few small children are left crying. The TV still on.

BECK (ON TV) (CONT'D)

The larger comet, Wolf, will be far more catastrophic. It will strike land in Western Canada three hours after Biederman. Within a week, the skies will be dark with dust from the impact and they will stay dark for two years. All plant life will be dead within four weeks, animal life within a few months.

256 INT. THE OVAL OFFICE - NIGHT

256

The President continues, looks directly into camera.

BECK

Good luck.

257 THE EASTBOUND TRUCK DAWN

257

The truck's turning around to head west. Everyone's jumping back on frantically, except Leo who's standing in the road. The last few people hop on or are dragged up by others. The truck completes its turn. A large HISPANIC MAN leans out, offers Leo his hand.

HISPANIC MAN

Come on...!

But Leo doesn't move. The people in the back of the truck stare at him. The truck barrels off west. Leo turns, begins to run east, toward the lightening horizon.

257A INSIDE THE MESSIAH

257A

Simon's under the radio panel, working with his one good hand on a jumble of wires. Other wires now criss-cross the ceiling of the cabin in a crazy tennis racket grid of colors. Through the cracked windshield, the Earth.

SIMON

Try that...

TANNER

I'm getting something.

257B JSC COMM ROOM - DAY

257B

A single GUY sits in the cramped comm room, watching MSNBC on a small set. Hears a SCRATCHY sound. Sits up. What?

TANNER

Houston...is...Messiah. Houston, this... the Messiah...

NASA GUY

Messiah, this is Houston, go ahead...

Another man sticks his head in from the hallway.

NASA GUY (CONT'D)

Get Hefter, quick!

257C MESSIAH COCKPIT

257C

The astronauts let off a WHOOP, elated to be back on line.

HEFTER

Nice of you to call Messiah, we were starting to wonder what the hell you were doing up there.

Tanner motions for everyone to shut up.

(CONTINUED)

257C CONTINUED:

257C

TANNER
Admiring the view, Houston.

HEFTER
Fish, that you?

TANNER
Yep. Sorry we don't have time to
talk Houston, we need the arming
codes for the last four nukes.

HEFTER
What the hell for?

TANNER
Mitch, we can do, or we can teach,
what's your pleasure?

257D JSC COMM ROOM

257D

More and more NASA folks jam into the room.

HEFTER
Get the arming codes! Get the
goddamn codes!

WOLF BIEDERMAN IMPACT: 19 HOURS 12 MINUTES 22 SECONDS

Worth's running a mini meeting, it's somber, quiet, a circle. Beer and wine containers litter the table, everyone smokes. A few younger, staffers, Jenny, Eric, Beth with Caitlin, Ira, Tim, Bobby, Marianne.

WORTH

We have one helicopter. It holds seven people. We can ferry six people to high ground in West Virginia and take Jenny to the ark.

They look around, there are thirteen of them, not counting Jenny and Eric. They aren't all going to make it. Worth reaches behind him for coffee stirrers, counts out thirteen, breaks the ends off six. Everyone watches, it's very quiet.

WORTH (CONT'D)

Short sticks go.

TIM

I always thought it was, "women and children first."

WORTH

If you pick short, you can give up your seat.

He offers his hand slowly around the room. Each person picks a straw. One at a time. Marianne's first, a long straw. A short one for the next man, he smiles. Bobby picks a long one. Ira, long. Short. Long. Tim, short. Long. Long. A woman begins to cry. Short. Eric has to choose. He looks to Jenny. He chooses a straw. Short. He takes Jenny's hand. Now, it's just Beth and Worth. Two sticks. One long and one short.

Beth looks at Worth, at Caitlin beside her. Takes a deep breath. Picks one. It's long. Worth opens his hand, the one remaining stick, short. There's a long silent beat.

JENNY

Oh my God, Beth... What are you going to do?

BETH

There's always the road. I'll be all right.

IRA

(making the best of a worst situation)
Well...I...I'm going to learn French.

