

MAN ON A MISSION

Based on a true story

Screenplay by

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EXT. NASSAU BAY, TEXAS - EARLY EVENING (1973)

We are looking at the entrance gate to the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center.

TITLE:

"NASSAU BAY, TEXAS - 1973"

Moving up the street from the Space Center through a housing community recently built for the families of astronauts and other NASA employees...

We MOVE IN on the Garriott house, where-

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

YOUNG RICHARD Garriott (12, oddly brilliant, a unique mix of straight-laced and eccentric) is entering the family room.

Resting silently on a sofa table is a NASA-provided "squawk box" radio receiver.

Young Richard flips the power switch on the box but nothing happens. He notices that the power cord isn't plugged in. The instant he plugs the cord into the wall outlet-

The receiver starts transmitting the unfiltered RADIO FEED between NASA and the Skylab mission crew currently up in space:

NASA (OVER RADIO)
Skylab, can we get an update?

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
Space walk proceeding A-OK,
Houston.

Richard freezes: that's his dad's voice, direct from space.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO) (CONT'D)
Have deployed twin-pole polar shield on ATM panel per Particle Collection S149 experiment. With shield deployed, should now be able to collect material from interplanetary dust particles on prepared surfaces suitable for studying impact phenomena.

NASA (OVER RADIO)
 Sounds pretty darn exciting,
 Skylab. Good work to you and
 Lousma, Garriott.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
 Appreciate it, Houston. Wrapping
 up and starting to think about
 lunch, if Bean hasn't eaten it all
 while we've been out here.

Richard smiles at his Dad's humor.

NASA (OVER RADIO)
 Fish or chicken?

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
 Chicken. Fish was breakfast.

NASA (OVER RADIO)
 Sounds like a feast. Bon appetit,
 Skylab.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
 Thanks, Houston, and our
 compliments to the chef.

The squawk box falls silent. Richard stares at it, his
 imagination on fire.

He gets up...

EXT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - DAY

Steps out into the front yard. Turns his gaze up to the
 sky...

And all that lies beyond.

INT. SKYLAB - SPACE - (1973 NASA VIDEO FOOTAGE)

In a high-ceilinged room of SKYLAB space station, OWEN
 GARRIOTT, wearing flightsuit and helmet, is preparing to test
 a prototype jet-pack.

Using the arm-extension joystick, he lifts off the ground,
 hovers, maneuvers left, right, higher, lower...

ANNOUNCER (ON VIDEO)

During his two months aboard SKYLAB as part of the SKYLAB 3 mission along with Commander Alan Bean and pilot Jack Lousma, science pilot Dr. Owen Garriott flies a prototype of NASA's Manned Maneuvering Unit. Dr. Garriott is satisfied enough with the flight test to declare this particular piece of space technology a promising success.

Owen steers himself back down to the ground.

EXT. OCEAN - DAY (1973 NASA VIDEO FOOTAGE)

The SKYLAB 3 command module floats (with stabilizing balloons) on the surface of the ocean, a rubber emergency raft tied up beside it.

ANNOUNCER (ON VIDEO)

September 24th, 1973: SKYLAB 3 achieves successful splashdown.

The hatch at the top of the command module opens...

Owen Garriott, Alan Bean, and Jack Lousma climb out, drenched with sweat but smiling and shooting thumbs-ups to the camera.

ANNOUNCER (ON VIDEO) (CONT'D)

Astronauts Owen Garriott, Alan Bean, and Jack Lousma climb out of the command module, safely back on earth. Mission accomplished!

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

Young Richard stands in the doorway watching with a certain degree of awe-

His dad reading the newspaper in the recliner chair by the window.

Back on earth, Owen Garriott (42, trim and intense in an odd, super-logical kind of way) looks ... bored and a little lost.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Yes, Richard?

YOUNG RICHARD

(tongue-tied)

Nothing.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Nothing's not an answer. It's
nothing.

YOUNG RICHARD
You're right.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Right is a direction, the opposite
of left. Right is an angle.

RICHARD
I mean correct.

Owen goes back to his newspaper. Young Richard keeps
watching him.

EXT. NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Tourist families in cars and RVs follow the prescribed road
among massive sandstone cliffs and scrub brush.

WHILE FAR OFF THE BEATEN PATH-

We find the Garriott clan - Young Richard, dad Owen, older
brother ROBERT GARRIOTT (17) and mom HELEN GARRIOTT (40, a
somewhat eccentric artist and housewife) - all dressed for
field work and outfitted with test tubes, trowels, shovels,
small hammers and other geological implements.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Remember, Garriotts - potential
discovery is everywhere. These
rocks right here could very well be
meteorite fragments. So what do we
do? Richard?

YOUNG RICHARD
Take samples and test for
ourselves.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Correct. The goal is always to add
to the base of human knowledge.
(checks watch)
Oh-nine hundred. One hour till
water break. Let's get to it.

They get to work...

Richard cracks open a good-size rock with a geologist's
hammer.

He studies the inside of the rock, which in fact looks strange, like it might actually be a piece of a real meteorite.

He moves the piece of rock closer then farther away - as if, to his surprise, he can't quite get it into clear focus.

INT. NASA MEDICAL EXAM ROOM - DAY

We find Young Richard in the NASA medical wing, wearing nothing but his underwear, near the end of his annual physical with a NASA DOCTOR.

NASA DOCTOR
Well, you're healthy enough.

The doctor hands Richard an eye occluder.

NASA DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Let's just do a quick eye exam before we wrap up. Put this over your left eye and take a look at that chart over there. Let's start with the fourth line.

Richard places the occluder over his left eye and attempts to read the eye chart.

But it's a struggle...

YOUNG RICHARD
...D ...P? ...B? Yeah, B.

NASA DOCTOR
Try the line above.

YOUNG RICHARD
...F? E? No, F. After that... Z?

The doctor's demeanor has turned gently compassionate.

NASA DOCTOR
That'll do, son. You can get dressed now.

INT. NASA DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Dressed, Young Richard sits across from the doctor.

NASA DOCTOR
Richard, your eyesight's sub-optimal. You need eyeglasses.

YOUNG RICHARD

Okay.

Richard is perfectly calm. The doctor realizes that the kid may not understand what the failed eye test means for his future.

NASA DOCTOR

I know you're father's been to space.

YOUNG RICHARD

He was on SkyLab for 60 days. That's a world record.

NASA DOCTOR

It would be only natural if you had hopes of following in his footsteps one day.

YOUNG RICHARD

I sure do.

NASA DOCTOR

But you understand that NASA has to have higher physical standards for people who fly in space than for ordinary personnel?

YOUNG RICHARD

Of course - they're astronauts.

NASA DOCTOR

Exactly. So if an astronaut couldn't physically function up there for whatever reason, that could be catastrophic. It could put the entire mission in jeopardy.

YOUNG RICHARD

No offense, sir, but that's pretty obvious.

NASA DOCTOR

Your father never explained any of this to you?

YOUNG RICHARD

Any of what?

NASA DOCTOR

Son, I'm afraid NASA is never going to let you go to space.

Young Richard feels as if someone just punched him.

YOUNG RICHARD
What are you talking about?

NASA DOCTOR
Not with compromised eyesight. Not
if you need eyeglasses. Never.
Not going to happen.

Over the next few seconds we watch Young Richard tip over the edge - from shock to despair to desperate fury, blinking back tears.

YOUNG RICHARD
You're not even a real eye doctor.

NASA DOCTOR
I don't make the rules, son, NASA
does. I'm sorry.

YOUNG RICHARD
(explodes)
You're a goddamn liar, that's what
you are!

EXT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - DAY

Behind the Garriott house we find, incongruously for such an orderly neighborhood...

An abandoned lot, where the uncut grass stands almost six feet high.

Now we're looking down on a hidden clearing hacked into the center of the very tall grass...

And in the middle of this secret Fortress of Solitude, Young Richard lies curled on the ground in the fetal position.

His dreams of becoming an astronaut like his dad, crushed.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Bathroom door closed, Young Richard takes brand-new contact lenses and bottles of solution out of a pharmacy bag and sets them on the sink.

He stares at them with hatred.

Awkwardly he balances a contact lens on his fingertip. He tilts his head and tries to place it over his eyeball...

YOUNG RICHARD

Aggh!

He grabs one of the bottles and shoots contact lens solution all over the eye.

Stands there: squinting one-eyed at himself in the mirror, face dripping wet.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - OWEN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Young Richard, his eyes irritated by the new contact lenses, faces his dad across his dad's desk. Behind Owen Garriott are an elaborate Ham radio set and several newfangled gizmos (prism-reversal goggles; photo-multiplier tube; prototype of Polaroid's first camera) that he's testing for NASA.

Richard's spirits are so low he can hardly keep his head up or speak. His father doesn't seem to notice.

Owen is holding up the chunk of rock that Richard earlier found in the National Park.

OWEN GARRIOTT

What makes you think this comes from an actual meteorite?

YOUNG RICHARD

You said yourself there could've been pieces of meteorite there.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Possibility is the sister of speculation until proven otherwise. What lab tests did you run it through?

YOUNG RICHARD

I didn't.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Let me get this straight: You did not do any testing of any kind to try to prove what it is?

YOUNG RICHARD

Right.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Right is a direction...

YOUNG RICHARD

Correct, I did not do any testing.

OWEN GARRIOTT
So what are you basing your
conclusion on?

YOUNG RICHARD
My gut.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Your gut.

YOUNG RICHARD
Right. I mean correct.

Unimpressed, Owen sets the chunk of rock on his desk and turns his back on Richard: the meeting is over. He picks up the pair of prism-reversal goggles (they show everything upside-down) he's been testing for NASA - these, at least, have some scientific value.

Richard stares at his father's back as if he's just been slapped.

OWEN GARRIOTT
You've got to do better, Richard.

When there's no response from Richard, Owen turns around. He's wearing the prism-reversal goggles.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
(confused)
Hm... that's odd. These reverse-
prism lenses must be...

Owen reaches out uncertainly, touches Richard's cheek.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
Are you *crying*?

Richard doesn't answer; he *is* crying. Irritated, Owen pulls off the goggles.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
Look, you can still run some tests
on the rock sample.

YOUNG RICHARD
It's not that.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Then what the hell are you crying
about?

YOUNG RICHARD

The NASA doctor said I can't go to space. I can't become an astronaut. Ever.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Why would he say that?

Richard can't bring himself to say it.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)

Well?

YOUNG RICHARD

I'm near-sighted. I failed the eye test.

A pause.

OWEN GARRIOTT

I see.

Only the quietness of Owen's voice suggests the depths of his personal disappointment.

Richard wipes his eyes.

YOUNG RICHARD

I'm sorry, Dad.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Not everyone's meant to go to space, Richard.

Richard stands there, his dad's words sinking in...

As an angry, ferocious determination starts to grow in his heart.

He grabs the chunk of rock and stalks from the room.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS - EVENING

Richard stalks away from his father's office.

Helen is waiting for him at the end of the hallway, full of sympathy.

Richard hurries past her, up the stairs-

SLAMS the door to his bedroom.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY (1987)

A packed crowd of gaming, fantasy and sci-fi fanatics dressed in a wild array of character costumes eagerly faces an empty stage.

We are in the middle of the inaugural DragonCon convention.

TITLE:

"FIRST DRAGONCON CONVENTION - 1987"

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now, ladies and gentlemen,
gamers and rockers, Klingons and
droids, allow me to present
DragonCon's main attraction, the
man you've all been waiting for,
the father of role-playing computer
games, creator of the mind-blowing
Ultima series, including his latest
masterpiece Ultima 5, Lord British
himself... Richard... Garriott!

To massive APPLAUSE/CHEERING, adult RICHARD (26, dressed in the full eccentric costume of a medieval Lord in a mystical land, including homemade silver earrings and necklace) bounds onto the stage, strides to the mic and bellows:

RICHARD

Lord British welcomes you to
Britannia!

The crowd goes nuts.

When things calm down a little, a costumed FAN yells out:

FAN 1

Lord British, where's the Avatar?

RICHARD

The Avatar, good sir, is coming!

And then a second costumed FAN, standing next to the first:

FAN 2

When? When is he coming?

RICHARD

Soon.

FAN 1

Will he save Britannia?

This should be Richard's big moment - massive success, computer-game god - but he doesn't seem to be entirely enjoying himself.

RICHARD
How the hell should I know?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL COMPUTER ROOM - DAY (1977)

Now it's ten years earlier and TEENAGE RICHARD (ages 16-21) is typing BASIC on a teletype machine in his public high school's (early-model) "computer" room.

TITLE:

"HOUSTON, TEXAS - 1977"

As he types, the machine automatically punches holes in a paper tape.

A portable RADIO plays Debby Boone's saccharine movie love song "You Light Up My Life - which Richard unconsciously hums along to while he works.

Finished coding, he dials a number on a rotary phone. He places the telephone receiver into a cradle on a second teletype machine and quickly runs the punched paper tape through that.

The song on the radio ends.

D.J. (OVER RADIO)
That makes a new record ten consecutive weeks at number one on the 1977 Billboard Hot 100 for Debby Boone and "You Light Up My Life."

A COMMERCIAL for Juicy Fruit gum comes on. A printer spits out a sheet of paper...

Richard grabs it. It says "HELLO WORLD."

He smiles to himself: he's just written his first computer program.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA - COMPUTER BUILDING - DAY

Teenage Richard walks across campus carrying a duffle bag and a copy of "The Lord of the Rings."

At the entrance to the computer building, he looks up to read the banner overhead:

"Welcome Summer Computer Campers."

INT. COMPUTER BUILDING - DAY

He walks into a large room where teenage computer geeks in odd medieval costumes are gathered around a table.

He stands observing until one of them finally notices him.

GEEK 1

Hi. Who are you?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Hello.

Some unflattering chuckles around the room.

GEEK 1

He said "hello."

TEENAGE RICHARD

Correct. Hello.

GEEK 1

That's weird. Nobody from around here says "hello." We say "hi" like normal people.

GEEK 2

He must be from Britain. That's how they talk over there - "hullo." He's got kind of an accent.

TEENAGE RICHARD

I'm from outside Houston.

GEEK 1

We'll call you "British."

Richard considers for a moment - *British?* Hm... We see the beginnings of an idea forming in his head.

TEENAGE RICHARD

What are you guys doing?

GEEK 2

What's it look like? Dungeons & Dragons. Know how to play, British?

TEENAGE RICHARD

I do. And it's "Lord British,"
actually.

Richard takes a seat at the table.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - CLOSET - NIGHT (THREE YEARS LATER)

We're in a large bedroom closet that's been ingeniously home-outfitted as a computer programming cave...

TITLE:

"THREE YEARS LATER"

Teenage Richard sits hunched over an Apple II on a makeshift computer desk, slugging Mountain Dew to stay awake...

Writing code for his first serious role-playing computer game.

He's changed his look: he's now dressed in a homemade medieval "Lord British" costume (prototype of the one we've already seen at DragonCon.)

EXT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 1") - DAY - (COMPUTER ANIMATED)

And now we're inside the computer game that Richard's writing.

The computer animation graphics here are early-80s Apple II, primitive and heavily pixilated.

A computer-animated man dressed in medieval fantasy garb stands before the black entrance to a computer-animated cave. Despite the rough computer graphics, the man somehow looks like Richard. But his character name is LORD BRITISH, ruler of Britannia.

Computer-animated Lord British seems to be deciding whether or not to enter the cave.

Now an arrow cursor above his head clicks open a menu-

Then clicks on "Question"-

A question appears in red letters above the man's head:

"Lord British, how did you get here, and where are you going?"

INT. RICHARD'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Back in the programming cave, we find Teenage Richard asleep with his head on the keyboard.

