

KÁRMÁN LINE

Written by

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INT. MAGELLAN SHUTTLE COCKPIT - MORNING

Strapped into their flight seats, Commander HEATHER HAYES (40s), and Pilot MEGAN DAWES (30s), occupy the front seats in the shuttle. Mission Specialist KEVIN AMES (40s), and Flight Engineer DAVID FLANAGAN (30s), sit directly behind them. They all stare straight up toward a CLEAR BLUE SKY.

VOICE (O.S.)

Magellan crew this is Houston.
Sound off on go/no go for launch.

HEATHER

Roger Houston. This is Magellan Shuttle Commander Heather Hayes. I am go for launch.

MEGAN

Houston. This is Pilot Megan Dawes. I am go for launch.

KEVIN

I think we're all ready to ride up here Houston.

VOICE (O.S.)

Let's keep this by the book people.

KEVIN

Uh. Roger that Houston. This is Mission Specialist Kevin Ames. I am go for launch.

DAVID

Houston. This is Flight Engineer David Flanagan. I am go for launch.

VOICE (O.S.)

Roger that Magellan. Thirty more seconds and you'll be on the best ride humankind has ever created.

Turning in her seat, Heather stretches her right arm back toward Kevin and David, fist closed. Megan follows Heather's gesture, their closed fists touching. Kevin and David follow suit until all four closed fists are touching.

HEATHER

Geo-synchronous orbit is at the edge of the Van Allen Belts. That's the farthest we've attempted a satellite repair but we've got this.

(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)

You're all the best I've ever worked with. Let's do our job and get home safely.

No one speaks. The astronauts just nod and grab for the belt restraints holding them hostage in their seats.

EXT. VIEW OF THE LAUNCH PAD

The shuttle is sleek and, even at a distance, its massive. Rockets that rival the famous SATURN V of the NASA Apollo missions sit ready to push the shuttle to the stars.

A large DIGITAL CLOCK in front of the spectator grand stand counts down as the rocket engines roar to life and engulf the shuttle in SMOKE.

Lifting off, the shuttle begins its race toward the stars.

INT. MAGELLAN COCKPIT

Shaking violently, the four astronauts struggle against the g-forces pressing them back into their seats.

Then a loud BANG as the...

EXT. MAGELLAN SHUTTLE

...BOOSTERS from the first stage are BLASTED away from the main rocket and begin falling back to Earth but....

...the main fails to FIRE and shuttle's upward momentum stalls; for an instant, the shuttle and its rocket booster are suspended in mid-air, until they begin falling back to Earth.

INT. MAGELLAN COCKPIT

The g-forces shift, forcing the astronauts forward in the seats, straining their restraints to the breaking point.

MEGAN

Commander. We're in free fall. Second stage booster ignition failure. Should I abort?

HEATHER

Houston we have a problem. Second stage engine failure. Request mission abort.

VOICE (O.S.)
Stand by Magellan.

EXT. MAGELLAN SHUTTLE

The rocket continues to fall, picking up speed as gravity drags it back toward the ground.

INT. MAGELLAN COCKPIT

Hovering over the abort button, Megan's hand reaches toward it when...

...without warning, the entire cockpit goes dark, only the daylight entering through the windows illuminates the cockpit; the blackness of SPACE growing more faint as the shuttle continues its rapid decent.

Suddenly, the system reboots and the Magellan comes back to life.

VOICE (O.S.)
Magellan, you are clear to abort.

As Megan reaches to press the abort button, a massive ROAR engulfs the cockpit and the astronauts are SLAMMED back into their seats as the engines of the shuttle's main rocket fire.

EXT. MAGELLAN SHUTTLE

The rocket pushes the shuttle up and toward the darkness of space at a blinding speed until...

INT. MAGELLAN COCKPIT

...the engines cut off and there is an ominous silence. Weightless now, the astronauts seat restraints keep them from floating away in the zero-g environment.

HEATHER
Houston. Magellan has passed the
Kármán line on our way to low Earth
orbit.

Grabbing their handheld tablets, readouts instantly appear and scroll across each astronaut's screen.

VOICE (O.S.)
Roger that Magellan. Can we get a
vehicle and crew status update.

HEATHER
Stand by Houston.

Turning to the others, Heather speaks with a calm and collected voice.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Status update please.

Examining the readouts, Kevin and David look to one another, seemingly perplexed.

DAVID
Flight status reads green across the board. The system didn't register the reboot or the second stage firing delay.

MEGAN
What about fuel. Can we make geo-synch orbit.

KEVIN
Let me run some calculations.

As Kevin works the numbers on his tablet, a simulation displays on the shuttle's heads up display, showing the shuttle making the intercept and returning to Earth orbit.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
We'll have enough to complete the mission but we'll need two extra orbits to gain enough velocity to reach the satellite.

HEATHER
Houston. Vehicle is fully operable and we have enough remaining fuel for the mission. We will need two extra Earth orbits to gain enough velocity. Can you confirm?