(CONTINUED)

258 CONTINUED:

258

Beth gets up and leaves. They all watch her go.

WORTH

All right, let's get moving!

WOLF BIEDERMAN IMPACT: 6 HOURS 54 MINUTES 37 SECONDS

259 SPACE

259

Wolf and Biederman tumble towards Earth.

260 OMIT
 THRU
 261

260
 THRU
 261

262 MESSIAH CREW QUARTERS

262

Tanner, Baker and Tulchinsky are working on the last bomb. Parts float around, tools. Simon's at the comm board. Monash is strapped to his seat.

SIMON

The code transfer is going too slow, I can't get a clear signal.

TANNER

They'll come or they won't, worrying about it won't help.

Tanner struggles to detach the nuke from its cumbersome MOLE mounting capsule. He's whistling. Baker looks down at him. Among the others.

BAKER

Are you whistling?

TANNER

Yep...

Baker grins, shakes his head.

BAKER

You're happy aren't you, Fish...?

Tanner doesn't answer for moment, then:

TANNER

During the middle ages, a Swedish Knight, returning home from the crusades, got caught by the plague. The Angel of Death came to take him away, he was on a beach and there was no place to hide.

Baker and Simon trade looks, here he goes again.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Death said, "It's time to go." The Knight took a look at him and said, "I've heard you're a chess player." Death said, "That's true." The Knight said, "Death, why don't we play a game of chess? As long as I hold you off, you don't claim my soul. And if I win, I live forever." Death smiled and said, "Let's play."

(CONTINUED)

Tanner gets the nuke out, takes it to the table where Simon's fashioned straps out of scrap to hold the nukes in place.

TANNER (CONT'D)

The Knight held him off for a long time, until one day, the Knight stopped in a church for confession. And in the dark of that confessional, he told the priest about the chess game, and how Death had overlooked a move, and how he, the Knight, was just one jump away from a checkmate. And the priest pulled back the screen, and it was Death himself. The Knight had given away his game.

Everyone's listening now, lost in their own emotions.

TANNER (CONT'D)

There was no chance to recover. He was going to lose. The Knight went outside, and he looked at his hands, and he could see the blood still flowing in his veins, and he said, "There it is, I'm still alive, and I, Antonius Block - that was his name - I, Antonius Block, am playing Chess with Death!"

Tanner finishes screwing the final nuke in place, slips on a control lead, the nukes LED's BLINK on. He smiles.

TANNER (CONT'D)

It's been a hell of game.

263 FREEWAY - DAY

263

A freeway sign: "RICHMOND BEACHES 6 MILES." The CAMERA BOOMS DOWN to find bumper to bumper traffic on both sides of the road heading west. Cars are HONKING, RADIOS are on, tempers FLARE. News CHOPPERS overhead.

WE MOVE DOWN TO FIND Leo, on a bike heading the opposite direction -- east, into town.

264 HOTCHNER VAN - DAY

264

Sarah and her family in the red Astro Minivan, stuck in horrible traffic. Sarah sneaks a look up front, ON THE DIGITAL SPEEDOMETER: 4 miles an hour. Chuck sees his daughter looking. They're in trouble. And they know it.

265 OMIT

265

(CONTINUED)

266 SPACE 266

The COMETS' POV: Earth fills the horizon.

267 OMIT 267

268 LEO'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY 268

The street's deserted, weeds choke lawns, trash is piled up everywhere, broken windows, doors ripped off hinges. Leo pedals up the street, hard. Passes abandoned cars, dogs roaming free eating garbage. Dumps the bike on Sarah's dead lawn, rushes into --

269 SARAH'S HOUSE - DAY 269

The front door bars have been pried off, wood hanging from the jam. It's oddly quiet, family photos missing, leaves blowing around, the place has been looted.

(CONTINUED)

269 CONTINUED:

269

LEO
Sarah! Sarah...!

No answer, he's near panic.