His face tells us he's having a very vivid dream.

EXT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 1") - DAY - (COMPUTER ANIMATED)

Back in the world of Richard's computer game, computer-animated Lord British is still standing before the entrance to the computer-animated cave, trying to decide whether or not to enter.

An arrow cursor above his head clicks open a menu, then clicks on "Question"-

Which appears in red letters above Lord British's head:

"Lord British, what do you see?"

Now the cursor clicks on "Answer"-

And above Lord British's head appears:

"I see more than before, Avatar."

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - HELEN'S ART STUDIO - DAY

Teenage Richard stands next to his mother in her home art studio. On the bottom two-thirds of the paper Helen has drawn a picture of:

A steep, forbidding stone path leading up to a castle-like kingdom with a pale planet floating behind it.

Now above the drawing in fiery lettering, she finishes illustrating:

"ULTIMA 1: The Original created by LORD BRITISH."

Mother and son take a few moments to appreciate the cover art for his first major computer game.

HELEN GARRIOTT
What do you think?

TEENAGE RICHARD
It's cool, mom.

HELEN GARRIOTT

Yes, it's pretty darn cool, isn't it? Almost as cool as the game you've created.

INT. COPY SHOP - DAY

Teenage Richard oversees a Xerox machine spitting out copies of his mom's cover illustration for "Ultima 1."

He notices a little girl in the shop with her mother, staring at the cover art.

TEENAGE RICHARD

What do you think?

The girl tilts her head to get a better angle-

Then makes a "so-so" face.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Teenage Richard, Helen, and Robert sit at the kitchen table stuffing Ziploc bags with floppy disks, instructions, and Helen's cover art as-

Robert (older, logical, business-minded, far more straight-laced than Richard) checks off each finished game on a ledger.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Our cost is twenty dollars per unit. Twenty units, our gross capital outlay is four hundred bucks.

TEENAGE RICHARD

That's more than I've made at Computerland all summer.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Let's just pray somebody buys it.

INT. COMPUTERLAND STORE - DAY

ANGLE ON: A young, geeky Computerland customer deliberating over a rack of Ziplocked copies of "Ultima 1."

He tentatively reaches out his hand...

REVEAL: ...Teenage Richard (wearing a Computerland employee shirt) and Robert watching from another aisle.

TEENAGE RICHARD
(under his breath)
Come on, you know you want it...

The customer takes a copy of the game-

TEENAGE RICHARD & ROBERT GARRIOTT
Yes!

The brothers high-five. The customer looks over-

Finds Richard and Robert intensely studying a shelf of floppy drives.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - EVENING

The Garriott family sits watching the nightly news on TV. Owen is in his recliner, highly focused on the broadcast.

HELEN GARRIOTT
Richard, did you tell your father
about your day at Computerland?

Helen is clearly trying to get him to share his good news, but Teenage Richard brushes her off with a quick shake of the head. He looks at-

His dad, completely absorbed by the newscast.

As Robert stares unhappily at their mother.

HELEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
I know you were there too, Robert.
But it's Richard's game. He
created it.

ON TV Richard notices-

Video footage of the Space Shuttle Columbia.

Then over the footage a photograph of astronaut John Young appears.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

In other news, NASA has announced that astronaut John Young, commander of the Apollo 16 mission and the ninth man in history to walk on the moon, has been chosen to command the first space shuttle mission in the spring of next year.

Owen switches off the TV.

HELEN GARRIOTT

John must be tremendously excited.

OWEN GARRIOTT

(unhappy)

That'll make five spaceflights for him.

The phone RINGS. Richard grabs it as if he's been waiting for the call.

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO PHONE)

Garriott residence.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (OVER PHONE)

Richard Garriott, please.

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO PHONE)

This is Richard.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (OVER PHONE)

Is this "Lord British," the mad genius behind the computer game "Ultima 1"?

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO PHONE)

Lord British is my avatar, good sir. What may we do for you?

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (OVER PHONE)

Lord British, I'm with California Pacific Computer Company. We think you've created the next frontier in gaming and we'd like to fly you out for a meeting ASAP. Sound cool to you?

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO PHONE)

Lord British and I accept your invitation.

Thrilled, Richard glances around-

Finds his family staring at him - all except his dad.

EXT. CALIFORNIA REGIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

Teenage Richard (medievally dressed in his "Lord British" costume) stands outside baggage claim with his overnight bag. People give him curious looks.

He's not sure who he's expecting to pick him up, but it's definitely not-

This COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (20s) screeching to a stop in front of him in a brand-new DeLorean sports car.

Richard awkwardly climbs in with his bag on his lap. He's still trying to get the gull-wing passenger door closed when the car zooms off.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - DAY

The exec leads Teenage Richard through a thoroughly decked-out bachelor pad.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC
 We're going to price our version of your game at thirty-four. You'll get five dollars for every copy sold. We're estimating thirty thousand units in the first six months, which translates to 150K for you. You good with those numbers?

Richard nods. He's never had any money of his own, or seen a place this fancy.

The exec stops before a gaudy chest of drawers.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (CONT'D)
 Then let's fucking celebrate, shall we?

The exec pulls open a drawer filled with-

Plastic-wrapped bricks of cocaine.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (CONT'D)
 Welcome to the glorious future of the world, Lord British.

INT. LUXURY APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teenage Richard sits with the exec at a table covered with tequila bottles and cocaine.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC
Hold on a sec, lemme get this
straight.

The exec pauses to do another line of blow.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC (CONT'D)
You're saying the Gem of
Immortality makes the evil wizard
Mondain invulnerable, so "The
Avatar" has to locate a time
machine, travel back in time to
Britannia - ruled by the benevolent
Lord British - and kill Mondain
before he can create the Gem, then
shatter the incomplete artifact?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Yep.

The exec throws back another shot of tequila.

COMPUTER COMPANY EXEC
That is so awesomely fucked up.

He offers Richard the rolled bill to do a line.

TEENAGE RICHARD
No thanks, I'm good.

EXT. NASSAU BAY, TEXAS - GARRIOTT HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

Owen, returning home from NASA, pulls the family car into the driveway.

He notices an uncoiled garden hose at the side of the house, disturbing his sense of order.

He coils the hose perfectly and hangs it on its hook at the side of the house. Looking along the house to the abandoned lot behind, he notices...

Richard's overnight bag.

EXT. HIDDEN CLEARING - EARLY EVENING

Owen parts the tall grass and steps into the hidden clearing.

Teenage Richard's there, on his back, staring at the sky.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Richard. What are you doing here?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Hello, Dad. Not much.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Is this something you do often?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Sometimes.

OWEN GARRIOTT

How was your trip?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Okay. The company wants to publish my computer game.

Owen looks at the grass as if just realizing how tall it is.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Is the lawnmower broken?

TEENAGE RICHARD

No. I'll make \$150,000 in the first six months.

Owen pauses unhappily, and Richard sees it was a mistake to mention the money.

OWEN GARRIOTT

That's a lot of money for a video game.

TEENAGE RICHARD

It's not a video game, Dad. It's a role-playing computer game. They're different.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Games are games.

TEENAGE RICHARD

I get letters from people who play "Ultima." They think it's more than a game. They feel like they're literally stepping through the story into another world.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Those the same folks who dress up in knight costumes when it's not Halloween? Well, I suppose the money will come in handy when you decide to start your real career. See you at dinner.

Owen starts to walk away, stops.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)

This morning I learned I'm going to be launching on the next shuttle mission.

Owen turns and disappears through the tall grass.

Alone in the clearing, Richard starts ripping up the grass in frustration.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - OWEN'S OFFICE - DAY (SIX MONTHS LATER)

Teenage Richard, Helen, and Robert crowd around the Ham radio in Owen's office.

The radio is on, STATIC cutting in and out as Richard twists the dial.

He hits the right frequency and suddenly-

HIS DAD'S VOICE breaks through loud and clear:

OWEN GARRIOTT (ON RADIO)

This is W5LFL in Space Shuttle Columbia. W5LFL in Columbia. Orbiting the earth at an altitude of 135 nautical miles. We're passing over the U.S. West Coast.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Holy shit, it's Dad.

HELEN GARRIOTT

Richard, talk to him.

But Richard is speechless, overwhelmed with awe of his dad and... envy.

OWEN GARRIOTT (ON RADIO)

This is W5LFL in Columbia. Earth, can you read me? Over.

HELEN GARRIOTT
 (to Richard)
 Talk to him. It would make him so
 proud to hear your voice.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
 Why Richard? I'm five years older.

HELEN GARRIOTT
 Richard's the one who knows how to
 work the radio.

Robert glares at Richard. Reluctantly, Richard picks up the
 handset.

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO HANDSET)
 W5LFL, this is G4TGL Nassau Bay,
 Texas, loud and clear. Do you
 read? Over.

OWEN GARRIOTT (ON RADIO)
 I read you loud and clear, G4TGL.
 I believe this makes the first Ham
 radio space-to-earth connection in
 history. Hello, Richard. Over.

Richard has to pause, fighting back a flood of complicated
 emotions.

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO HANDSET)
 Congratulations, Dad. Over.

Another pause, as if on his end Owen doesn't know what to
 say.

OWEN GARRIOTT (ON RADIO)
 Okay, let's all get back to work.
 Tell your mother and brother I
 expect to be home for dinner next
 week.

TEENAGE RICHARD (INTO HANDSET)
 Will do. Over.

OWEN (ON RADIO)
 Over and out.

The connection cuts out-

Leaving Richard with a dead handset and a confused heart.

TEENAGE RICHARD
 Over and out.

EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY - (1983 NASA VIDEO FOOTAGE)

And now we are looking at NASA archival footage of-

Columbia Space Shuttle, darkened by burn marks from re-entry to Earth's atmosphere, rolling to a stop at the terminus of its landing on a vast dusty airstrip...

TITLE:

"1983"

Owen Garriott steps out of the safely landed vehicle at the head of a group of six sweaty, dirty, tired but smiling astronauts, descending the landing stairs to the tarmac-

NASA ANNOUNCER (ON VIDEO)

And here you see six men getting off a spaceship after ten days in space, they haven't had a bath - you might say this is six dirty old men-

(faint audience laughter)

- but I think they're pretty darn steady considering how long they've been up there.

Owen Garriott shakes the hand of a NASA official-

As we hear the sound of a small roomful of people APPLAUDING-

And the screen footage fills with the pink "NASA" logo over the words "National Aeronautics and Space Administration."

INT. COMPUTERLAND STORE - DAY

We find Teenage Richard appreciating a rack of Ziplocked copies of "Ultima 2." A handwritten sign beside the rack says:

"Lord British Is Back! Grab Ultima 2 While Still In Stock!"

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I've heard it's the coolest role-playing game ever written.

Richard turns, finds himself staring at LIZ: same age as him, pretty and brainy. For a moment, he's speechless.

LIZ

Have you played it?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Only about a thousand times.

LIZ
So what do you think?

TEENAGE RICHARD
I think Ultima 3's going to be even better.

LIZ
The next version's already out?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Not yet. I'm working on it.

A beat.

LIZ
Wait a second... You're Lord British?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Call me Richard.

LIZ
Wow. Okay. I'm Liz. So where's your costume, Richard? I mean, Lord British. Whatever.

TEENAGE RICHARD
It's in my bedroom closet.

LIZ
You mean, just hanging there next to your regular clothes?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Yeah.

LIZ
Superman would never do that.

TEENAGE RICHARD
Then I guess I'm not Superman.

LIZ
It's good to have humility when you're a genius.

TEENAGE RICHARD
If I agreed with that, it wouldn't be very humble.

(MORE)

TEENAGE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 (beat, looking at her)
 Want to see my closet?

Slowly, Liz smiles.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - RICHARD'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dressed as Lord British, Teenage Richard stands before Liz in his room, holding a deck of playing cards still in their box.

He hands the box to Liz. This isn't necessarily what she imagined she'd be doing in his bedroom, but she's intrigued.

TEENAGE RICHARD
 You'll want to look them over, make sure they're all there.

She takes out the deck, fans the cards open, looks at them carefully.

TEENAGE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 No doubles or fakes?

LIZ
 Nope.

Taking the cards back, Richard deftly shuffles them.

TEENAGE RICHARD
 Now watch carefully. I'm going to remove one card from the deck.

He pulls out one card, keeping it face-down, and hands it to Liz without looking at it.

TEENAGE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Study the card.

Liz studies it.

TEENAGE RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Got it in your head?

LIZ
 Yep.

TEENAGE RICHARD
 Good. Now I'm going to put the remaining fifty-one cards back in the box.

She watches him do it.

Richard does a little spell over the box.

TEENAGE RICHARD (CONT'D)

Ready?

He holds the box out vertically so she can see it. And then as he holds it...

A single card slowly rises by itself until it's halfway out of the box.

LIZ

How'd you do that?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Can you see the card? What is it?

LIZ

Eight of diamonds.

TEENAGE RICHARD

What card did you have?

She already knows, but she turns over her card. It's the eight of diamonds.

LIZ

How'd you do that?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Full disclosure, I practice a lot.

Excited, he starts pacing the room...

TEENAGE RICHARD (CONT'D)

As you might've noticed, I also sometimes like to dress up as my characters. And every Halloween I turn our garage into a haunted house - a serious haunted house, not the cheesy kind. Most people don't think about it this way, but Magic and science are like twins bound by wonder. They like to hang out with each other. You know where they hang out best?

LIZ

Where?

TEENAGE RICHARD

In space.

LIZ
And in Richard Garriott's brain.

Liz steps up and kisses him on the mouth.

EXT. HIDDEN CLEARING - DAY

Teenage Richard and Liz are lying side by side in Richard's hidden clearing. Just hanging out.

TEENAGE RICHARD
I put my Dad in "Ultima 2."

LIZ
Your Dad? Which character is he?

TEENAGE RICHARD
He's that guy who wanders through the story searching for a rocket to take him to space.

LIZ
What else does he do?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Nothing. Just looks for a rocket so he can get back to space, because that's where he's happiest.

LIZ
What did he say about it?

TEENAGE RICHARD
He doesn't know.

Liz sits up and looks at him.

LIZ
You never told him?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Liz, my dad's been to space twice. Three months total, longer than any other human being in history. Dr. Owen Garriott doesn't believe in computer games.

LIZ
Does he ever talk about what it was like in space?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Never.

Richard lies staring up at the sky.

High up, a plane passes, leaving a jet-trail.

INT. RICHARD'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Alone in his programming cave, we watch Teenage Richard playing his own computer game on his Apple II - so intensely it's as if-

EXT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 2") - (COMPUTER ANIMATED)

We are in the computer-animated world of "Ultima 2"-

As a computer-animated male figure (who despite the heavily pixilated graphics somehow resembles Owen Garriott) enters against a dark background-

And wanders around here and there, here and there, as if forever lost.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Gathered around the Garriott kitchen table we find Teenage Richard, Robert, and Liz, as Helen moves about the room preparing dinner.

A roll of drafting paper covers the table, corners pinned down by bottles of chocolate Yoohoo.

ANGLE ON: Richard's design sketch of a large rectangular box mounted on a large frame.

TEENAGE RICHARD

It's a full-motion space simulator.

The three stare at the drawing.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

(skeptical)

What's it made of?

TEENAGE RICHARD

Wood.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Wood? Come on. No seat belts? No joystick?

TEENAGE RICHARD
Forget about that. What's our
tagline?

ROBERT GARRIOTT
What do you mean?

TEENAGE RICHARD
We're calling our company "Origin
Systems."

HELEN GARRIOTT
(passing the table)
Cool name.

TEENAGE RICHARD
Thanks, Mom.

HELEN GARRIOTT
Would you all like some juice?

