

THE MARS EXPERIMENT

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A small soulless room, taken up by a large desk.

On the back wall, a spectacular photo of Earth.

SUPER: NASA HEADQUARTERS, HOUSTON, TX

SUPER: August 1977

Behind the desk sits NASA researcher, PROFESSOR KARL VON BARON (55), slight, glasses and balding, but creepy.

In the visitor's chair sits FBI Agent, CLAY RAMSEY (42), tall, handsome, arrogant, with perfect dark hair.

RAMSEY

Professor. I must stress this is highly confidential. What we're doing here cannot, and I repeat, cannot get out.

The Professor reads through a file in front of him.

PROFESSOR

We've been wanting to do this experiment for quite a while. We understand the importance of secrecy.

Ramsey grabs his arm to get his point truly across.

RAMSEY

If the public find out were putting three Death Row prisoners into a NASA program, all hell will brake loose.

The Professor eyeballs Ramsey.

PROFESSOR

Agent Ramsey. I'll answer your concerns like this. Think of these prisoners as library books. NASA simply wants to read them for two weeks. After that, we'll put 'em back on the shelf.

Ramsey stares at the Professor with repugnance.

RAMSEY  
When's launch date?

PROFESSOR  
Eight days.

RAMSEY  
What? How ya gonna train these bums  
in eight days?

The Professor arrogantly grins, before it disappears from his smug face.

PROFESSOR  
We don't train prisoners.

RAMSEY  
Tell me what you're actually doing.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

THREE PRISONERS, dressed as Astronauts, sit next to each other in pilot seats, all facing the sky, strapped in by handcuffs and leg shackles.

We see the faces of African American, SPIKE (22). Latino American, CARLOS (22). And Caucasian American, RONAN (22).

PROFESSOR (V.O.)  
The prisoners will be secured with  
no possibility of escaping.

LATER

All three prisoners sleep as the spaceship rocks from side to side.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)  
Add to the fact, thirty seconds  
into the flight, a gas will fill  
the cockpit and they'll all fall  
asleep.

EXT. DESERT LIKE TERRAIN - DAY

The three prisoners, wearing helmets, step outside the capsule. They look around at their new surroundings.

PROFESSOR (V.O.)  
Once landing has been completed,  
the cuffs and shackles will  
automatically unlock.

(MORE)

PROFESSOR (V.O) (CONT'D)  
They'll wake up, and exit the  
capsule to their new world.

RAMSEY (V.O)  
And what about food?

INT. CAPSULE - DAY

One of the prisoners opens up their own canvas bag and pulls out a can of baked beans and a bottle of water.

PROFESSOR (V.O)  
They have fourteen days of food and  
water each. They'll be given  
instructions on that.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ramsey climbs out of his chair.

RAMSEY  
What a waste of taxpayers' dollars!

The Professor closes his file. He's slightly annoyed by Agent Ramsey's attitude.

PROFESSOR  
Agent Ramsey. We have over fifty  
thousand prisoners in the US that  
have no possibility of parole. It  
costs thousands per year to house  
each one of them.

The Professor sits back in his chair.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)  
Who knows? One day these prisoners  
might be housed on Mars  
permanently.

RAMSEY  
No government will allow it.

PROFESSOR  
Maybe? These three library books  
aren't human. All uneducated. All  
from broken families. Poor  
neighborhoods. All killers. All  
young men on Death Row.

RAMSEY

Ah! So we're basically dumping them, see how they survive, then picking them up? A social experiment.

PROFESSOR

Correct. Most normal people would be okay. These are far from normal.

The Professor proudly glances down at his file.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

It's worth the experiment.

RAMSEY

(sarcastic)

One small step for man.

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: 10 Days Later

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

Hidden cameras beam back images of the prisoners shown on different angles of the TV screens, spread across the wall.

The Professor sits and takes notes.

EXT. DESERT LIKE TERRAIN - DAY

Spike and Ronan walk casually together up a slight hill, not far from the capsule.

SPIKE

Thought Mars would be different to this.

RONAN

Yeah, I guess. I know nothing 'bout space.

SPIKE

Me neither, man. Just sayin'.

Ronan notices Carlos walking to another hill on the opposite side to them.

RONAN

What's with the Mexican? Doesn't say much.

SPIKE

Yeah. Noticed that. Keeps to himself.

RONAN

Picked the right place.

Both men laugh.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Professor has a curious look on his face, as he studies Carlos.

EXT. DESERT LIKE TERRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Carlos treks further away from the capsule. He walks up and over the hill, now out of sight from the other two prisoners.

ON SCREEN - CARLOS' POV (hidden camera in helmet)

Carlos observes the far horizon. He pauses.

He looks up at the bright sun. He stares at the ground, before looking back at the sun.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Professor sits forward. What's Carlos up to?

ON SCREEN - CARLOS' POV

The screen starts shaking. Suddenly the image stops at ground level, with Carlos walking away.

EXT. DESERT TERRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Carlos walks further away without his helmet on. He turns around and looks back at his helmet.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Professor reaches over to a phone and quickly punches out a phone number.

PROFESSOR

Ramsey. We may have a problem?

EXT. DESERT TERRAIN - NIGHT

A still night. Millions of stars light up the clear sky.

INT. CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

The three prisoners, with helmets on, sleep in narrow makeshift beds.

Carlos carefully lifts his head up and observes Spike and Ronan.

INT. OPERATIONS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Agent Ramsey dumps a file in front of the Professor.

PROFESSOR  
What's this?

The Professor opens up the file.

RAMSEY  
I spoke to Carlos' fifth grade  
teacher, Miss Calloway. Nice lady.

Agent Ramsey leans up against the table, back to the screens.

RAMSEY (CONT'D)  
She said Carlos was very shy.  
Struggled to make friends. However,  
he did have a passion.

The Professor lifts his head from the file.

PROFESSOR  
Oh no!

RAMSEY  
Correct. He excelled in geography  
and astrology. In fact, Miss  
Calloway said he wanted to be a  
astronaut. He was fascinated by the  
planets.

The Professor sits back in his seat, deflated.

RAMSEY (CONT'D)  
We better move quickly. I'll get a  
team organized now.

Ramsey turns around at the screens. They've all gone black.

RAMSEY (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

The Professor looks up from the file.

PROFESSOR  
Shit! He's worked it out.

The Professor and Agent Ramsey storm out of the room.

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: 4 Hours Later

EXT. DESERT TERRAIN - NIGHT

EIGHT NAVY SEALS, carrying guns, exit a Chinook helicopter and surround the capsule.

With precision, SEAL #1, jimmy's the lock. The SEAL LEADER, hand signals SEAL #2 and SEAL #3 to enter. They turn their flashlights on.

INT. CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

The flashlights reveal Spike and Ronan lying dead on their makeshift beds. Their throats have been cut.

The flashlights moves over to Carlos.

All that remains is ripped up pieces of his jumpsuit.

Carlos is gone.

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: 16 Days Later

INT. DESERT TERRAIN - MORNING

Carlos, with a beard and dusty face, sleeps on a makeshift bed, with his modified helmet next to him.

The three bags of food and water sit tied up on a makeshift sleigh, made from one of the capsule's paneling. Ropes from the parachute hang off it.

A subtle sound wakes him up.

He climbs up to his knees and carefully listens.

He makes his way up a slight hill, slowly dropping to his stomach.

He hesitates.

Finally, he crawls to the top, before curiously looking over.

In the near distance, a herd of kangaroos grazing in the dry Australian outback, as the sun climbs out of the eastern horizon.

Carlos rolls on his back and looks up at the sky.

CARLOS  
Mama, I'm free.

FADE OUT