VOICE (O.S.)
Roger that Magellan. That's Our assessment down here as well.

KEVIN
So ladies and gent, is it safe to say we've had our one glitch for the mission?

Smiling, the crew looks to one another and nods in agreement.

HEATHER

Houston. We think we've had our glitch for this mission. We're going to run full system diagnostics and set the auto pilot for intercept.

VOICE (O.S.)

Roger that Magellan. It's been quite a morning. We're glad you are all safe. Rest up. Still a long mission ahead. Houston signing off.

Unbuckling her restraints, Heather FLOATS up and guides herself past the still seated Kevin and David.

HEATHER

Megan. Kevin. Check the entry parameters for satellite intercept. I'll check the cargo bay. Then I want all of you in your bunks.

Pausing, Heather turns back to the other astronauts.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

We handled that incident very professionally. Thank you.

INT. MAGELLAN CREW BUNKS

The lights gain intensity as soft MUSIC permeates the shuttle bunk area. Slowly, the zippered privacy flaps on each bunk are opened as the crew peers out from inside.

DAVID

Well. That was too short.

Megan and the others have floated out of their bunk spaces.

MEGAN

Agreed.

INT. MAGELLAN COCKPIT

Back in their respective seats, the astronauts busily review data from their tablets.

VOICE (O.S.)

Good Evening Magellan. You are on track and about four hours to intercept. Start the mission prep sequence.

HEATHER

Roger Houston and thank you for the gentle wake-up. Magellan out.

Suddenly, three lights ILLUMINATE the space outside the shuttle.

MEGAN

What the hell is that?

Busy looking at the tablet, Heather is oblivious.

HEATHER

What?

Megan grabs and shakes Heather's arm.

MEGAN

(pointing out the window)

That.

The astronauts look and appear mesmerized by the moving lights. Only the appearance of a fourth light snaps them back to reality.

HEATHER

Houston. Can you confirm there is no other traffic out here.

VOICE (O.S.)

Magellan. We may be getting some interference down here. Did you ask about other traffic?

HEATHER

That's correct Houston.

The silence from Houston seems to go on forever.

VOICE (O.S.)

That's a negative Magellan. Just you and the satellite. Is there a problem?

The lights disappear and outside the shuttle windows there is only a deep dark black VOID.

DAVID

Where did the stars go?

HEATHER

Stay calm people. Stand by Houston.

The astronauts are looking out at the void when all the shuttle systems shut down again just before a blinding WHITE LIGHT engulfs the cockpit, forcing the crew to shield their eyes from its intensity.

Then COMPLETE BLACK.

The Magellan's emergency lights activate and all four seats are EMPTY.

INT. DIMLY LIT ROOM

A soft light just barely illuminates the astronauts and their surroundings.

Stripped of their flight suits, their mouths and noses are covered by masks so they can't speak. TENTACLES are attached to their shackled wrists and ankles, holding them suspended in the air, their arms and legs pulled wide apart.

Slowly they wake and realize their situation. Staring at each other, wild eyed and frantic, they all fight against their restraints.

Around them, several SKELETONS of unusual looking creatures remain shackled; two even look HUMAN. They are prisoners in an extraterrestrial dungeon.

In the distance, a deep RED LIGHT grows in intensity and reveals the outline of a humanoid-looking figure...

...just as four separate tentacles descend from the darkness above each astronaut, settling in front of their faces; a fine MIST sprays and they all go limp and pass out.

INT. DIMLY LIT ROOM

The astronauts all awaken, strapped to tables situated in a circle so they can see each other, the masks still covering their faces. Hoses stretch from their bodies up into the darkness above them. Their arms are stretched outward to their sides and strapped down. Their legs are strapped at the ankles.

From the darkness above them, four pairs of METALLIC HANDS descend. One pair of hands grab Heather's right arm at the bicep. A separate set of hands grab Megan's left leg at the thigh. Two more of the hands grab each side of Kevin's head and a final set descend and hover over David's chest.

They are all calm even as Four TENTACLES with POINTED ends descend from the darkness above.

One pointed tentacle settles over Heather's right shoulder. Another settles over Megan's left hip. One settles just left of Kevin's neck and the last one settles above David's STERNUM.

Lasers fires from each of the tentacles, sheer terror visible in the astronauts eyes before everything goes BLACK.

INT. DIMLY LIT ROOM

David awakens to see the metallic hands hovering over the incision in his chest just before they reach in and grab David's ribs; slowly they begin pulling David's chest open.

Jerking at his restraints violently, David stops when a DEEP GUTTURAL NOISE goes off in the room like an AIR HORN.

The hands stop pulling at David's rib cage. The lasers have stopped mid cut and the other astronauts look calm and peaceful, despite the incisions.

A HAND pierces the shadowy veil surrounding David and pulls an oblong metallic-looking piece of metal from his partially open chest.

X-RAY-like scans appear in front of the other astronauts, each showing an outline of the distinctive metallic-looking piece in their chests.