LEO (CONT'D)
SARAH...

270 BACK ON THE STREET - DAY

270

A metal toolshed door RATTLES in the breeze. A front door SLAPS back and forth.

LEO
Sarah...!

A cat scoots across the street. A car wreck sits under the streetlight. He checks both cars for keys, nothing. Runs along the houses, all deserted. Nobody.

LEO (CONT'D)
Hello! Hello...!

Nothing. Just the empty street.

LEO (CONT'D)
SARAH...?!

It's getting creepy now, Leo's spooked. He runs up to his own garage, pulls the partially destroyed garage door up.

The garage has been looted, too. Old toys strewn around, dolls, baby clothing. But sitting against the wall, still chained in place. His Dad's dirt bike, its heavy duty chain and massive lock still in there, showing the evidence of several attempts to break it.

Leo digs among the scattered paint cans. Finds the right one. The keys still in their hiding place. Unlocks it. Climbs on, turns it over with a ROAR. FLIES down the driveway and out into the street, barely hanging on.

271 OMIT
THRU
273

271
THRU
273

274 THE MESSIAH

274

The astronauts watch Biederman entering the atmosphere.

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

We ready?

Everyone's strapped in, Tanner and Baker up front with Simon. Tulchinsky and Monash next to the nukes. All nod.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Houston, this is Messiah. We're ready to begin our run. Our families there yet?

HEFTER (ON COM)

They're on their way, Messiah. Good luck.

Kenny takes the yoke, begins a turn.

TANNER

Disengage autopath. Here we go...

275 SPACE

275

The Messiah sling shots around the Earth, heading for the massive Wolf. We SWING BACK TO Biederman's view of the earth as it approaches the atmosphere and begins to heat up. SCREAMS past a satellite, starts to glow.

275A THE FREEWAY - DAY

275A

Leo ROARS along the shoulder, up and down the grass embankments trying to miss abandoned cars. Surfing the sea of slow moving traffic. Searching for the Astrovan.

275B OMIT

275B

THRU

THRU

275D

275D

275E INT. MSNBC - DAY

275E

Jenny and Eric are running through the building. They have to cross the studio. Jenny runs to her desk.

ERIC

What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

JENNY

I have to get something.

She grabs the envelope her Father gave her.

ERIC

Jenny! Let's go!

She runs with him. They pass the day care center. There are Beth and Caitlin, playing. Jenny stops.

JENNY

(surprised)

Beth!

ERIC

Jenny!

He's already at the door to the roof. The others are pushing past him. When the door opens we can hear the noise of the helicopter on the roof.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Jenny! We have to go!

BETH

The roads were so crowded, it was obvious that we weren't going to make it. If the wave is going to come, I thought, well, she likes it here. It's the fifteenth floor, who knows, maybe we'll be alright.

JENNY

Caitlin. Come here.

Caitlin comes to her. Jenny picks her up.

BETH

Say goodbye to Jenny, Caitlin.

ERIC

Jenny! There's no time left!

JENNY

Let's go.

BETH

Where?

Jenny starts running with Caitlin. Caitlin drops her doll.

JENNY

Let's go.

They all start running up the stairs together.

275F OMIT

275F

275G EXT. MSNBC ROOFTOP - DAY

275G

They come to the roof. A helicopter is waiting for them, and another chopper has just left. The sky is filled with helicopters and small planes, all heading west.

ERIC

We're going to make it, we're going
to make it, let's go, let's go,
now, now, now...

BETH

Where are you going with my Caitlin?

Jenny seems to have an aura around her, something is holding her back from the fear and tension that everyone else is showing on their faces. She's actually calm.

JENNY

You're taking Caitlin and you're
taking my seat.

BETH

Why?

A few people are already in the chopper.

JENNY

Get inside!

Beth rushes in.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Caitlin, I love you.

Jenny hands Caitlin to her mother. Eric is about to get on.

ERIC

What are you doing?