LIZ
No thanks, Helen.

Helen smiles at Liz.

TEENAGE RICHARD
(to Robert)
We're going to need a tagline that
tells people what we're about.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
I got it. "Origin Systems: We
create original systems."

Deeply unimpressed, Teenage Richard and Liz exchange a look.

ROBERT GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
It's the tagline.

LIZ
Or an epitaph.

TEENAGE RICHARD
"Original systems" sounds like a
closed door. We want to open the
door. How about... "Origin
Systems: We Create Worlds."

LIZ
I like it.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

(grudging)

I guess it's okay. But I still don't get the connection with this thing. What's a big spinning coffin got to do with designing computer games?

TEENAGE RICHARD

It's an attitude. "We create worlds." Any kind of world, as long as its original, dynamic, and innovative.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Do you have to call it the "Nauseator"? That's a tough-sell.

LIZ

Come on, Robert. You think Einstein discovered relativity by playing it safe? You have to be a little crazy or nothing's ever gonna happen.

Liz's words seem to persuade Robert. Richard locks eyes with her privately, grateful for her support.

INT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 4") - DAY - (COMPUTER ANIMATED)

We're back in the computer-animated world of Britannia.

This time the computer-animation graphics are from "Ultima 4," mid-80s, somewhat more advanced but still clearly pixilated and stiff.

Computer-animated Lord British stands in the center of a dungeon-like room ringed with innocent-seeming, computer-animated children in cages.

Computer-animated Lord British has his hand on a lever. He stands there looking at the computer-animated children, eager to set them free, but struggling to decide.

Finally, an arrow cursor appears, clicks on his arm so that-

He pulls the lever-

The cages are thrown open; the computer-animated children pour out, instantly turning into computer-animated monsters and attacking computer-animated Lord British-

Who now must kill them in order to stay alive.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An expensive restaurant. We follow a waiter carrying two desserts across the dining room...

TITLE:

"AUSTIN, TEXAS - 1987"

The waiter reaches the table where...

Adult RICHARD (age 26 and up) and Liz are deep in conversation toward the end of their meal. The waiter places the desserts in front of them and leaves.

LIZ

Want to know the absolute coolest thing about "Ultima 4"?

RICHARD

I want to know.

LIZ

It's your focus on virtue. Britannia isn't one of those typical "age of darkness" scenarios. It's at peace. Virtue is prized. But the Eight Virtues you created are a two-edged sword. You can do good and locate the artifacts and finally make your way down to the Stygian Abyss and gain access to the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom - or, if you're not virtuous and you don't do good when you're able - like if you steal from that blind lady? - your virtues will be taken away and then you'll never become an Avatar. And don't even get me started on those little kids in the cages.

RICHARD

You think those kids in the cages... Yeah, okay, maybe that was a bridge too far.

LIZ

More like ten bridges. But Richard, you're the one who first showed me. If the bridge isn't too far...

RICHARD

It's not a destination worth going to.

They clink wine glasses.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

There's something I want to show you.

EXT. UNFINISHED NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

A flashlight beam probes the otherwise dark property of a large, unorthodox-looking mansion still under construction.

Actually, the beam's not from a flashlight, but from a headlamp that Richard's wearing as he gives Liz a tour.

Passing a couple of backhoes sitting idle, he leads her to the still-unpainted front door.

LIZ

Richard, you want to tell me what we're doing here? It's a little creepy.

He opens the door with a key.

RICHARD

You know how I've always wanted to build my own haunted house. The most amazing haunted house in the world, where magic and science and wonder all come together in one act.

LIZ

Yeah...

RICHARD

This is going to be it.

He and his headlamp enter the dark, unfinished structure. After a moment, uncertain but excited, Liz follows.

INT. UNFINISHED NEW HOUSE - NIGHT

Following the headlamp beam, Richard leads Liz up a newly constructed set of stairs. As he walks, he runs his hand along the bare wall as if feeling for something.

RICHARD

A haunted house is just another kind of world. Like ours, but with its own rules and expectations.

His hand finds a hidden latch in the wall; he pulls it-

A door that a moment ago wasn't there, opens.

LIZ

(surprised)

What?

Richard shines his headlamp into the dark space through the open door, revealing...

A SECRET ROOM-

Inside the room is a bed, perfectly made, the only piece of furniture in the entire unfinished house.

Waiting for them.

RICHARD

You see, Liz: magic, science...

(kisses her)

Wonder.

INT. ORIGIN SYSTEMS - ROBERT'S OFFICE - DAY

Meeting in Robert's office (Origin Systems now a computer-game company with a dozen employees), a tense Robert is hitting Richard with a hard cold dose of economic reality-

ROBERT

It was your decision to stick with Apple over IBM for the first four Ultimas. Remember?

RICHARD

Robert, programming in DOS is like trying to quote Shakespeare in Klingon.

ROBERT

The rest of the world is moving to DOS. They don't seem to have any problem with it.

RICHARD

Yeah, well, Steve Jobs is a genius. And IBM's a fucking corporation.

ROBERT

Origin Systems is a corporation too - or we were. We made a really dumb call and now we've got to deal with the fallout. Richard, as your older brother and CFO of this company, it's my fiduciary responsibility to tell you that programming all our games for the Apple II has left us on the verge of fucking bankruptcy.

Richard's anxiety spikes - money matters are not his strong suit. He picks up a pencil from Robert's desk and starts tapping it repeatedly against his knuckles to calm himself.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Please don't do that.

Richard takes a few breaths to try to calm himself; meanwhile, he keeps tapping the pencil.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

That's my pencil.

RICHARD

So?

ROBERT

Leave it alone.

RICHARD

What the fuck does it matter whose pencil it is? Define "verge of bankruptcy."

ROBERT

All our games in development have to be re-programmed on the PC. That's going to delay Ultima 5 at least six months. That's going to cost us two million dollars.

RICHARD

Robert, we don't have anywhere close to two million dollars.

ROBERT

There's your definition of "verge of bankruptcy."

RICHARD

I need to finish my house.

ROBERT

Your house is the least of our problems if you don't complete this game to perfection in under six weeks.

Richard stops tapping the pencil.

INT. ORIGIN SYSTEMS - NIGHT

The Origin Systems offices and common room are dark; everyone's gone home.

Only one light remains on...

The name plate outside this particular office says "Richard Garriott, CEO."

INT. RICHARD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

We find Richard prone on the floor, paralyzed by anxiety. Clutched to his chest is-

The chunk of rock he found when he was 13 that his father did not believe was a meteorite.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - HELEN'S ART STUDIO - DAY

Helen Garriott is in her studio putting the finishing touches on her latest eccentric artwork (a moon-shaped cookie jar).

Hearing a car pull up outside, she goes to the window and is surprised to see-

EXT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Richard on the front lawn, looking tired and stressed, holding a carry-on suitcase.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Richard's at the kitchen table, anxiously fiddling with a pencil.

Helen sets a mug of tea in front of him and sits down.

HELEN GARRIOTT

Your dad will be happy to see you.

RICHARD
Surprised, anyway.

Helen gives him a look.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
How is he?

HELEN GARRIOTT
You know your dad. Not one to dwell, always busy. But now that he's practically retired... It's a weird business, being an astronaut. At a pretty young age you're guaranteed that the most exciting thing you're ever going to do in your life is already behind you. But you still have all this knowledge and curiosity, all these dreams in your head and heart. That's not easy to live with.

RICHARD
At least he got to go.

HELEN GARRIOTT
And that was thrilling for him - both times. But now what? Richard, your dad's too young to be old and too old to be young. He's got to figure out what's ahead. So do I.

Her shift in tone has caught Richard's attention.

HELEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
Your dad and I - oh, we're fond of each other. But we're just completely different people. We met too young. Life's strange that way, you'll see: sometimes you end up taking such a different path from the one you thought you'd be on. It doesn't mean you can't eventually get to the place you were looking for all along. It's just going to have to be by a different route, that's all.

Richard is anxiously fiddling with the pencil again.

Helen puts her hand over his, gently stilling him.

RICHARD

Mom, I just don't want my dreams to die.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - RICHARD'S BEDROOM - EVENING

In the privacy of his old room, once again wearing his Lord British costume, Richard practices his rising-card trick in front of the wall mirror.

But hard as he works at it, he can't get the card to rise from the box.

RICHARD

Shit.

The door to the room opens. Owen Garriott stares at his grown son dressed in the costume of Lord British.

Richard stares back, caught in the act.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Your mother wanted me to tell you dinner's on the table.

The door closes.

Richard tosses the deck of cards into the wastebasket.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - RICHARD'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Hunched over the computer desk in his programming cave, now littered with volumes of ancient history, Buddhist philosophy, Greek myths, Arthurian legends (signs of how narratively complex "Ultima" has grown), Richard pounds away at his computer, struggling to complete the newest version of the game before Origin Systems goes bankrupt.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - RICHARD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the dark, Richard lies in his childhood bed staring at-

The ceiling, still covered with glow-in-the-dark stars and planets: the universe of his most personal childhood dreams.

Somehow, he's got to get back there, in order to move forward.

EXT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - DAY

Outside his parents' house, Richard places his carry-on bag in his car.

Owen walks out of the house carrying a brown paper bag...

He's also wearing the fifteen-year-old reverse-prism goggles that he once tested for NASA.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Your mother made you a sandwich for the road.

Owen tries to give Richard the lunch bag... but misses the hand-off because of the goggles' distorting optics.

RICHARD

I got it.

Richard takes the bag. Owen removes the goggles.

OWEN GARRIOTT

(awkward)

These are for you. From me.

Surprised, then appreciative, Richard accepts the goggles.

RICHARD

Thanks, dad.

Father and son have never hugged, and they're not about to start to now. Richard turns to get into his car...

OWEN GARRIOTT

You get up there, and you've planned for every contingency.

Richard turns back to his dad - and suddenly realizes that he's talking about being in space.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)

You know it all - or you think you do. Then there's that first moment when you see... Firsthand, you see the Earth, simply the reality of the Earth in space. And you understand, in an instant, that it's this tiny, fragile ball of life hanging in the void, protected and nourished by a paper-thin atmosphere. From up there, there are no boundaries between nations. No warring beliefs. No wars.

(MORE)

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
 Just this pale blue dot. And
 that's where we come from.

Richard stares at his dad, moved and inspired. He's never heard him speak about this - or like this - before. And he knows he probably never will again.

Owen seems a bit surprised himself. And the moment passes.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
 Well. Glad you came back for a
 visit. Drive safely.

Richard watches his father walk back toward the house...

Owen stops and turns.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
 Is that dry-clean only?

RICHARD
 What?

OWEN GARRIOTT
 That knight costume you wear.

RICHARD
 He's not technically a knight.
 He's more like a lord. But yes,
 dry-clean only.

OWEN GARRIOTT
 That's what I thought. You did a
 nice job with the details. I meant
 to tell you that.

Owen turns and continues into the house. Richard waits till the door closes. Then he gets in his car and drives away.

INT. ORIGIN SYSTEMS - ROBERT'S OFFICE/COMMON ROOM - DAY

Robert's on the phone, highly stressed-

ROBERT GARRIOTT (INTO PHONE)
 ... For Christ's sake, Richard,
 call me when you get this.

He hangs up, just as he spots-

Richard walking past his office-

ROBERT GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
 Hey!

Reluctantly, Richard changes direction and enters Robert's office.

ROBERT GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
Where the hell have you been?

RICHARD
I went to Mom and Dad's.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
Why?

RICHARD
I was stuck. I think they might be getting divorced.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
What? Fuck. Never mind. Where are we on Ultima 5?

RICHARD
I'm making headway.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
How much headway? We've got less than three weeks.

Richard flashes Robert the Vulcan salute.

RICHARD
(Spock voice)
I will not let the mission fail, Captain.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
This is just a game to you?

RICHARD
I hate to break it to you, bro, but it is a game. Ultima 5 is a game. So are Ultimas 1 through 4. I know, because I wrote them.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
(bitter)
Yeah, you wrote them.

Richard picks a pencil off Robert's desk and starts tapping it anxiously against his knuckles.

ROBERT GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
Just finish the fucking game, okay?

RICHARD
Yessir, Captain, sir.

Richard starts for the door.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
Hold it.

Richard stops - still holding the pencil from Robert's desk.

ROBERT GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
That's my pencil.

RICHARD
No it's not.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
Don't be an asshole, Richard.
That's my pencil. It was on my
desk. I saw you pick it up.

RICHARD
I took this pencil off your desk,
Robert, because I *left* it there
last week. So all I'm doing, you
see, is *re-appropriating* my own
pencil.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
No you're not.

RICHARD
Yes, I am.
(beat)
Unless you want to try and stop me.

They glare at each other, until suddenly-

Robert lunges at Richard, grabs the pencil-

Richard grabs it back, leading to-

A tug-of-war that quickly turns into a full-on wrestling
match-

The two brothers spilling out of Robert's office-

Into the common room, going at it now as if the pencil is
life and death, until finally-

The pencil snaps in two, leaving each brother on the floor
holding half a pencil as, stunned, they both look up and-

Find every Origin employee gaping at them.

Silence.

Richard starts laughing first...

Then Robert joins him, bitterness gone for now, until...

They are LAUGHING hysterically together, rolling on the floor.

INT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 4") - DAY - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

We're back in the computer-animated, pixilated world of Britannia and "Ultima 4" as-

One after another, computer-animated Lord British slays the computer-animated monster-children he has let out of the cages.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

A packed crowd of gaming, fantasy and sci-fi fanatics dressed in a wild array of character costumes eagerly faces an empty stage...

And we're back in the DragonCon teaser from p. 11 - only now in "real time."

TITLE:

"FIRST DRAGONCON CONVENTION - 1987"

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

And now, ladies and gentlemen,
gamers and rockers, Klingons and
droids, allow me to present
DragonCon's main attraction, the
man you've all been waiting for,
the father of role-playing computer
games, creator of the mind-blowing
Ultima series, including his latest
masterpiece Ultima 5, Lord British
himself... Richard... Garriott!

To massive APPLAUSE/CHEERING, Richard (dressed in full medieval Lord British costume) bounds onto the stage, strides to the mic and bellows:

RICHARD

Lord British welcomes you to
Britannia!

The crowd goes nuts.

When things calm down a little, a costumed FAN yells out:

FAN 1
Lord British, where's the Avatar?

RICHARD
The Avatar, good sir, is coming!

And then a second costumed FAN, standing next to the first:

FAN 2
When? When's he coming?

RICHARD
Soon.

FAN 1
Is he going to save Britannia?

This should be Richard's big moment - massive success, gaming god - but he doesn't seem to be entirely enjoying himself.

RICHARD
How the hell should I know?

Awkward laughter; a ripple of uncertainty runs through the crowd.

FAN 2
Because you're Lord British!

For a long, publicly uncomfortable moment, the crowd eagerly waiting for Lord British's answer, Richard stands on stage lost in private argument with himself - as if some fundamental life-reckoning is going on inside him right this second...

FAN 1
Lord British?

Richard looks down at his arms and legs - his entire "Lord British" costume. Unhappy with himself, almost disgusted, he shakes his head.

RICHARD
(low, to himself)
A bridge too far. But not far enough.

FAN 2
Lord British, hey, you okay?

RICHARD

(to fan)

No, good sir, Lord British is not okay.

(low, to himself)

My dreams are not going to die here.

FAN 2

What'd he say? I couldn't hear the last part.

FAN 1

Something about dying? Shit, you don't think he plans to kill Lord British off?

RICHARD

(low, to himself)

I'm going to space.

FAN 2

He just said something else.

RICHARD

(low, to himself)

I'm going to space.

FAN 1

Something about space?

