

THE ASTRAL PLANE

by

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FADE IN

EXT. SPACE - IN ORBIT OVER A PLANET

The CELESTE, an interstellar spacecraft is in low orbit over an Earth analog planet. The craft looks worse for wear. Most markings are illegible and appear as ancient runes.

The planet looks terrestrial and habitable except for the swirling masses of enormous surface storms.

Moments later, a winged shuttle is launched from the underside of the craft. The shuttle's name ASTRAL is visible as it arcs towards the surface.

INT. ASTRAL - CONTINUOUS

At the helm is WILL (45), Mission Commander. Seated at a workstation, just behind and to his right, is DEAN (30), Mission Specialist. They are in flight suits with comm-linked skull-caps.

WILL

Celeste Control, we are green. On track and five-by-five.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Copy that, Astral. Best we figure, we'll be incommunicado as soon as you enter the outer atmosphere. Storm or no storm, there's an anomaly that we just can't seem to overcome.

WILL

Roger that. We'll reconfigure comms on entry. If you gents would be so kind as to ---

DISPATCH (V.O.)

--- work our magic from here? Bet on it, Commander. When you find the others, let them know that we're doing---

(garbled)

everything---

WILL

Control? Do you copy?

Silence. Will and Dean trade a sideways glance.

DEAN

And there you have it.

WILL
Yep, we're on our own. We got this,
right, Dean?

DEAN
Yes, sir. By the book.

Will sighs.

WILL
Right. Protocol. Atmospheric
testing, adjust our meds, confirm
comms, and Bob is your Uncle.

Dean calculates telemetry on a touch-screen.

DEAN
I figure, with minimal buffeting,
we should be able to touch down
within a kilometer of Commander
SHAW's mission.

WILL
I'm going to hold you to that.

DEAN
Like I said, we got this.

The shuttle begins to shake and the blackness of space in
the view ports begin to glow cherry red.

Will taps his head and Dean nods.

They put on their helmets, tighten their harnesses and brace
for landing.

EXT. ASTRAL - CONTINUOUS

The shuttle noses up as it plummets towards the planet. The
underside glows and begins to smoke.

The surface comes into view. The burnt-orange buttes are
surrounded by an endless cracked plain.

INT. ASTRAL - CONTINUOUS

Will and Dean frantically push buttons and flip switches as
the shuttle continues to drop.

WILL
We're coming in hot, Dean. I'm not
so sure we'll maintain hull
integrity.

DEAN
 Roger that, sir. Checking
 atmosphere now and adjusting meds
 for--- what the hell?

WILL
 What is it?

DEAN
 Readings are anomalous. Twenty-one
 percent oxygen, which is good, but
 the rest is a mixture of
 unidentifiable gases.

WILL
 Do what you can and do it quick.
 I'm switching to manual.

DEAN
 Adjusting for density...airborne
 particulates...

WILL
 Brace for impact in ten, nine,
 eight---

DEAN
 ...Got it!

WILL
 ---five, four, three, two---

As Dean prepares a compressed gas syringe, the shuttle
 touches down and the meds fly from his grip.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - CONTINUOUS

The Astral hits hard and the landing gear buckles. It skids
 sideways and begins to roll down a ravine.

As it tumbles, the hatch opens and Dean is thrown from the
 shuttle into a rock outcrop. He is a mangled, bloody, mess.

The shuttle continues to roll until it comes to a rest,
 belly-side up, at the bottom of a ravine.

INT. ASTRAL - CONTINUOUS

Will hangs upside-down, motionless, by his harness. His
 helmet visor is shattered.

Moments later, Will wakes and begins to violently cough. He
 takes off the helmet to reveal his purple-hued face.

Will pounds on the five-point harness buckle on his chest and drops to the ground.

He searches frantically on hands and knees, finds the syringe, and jams it into the side of his neck.

After a series of long deep breaths, his color returns to normal. He rests on his knees with his head hung low.

DEAN

Will! You made it!

Will looks up to see Dean in the hatch opening.

WILL

Wha--? How? Are you okay?

Dean looks down and pats his chest and arms.

DEAN

Yeah, I'm good! Come on. I'll help you out. Wait until you see this.

Will shuffles slowly to the opening and peers outside.

EXT. PLANET SURFACE - CONTINUOUS

The barren ravine slowly transforms into a bustling market lined with lush plants and palm trees.

People begin to appear dressed in robes and shawls with baskets of textiles, fruits and vegetables.

Dean helps Will from the hatch and supports him as he stands on shaky legs.

WILL

What is this?

DEAN

No idea. I thought it was an oasis and walked into the bazaar. I don't get it.

As they stare, a shout comes from within the crowd. Shuttle Pilot SHAW, a tall black man, waves his arms.

SHAW

Will! Dean!

Will and Dean are shocked to see Shaw.

WILL

Shaw?

DEAN

Shaw! You're okay!

Dean bear-hugs Shaw.

SHAW

Yeah, though I was hoping the
CELESTE wouldn't send a rescue
party.

Dean isn't listening. He's ecstatic, almost hysterical.

DEAN

Yeah, yeah! What about the others?

SHAW

They're all here.

WILL

Why wouldn't you want to be
rescued?

Shaw looks to Will with hesitation.

SHAW

You, though. You're just hurt,
aren't you.

WILL

And what do you mean by that?

Shaw turns and gestures to the crowds where another Pilot,
LIN, a short Asian woman smiles and waves.

SHAW

You can see all this?

DEAN

Of course we can. Why wouldn't
we---

SHAW

I know YOU can. It's the Commander
that surprises me. He's only
wounded. You...Dean, are dead.

WILL

What the hell are you talking
about?

SHAW

Look. Up there.

Shaw points up and beyond the palm trees to a rock outcrop. The crumpled body of Dean is at the base.

Dean staggers, drops to his knees and GASPS. Shaw puts a hand on his shoulder.

SHAW

It's okay. I'm dead too. We're all dead.

WILL

I'm not.

SHAW

Not yet, sir.

Will holds his arm close to his side.

WILL

These are not life threatening wounds and I don't plan on staying here.

SHAW

When we landed, we took our meds and stepped out into a barren wasteland. We didn't see anything until we passed.

Shaw points to Will.

SHAW

You, on the other hand, can see them...and us. Why?

Will shakes his head.

WILL

Maybe...It was a while before I took my meds and had quite a few lung-fulls of this atmosphere before the injection.

SHAW

Could be, but the thing is, the meds don't last. I'm sorry, sir, you ARE going to get sick and die.

As if on queue, Will's face begins to turn purple. He grabs at his throat and starts to choke.

Shaw comforts Will and helps him sit by the shuttle.

SHAW

It's okay, Will. I'm sorry, but
there's nothing we can do. Trust
me. It'll be okay.

Will turns a deeper shade of purple and grabs Shaw by the shirt collar. Shaw smiles and fades from view.

He turns to see Dean, Lin, trees, and market disappear. Nothing left but a sandy ravine.

Will takes his last gasp, convulses, and dies in a barren wasteland of a nameless planet in space.

FADE TO BLACK