The Pilot looks doubtfully at the number of people he's supposed to carry.

PILOT

That's too many.

ERIC

We can make it.

JENNY

I'm not going. Goodbye, Eric.

ERIC

What?

(CONTINUED)

BETH

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

PILOT

We gotta go!

And he starts to lift off.

ERIC

No!

JENNY

Goodbye, Eric.

Eric is holding Jenny's hand as the helicopter rises.

ERIC

But I love you.

Jenny hears this, and smiles. She kisses his hand.

JENNY

Next time!

ERIC

Next time!

And then their hands separate, and the helicopter flies off the roof, and joins the swarm of planes going west.

275H OMIT

275H

275I EXT. ROAD - DAY

275I

We are looking east on the freeway, at the miles of cars, filling both sides of the road and all heading west. They are stopped, or moving at a mile an hour.

We are on the westbound lanes, looking at the back of a sign over the freeway. We cross to the eastbound lane and a sign saying BEACHES... We continue across the highway and over the embankment to an access road, where one car is heading towards the water. We find the driver: Jenny.

(CONTINUED)

Leo on his motorbike, wearing a helmet, through the traffic. Cars everywhere, impossible to get through.

An Astrovan... he goes up to it: the wrong family.

Another Astrovan... the wrong people.

Leo drives up onto the center median. Other motorcyclists are using the same road.

HE PASSES THE HOTCHNER FAMILY.

Vicky sees him.

INSIDE THE VAN

Vicky sees Leo.

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Look... Sarah... Look...

Sarah and Chuck see Leo.

SARAH

Leo!

She throws herself over her Father to hit the horn. But all the cars are honking.

ON LEO

Leo is ahead of the Hotchners.

ON SARAH

She gets out of the car and climbs up on the roof.

SARAH (CONT'D)

LEO! LEO BIEDERMAN! LEO!

Leo doesn't hear her.

ON LEO (FROM HIS REAR VIEW MIRROR)

A girl on a van.

BACK TO SCENE

He stops. He turns around. He sees Sarah.

She is off the van, and running to him through the stopped traffic.

He rides back to her.

(CONTINUED)

They kiss.

Vicky, carrying the Baby, and Chuck, are out of the van, coming to them.

CHUCK HOTCHNER

You don't have any time, you have
to go now.

VICKY

Here...

She gives Sarah the Baby.

SARAH

Mom...

VICKY

Make a life.

LEO

I'll take care of them, I promise...

CHUCK HOTCHNER

I know you will. Go, please go...

Sarah nods, crying. Leaps on the back of his bike.

VICKY

We love you, we always loved you,
now get out of here, now, now,
now. Go!

Leo and Sarah, holding the Baby, get on the motorbike, and get out of there as fast as they can, leaving Chuck and Vicky on the road.

276A EXT. SKY - DAY

276

The comet's POV, low in the atmosphere, streaking over the earth.

277 OMIT

277

THRU

THRU

278B

278B

279 FREEWAY - DAY

279

Chuck and Vicky Hotchner lean against their stopped van. He has his arm around her. She lets him hold her. He looks up... Everyone is looking up, she looks up... there's the comet.

CHUCK HOTCHNER

Biederman.

People get out of their cars, slowly. WE BOOM UP, to see miles of jammed road, all traffic has stopped as a million people make peace with the end of their lives.

280 OMIT 280

281 COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 281

Leo and Sarah ROAR off the freeway, FLY past an endless line of cars crawling slowly into the green hills. Sarah sees the comet first.

SARAH

Oh no...

Streaking overhead. Leo yells over the NOISE of the bike.

LEO

Fifteen minutes after it hits we'll feel the shock wave! Hold on...!

He LAYS on the gas, Sarah holding onto Leo and the baby for dear life.