FAN 2

He could be talking about that dude in Ultima 2 - the guy with the rocket? Maybe he's gonna bring him back in Ultima 6.

FAN 1

That'd be cool.

But Richard's had enough; he's done, and already heading toward a different, deeper, more fantastical dream of his own.

RICHARD

(certain now; aloud)

I'm going to space.

Without another word, ignoring the shouted questions from the audience, Richard turns and walks off the DragonCon stage...

Leaving his crowd of costumed fans MURMURING behind him about Lord British's next plans for Britannia.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

A young waitress approaches a restaurant table where Richard sits across from a crusty, familiar-looking man in his late-50s...

TITLE:

"TWO YEARS LATER"

Yep, it's BUZZ ALDRIN, ever the iconic, unpredictable hero - though at this point in his life, it must be said, just out of rehab for the third time, Buzz looks a little more unpredictable than usual.

BUZZ ALDRIN

I'm sober, honey. Just water for me.

Buzz winks at the waitress, who raises a skeptical eyebrow and walks away.

BUZZ ALDRIN (CONT'D)

Didn't see anyone like her in rehab. How about you, Rich? Got yourself a little pack of Juicy Fruit tucked away somewhere?

RICHARD

The gum?

BUZZ ALDRIN

Everybody needs some Juicy Fruit. Problem is the flavor doesn't last. Before you know it, you gotta pop in another piece to keep that fresh taste. Thank God I put those days in my rearview. I've got Lois with me now. She said those words "Buzz Aldrin, for better and worse." What were we talking about again?

RICHARD

You called me and said you had an idea for a commercial space venture?

BUZZ ALDRIN

Right. So your dad, who I admire, helluva astronaut, tells me you've made yourself a pile of dough from computer games. Says you might be looking to invest some of it in the future of space travel. Good idea.

RICHARD

My dad told you that?

BUZZ ALDRIN

Well, the first part, anyway. I can tell the rest myself. You're an astronaut's son as well as some fantasy guru, aren't you? Cosmic wonder's real, Richard. I know: I've been there.

RICHARD

I guess I just don't see why NASA should be the gatekeeper of who does and doesn't get to space.

BUZZ ALDRIN

There's the Russians. But you'd have to be nuts to get in the same romper room with those guys. You're a little weird, maybe, off the beaten trail. But you're not crazy, are you, Richard?

RICHARD

What about private citizens? Commercialize the industry, open it up to new ideas and new sources of funding so companies can profit from sending non-traditional astronauts to space.

BUZZ ALDRIN

"Non-traditional" space tourists like yourself, you mean?

RICHARD

Absolutely. I intend to be the first.

BUZZ ALDRIN

Did you know I was supposed to be first? That's right - first man to walk on the moon. That's how we practiced it every day. Standard NASA protocol: the commander drives, the pilot does the space walk. Neil was senior, so he was commander. He keeps his ass in the driver's seat of the lunar module and the pilot - that's me - opens the hatch, climbs out and walks on the fucking moon. *First.*

(MORE)

BUZZ ALDRIN (CONT'D)

Except the lunar module hatch was located on the floor in front of our seats. The hinges were on my side of the cockpit. Somehow nobody had figured this out. So we land on the moon and open the hatch. And what do you think happens? Not the protocol. The hatch swings toward me, blocking my access, and Neil's got the only clear path out. No choice. Neil Armstrong first, Buzz Aldrin second. That's history for you.

Buzz is speaking as if to himself now, but Richard is right there with him.

BUZZ ALDRIN (CONT'D)

My dad couldn't accept it. "Second. You came in second on the moon. How in hell did you manage to do that?" Never forgave me for it. But my mom... You won't believe this, kid. My mother's maiden name was Moon. Yeah, depression runs on the Moon side of the family. The dark side. My mother took her own life not long before we launched. Turned out she was terrified she wouldn't be able to handle the fame that no doubt was going to come to her son for being the first man to walk on the moon. Only I wasn't the first, was I?

The waitress approaches with Buzz's water, but this time Buzz angrily waves her away.

BUZZ ALDRIN (CONT'D)

Listen to me, Richard. You gotta take your home run chances when you see 'em. Do not turn away, do not pause, do not so much as fucking blink. 'Cause you are never gonna get a second chance to walk on the fucking moon.

Richard nods soberly.

INT/EXT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 9") - DAWN - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

And now, to the strains of SPANISH GUITAR, we are in some computer-animated distant land, looking at the outside of a computer-animated white clapboard house...

The computer-animation graphics here are from "Ultima 9," a good decade more advanced than what we've seen till now.

Slowly we PUSH IN through the attic window-

Into a computer-animated attic bedroom, where a computer-animated young man ("AVATAR") lies in bed.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)
Avatar, arise from your slumber.
The Guardian has invaded Britannia
and Lord British has summoned you
for your final adventure.

Computer-animated Avatar sits up. Then he stands.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - EXPLORERS CLUB - DAY

Richard enters an elegant brick building on the Upper East Side.

A plaque beside the door reads "The Explorers Club."

INT. EXPLORERS CLUB - BALLROOM - DAY

Richard walks into the ballroom where other club members are milling about and a few individuals are seated behind tables, soliciting for potential expeditions.

TITLE:

"NEW YORK CITY - 1992"

Richard passes a table...

MAN
Hi there, I'm Eric Anderson. My
little company's called Space
Adventures -

Hearing the name of the company, Richard stops in his tracks-

MAN (CONT'D)
- and we're going to take people to
space.

Now Richard is staring at him.

RICHARD
Sorry, could you repeat that?

INT. EXPLORERS CLUB - TROPHY ROOM - DAY

Richard and ERIC ANDERSON (30, entrepreneurial) have moved into another room to talk privately.

ERIC ANDERSON
We're not going to build rockets to take people to space. We're going to encourage the world's boldest and most innovative entrepreneurs to build them.

RICHARD
What's their incentive?

ERIC ANDERSON
Profit, eventually. Meantime, to whet their appetites, we're going to establish a prize to see who can develop the best vehicle to take our clients to space. We're thinking of calling it the "X-Prize."

RICHARD
What do you get if you win the prize?

ERIC ANDERSON
Ten million dollars. If we can find the money somehow.

RICHARD
My brother and I just sold our computer game company to Electronic Arts. How many clients did you say you've signed up?

ERIC ANDERSON
Richard, how would you like to become Space Adventures' very first client?

Richard looks around the room at trophies representing a century of bold, extravagant, and sometimes foolhardy human exploration:

- a stuffed polar bear

- the tusk of a narwhal
- a meteorite found in Antarctica

RICHARD

Tell you what, Eric. I'd like to become Space Adventures' first client and a co-founder of the company. Here's half a million to get us started.

Richard pulls a check out of his wallet, fills it out and hands it to Eric.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

How long do you think it's going to take?

EXT. ANTARCTICA - DAY (TWO YEARS LATER)

We are looking at absolute frozen white emptiness as far as the eye can see.

Richard (in full arctic gear) lowers a pair of binoculars.

TITLE:

"TWO YEARS LATER"

Richard digs around in the pack he's carrying and takes out a satellite phone. He has to remove his gloves to dial (he quickly pulls them on again with his teeth).

RICHARD (INTO PHONE)

Eric, it's Richard. What did NASA say this time?

(unhappy pause)

Shit. We'll have to come up with a better proposal.

(pause)

No, I'm on another expedition. Looking for meteorites.

Frustrated, Richard ends the call and looks ahead toward-

A small group of tourists, as a PROFESSIONAL GUIDE waves at him to join the group.

Richard walks over to the guide.

GUIDE

The group's a bit tired. They'd like to head back to camp.

RICHARD
No fucking way.

INT. RICHARD'S HAUNTED HOUSE - DAY

The front door opens and Richard (shaggy-haired, bearded, humping bags of gear) enters, just home from yet another long, grueling exploration trip to the ends of the earth.

TITLE:

"TWO YEARS LATER"

Richard's haunted house is all complete now and full of cool, weird stuff (entryway shelves filled with real human skulls, for instance). But it hardly looks lived in.

Standing there, Richard starts to realize that something's not right, the place feels too empty...

Already sensing what's wrong, he drops his bags and heads-

UP THE STAIRCASE-

Halfway, he pulls the hidden lever in the wall, opening the door to the-

SECRET BEDROOM-

And discovers that all of Liz's clothes except a single T-shirt have been removed from the closets and drawers.

He stands holding her T-shirt.

On the perfectly made bed there's a note. He stares at it.

LIZ (V.O.)

Dear Richard,
I really hope you find your rocket
to space. I just can't keep
waiting around while you search for
it. If I don't start my own life
for real, it's going to pass me by.
We're not kids anymore. I hope one
day you'll be able to understand
that I love you. Liz.

Slowly, Richard sits down on the bed and presses her T-shirt to his face.

EXT. AMAZON RIVER - DAY

Richard and several other travelers sit in a long dug-out canoe. Everyone looks terribly dirty, thirsty, and hot.

TITLE:

"TWO YEARS LATER"

The canoe's passage is blocked by a tangle of dead trees clogging the narrow, shallow brown river.

Two AMAZONIAN RIVER GUIDES are hacking at the tangle of logs with axes. It's useless - their way is blocked. Finally, they give up.

AMAZONIAN RIVER GUIDE
(to Richard)
We travel no more.

Richard slaps at a buzzing insect that has just bitten him on the neck. Squinting, he raises his eyes to the-

Huge white daytime moon in the sky.

Suddenly, a phone starts RINGING. Everyone stares at Richard. He digs around in his pack and pulls out a satellite phone...

RICHARD (INTO PHONE)
Hello?

ERIC ANDERSON (ON PHONE)
Richard, where are you?

RICHARD (INTO PHONE)
Hi, Eric. Kind of up a river
without a paddle at the moment.

ERIC ANDERSON (ON PHONE)
Well, if you still want to go to
space, you'd better be in New York
by the end of the week. I think we
may have finally found your ride.

Richard looks back up at the daytime moon.

ERIC ANDERSON (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
Richard, you there?

RICHARD (INTO PHONE)
Is it NASA?

ERIC ANDERSON (ON PHONE)
No. The Russians.

RICHARD (INTO PHONE)
I'll be there.

Richard ends the call, climbs out of the canoe...

Grabs the ax from one of the river guides, and-

Starts hacking like a man possessed at the trees blocking the river.

EXT. MOSCOW - ROSCOSMOS HEADQUARTERS - DAY

We are looking across a large Soviet-era plaza punctuated by a statue of Yuri Gagarin...

To the Soviet-era Russian Space Agency ("Roscosmos") headquarters.

TITLE:

"RUSSIAN SPACE AGENCY HEADQUARTERS, MOSCOW - DECEMBER 1999"

INT. ROSCOSMOS HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Across a Soviet-era conference table, Richard and Eric Anderson face the ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR and other RUSSIAN SPACE OFFICIALS.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR
NASA rejected your proposition.

RICHARD
That is correct, Director.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR
So your father, Dr. Owen Garriott,
was unable to influence NASA?

Richard tries not to show how much the director's assumption bothers him.

RICHARD
My father has been retired from
NASA for quite some time. His last
space flight was in 1983, sixteen
years ago. I applied on my own.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR
And were unsuccessful.

RICHARD

Despite our best efforts over nearly a decade, NASA has refused to allow any civilian to purchase a seat on their space shuttle. I won't lie to you, Director - I was disappointed. NASA's afraid they'll lose what's left of their government funding if they actively help the private sector get a firm hold in space. It's our hope, however, that the Russian Space Agency, given your budgetary constraints and other structural challenges, might perhaps come to a more enlightened view.

RUSSIAN SPACE OFFICIAL

We can't say if such venture is even feasible. Training civilian for space over one year? Putting him in International Space Station? This has never been done. How much is the cost? We do not know.

ERIC ANDERSON

As a matter of fact, Director, Space Adventures has funded a preliminary estimate of the cost to Roscosmos of sending the first private citizen to space on a Russian Soyuz rocket.

(hands Director a folder)

All-in, our estimate is twenty million U.S. - a fee my co-founder Richard Garriott is ready and willing to pay the Russian space program out of his own personal funds.

RICHARD

Sir, I will do anything and give all the money I have to get to space. In Texas, where I come from, we call this kind of opportunity a "win-win."

The director hands the folder to an associate without opening it.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR

In Russia, Mr. Garriott, we have no such thing as "win-win."

The director stands.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

If you gentlemen wish, while waiting for our answer you may tour appropriate parts of the building. Other areas, of course, are restricted.

RICHARD

(dejected)

Thank you.

INT. ROSCOSMOS HEADQUARTERS - ARCHIVE ROOM - DAY

Richard and an official ROSCOSMOS GUIDE stand before a Plexiglas-encased collection of scientific/mathematical papers from the early 20th Century.

RICHARD

You said these are the original papers of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, the "Father of Rocketry"?

ROSCOSMOS GUIDE

Tsiolkovsky - yes.

RICHARD

His actual theories of how humankind would one day travel to space? With his own sketches?

ROSCOSMOS GUIDE

Yes.

RICHARD

When did he make these?

ROSCOSMOS GUIDE

Between 1911 and 1929.

Richard studies Tsiolkovsky's papers...

Accompanying complex equations and densely scribbled observations in Russian are sketches of multi-stage rockets and lunar-landing modules and spacesuits that look almost exactly like the equipment used today.

We watch Richard's fascination turning to awe and wonder: seventy years earlier this crazy Russian rocket scientist actually imagined the future of travel as it was going to be...

ROSCOSMOS GUIDE (CONT'D)
We must go back now.

INT. ROSCOSMOS HEADQUARTERS - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Richard and Eric wait alone in the conference room, tense and silent.

Richard taps a pencil anxiously against his knuckles.

ERIC ANDERSON
Richard, if this doesn't work...

RICHARD
Win-win, Eric. Win-win.

The Russians enter. Expressions notably grim.

Richard's heart sinks.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR
Mr. Garriott.

RICHARD
(steels himself)
Director.

All at once, the director grabs Richard and kisses him on both cheeks.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR
Allow me to officially welcome you
to Russian Federal Space Agency.
Congratulations.

RICHARD
(stunned)
Thank you.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR
As you know, Roscosmos and NASA are
not the same. Our training is
extensive - one year in Moscow Star
City working in simulators under
best supervision. You Americans
are in love with technology, but
Russian emphasis is still on
institutional knowledge. Our
history in space is longest. And
of course you must learn Russian.
You are prepared for all this?

RICHARD

I've been waiting my whole life.

ROSCOSMOS DIRECTOR

A few more months will be required to complete details. At that time we contact you and you transfer first payment. Credit cards not accepted.

RICHARD

Too bad, I was hoping to get the frequent-flyer miles.

Richard's attempt at humor is met with a blank stare from the director.

EXT. ROSCOSMOS HEADQUARTERS - PLAZA - DAY

In the Soviet-era plaza in front of the Space Agency, we find-
Roscosmos personnel in winter coats eating lunch and shooting glances of consternation at-

Richard, who at this moment is engaged in a joyous love embrace with the stature of Yuri Gagarin as-

He passionately starts SINGING "YOU LIGHT UP MY LIFE" to the block of granite:

RICHARD (SINGING)

"So many nights I'd sit by my
window
Waiting for someone to sing me his
song
So many dreams I kept deep inside
me
Alone in the dark but now you've
come along

And you light up my life
You give me hope to carry on
You light up my days and fill my
nights with song"...

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

CLOSE ANGLE ON: Stock ticker symbols with massive red loss numbers streaming horizontally across-

The TV screen in Richard's apartment-

CNBC ANCHOR (ON TV)

On this Monday morning, March 13th 2000, the NASDAQ opened trading and proceeded to immediately fall off a cliff, down a further four percent from last week's already massive losses. This is the worst market carnage for dotcom companies that we have seen yet, and apparently there is no bottom in sight.

