THE WATCHER ON THE HILL

by

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SPACE

A strange, disc-shaped SPACECRAFT is headed for MARS. When it hits the atmosphere, it leaves a white streak in it's wake like a comet's tail.

THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE

The spacecraft enters the Martian atmosphere and descends at incredible speed.

A large PARACHUTE jettisons from the back to slow it's descent, along with the help of small bursts of braking thrusters around the rim.

The spacecraft's bottom part splits open, and out pops a triangular-shaped LANDER attached to a cable.

EXT - MARTIAN SURFACE - DAY

The spacecraft descends to about fifty feet from the surface. It's braking thrusters stabilize it until it's almost hovering above the surface.

Then the lander breaks away. It bounces end-over-end for hundreds of feet until it rolls to a stop on a sandy Martian plain.

Moments later, the lander opens like the pedals of a flower, revealing a small VEHICLE like a child's radio-controlled toy car. It has four small wheels on either side, tiny cameras front and back, a large solar panel on top and an antenna coming from it's side and bending up.

Decals on the vehicle show a United States flag, a NASA emblem, and the word VENTURE. It is an EXPLORATORY ROVING PROBE sent from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory on Earth to explore Mars.

The ROVER comes to life.

SCREEN - POV - ROVER

A video screen showing the surrounding Martian surface, dry and sandy like the Sahara desert.

Small bits of data flash across the screen signifying that it's systems are up and running.

It snaps a picture.

STILL PHOTO - MARTIAN SURFACE

The view from the rover's front of the Martian desert, with the metallic pedals of the lander in the foreground glistening in the bright sunlight.

EXT - MARTIAN SURFACE - DAY

The rover then rolls off the lander's platform and heads off to begin it's mission.

MONTAGE - SCENES OF MARS

--The rover rides along the rim of a giant crater

--It rides up a hillside in the middle of a sandstorm

--Traveling at night, it encounters one of Mars' moons above the horizon

--The sun, smaller on Mars than on Earth, rises above a mountain range

EXT - MARTIAN SURFACE - DAY

The rover heads into a large canyon. The morning light turns the sandy surface into a glistening gold.

ARIAL VIEW - CANYON

As the camera zooms away to where it's a satellite view from orbit, it shows how big the canyon is. It's enormous, almost ten times the size of the Grand Canyon on Earth.

EXT - CANYON - DAY

As the rover rides through the canyon, superimposed images of what Mars may look like when it's someday colonized begin to appear.

--Cars and trucks traveling down a highway

--People walking through streets of a town

--Down a residential street of houses with children playing and adults gardening, mowing lawns, washing their cars, etc. The rover reaches the base of a cliff, getting ready to go around a corner when it suddenly stops.

SCREEN - POV - ROVER

The screen shows the slope of a nearby hillside. Some rocks are rolling down the slope. Something alive is out there.

Data going across the screen signifies that it's heat sensors have picked up something.

The screen pans from left to right, trying to zero in on the source.

It zooms in on a dark, human-like shape sitting on a boulder. It appears to have it's left arm flexed and up in the air, looking almost comically as if it were scratching it's armpit.

EXT - ROVER - DAY

The rover watches the shape.

SCREEN - POV - ROVER

The shape on the hillside It hasn't moved a muscle.

EXT - ROVER - DAY

The rover snaps a picture of the shape.

STILL PHOTO

The shape, a little blurred.

EXT - ROVER - DAY

The rover turns around and moves further down the canyon floor.

Once it is out of sight beyond a rock cliff, the camera moves in slowly on the hillside where the shape is.

As the image becomes clearer, the shape takes the form of a humanoid, with a large, hairless head and a seemingly humanlike face. It is wearing a robe of some kind. The being lowers it's left arm, gets up from the boulder and walks away.

EXT - CANYON FLOOR - DAY

The rover rides off through the canyon, continuing on with it's programmed mission.

FADE OUT