281A OMIT 281A
THRU THRU
285 285

285A NEW YORK CITY - DAY 285A

Stuart walks calmly along the street in a suit and tie. People run past, cars JAMMED bumper to bumper in the street, HONKING, trying desperately to get out of the city. But Stuart's calm, relaxed. Finds a --

Curbside Starbucks coffee cart, umbrella, it's deserted. Makes himself a cup of espresso. The portable TV on the cart now only STATIC. Grabs a New York Times from an abandoned news stand. The NY tabloids hanging from it's sides scream "COMET TO CITY: DROP DEAD!" And "THE FAT LADY SINGS!", the Times simply states, "Wolf, Biederman Impact Imminent" and in smaller type, "Scientists Disagree On Extent Of Destruction".

He walks through the chaos and out into Washington Square among the pigeons. Sits on the steps near the Arch, sets his coffee to one side, lights a cigarette, opens his paper.

285B OMIT 285B
AND AND
285C 285C

286 EXT. CAPE HATTERAS - DAY 286

The comet is coming to ground. Forest and fields on shore IGNITE, the ocean BOILS as the comet SPLASHES into the sea a few miles off the coast.

The white hot tip of the comet breaks the surface. The hole in the ocean begins to spread. Merges with the earth, and FROM ABOVE, the circle of the impact spreads. On shore, the earth RIPPLES away in harmony with the water. And then the shock wave catches up with the fires, BLOWING them out as it KNOCKS the forests flat.

(CONTINUED)

286 CONTINUED: 286

Farms and towns are thrown into the air, then roads and cars SHOCKED into vapor by the impact. The ocean wave begins to form, TOWERING above. WE'RE MOVING fast... Down the East Coast ... Faster than the speed of sound... Cities COLLAPSE, forests, bridges. Everything in its path.

287 OMIT 287

287A VIRGINIA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY 287A

Jenny drives down the deserted country road, heading east, when SUDDENLY the ground RIPPLES towards her, as if the highway were a rug and God was shaking out the dust. Trees FALL, telephone poles SNAP. The car FLIES over the sudden three foot speed bump. SLAMS back to the road, with a metal GRINDING THUMP, Jenny keeps going.

288 COUNTRY ROAD - DAY 288

Leo and Sarah. The RIPPLING earth catches up to them from behind, moving fast. Sarah sees, SCREAMS to Leo.

SARAH

Oh God...!

It catches them. The motorcycle JUMPS, bounces up over the rolling ground. They land HARD, Leo struggles to keep the bike upright, Sarah clutching the bundled Baby.

289 OCEAN - DAY 289

The wave is a thousand feet high and moves across the ocean in a line that stretches past the horizon. OIL RIGS are simply swallowed whole.

290 OMIT 290
THRU THRU
290D 290D

290E EXT. OLD BEACH COLONY - DAY 290E

Jenny arrives at the beach colony, with beautiful weathered old ramshackle cottages behind fences on the dunes. She has the photographs that Jason gave her at MSNBC.

She has found the cottage in the background.

Ahead of her, through a break in the houses, a path to the sea. A dog barks. The birds wheel overhead. She walks to the sand. She takes off her shoes. She's carrying a bag and she flings it away.

No more than a hundred or so people are on the beach, families, old people, children, and dogs. A little girl has a cockatiel in a birdcage. She lets it go. The bird flies away. There's a boy in a wheelchair. His parents set him on the sand, near the water's edge. Couples are kissing, families are hugging each other. A man alone plays frisbee with his black lab.

(CONTINUED)

Someone is playing the guitar.

There's Jason, standing alone, looking out at the sea. He comes to her.

JASON

Jenny...

JENNY

When I was eleven, I stole money from your wallet.

JASON

When you were a baby, I dropped you on your head.

JENNY

When you came to the studio, and you showed me the pictures, I lied when I told you that I didn't remember. I was so mad at you, because I remembered everything. I remember the day, it was a perfect happy day. We were right over here... We were all alone on the beach, and Mom was really upset because she'd left her tripod in the house. I'm here because I wanted you to know.

They walk to the water's edge.