REVEAL: ...Richard curled on the floor. His dream of ever going to space once again crushed.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Filled with despair and halfway drunk, RICHARD slumps at a table with Robert and Eric Anderson.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

I do not understand how you could have been stupid enough to leave all your money in Electronics Arts stock.

RICHARD

Only ninety-seven percent of it.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Jesus Christ. Didn't anyone ever tell you about financial diversification?

RICHARD

You did.

(beat)

If the market had just waited one more week to crash - one more fucking week - I would've sold my stock, paid the Russians, started my training... Fuck. I'm totally wiped out.

Robert and Eric exchange glances.

ERIC ANDERSON

Richard, I don't know how to say this. You're going to have to sell your seat on the rocket to somebody else.

Richard sucks on his drink without responding.

ERIC ANDERSON (CONT'D)
Richard, are you hearing me?

Richard sucks on his drink without responding.

ERIC ANDERSON (CONT'D)
I'm really sorry. I know how much
this meant to you.

RICHARD
My seat on the rocket.

ERIC ANDERSON
Right.

RICHARD
You mean "correct." "Right" is an
angle.

Eric glances at Robert. *What?*

ROBERT GARRIOTT
It's a thing with our dad.

RICHARD
I'm going to have to sell my seat
to somebody else.

ERIC ANDERSON
Correct.

RICHARD
Watch that fucker go to space
instead of me.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
He might not be a fucker. He might
simply be a guy who managed not to
lose all his money.

RICHARD
Fuck you, Robert.

ERIC ANDERSON
Richard, you don't have to watch
the launch. Whenever it happens.
In fact, I strongly advise you not
to watch.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
Definitely don't watch.

INT. RICHARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

ANGLE ON: A magazine photo thumb-tacked to the wall-

The photo is of an older white male wearing a United States space suit and standing with two Russian cosmonauts (all waving and smiling) atop launch scaffolding beside a massive Russian Soyuz rocket.

The photo caption reads: "World's first space tourist, American businessman Dennis A. Tito, launches into orbit on board Russian rocket."

As we study the photo, suddenly-

PHLITT! A deadly Amazonian blow dart sticks the image of Dennis Tito right between the eyes.

REVEAL: ...Richard across the room, holding an Amazonian blow gun, looking as if he wished he'd hit the actual living target instead...

And Robert nearby, his face showing some concern for his own physical safety.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Feel better?

RICHARD

No.

ROBERT

Richard, maybe it's time you just accept that the whole space thing's not meant to happen.

RICHARD

"The whole space thing"?

ROBERT GARRIOTT

You're in the gaming Hall of Fame, for Christ's sake. What more do you want? You even have an alter ego. Just say thanks and get on with your life. Look at yourself - you're forty years old and who do you hang out with? Me. That's not a good sign.

Richard walks to the photograph and pulls the blow dart out of Dennis A. Tito's head.

RICHARD

Know why I love telling stories through computer games? Because they're interactive. Change a single decision along the way and you get a totally different outcome. All it takes is belief. You have to commit to the story, or there's no point in playing. But if you commit, if you enter that story with everything you have and you don't let yourself get paralyzed by the thought of making mistakes, then you can do anything. This is my story, Robert, and I believe in it even if nobody else does.

INT. FRENCHIE'S RESTAURANT - DAY (2 YEARS LATER)

ANGLE ON: A framed color photograph of an astronaut (Owen Garriott) performing a space-walk on the exterior of Skylab. (The visor is reflective so we cannot identify the astronaut.)

REVEAL: ...Richard looking at the photograph, which is framed and hanging on the wall of the restaurant - a wall entirely covered with photographs of astronauts.

Richard is seated at a white-clothed table. Finally, he turns to-

Owen, whose eyes are on his plate of pasta as he continues, in his unemotional way, to eat his lunch.

TITLE:

"FRENCHIE'S RESTAURANT, NASSAU BAY - 2003"

RICHARD

That's you?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Yep.

RICHARD

Who took the photo?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Jack Lousma, our Skylab pilot. Used a handheld 70mm Hasselblad, as I recall.

RICHARD
Did the experiment you deployed
work?

OWEN GARRIOTT
(no big deal)
Yep.

RICHARD
What was it like, that first moment
you stepped out of Skylab and
realized there was nothing between
you and oblivion?

OWEN GARRIOTT
We had safety tethers.

RICHARD
I know, but-

OWEN GARRIOTT
We were relieved to get the job
done.

His food finished, Owen signals the waiter for the check.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)
I'll get this. You should save
your money.

RICHARD
Can I ask you something, Dad?
Why'd you bring me here today?

OWEN GARRIOTT
(gestures at photos)
Everyone goes to Frenchie's.

RICHARD
I've never been here before.

OWEN GARRIOTT
You're not an astronaut.
(gets up)
I need to hit the men's. Meet you
outside.

Owen walks off. Richard remains at the table under the
crushing weight of what his father just said to him.

EXT. FRENCHIE'S RESTAURANT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Richard joins Owen outside the restaurant. Across the parking lot we find-

The Johnson Space Center. NASA.

Father and son stand side by side, silently taking in the sight, with its different meanings for each.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Heading back to Austin?

RICHARD
Yeah, I've got meetings.

OWEN GARRIOTT
How's the video game business?

RICHARD
We've partnered Destination Games, our new company, with a big Japanese software outfit. I've got some equity. I'm working my way back.

OWEN GARRIOTT
You're not going to try again with the Russians?

RICHARD
When I have enough capital. The price has already gone up fifty percent.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Thirty million dollars? I hope you know what you're doing. Well, give my best to your mother.

Richard watches his father get in his car and drive away.

He turns and looks again at the Space Center.

EXT. LAKE - DAY - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

And now we're watching computer-animated Richard and computer-animated Owen Garriott as they fish from a rowboat in the middle of a lake.

The computer-animation graphics here are better and more realistic than any computer game: it almost looks like film.

The pace is slow, like a scene out of time.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT
 I just have one question for you,
 Richard. Why the hell are you
 doing all this?

Computer-animated Richard stares at his computer-animated
 father. Doesn't he know the answer?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT
 (CONT'D)
 I'm talking about the logic of the
 mission. What is the logic of this
 particular mission of trying to get
 yourself to space at any cost?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD
 Games aren't enough. You said it
 yourself a long time ago.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT
 There's your problem. You're
 letting yourself get blinded by
 emotion. That's mission failure
 right there.

A computer-animated shadow cuts across their boat, causing
 both computer-animated men to look up at-

A computer-animated eagle gliding overhead.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD
 I thought going to space changed
 your life.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT
 (staring at the bird)
 It did change my life.
 (now at Richard)
 It was my life.

INT. DESTINATION GAMES - RICHARD'S OFFICE - DAY

In a different office than previously, Richard sits working
 on his desktop computer.

TITLE:

"AUSTIN, TEXAS - 2006"

He's writing code for a new game. Working hard. But the work is no longer as compelling or fresh to him as it once was.

He pauses, his gaze drawn to an object sitting on his desk:

The chunk of rock that he found when he was boy, that his father did not believe was really a meteorite.

Richard gets to his feet.

EXT. URBAN FLEA MARKET - DAY

Richard meanders through an unusual urban flea market, a place he's familiar with, stopping here and there at stalls selling scientific gadgets, "radioactive rocks" - the sort of weird cool stuff we've seen in his haunted house.

LIZ (O.S.)

Richard?

Richard turns - and is stunned to find-

Liz, pretty and brainy as ever.

RICHARD

Liz.

LIZ

I thought that was you.

Beat; both of them unprepared for the sudden emotional charge of seeing each other again.

LIZ (CONT'D)

It's been-

RICHARD

Right-

LIZ

Twelve years. How's the haunted house?

RICHARD

Still haunted.

LIZ

Yeah, well, all those skulls.

Richard opens the bag he's carrying and shows her what's he's just bought at the flea market: another skull.

LIZ (CONT'D)
Looks like you've really cornered
the market on those.

RICHARD
I heard you'd moved to Houston.

LIZ
I did.
(beat)
I'm divorced.

RICHARD
Sorry.

LIZ
No, it's okay. We didn't have kids
so... And you? You're probably
married, big family, all that.

Richard shakes his head.

RICHARD
I'm trying to finish a new game.
It's called "Tabula Rasa."

LIZ
I'll be first in line to buy it
when it comes out.

RICHARD
You don't have to. I'll send you a
copy.

LIZ
I don't suppose it has a character
who wanders around searching for a
rocket to take him to space? I
really miss that guy.

RICHARD
He misses you, too.

They stand looking at each other; the feeling between them
palpable.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
I still have your T-shirt.

LIZ
Maybe I'll come by and get it.

RICHARD

Just watch the floating eyeballs in
the bathtub and the room full of
burning oil.

Liz smiles - and with that smile, Richard has the sudden
feeling that his luck is about to change for the better.

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY (SIX MONTHS LATER)

Richard's car motors along the highway.

TITLE:

"SIX MONTHS LATER"

From the car, we hear the sound of a PHONE RINGING (PRELAP)-

INT. RICHARD'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Richard behind the wheel, his PHONE RINGING.

He answers via car speaker-

RICHARD

Hello?

ERIC ANDERSON (ON SPEAKER)

Richard.

RICHARD

That wasn't a physical exam, Eric,
it was an archeological dig. Those
doctors checked body parts I didn't
even know I had. Anyway,
everything seems okay.

ERIC ANDERSON (ON SPEAKER)

(concerned)

The flight medical specialist
hasn't called you?

RICHARD

No. Is something wrong?

EXT. TEXAS HIGHWAY - DAY

We see Richard's car pull off the highway at the next exit...

And re-enter the highway, now speeding in the opposite
direction.

INT. HOSPITAL - SURGEON'S OFFICE - DAY

Richard sits facing an AMERICAN SURGEON.

AMERICAN SURGEON

I have good news and bad news, Mr. Garriott.

Richard seems calm on the outside, but inside his anxiety is starting to spike.

AMERICAN RICHARD

Bad news me.

AMERICAN SURGEON

You have a hemangioma on your liver.

RICHARD

What's a hemangioma?

AMERICAN SURGEON

A genetic defect, relatively rare. What it means is that one of the six lobes on your liver doesn't drain properly.

RICHARD

I've never had liver problems in my life.

AMERICAN SURGEON

That's because here on earth a hemangioma isn't really a serious issue.

RICHARD

Good. Because here on earth I have twenty million non-refundable dollars invested in my upcoming space flight, with ten million more to pay out, no insurance policy, and the Russian Space Agency, unlike Amazon, doesn't allow free returns or shipping.

AMERICAN SURGEON

Mr. Garriott, I'm afraid this is quite serious. In certain situations in space, such as a rapid depressurization, a hemangioma like yours could cause fatal internal bleeding. You'd be dead in a matter of minutes.

Now Richard's anxiety blows through the roof-

RICHARD

Are you telling me I can't go to space with this condition?

AMERICAN SURGEON

With a hemangioma on your liver?
No. It can't be allowed. I'm sorry.

Richard bends over and tries to calm himself by breathing.

RICHARD

Not again... Not fucking again.
(beat)
What about surgery?

AMERICAN SURGEON

There *is* an operation. But it's life-threatening and I don't recommend it. Frankly, Mr. Garriott, my advice to you is to stay here on earth and live out the rest of your days happily and safely with the people you love.

Richard glares at the doctor. That 13-year-old's ferocious, fuck-you determination growing in him once again.

RICHARD

Obviously, doctor, you are not a Garriott.

INT. HOSPITAL - RECOVERY ROOM - DAY

A man's face emerging from blurred light...

RUSSIAN SURGEON

(Russian accent)
Mr. Garriott, welcome back to earth.

RICHARD

(foggy)
Was I in space already?

RUSSIAN SURGEON

Was there a beautiful woman named Olga there? I am joking. I am Subaru, one of your surgical team, included as part of Roscosmos-NASA cooperation agreement.

(MORE)

RUSSIAN SURGEON (CONT'D)

No worries - you have survived.
Everything is good. Your liver is
repaired. In fact, we also removed
your gall bladder.

RICHARD

What...? What was wrong with my
gall bladder?

RUSSIAN SURGEON

Nothing at all! But better safe
than sorry, eh? In any case, a
gall bladder is not something you
will need-
(points at ceiling)
-up there.

Too wiped out to really care, Richard lies back and covers
his eyes with his hand.

RUSSIAN SURGEON (CONT'D)

Now rest. Recovery period from
surgery is six months. All goes
well, then you go to Russia and
begin flight training.

INT. GARRIOTT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Robert, Owen, and Helen sit watching TV. Sort of like old
times except Owen and Helen are no longer married and-

Richard, pale and thin, exudes the look of someone still in
recovery from major surgery.

TITLE:

"MARCH 14, 2008"

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Four o'clock, Dad.

Without much interest, Owen changes the channel-

CNBC appears on screen, we hear the sound of the STOCK
EXCHANGE BELL being rung as Anchor MARIA BARTIROMO launches
into her daily market wrap-up (with stock charts and
visuals):

MARIA BARTIROMO (ON TV)

And the bell has sounded, bringing
to a close an extraordinary day on
Wall Street.

(MORE)

MARIA BARTIROMO (ON TV) (CONT'D)

The rescue of Bear Stearns
dominating the entire trading day
on Wall Street, leading the market
lower right from the get-go.
Another ugly day for stocks.

CLOSE ON RICHARD: Face frozen...

MARIA BARTIROMO (ON TV)

Bear Stearns today leading the
tumble on Wall Street, the stock
plunging forty-five percent after
the New York Federal Reserve and
J.P. Morgan agreed to provide
emergency financing to the Wall
Street firm.

Owen switches off the TV.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Why'd you turn it off?

OWEN GARRIOTT

It's all paper money. Logically,
you could say it never really
existed in the first place.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Are you serious?

HELEN GARRIOTT

Your father was never very
interested in money.

OWEN GARRIOTT

You make that sound like a
criticism, Helen.

HELEN GARRIOTT

Oh no. It's just another one of
your... special characteristics.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Please don't argue.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Your mother and I never once argued
the entire time we were married.

HELEN GARRIOTT

Sad but true. Richard, you don't
still keep your money in stocks, do
you? Not after what happened last
time.

All this while Richard's expression of internal panic has been growing more intense-

RICHARD

Actually, I've been, um... I was about to pay the final thirty percent to the Russians guaranteeing my seat on the next flight to the space station.

HELEN GARRIOTT

Where's that money now?

RICHARD

(long, panicked beat)
In the stock of the Japanese company that bought our company.

The room has gone quiet.

ROBERT GARRIOTT

Jesus. Not again.

Richard, looking nauseated, pulls out his cell phone.

RICHARD

I'll call my broker.

INT. GARRIOTT GARAGE - DAY - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

Computer-animated Owen (age 78) stands pondering a lawnmower his computer-animated garage.

As before, The computer-animation graphics here are better and more realistic than any computer game: it almost looks like film.

The pace is slow, like a scene out of time.

Computer-animated Richard enters.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD

I've been cleared to start training.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT

So you didn't lose all your money?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD

Not this time.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT
Still determined to go with the
Russians?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD
They're my only chance.
(takes a breath)
Dad, I was hoping you might head up
my mission flight team.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED OWEN GARRIOTT
(surprised)
Me?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD
I could really use your expertise
on what experiments I should do
while I'm on the space station. I
don't want to be just a tourist up
there. I want to prove there's a
valuable role for non-professional
space participants to play in the
future of space travel.

To Richard's surprise, his father seems to be listening.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED RICHARD (CONT'D)
We could Skype during my training
in Star City. Then you could join
me in Kazakhstan for the launch and
monitor things from there.