Putting the piece back in David, the hand disappears back into the shadows.

INT. MAGELLAN COCKPIT

The astronauts have been returned to their shuttle seats, their flight suits on as if nothing happened. Slowly they begin to regain consciousness. They sit silently, looking to each other, when the silence is broken.

VOICE (O.S.)
(emergency in the voice)
Magellan crew! This is Houston.
Please respond.

Shaking off the memories, Heather responds.

HEATHER
Uh, Houston. We've experienced an incident. The vehicle seems to be intact. Gives us a second up here.

VOICE (O.S.)
OH! THANK GOD! We thought we lost
you Magellan.

HEATHER
Why's that Houston?

There's a long silence.

VOICE (O.S.)
Magellan. You've been radio silent
for three hours.

Looking to her watch, Heather sees the time. She turns to her crew.

HEATHER
Check your watches. Time?

The fists of their outstretched arms all touch again, watches all stopped at 3:05 and the top center of each astronaut's hand has a circular scar.

Pulling their hands away, the astronauts inspect the scars and upon looking at their palms, they see the same scar; it looks as if they have been crucified.

KEVIN
We've been branded people.

VOICE (O.S.)
Magellan. Are you receiving us?

HEATHER
Roger Houston. Please be advised
that all of our watches have
stopped at three o'five a.m.

VOICE (O.S.)
Magellan. Standby and switch to the
medical frequency.

HEATHER
Roger Houston. Switching to medical
and standing by.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
What the hell just happened?

Visibly shaken, David is nearly hyperventilating.

Grabbing a flight oxygen mask, Kevin tries to put it on David but, upon seeing it, David swats it away.

DAVID

GET THAT AWAY FROM ME! Don't you remember what just happened to us?

Pulling a water bottle from next to her seat, Megan, still visibly shaken, hands it back to David.

MEGAN

David. Please calm down. Drink this and take some deep breaths.

Taking the bottle, David opens it and squeezes, forcing the contents into his mouth.

KEVIN

I don't know what just happened to us. Maybe we experienced some type of temporary dementia from radiation exposure?

HEATHER

Kevin's right. We're at the outer edge of the Van Allen Belts. Less protected from radiation.

David closes the bottle as he vigorously shakes his head no.

DAVID

No. No. No. No. No. I know what I saw.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Heather. A laser was cutting off your right arm! Megan was about to lose her left leg at the hip.

DAVID (CONT'D)

And you! Oh man. That laser in front of you had cut through half your neck.

Laughing uncontrollably, David grabs Kevin's head and shakes it vigorously, looking for signs of the incision.

Kevin grabs at David's hands and restrains them. Refusing to be restrained, David violently pulls away from Kevin's grip.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(animated)

And let's not forget the Terminator like hands pulling my f'ing chest open!

KEVIN

DAVID! Get your shit together, man.

Everyone falls silent.

HEATHER

Let's all just calm down and try to figure this out!

VOICE (O.S.)

Magellan. This is Houston. Do you copy?

HEATHER

Roger Houston. We are standing by.

VOICE (O.S.)

Magellan. Would you like to report an anomaly or incident?

Looking first to Megan, Heather sees her shake her head no. Turning, Heather looks to Kevin and she sees him shake his head no. They all look to David who is just staring out into space, breathing rhythmically.

MEGAN

David. Please. We tell them about this and we will be lab rats for the rest of our lives.

Reluctantly, David sighs and just shakes his head no.

HEATHER

Not at this time Houston. It seems we did have a communication malfunction.

VOICE (O.S.)

Roger that Magellan. If crew and vehicle are still mission capable, proceed with satellite retrieval and repair.

HEATHER

Listen. I believe that if we all remember the same thing, then it really happened but right now we can't change it so let's finish the mission and get home. Then we need to discuss this amongst ourselves, understood?

They all nod in agreement.

EXT. LOG CABIN - DAY

The four astronauts sit silently on the FRONT PORCH, surrounded by thick FOREST. Only NATURE and the soft creaking noise from their ROCKING CHAIRS permeate the air.

HEATHER

So. We're here for a reason. Let's talk. Theories?

The rocking stops as the group look to one another.

MEGAN

I don't think we can explain it. There is no evidence of any of it. Maybe it was an experiment.

KEVIN

Maybe hallucinations brought on by something in the shuttle reacting with the increased radiation?

DAVID

That was not a hallucination. Every time I close my eyes I see what was happening to us and all I want is to forget the whole thing. Is that so wrong?

Looking to his friends, David sees them all shaking their heads no.

HEATHER

No. It's not. I keep seeing you cut open. I saw all of you with those incisions and I felt so calm in the moment.

Standing and looking to her friends, Heather leans against a railing, fresh determination in her eyes.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

I remember all of it in such vivid detail and so now we have a choice. We forget what happened or try to find out the truth.

Just the sounds of nature as they stare silently out at the surrounding forest.

FADE TO BLACK.