JASON

Thank you. I miss her, too.

Jenny stares at her Father.

JASON (CONT'D)

I wish I could make up all that lost time for you.

JENNY

(no irony, she means this)

We have the rest of our lives.

And then a terrible sound, not the wave, something else:

The sky is filled with SQUAWKING sea birds flying inland, a dense cloud of gulls, terns, and pelicans. Everyone on the beach begins to join hands in a line at the water's edge, gently, without the need to talk. The DOGS run away from them, away from the water.

And then the sea before them is SUCKED away in a massive rip tide, exposing fish and an old wreck. Something foams on the horizon. Here it comes. Imagine the Santa Monica mountains rolling toward you, faster than the speed of sound.

(CONTINUED)

290E CONTINUED: (2)

290

Jenny grabs her father.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Daddeeee!

Father holds daughter. The sound is DEAFENING. And they're gone.

290F OMIT

290F

290G OMIT

129A.

290G

(CONTINUED)

- 291 FREEWAY - DAY 291
- The wave sweeps down the freeway, gathering thousands of cars in its foam. The Hotchners wait, holding each other.
- Vicky looks up at her husband, smiles. And they disappear as the tidal wave sucks up fifty thousand cars.
- 291A OMIT 291
- 292 EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY 292
- Two F-16's SCREAM into view, towards the Manhattan skyline.
- They close in on the STATUE OF LIBERTY. They veer off in opposite directions as the GIANT WAVE enters frame and the sky starts to darken.
- 292A EXT. MANHATTAN SKYLINE - DAY 192A
- The wave sweeps over lower Manhattan, around and between and over the twin towers of the World Trade Center.
- 292B EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN - DAY 292B
- It tears through Soho.
- 292C EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY 292C
- From Times Square, you can see it coming up Broadway and Seventh Avenue.
- 292D WASHINGTON SQUARE - DAY 292D
- The rushing crowds around Stuart, stop. Climb out of their cars, look eastward. A tremendous NOISE. Stuart looks up from his paper. Takes a final deep drag of his cigarette, and he's gone.
- 292E EXT. CHRYSLER BUILDING - DAY 292E
- Looking up at the Chrysler building we see an ocean liner tossed by the wave into the skyscraper's top floors.
- 292F EXT. EMPIRE STATE BUILDING - DAY 292F
- FROM ABOVE: looking down at the Empire State Building as the wave surges through mid-town.
- 292G EXT. NEW YORK UNDERWATER - DAY 292G
- FROM BELOW: As the Statue of Liberty floats face down above the drowned city.

292H EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER - DAY

292H

FROM THE SURFACE OF THE WATER: the wave has passed, leaving one tower of the World Trade Center leaning against the other, water draining from the shattered windows.

293 OMIT

293

294 VIRGINIA HILLS - DAY

294

Leo and Sarah ROAR over a hill to see a mountain road rising above, traffic JAMMED all the way up. Sedans have tried to negotiate the shoulder and gotten stuck. There's nowhere to go. Leo idles for a moment. Looks around desperately, Steve McQueen in The Great Escape. Behind them, in the far distance, something is COMING. He REVS the engine.

LEO

Hold on!

FLIES off into the brush, looking for a trail, anything. The bushes and branches SLAP at their faces, SCRATCH and TEAR.

A deer trail. Not much but they'll take it. It's steep, not meant for motorcycles. The wrong move and they'll FLY off into the woods. Dirt SAILS off the tires as they SKID and SLAM over branches and decomposing leaves.

They come around a bend, a huge TREE down ahead. Leo brakes to try to stop, but the bike SKIDS underneath them. They go down. Leo and Sarah falling, SLIDING behind it.

(CONTINUED)

294 CONTINUED:

294

The cycle SMASHES into the tree, SLAMS up and over it in a twisting somersault of metal and paint.

And suddenly, it's silent. Leo sits up, clothes torn, covered in mud and dirt. Crawls back to Sarah.