A pause. Richard waiting, emotionally holding his breath.

INT. CENTRIFUGE TEST MACHINE - DAY

We find Richard (in a blue flight suit) struggling to
breathe, his face dangerously red-

He's on his back in an enclosed, windowless capsule, pressed
into his seat by extreme G-forces as-

INT. U.S.A.F. G-FORCE TESTING CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS - DAY

A centrifuge test machine circles the test chamber at high
speed, fast enough to create extreme G-forces on the person
inside the capsule.

TITLE:

"U.S.A.F. G-FORCE TESTING CHAMBER - THREE MONTHS LATER"

In a connecting room, flight technicians monitor Richard's vitals.

INT. CENTRIFUGE TEST MACHINE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

An L.E.D. screen inside the capsule shows the G-force number steadily climbing: 7.6... 7.7... 7.8...

FLIGHT TECHNICIAN (OVER INTERCOM)
How're you doing, Richard?

RICHARD
(trying not to gasp)
...Okay.

FLIGHT TECHNICIAN (OVER INTERCOM)
Your liver's holding up well. That pressure you're feeling is the front of your rib cage pressing against your lungs as the G-force increases.

RICHARD
...Right.

FLIGHT TECHNICIAN (OVER INTERCOM)
At around 8G's, most people find their breathing significantly challenged.

RICHARD
...Yeah.

FLIGHT TECHNICIAN (OVER INTERCOM)
There's an air-sick bag in there if you need it.

RICHARD
(squeezing out the words)
...No, I'm good.

INT. U.S.A.F. G-FORCE TESTING CHAMBER - DAY

The centrifuge test machine slows to a stop. The lead flight technician opens the capsule and finds-

Richard, red-faced but thrilled.

FLIGHT TECHNICIAN
That went great. How do you feel?

Richard is woozy and sweating, but he's never felt more alive in his life.

RICHARD
I'm ready to do it again.

INT. RICHARD'S HAUNTED HOUSE - DAY

Trying to follow a Roscosmos packing list, Richard is finishing packing the luggage he'll be taking to Russia.

The doorbell RINGS.

It's his mother. She hands him a purple-glazed moon-shaped cookie jar.

HELEN GARRIOTT
I made this for you.

RICHARD
It's nice, thanks.

He sets it on a table, resumes packing.

HELEN
(looking around)
I see your skull collection's grown.

RICHARD
I've been going to the flea market a lot.

HELEN GARRIOTT
With Liz, I know. She told me.

RICHARD
(surprised)
When did you see her?

HELEN GARRIOTT
She called and wanted to have coffee.
(beat)
I think she's still in love with you.

RICHARD
Sounds like a lot more than coffee.

Pleased but trying not to show it, Richard turns back to his packing. He tries to jam one last pair of socks into an already over-stuffed suitcase...

HELEN GARRIOTT
That bag's too full.

RICHARD
I know, Mom.

HELEN GARRIOTT
Richard, one piece of advice before
you leave. Don't miss the moon
because you're too busy staring at
the stars.

RICHARD
Is this like an interactive story?
Is Liz supposed to be the moon?

She hugs him.

HELEN GARRIOTT
Just come back to us safe.

EXT. MOSCOW, RUSSIA - SHEREMETYEVO INT'L AIRPORT - DAY

Outside the airline terminal, Richard hauls a mess of luggage
with him into the back of a Moscow taxi with the help of a
RUSSIAN TAXI DRIVER.

TITLE:

"SHEREMETYEVO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MOSCOW"

RUSSIAN TAXI DRIVER
Destination?

RICHARD
Star City.

RUSSIAN TAXI DRIVER
For cosmonauts?

RICHARD
Correct.

RUSSIAN TAXI DRIVER
Not in Moscow.

RICHARD
No, no, it is. I was told that
everyone in Moscow knows where Star
City is.

RUSSIAN TAXI DRIVER
Not in Moscow.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF MOSCOW - DAY

The taxi, clearly lost, wanders through the drab Soviet-era outskirts of Moscow.

The taxi pulls up beside an old Russian woman walking with a little girl.

Asking the old woman directions, the driver makes rocket-launch gestures with his hands.

EXT. STAR CITY - DAY

The taxi passes down a wide avenue through Star City - a vast space-training complex that looks like a very underpopulated, space-themed Soviet university with large institutional buildings, dorms, and outsized concrete plazas.

INT. STAR CITY - RICHARD'S DORM ROOM - DAY

Richard stands with his bags, looking around his small, very Soviet dorm room.

He begins to unpack. The first thing he lifts out of his suitcase is-

The chunk of rock that he found when he was boy, that his father did not believe was really a meteorite.

He sets this talisman on his desk so he will be able to look at it every day.

INT. STAR CITY - DINING HALL - EVENING

ANGLE ON: A large pink boiled sausage plops onto a plate next to some colorless boiled vegetables.

Standing in line at the food counter, Richard looks up from the plate of unappetizing food into-

The gaze of the large unsmiling RUSSIAN WOMAN behind the food counter.

He gives her a weak smile - and she beams at him.

MAN BEHIND HIM IN LINE

Looks like you've just made a new friend. Richard, I'm Mike Fincke, mission commander. Glad you're with us.

Richard and American astronaut MIKE FINCKE (40) shake hands.

RICHARD
Nice to meet you, Mike.

MIKE FINCKE
Hope you like boiled sausage.

INT. STAR CITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

We are looking through a window at a statue of Yuri Gagarin in the plaza outside.

RUSSIAN TEACHER (O.S.)
V chem problema?

We REVERSE ANGLE and find Richard and Mike Fincke sitting in student chair desks facing the severe-looking female RUSSIAN TEACHER.

MIKE FINCKE
Kabina gorit.

RICHARD
(doesn't understand)
Ka... bina go... rit?

MIKE FINCKE
(low, to Richard)
The cockpit is on fire.

RICHARD
Ah. Da. Ka... bina go... rit.

RUSSIAN TEACHER
Chto takoye protsent kislroda?

RICHARD
Chto... ta... koye... prot...
sent... kis... lo... roda?

RUSSIAN TEACHER
Khorosho.

Richard smiles gratefully.

The Russian teacher does not smile. She stares at him expectantly.

RICHARD
(low, to Mike)
Why's she looking at me like that?

MIKE FINCKE
 (low, to Richard)
 I think she's waiting for the
 answer.

RICHARD
 (to teacher)
 Ah. The oxygen percentage is ...
 low?

RUSSIAN TEACHER
 Na russkom.

RICHARD
 Ah... Da. Kis... lorod... niz...
 kiy.

RUSSIAN TEACHER
 Bravo.

Mike extends his fist to Richard, and Richard bumps it with his.

INT. STAR CITY - SCULPTING ROOM - DAY

Richard (in a kind of long-underwear bodysuit with hood) lies on his back with knees raised on a strange slanted table while sculpting technicians in lab coats measure his dimensions with calipers.

RICHARD
 The fetal position is one of my
 personal favorites.

The technicians do not smile at his little joke.

IN THE SCULPTING BASIN-

Still in the fetal position with knees raised, Richard is now on his back in a kind of basin, like a very cramped Japanese tub. The technicians help position his feet into footrests and his head in the headrest.

Technicians hold his arms raised and his body in the correct position, while others slowly pour buckets of liquid plaster of Paris into the sculpting basin.

Richard lies totally still in the basin, in the fetal position, as the plaster of Paris rises around him, already hardening.

A mini-crane is wheeled over, hand-straps lowered down...

Richard takes hold of the straps and is lifted (covered with plaster of Paris) out of the mold that has formed around his body.

He watches as technicians begin to sculpt the mold of his body with scrapers.

TIME CUT TO:

SCULPTING ROOM - LATER-

Now wearing a full space suit with clear-visored helmet, Richard lies in the same fetal position - but the mold of his body has been transformed into the fully built seat liner that will hold him on his journey to space.

CLOSE ON RICHARD: Starting to feel it. This is as near as he's ever been to making the trip.

INT. ATTIC ROOM ("ULTIMA 9")- DAWN - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

The computer-animated young man ("Avatar") stands at the attic window looking out at a distant, computer-animated horizon, where an orange sun floats.

As before, The computer-animation graphics here are from "Ultima 9," a good decade more advanced than the mid-80s "Ultima 4."

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)

Avatar, are you ready for the many adventures required of you to save Britannia?

AVATAR

I am, Lord British.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)

And where will you go?

AVATAR

To the ends of the earth, my Lord.
And beyond.

DEEP VOICE (O.S.)

Then go, Avatar. Go.

A silent pause, and-

Avatar leaps through the window-

Leaving shards of shattered glass hanging in the air like diamonds.

A moment later, we see him running toward the distant horizon.

INT. STAR CITY - DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Richard lies in his bunk, exhausted, but his mind too stimulated to allow him to sleep.

He raises his knees and arms in bed until he has assumed the fetal position he will take inside the Soyuz rocket on launch day.

He remains like that, eyes closed, trying to visualize the moment in his own mind.

EXT. STAR CITY - DAY

A flock of pigeons bursts into flight as-

Richard, Mike Fincke, and Russian Cosmonaut YURI LONCHAKOV (40) ride by on Russian bicycles. They race each other, laughing like kids let out of school.

Except for them, the avenues and plazas of Star City seem empty.

BY A STATUE OF GAGARIN-

The three astronauts-in-training pose for a group selfie.

INT. STAR CITY - DINING HALL - EVENING

ANGLE ON: A large pink boiled sausage plops onto a plate next to some colorless boiled vegetables.

Once again standing in line at the food counter, RICHARD looks up from the plate of unappetizing food into-

The gaze of the large unsmiling Russian woman behind the food counter.

He smiles weakly... She beams at him.

Trying not to laugh, Mike Fincke pats Richard on the shoulder.

INT. STAR CITY - CLASSROOM - DAY

Richard and Mike Fincke sit facing the Russian teacher.

RICHARD
 (to teacher)
 How do you say, "Please, no more
 sausages" in Russian?

RUSSIAN TEACHER
 Pozhaluysta, bol'she kolbas.

RICHARD
 (relieved)
 Da. Spasibo.

INT. STAR CITY - DINING HALL - EVENING

Richard regards the large unsmiling Russian woman across the food counter.

RICHARD
 Poz... hal... uysta... bol...
 she... kolbas.

He did it. Richard is proud of himself. The Russian woman beams at him and this time-

Deposits two large pink boiled sausages onto his plate.

Mike Fincke pats Richard on the shoulder.

MIKE FINCKE
 It's going to be some wedding.

INT. TRAINING CAPSULE - DAY

CLOSE ON RICHARD: ... His face almost as pink as those sausages, sweat pouring down his cheeks as inches away-

We find Mike Fincke and Yuri Lonchakov in almost the same condition. It's close to a hundred degrees inside the closed training capsule and the men are dangerously overheated and tangled with each other as each struggles to-

Change out of his spacesuit and into his aquatic survival suit in the claustrophobic space that affords almost no room to move.

Richard is struggling more than the others, on the verge of passing out.

EXT. OPEN SEA - TRAINING CAPSULE - DAY

A hatch opens at the top of the training capsule floating in the open sea and-

Richard bursts out, gasping for air, drenched in sweat, one sleeve of his aquatic survival suit still flapping loose. He takes huge, desperate gulps of air.

He slips and almost tumbles down into the survival raft tethered to the floating capsule, as Mike and then Yuri (both with survival suits properly on) emerge from the training capsule after him.

Shaken and exhausted, Richard tries to catch his breath as a motor launch approaches to pick them up.

EXT. OPEN SEA - DIVE BOAT - DAY

Still over-heated, Richard stands under a cold hose shower on the deck of the dive boat, trying to lower his body temperature and regain his composure.

EXT./INT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 9") - NIGHT -(COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

Striding through a wooded area with a long sword strapped to his back, computer-animated Avatar sees a small Gypsy hut in a clearing.

As before, The computer-animation graphics here are from "Ultima 9," a good decade more advanced than the mid-80s "Ultima 4."

Entering the hut, computer-animated Avatar finds a beautiful computer-animated FORTUNE TELLER in colorful robes standing behind a table covered with fortune-telling cards.

Computer-animated Avatar sits down on the empty chair.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED FORTUNE TELLER
Greetings, Avatar. Britannia awaits. This will be your ultimate challenge. The final battle for the destiny of Britannia. If you take this journey, you will never return to earth again. Nor shall you return to Britannia. Are you now prepared for this most important quest?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
What journey?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED FORTUNE TELLER

Long have you been the savior of
Britannia. Eight times before, you
have made this trip and saved
Britannia from utter destruction.
This time, you must finish the
task. For after this journey, your
future lies on a different path.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR

What path?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED FORTUNE TELLER

This I cannot see.

INT. STAR CITY - DORM ROOM - DAY

We are back in Star City, looking at the ceiling of RICHARD'S dorm room.

His eyes are open. He's in bed, on his back in the fetal position, as if strapped into the cockpit of the Soyuz.

Slowly, he unbends his limbs.

INT. STAR CITY - SOYUZ TESTING HALL - DAY

We're in a large hanger-like hall where sections of the International Space Station ("ISS") and the Soyuz-12 capsule have been recreated for training purposes.

A loud, repetitive FIRE ALARM begins to sound...

INT. SOYUZ TEST COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Richard, Mike Fincke, and Yuri Lonchakov (in spacesuits) are crammed into their seats in the Soyuz test cockpit with thick operation manuals on their laps as the FIRE ALARM continues all around them-

RICHARD

(trying not to panic)
What's happening?

MIKE FINCKE

We've got a fire on the Soyuz.

RICHARD

Shit.

YURI LONCHAKOV
Full capsule depressurization in
effect.

The men close their visors.

MIKE FINCKE
Enact emergency landing sequence.

Yuri flips a switch and cranks a knob on the instrumentation
dashboard. The fire alarm continues...

YURI LONCHAKOV
Malfunction.

RICHARD
Nothing's working. The digital
computer's down.

MIKE FINCKE
Stay calm. This is what we're
training for.

Each man pulls a red file from the middle of his operation
manual and opens it as we switch to-

RICHARD'S CLOSE POV as-

He struggles to read the words written in the manual in both
English and Russian-

"IN CASE OF FIRE MALFUNCTION"-

The FIRE ALARM continuing to reverberate all around him,
inside his head, the words on the page beginning to blur
because of his own panic...

MIKE FINCKE (CONT'D)
Switch to manual systems over-ride.

But too overwhelmed to act, Richard sits frozen...

MIKE FINCKE (CONT'D)
(urgent)
Richard, the switch.

Too late: the fire alarm ceases, bright lights flash on and
then-

Everything goes still and quiet.

MIKE FINCKE (CONT'D)
Catastrophic impact. All crew
dead.

RICHARD

Shit.

Mike and Yuri open their visors.

Richard keeps his visor closed - ashamed, his confidence in tatters.

INT. STAR CITY - DORM ROOM - DAY

Richard is Skyping on his laptop with someone back in America (we can't see who it is, but the voice is familiar):

BUZZ ALDRIN (OVER SKYPE)

Yeah, my old man knew one of the Wright brothers, I can never remember which one, Orville or what's-his-name, Wilbur, but he knew that guy and he met Amelia Earhart too, no shit.

Now we see on Richard's laptop screen that it's-

Buzz Aldrin (late 70s), Skyping with Richard while driving in his car, wearing his leather flight jacket and a pair of regular glasses over sunglasses and a blue NASA ball cap with red flames on the sides.

BUZZ ALDRIN (OVER SKYPE) (CONT'D)

You know what else my old man did? Took a transatlantic flight on the goddamn Hindenburg a month before she blew up. God's fucking truth. Then I come along, the only son, and how in hell am I supposed to top any of what he did in the big scheme of things? So next thing I know I'm flying an F-86 Sabre in Korea, shooting down two Soviet MiG-15's. There's a fucking rush for you. After that, the only place left for me to go was you-know-where.

RICHARD

Buzz, on Gemini XII-

BUZZ ALDRIN (OVER SKYPE)

That was '66.

RICHARD

You space-walked.

BUZZ ALDRIN

Yep, did 3 EVA's. The initial walk was the most significant 'cause it gave us our first actual proof that astronauts could work outside the spacecraft. That was the whole point of the Gemini mission. Nobody ever used underwater pool training for EVA maneuvers till we did it. Now it's standard. The Russkies had you in their neutral buoyancy pool yet?

RICHARD

We're doing it tomorrow.

BUZZ ALDRIN (OVER SKYPE)

There's no better space-walk training.

RICHARD

They don't plan on letting me space-walk on the mission.

BUZZ ALDRIN (OVER SKYPE)

No? Fuck 'em. You wanna go for a space walk, Richard, you go for a fucking space-walk. I did it. Your old man did it. What are they gonna do, throw you in space jail? Fuck 'em. You only live once.

(glances out car window)

Shit - cops. Gotta scoot. Safe travels, Richard. Over and out.

Buzz cancels the Skype connection.

INT. STAR CITY - NEUTRAL BUOYANCY POOL - DAY

Now we are in Star City's huge Neutral Buoyancy Pool Training Center. Richard, Mike, and Yuri (all in bulky pressurized Orlan suits with breathing packs) are being lowered on a movable platform into the neutral buoyancy pool.

At the bottom of the tank is a full-size replica of the Russian modules of the ISS.

Richard looks like he's being lowered to his doom as-

INT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

We enter HIS POV observed by multiple floating underwater cameras moving downward through clear light-filled water, deeper into the huge tank, Richard's BREATHING growing louder in his ears as he experiences the unpleasant constriction of the Orlan suit on his movements and thoughts.

Mike hand-signals that they are going to attach themselves via tethers to the outside hatch area of the ISS module and practice "space-walking" along the outside of the structure.

Mike attaches his tether first... Then Yuri does.

Richard, meanwhile, is struggling with his thick-gloved fingers to get the clip on his tether open...

His panic grows, his BREATHING ratchets up louder as...

Untethered, he begins to float helplessly away from the hatch area into the unattended areas of the pool, his drift captured by the underwater cameras. If they were in space, he'd be dead.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

In the middle of a remote forest, far from human civilization, Richard (wearing a land-survival jumpsuit) hacks repeatedly at the trunk of a narrow tree with an ax. He's been at it for hours and is pouring sweat.

A few more swings and miraculously...

The tree crashes to the ground.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Richard and Mike work together finishing a survival lean-to made from branches from the tree Richard cut down.

Nearby, Yuri blows on the first sparks of a campfire he has started with a flint. Beside him is a skinned rabbit carcass on a wooden spit.

INT. LEAN-TO - NIGHT

Mike and Yuri lie sleeping inside the finished lean-to.

Beside them we find Richard, wide awake.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Richard emerges alone from the lean-to, a blanket wrapped around his shoulders.

He stares up at the night sky, twinkling with stars and planets.

INT. BRITANNIA CASTLE ("ULTIMA 9") - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

Computer-animated Avatar enters the throne room of computer-animated Britannia Castle at a jog, so eager is he to finally reach-

Computer-animated Lord British (white-bearded and purple-robed), ruler of Britannia.

As before, The computer-animation graphics here are from "Ultima 9," a good decade more advanced than the mid-80s "Ultima 4."

Computer-animated Lord British rises from his throne to greet the arriving savior-

COMPUTER-ANIMATED LORD BRITISH

Avatar! It is you at long last! I sent word seemingly ages ago and have awaited your arrival day and night and now you are here. I tell you truly, Avatar, trouble, very serious trouble is afoot in our land, and we need your help if Britannia is to survive in peace and security. I fear that only you can solve the mystery of this pernicious darkness, Avatar. I know that I have asked much of you over the years, but we need you now more than ever. Will you dedicate yourself to our survival?

Standing before computer-animated Lord British, computer-animated Avatar blinks several times, appearing to consider the great task put before him.

Then he bows.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR

On my word.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Back in the clearing, we see a shiver of doubt come over Richard:

Can he really do what he's dreamed his whole life of doing?

INT. STAR CITY - SOYUZ TESTING HALL - DAY

Once again, we are back in the Soyuz testing hall as a repetitive FIRE ALARM begins to sound...

INT. SOYUZ TEST COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Once again, we find Richard, Mike, and Yuri (in spacesuits) crammed into their seats in the Soyuz test cockpit with thick operation manuals on their laps as the FIRE ALARM continues all around them.

MIKE FINCKE

(calm)

We've got a fire on the Soyuz.

Richard flips a switch, but nothing happens.

RICHARD

Malfunction.

We can see Richard's failure on the last landing test weighing on him doubly now: he knows he cannot afford to fail again.

YURI LONCHAKOV

(pushing a button)

Full capsule depressurization in effect.

The men close their visors.

MIKE FINCKE

Enact emergency landing sequence.

Mike flips a switch and cranks a knob on the instrumentation dashboard.

RICHARD

Digital computer's down.

MIKE FINCKE

(to Richard)

You've got this, buddy.

Each man pulls a red file from the middle of his operation manual and opens it as we switch to-

RICHARD'S CLOSE POV as-

Richard reads the words written in the manual in both English and Russian-

"IN CASE OF FIRE MALFUNCTION"-

The FIRE ALARM continuing to sound all around him, inside his head, the words on the page beginning to faintly blur before his eyes-

Richard glances anxiously at a small video camera in the cockpit-

INT. OPERATIONS MONITORING ROOM - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The Roscosmos Director, among a group of Russian space officials, military officers and dignitaries, observes the astronauts on a video screen as computers track the status of the capsule during the test-landing procedure.

The director seems to be particularly watching Richard...

INT. SOYUZ TEST COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Who, as if sensing the director's gaze, takes a breath to calm himself, the words in the manual coming back into focus:

"Switch to manual systems over-ride."

RICHARD

Switch to manual systems over-ride.

Richard activates a switch on the dashboard...

Yuri cranks a knob... Then Mike presses two buttons-

MIKE FINCKE

(off the monitors)

Hold steady...

The test capsule is shaking. The crew holds its breath...

MIKE FINCKE (CONT'D)

Hold steady...

Hold steady...

Touch-down.

All crew survive.

EXT. KAZAKHSTAN - STEPPE - DAWN

Rubbing their hands to keep warm, two Russian officers wait beside railroad tracks in the frigid dawn in the desert steppe of Kazakhstan.

One of them nudges the other, points:

Far in the distance. A train, slowly coming their way.

As it lumbers closer, we see that it's no normal train...

One of the Russian officers takes a 50-kopeck coin and places it on the rail so the train will run over it and make him a souvenir. He shrugs at the other officer: *Why not?*

The train rumbles over the coin-

And we see that the engines of the Soyuz rocket being carried on the train are truly, unbelievably massive.

EXT. BAIKONUR, KAZAKHSTAN - DAY

A Roscosmos mini-bus with tinted windows drives through the streets of Baikonur - a small ex-Soviet city rented from the Kazakh government by the Russian Space Agency.

TITLE:

"BAIKONUR, KAZAKHSTAN"

INT. COSMONAUT QUARANTINE FACILITY - DAY

Observed by doctors in lab coats, Richard is strapped into a mechanically revolving chair. He is trying not to throw up now, so that he won't throw up on the way to space.

Nearby, Mike and Yuri are both revolving in chairs as well.

MIKE FINKE

How're you feeling, buddy?

RICHARD

(not really)

...Okay.

MIKE FINKE

The adult diaper comes highly recommended.

RICHARD

Make mine a double.

Richard turns to look at the entrance to the large room and sees-

His dad standing with his suitcase and some Russian officials. All the Russians are wearing surgical masks and caps. Despite his very long journey to get here, Owen looks quietly animated in a way we haven't seen except in the old NASA videos.

Kneeling between Owen and Richard are a couple of dozen press photographers (also in surgical masks and caps) snapping photos of the astronauts.

Owen navigates through them to get to Richard (still revolving in his chair).

OWEN GARRIOTT

Excuse me, yep, excuse me... Hello, Richard.

RICHARD

Hi, Dad.

OWEN GARRIOTT

I see they've got you in the chair.

RICHARD

I've decided to go with the adult Pampers. What do you think?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Highly recommended.

RICHARD

How was your trip?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Twenty-eight hours. A little long when you consider we're still on the same planet.

Richard notices a small smile on his father's mouth.

RICHARD

Dad, are you smiling at your own joke?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Possible.

The chairs stop revolving. A technician unbuckles Richard, who stands up too quickly, wobbles and-

Owen grabs him before he can fall.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)

I got you.

Richard steadies himself against his dad as the photographers snap photos.

RICHARD

Shouldn't you be wearing a mask in quarantine?

OWEN GARRIOTT

I told the supervisor I'm your father - whatever I've got in me, you've already got in your DNA. And then some.

We catch a flash of fatherly pride in Owen's eyes before he looks away.

EXT. KAZAKHSTAN - BAIKONUR COSMODROME - DAWN

Launch day.

We are looking at the 150-foot-tall Soyuz rocket and launch scaffolding silhouetted against the burning orange dawn of the Baikonur horizon.

TITLE:

"LAUNCH DAY - OCTOBER 12, 2008"

INT. BAIKONUR - COSMONAUT DORM ROOM - DAWN

Richard (in a blue flight suit) sits on the edge of his bunk, trying to mentally prepare himself.

A KNOCK on the door.

RICHARD

Come in.

The door opens and Owen (also in blue flight suit) enters. He looks just like he did when he last went to space, but thirty-five years older.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Little chilly out there, but good clear launch weather.

(studies Richard)

Okay?

Richard nods - all he trusts himself to do at the moment.

Owen is surprised to see the chunk of rock sitting on the desk.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)

(picks it up)

What's this doing here? You don't still believe this is a meteorite, do you?

RICHARD

(calmly certain)

Definitely a meteorite.

Owen stares at him, a small smile finally emerging.

OWEN GARRIOTT

Okay. Almost forgot - I brought you something.

Owen pulls a small object from his pocket and hands it to Richard.

It's a "Lord British" plastic figurine, expertly painted; the last thing Richard ever expected to receive from his dad.

RICHARD

Where'd you find this?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Hobby shop in Houston. I was walking by and recognized him in the window. Am I wrong, or does he look a little like you?

RICHARD

There's a character that looks like you too. I've been meaning to tell you that for twenty years.

OWEN GARRIOTT

You might've given me more to do than wander around looking for a rocket that's never going to fly.

Richard stares at his dad.

RICHARD

You played Ultima?

OWEN GARRIOTT

"Played" would be an overstatement. I watched it.

A pause as Richard processes this.

RICHARD

What'd you think of the game?

OWEN GARRIOTT

Not my kind of thing. But on its own terms, impressive. You kept your nerve and didn't do it halfway. And if you don't do something only halfway, you got a chance go all the way.

Their eyes meet - one of the few times this will happen.

OWEN GARRIOTT (CONT'D)

Just like you're about to do today.
I'll see you out there.

Owen leaves. And Richard remains, still holding the "Lord British" plastic figurine.

INT. BAIKONUR - PRESS HALL - DAY

Mike, Yuri, and Richard (all in blue flight suits) stand formally before a Russian Orthodox Priest.

The priest blesses them with a cross, then shakes holy water from a straw whisk onto each of their faces.

Richard is last. The holy water drips down his face.

INT. BAIKONUR - COSMONAUT DRESSING ROOM - DAY

WE ARE WITH RICHARD as he, Mike, and Yuri solemnly - like teammates dressing for the biggest match of their lives - go through the complicated process of putting on their space suits.

Richard knows what he's doing now, has done it before. But never before has it felt like this.

The muted sound of PEOPLE CHEERING (PRELAP) begins to grow...

INT. MINI-BUS (MOVING) - DAY

We are in RICHARD'S POV as he stares through the tinted window of the mini-bus taking them to the launch site, the hint of his own reflection (wearing the black "Snoopy cap" with headphone and mic) ghosting over-

Images of the Baikonur Cosmodrome and the small cheering crowd of people being left behind.

EXT. BAIKONUR COSMODROME - LAUNCH PAD - DAY

In the shadow of the gigantic Soyuz Rocket, the mini-bus pulls up and stops.

Engine smoke has already begun pouring out of the lower reaches of the launch scaffolding and rising around the launch tower.

Richard, Mike, and Yuri (each carrying a small metal air-conditioning box so they don't overheat) step off the mini-bus and walk toward a small group of final well-wishers gathered in front of the stairs to the scaffolding elevator that will take them up to the cockpit.

Owen is there, waiting to see Richard off. Father and son just look at each other...

As Richard slowly walks by and climbs the stairs behind the others.

Just before he disappears into the launch elevator he turns and sees-

His dad give him a thumbs-up.

Then Richard steps into the elevator as a launch official closes the gate.

INT. SOYUZ ROCKET COCKPIT - DAY

Richard awkwardly climbs down into the empty, three-seat cockpit through the narrow hatch. He's the first one in.

With difficulty - the space is shockingly cramped - he settles himself in his seat liner (on his back in the fetal position, essentially), takes a breath to calm his nerves, and looks at-

The dashboard of extraordinarily complex instrumentation in front of him-

Every single switch labeled solely in Russian.

EXT. LAUNCH VIEWING STAND - DAY

Owen joins Robert, Helen and... Liz on the viewing stand some distance from the launch pad.

HELEN GARRIOTT
How did he seem?

OWEN GARRIOTT
He'll be fine.

Helen gives her ex-husband an extra moment of scrutiny, detecting the worry behind his unemotional facade.

ROBERT GARRIOTT
Of course he will. He's Lord
British.

For the first time, Robert doesn't sound jealous of his younger brother, but proud of him.

HELEN GARRIOTT
There's something I've always
wondered about. If Richard's Lord
British, who's the Avatar?

LIZ
He's Richard, too.

They all look at Liz, some important realization about Richard finally clicking into place for each one of them.

Helen takes Liz's hand.

OWEN GARRIOTT
Here we go.

They all turn to watch The Soyuz Rocket in the distance, engine noise rising now to a window-shattering ROAR and thick column of flame breaking through swirling clouds of smoke as...

Lift-off is achieved...

INT. SOYUZ ROCKET COCKPIT - DAY

And WE ARE WITH RICHARD, Mike, and Yuri strapped in their seats, ENGINE ROAR shaking the vehicle...

Richard pinned down hard in his seat by over four G's of acceleration, shaking along with the vehicle, like being inside an enormous wave continuously breaking...

His excitement and thrill unexpectedly mixed with something like sadness. Because the thing he has always dreamed about is actually happening.

And WE STAY ON RICHARD, thrown forward then shoved back in his seat as-

The first engine dies, and the second starts with a propulsive, crackling ROAR-

EXT. KENNEDY LAUNCH CENTER - VIEWING STAND - DAY - 1973

And now we're back at Kennedy Launch Center in 1973 and there's a similar ROAR, though more distant as-

YOUNG RICHARD stands with his mom and brother on the viewing stand, inexpressible pride in his eyes, watching-

His dad's rocket rip upwards through blue sky, flames and smoke, up, up-

INT. SOYUZ ROCKET COCKPIT - DAY/NIGHT - 2008

And now back in the Soyuz, ROAR ongoing, Richard viscerally compressed by the continuous weight of the G-forces on his chest.