LEO (CONT'D)

Sarah...? Sarah...?!

She's a few feet behind him, face scrapped, more concerned about the baby still strapped to her chest.

SARAH

I think he's okay...

CRYING like hell, but alright. Leo pulls her up.

LEO

We have to keep going, can you run?

She nods. He drags her behind him over the tree, the bike a mangled mess, the back wheel still spinning.

295 THE WAVE - DAY

295

It covers the countryside, the crest of the beast eating everything in its way, devouring entire states.

296 FOREST - DAY

296

Leo and Sarah running. People behind them, above them.

297 THE WAVE - DAY

297

It reaches the base of the hills. An immense force, the water piling up on the mountain as easily as water in a bathtub surges over the side if you give it a push.

298 EXT SPACE

298

The United States coastline has changed. Cape Cod is gone.. New York City and Long Island. No Chesapeake Bay. No Carolinas or Florida. The ocean reaches inland from the White Mountains of New Hampshire to the Poconos, to the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Appalachians.

298A INT MESSIAH

298A

The bombs are strapped to the cabin table, their LEDs blinking 0:00:20. Ready to be started.

BAKER

We're at perigee. Wolf contact in three minutes, forty-five seconds.

Wolf dead ahead, heading for earth.

(CONTINUED)

TANNER

We'll never be closer to home than
we are right now.

They watch the earth below them.

HEFTER (ON COM)

Messiah, we've got some people down
here who want to talk to you...

299 MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

299

Leo and Sarah CRASH out of the woods onto the road, out of
breath. HEAR the thing behind them. Look back --

White foam, DEAFENING noise, planes overhead. People run
out of the forest, the water rising behind them, ROARING
up out of the woods. The Atlantic Ocean now two hundred
miles west of where it was this morning.

300 JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

300

The families of the astronauts, monitors set up in front
of them, Simon's scratchy image. His fiancée, Wendy,
crying.

SIMON (ON MONITOR)

Wendy, if you let this ruin your
life, I'm going to come back to
haunt you.

WENDY

Please, come back and haunt me.

301 ON THE MESSIAH

301

It's Baker's turn, her husband and two daughters.

BAKER

Take care of Daddy for me, okay?
(the little girls nod)
David, you know what I want to
say.

DAVID BAKER (ON MONITOR)

I know.

302 JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

302

Next up is Tulchinsky. He starts in English, switches to
Russian and then a SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATOR takes over.

TULCHINSKY (ON MONITOR)

I was in love with three women in
my life. You know who you are.
(in Russian, translated)
I was stupid, I couldn't decide.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

302 CONTINUED:

302

TULCHINSKY (ON MONITOR) (CONT'D)

Each of you is beautiful and unique
and I didn't want to give that up.
But I loved you, don't ever doubt
that, I loved you all...

303 MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

303

Leo and Sarah are trying to make it to higher ground but
the wave CRESTS over the road. CATCHES them.

LEO

Sarah!

SARAH

Leo!

LIFTS them up as they're carried by the water, TURNED and
TOSSED, ROLLED and BUMPED together.

304 THE MESSIAH

304

Wolf looms very large, dead ahead. Tulchinsky helps Monash
get in place for the camera. Baker's counting down.

BAKER

Wolf contact in two minutes, thirty
seconds.

Hefter's face appears in the Houston monitor, distressed.

HEFTER (ON MONITOR)

Oren, Mariette was up at your folks
place in Utah, we sent a plane for
her, but she isn't here yet.

The other's watch Monash's face. The clock's down to 2:14.

HEFTER

And Fish, your sons are both on
active duty, we couldn't get them
back here in time. I'm sorry. We
tried. Spurgeon, I was wrong.
You were the best man for the job.

Tanner nods, not surprised.

TANNER

Mitch? I want to say good-bye to
Mary. I want to tell her I love
her, and that, ever since we've
been apart, every day, I think
about her.

(then)

I'm coming home, Mary.

(CONTINUED)

304 CONTINUED:

304

BAKER
 Coming up on target 126 miles,
 RDOT .3, 1 degree X, 15 degrees
 Y...

Tanner looks away from the monitor, takes the controls.

BAKER (CONT'D)
 115 miles, .3, 2 degrees X, 13
 Y...

305 SPACE

305

Wolf rolls slowly, the vent clearly ahead of them. The Messiah heads into the mass of coma and rocks.

306 JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

306

Mariette, with the baby, runs into the building, military escorts struggling to keep up.

MARIETTE
 Wait...oh god...wait...!

307 WOLF

307

The comet is nearing the earth's atmosphere.

308 THE MESSIAH

308

They're BANGING around, the worst, downhill four-wheel drive off road experience you can imagine. Tanner tries to hold it on target.

BAKER
 76 miles. Wolf impact in forty-
 five seconds...

MARIETTE (ON MONITOR)
 Oren?... Oren, are you there?!

Monash turns to his wife's voice. Her picture breaking up as they FIGHT their way through the dense coma.

MONASH
 Mariette? I'm here, I can hear
 you.

309 JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

309

The terrifyingly jumpy interior of the ship and Monash on the static filled monitor. Mariette holds up their child.

MARIETTE
 Baby... This is your father.

(CONTINUED)

MONASH

Mariette!

MARIETTE

His name is Oren, I named him after
you.

OREN JR.

Dadda!

HONASH

Oren.

Oren Jr. holds up to the camera a rocket toy he has been
clutching.

(CONTINUED)

We see the image of the baby and the rocket on the Messiah's monitor.

MONASH

What happened?

OREN JR.

Look!

SIMON

(helping out Monash)

He's holding up a little rocket.

MONASH

Oh, what a powerful rocket you have.

The Baby coos and giggles.

SIMON

He's laughing.

MONASH

I can hear him. Mariette...

BAKER

In 40 miles...25 seconds...

She keeps counting. Tanner yells back to Tulchinsky.

TANNER

Prepare to synchronize the nukes.

MONASH

...I'm hugging you both right now...
I'm holding you...

MARIETTE

We're holding you!

Tulchinsky has a makeshift button, wires run from it to the nukes. 0:00:20 frozen on their LEDs.

BAKER

...23...22...21...20...

Tulchinsky hits the button and the nukes begin to count down in perfect unison...19...18...

BAKER (CONT'D)

It's been a pleasure serving with you, Commander.

Tanner doesn't take his eyes off the vent.

(CONTINUED)

310 CONTINUED:

310

TANNER

The honor's all mine, Andy...

MARIETTE

We love you, Oren...

311 JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

311

Mariette's crying, hell, everybody's crying. Monash's face, his hand touching the camera. And then, he's gone. The monitor suddenly filled with STATIC. The baby leans forward trying to touch the screen, mystified.

BABY

...dada...?

312 THE COMET AND THE MESSIAH

312

Wolf begins heating up as the Messiah ROARS into the vent, swallowed whole.

Nothing. Didn't it work? And then, a BLINDING light SHOOTs out... and BOOM. Everything goes WHITE.

313 THE HILLSIDE

313

Leo and Sarah sit up in the middle of the flooded road. The water draining away as the wave recedes. Sarah still has the CRYING baby in her arms.

LEO

...look...

THE SKY: overhead, far away, Wolf and a brilliant light followed by a massive rolling wave of THUNDER that shakes the earth. They walk to the edge of the road, look out over the valley, the ocean slowly receding below.

SARAH

It's going away.

And then all the pieces from the explosion begin HITTING the atmosphere. The greatest meteor shower in history, FIREWORKS in the day brighter than at night. The entire sky filled with color and light, STREAKING, BURNING.

Leo can't speak. Sarah holds Leo, the baby. The baby stares at the sky, the ocean, mesmerized. Begins to LAUGH...

THE END