MIKE FINCKE

(off the dash monitor)

8:54, 8:55, 8:56, 8:57, 8:58, 8:59,
9-

Suddenly the engine roar ceases-

And the three astronauts are weightless, strapped into their seats. A pen attached to a cord floats up from a clipboard and hits the instrument dash in slow motion.

Richard finds he can breathe normally again.

RICHARD

Pressure's gone.

YURI LONCHAKOV

All good.

RICHARD

Are we in space?

MIKE FINCKE

Ever seen day turn to night in
fifteen seconds?

Over the next fifteen seconds, Richard watches the light outside turn to the blackness of space.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOYUZ ROCKET COCKPIT - MANY HOURS LATER - NIGHT

Sparks of molten fire are pouring past the Soyuz's windows as the vehicle performs the "burn" necessary to propel it into the same orbit as the ISS.

Richard finds the fiery sight alarming, as if the vehicle might burn up. But it is beautiful too.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOYUZ ROCKET COCKPIT - MANY HOURS LATER - NIGHT

Yuri dozing in his seat, his daughter's small stuffed frog gripped in one hand.

Mike studying the operation manual as-

Richard stares riveted by the sight passing out his window of-

EXT. SPACE

The moon's coolly glowing surface, closer and brighter than he ever could have imagined. And there, like a reflective dragonfly floating in front of the moon-

Richard has his first live view of the International Space Station ("ISS").

EXT. SPACE/ISS DOCKING PORT

In the silent crystalline darkness of space, we watch the Soyuz slowly approaching the docking port of the ISS:

Closer... Closer...

And connect.

EXT. SPACE

The ISS is a massive, ramshackle structure 240 feet long by 355 feet wide by 65 feet high, made up of dozens of modular capsules connected together, with extended solar-paneled wings. At an altitude of 249 miles, it orbits the earth every 92 minutes.

We take in this floating city...

And observe that from certain modules lights are shining through tiny, thick-glassed windows. PUSHING IN ON ONE WINDOW-

We find the small figure of Richard looking out at-

The blue, almost perfectly spherical earth hanging in the infinite blackness of the universe. Clouds are legible down there, the blue of oceans, the shapes of continents-

Which Richard's awe-filled eyes tell us is not infinite after all, as he always believed, but just one very finite, very tiny planet in an endless void.

INT. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION ("ISS") - DAY

We are looking at the ceiling of Richard's ISS sleeping quarters.

Richard lies on his back, eyes open, listening to the station's ambient mechanical hum.

TITLE:

"INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - DAY TWO"

He looks down the length of his body... his sleeping bag is tethered to the floor. He eases himself out of the bag-

And immediately begins to float, weightless.

IN THE BATHROOM-

Moving in slowed, weightless motion, Richard brushes his teeth. He spits the mouthful of foam into a clear plastic bag and seals it before it can float away.

INT. ISS - VARIOUS SECTIONS - DAY

IN THE AMERICAN SECTION-

Sweating, Richard walks slowly on a compact treadmill. He is tethered to the machine.

Floating to one side of him, Mike and Russian cosmonaut SERGEY VOLKOV (35) play a game of slow-motion catch with multiple tennis balls as-

Cosmonaut OLEG KONNENKO (early 40s) reads a Russian magazine while lying on the ceiling-

And Yuri practices working his digital video camera. When he lets go of the camera for a moment, it begins to float up toward the ceiling.

IN THE GALLEY - LATER-

As Yuri films with his camera...

Richard, Mike, Sergey, and Oleg eat out of small tin cans, playfully using spoons to direct floating bits of food into their mouths before they can get away.

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)
Cosmonauts Sergey Volkov and Oleg Konnenko, Commander Mike Finke, and space participant Richard "Lord British" Garriott take nourishment in ISS galley.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
Fish with brown sauce. Mmm, delicious.

MIKE FINCKE (TO CAMERA)
And nutritious.

Mike rubs his tummy in mock-satisfaction - then has to chase a bit of food floating past his head.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
See, even Mikey likes it.

(Something about Richard already seems *lighter* in space, like a part of himself needed to get up here to emerge.)

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)
Mike Finke, NASA astronaut and commander Expedition 18, on Soyuz TMA-13. Russian-American joint operation.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
They don't call this the *International* Space Station for nothing.

MIKE FINCKE (TO CAMERA)
Bet you didn't know I also speak Japanese.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
Konnichi-Wa, Finke-san.

MIKE FINCKE (TO CAMERA)
Domo arrigato, Garriott-san.

OLEG KONNENKO (TO CAMERA)
(strong Russian accent)
Sorry, English - no.

SERGEY VOLKOV (TO CAMERA)
We are like United Nations with
scary food.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
Mom, if you're watching this,
please send a care package with
M&Ms.
(indicates Yuri)
Ladies and gentlemen, our film
director, cosmonaut Yuri Lonchakov.

Yuri bows.

INT. ISS - VARIOUS SECTIONS - DAY

IN RICHARD'S SLEEPING QUARTERS-

Again we are looking at the ceiling of Richard's ISS sleeping quarters.

Richard lies on his back, eyes open, listening to the ambient mechanical hum.

TITLE:

"INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - DAY FOUR"

He looks down the length of his body... his sleeping bag is tethered to the floor. He eases himself out of the bag-

And immediately begins to float, weightless.

Now for the first time we see the 16-inch L-shaped scar where his liver would be.

IN ANOTHER SECTION - LATER- (DIGITAL VIDEO)

Richard is giving himself an eye exam, reading an eye chart then writing down his answers on a log sheet, while Yuri films...

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
 As the first person in space to
 have had laser-corrective eye
 surgery, I am testing the potential
 effects of zero gravity on my
 surgically corrected vision.
 (reads chart)
 L... Z... W...

IN ANOTHER SECTION - LATER- (DIGITAL VIDEO)

Richard holds a box of cards vertically out toward camera.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)
 And now for a little magic.
 (over cards)
 Abracadabra, etcetera, etcetera...

As Richard holds the box of cards, a single card slowly rises out of the deck all by itself and keeps rising all the way to the ceiling.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)
 I give you the rising-card trick in
 zero gravity.

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)
 That's some crazy stuff, Lord
 British.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
 Thanks, Yuri. But more seriously,
 folks.

Richard holds up a metal cannister and unscrews its top.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)
 One of my mission's main
 experiments concerns the
 possibilities for the
 crystallization of certain proteins
 in space. This was my father, Dr.
 Owen Garriott's, idea.
 (peers inside cannister)
 Coming along nicely.

He makes a note on a log sheet, then closes the cannister.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)
 Thanks, Dad.

Next, with Sergey at his side, Richard picks up a metal tube.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA) (CONT'D)
 Now this is interesting. Inside this tube is the external bolt from Soyuz TMA-12 that the Russian Space Agency believes malfunctioned during the near-catastrophic re-entries into Earth's atmosphere of the last two Russian capsules. Sergey replaced the bolt during a space-walk before I got here. How long was your space-walk, Sergey?

SERGEY VOLKOV (TO CAMERA)
 Six hours eighteen minutes.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
 To be out there must have been... I assume you're confident the problem's been fixed?

SERGEY VOLKOV (TO CAMERA)
 We will find out on way home.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)
 Well, that's, um... Sergey's father was also a cosmonaut.

SERGEY VOLKOV (TO CAMERA)
 Me and Richard are only second-generation astronauts in history to fly in space.

Sergey gives the camera a thumbs-up.

But Richard's thoughts now seem far away, as the camera pushes close on his face...

EXT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 9") - DAY - (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR walks along a computer-animated dirt road.

As before, The computer-animation graphics here are from "Ultima 9," a good decade more advanced than the mid-80s "Ultima 4."

Computer-animated Avatar appears weary. Older. For years he has traveled from one end of the land to the other seeking out and destroying the foes of Lord British. It is not clear, now, how much longer he can go on.

Ahead on the road, waiting for him, he encounters a COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER dressed in a ragged cloak with a hood covering his head and much of his face.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER
So, you are the one they call
Avatar.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
How do you know my name, old man?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER
I have heard it called in the land.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
How may I be of service?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER
Do you have water? I am terribly
thirsty.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
I have been on the road many years.
My waterskin is almost dry. But
you may take what is left.

Computer-animated Avatar unstraps his waterskin and hands it to the computer-animated Wanderer.

In no time the old man has drunk the waterskin dry.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER
I fear I have taken all you had.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
It is what I offered.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER
What may I give in return?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
What do you possess?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED WANDERER
Nothing but who I am.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
And who are you?

INT. ISS - RICHARD'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - DAY

Richard lies on his back in his sleeping quarters, eyes open.

TITLE:

"INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - DAY SIX"

He looks down the length of his body... his sleeping bag is tethered to the floor. He eases himself out of the bag-

And immediately begins to float, weightless.

INT. ISS - VARIOUS MODULES - DAY

Richard awkwardly "swims" along the ceiling through one cluttered, claustrophobic section of the ISS after another, occasionally bumping into walls and objects along the way.

IN THE AMERICAN SECTION-

We find Richard and Mike facing each other a few feet apart, each holding a squirt water bottle and poised for action.

The main difference between them is that Richard is standing upside down, his feet on the ceiling, while Mike is standing right side up on the floor.

Or, at least, that's what we assume-

MIKE FINCKE

Richard, I don't know how to tell you this. You're upside down.

RICHARD

No, I'm not.

MIKE FINCKE

Yeah, you are? Like completely.

RICHARD

Mike, you're upside down.

MIKE FINCKE

Sorry, buddy, but out of the two of us, I'm the one that's right side up.

RICHARD

We'll see about that. Ready?
One... two-

They draw and fire their squirt bottles like gun-slingers-

Slow-motion squirts of water shooting toward each other instead of bullets, the strings of water elongating and breaking apart into drops as-

Richard and Mike try to capture as many drops as they can in their mouths. It's a game-

MIKE FINCKE

Five.

RICHARD

Seven. No hands, Mike.

MIKE FINCKE

I didn't.

RICHARD

Nine.

MIKE FINCKE

You missed that one, Richard.
Eight. Nine.

RICHARD

Tie?

MIKE FINCKE

Okay.

They finish swallowing the remaining water drops in the air.

IN THE LIVING QUARTERS - LATER- (DIGITAL VIDEO)

Yuri is filming-

Richard, Mike, and Sergey studying a bunch of multi-colored, abstract splatter paintings taped to the wall.

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)

We are at opening of first art show
made in space. Lord British is
artist. Let us look.

The camera studies one of the paintings-

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Interesting. Could be many little
planets exploding. Could also be
human sneeze. Come, we will listen
in on artist with his public.

The camera circles back to the astronauts-

MIKE FINCKE

You're saying this is art?

RICHARD

Are *you* saying it's art?

MIKE FINKE

No. I'm asking.

RICHARD

If you think it's art, Mike, it's art.

MIKE FINKE

I don't know what to think.

RICHARD

Exactly what you're supposed to think.

SERGEY VOLKOV

I am confused.

MIKE FINKE

That makes two of us, Sergey.

RICHARD

That's how we know it's working.

MIKE FINCKE AND SERGEY VOLKOV

Huh?

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)

Okay, we talk to artist for better understanding.

(approaches Richard)

Lord British, how do you call these pictures?

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)

Zero-gravity action space paintings.

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)

I see. Lord British and space action paintings.

RICHARD (TO CAMERA)

Action space paintings.

YURI LONCHAKOV (O.S.)

Yes. Well, thank you for watching.

The camera switches off.

ANOTHER SECTION - LATER-

Covering one eye with his hand, RICHARD reads the eye chart, noting the results on his log sheet.

Now he stands AT THE WINDOW with the same eye covered, staring back at-

Earth.

He covers the other eye, and looks again.

INT. ISS - RICHARD'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

RICHARD, bare-chested, looks down at the 16-inch L-shaped scar on his torso, where his liver would be.

He pulls on a fresh T-shirt. On the T-shirt is an image of Computer-animated Avatar, a long sword strapped across his back.

INT. ISS - VARIOUS SECTIONS - DAY

AT THE WINDOW-

Richard snaps a photo of earth with a digital camera with a powerful zoom lens.

Next, ON HIS LAPTOP-

He uploads the photo. It appears on his screen next to another photo of the exact same section of the earth taken many years earlier.

Richard compares the two images side by side.

RICHARD
Mike, look at this.

Mike swims over.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
The one on the left was taken twenty-five years ago from the exact same orbital position. Look at the difference: climate change, overpopulation.

MIKE FINCKE
Who took the earlier photo?

RICHARD
My dad.

MIKE FINCKE
He went up twice? Must be a pretty amazing guy.

RICHARD

I guess he is, in his own way.

MIKE FINCKE

It must've been kind of like having a walking space museum sitting at your dinner table every night when you were a kid. Did you ever worry something might happen to him on one of his missions?

The question has never occurred to Richard until this moment.

RICHARD

I never did. But I worry that something might happen to him now.

EXT. BRITANNIA ("ULTIMA 9") - DAY (COMPUTER-ANIMATED)

We are back on the roadside with computer-animated Avatar and the computer-animated Wanderer.

As before, The computer-animation graphics here are from "Ultima 9," a good decade more advanced than the mid-80s "Ultima 4."

The computer-animated Wanderer pulls back the hood of his cloak to show computer-animated Avatar his identity.

Avatar is amazed. He kneels on the road before the old man.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR

You are my Lord British.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED LORD BRITISH

And you, my son, are my avatar.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR

Forgive me, my Lord. I did not recognize you.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED LORD BRITISH

We are the same, you and I. We only inhabit different worlds.

Indeed the men look much the same... They both look like Richard.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED LORD BRITISH

(CONT'D)

Rise now and give me your hand.

Computer-animated Avatar rises. But he does not give his hand to computer-animated Lord British.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED LORD BRITISH
(CONT'D)

Do you not trust me, Avatar, after
all that we have been through
together?

COMPUTER-ANIMATED AVATAR
I trust you more than myself, my
Lord.

COMPUTER-ANIMATED LORD BRITISH
Then give me your hand and all will
be well.

Computer-animated Lord British extends his hand.

Now computer-animated Avatar extends his hand...

INT. ISS - DAY

Richard floats beside a Ham radio station. He's wearing an audio headset and nervously (in weightless slow-motion) tapping a pencil against his knuckles.

TITLE:

"INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - DAY EIGHT"

INT. KAZAKHSTAN - BAIKONUR COSMODROME - DAY

While on earth, amidst a small gaggle of Russian space officials, Owen Garriott sits by an antiquated-looking Ham radio set. Waiting impatiently.

After a while, he wipes the sweat of his palm on the leg of his pants. At that moment-

RICHARD'S VOICE comes over the radio-

RICHARD (OVER RADIO)
This is W5KWQ in the International
Space Station. W5KWQ in the
International Space Station.
Orbiting the earth at an altitude
of 249 miles. Earth, can you read
me? Over.

In his haste Owen grabs for the handset-

But drops it on the floor-

Then bends to retrieve the handset-

And bumps shoulders with a Russian Space Official doing the same-

OWEN GARRIOTT

Damn it.

RUSSIAN SPACE OFFICIAL

Sorry, Dr. Garriott.

RICHARD (OVER RADIO)

This is W5KWQ in the International Space Station. Earth, can you read me? Over.

Owen grabs the handset-

OWEN GARRIOTT (INTO HANDSET)

W5KWQ, this is W5LFL in Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan. I read you loud and clear, Richard. How's the view up there? Over.

INT. ISS - CONTINUOUS - DAY - 2008

Hearing his father's voice from earth is profoundly moving to Richard. He "swims" over to the window and takes a long look:

His own fragile planet surrounded by the infinite blackness of space.

RICHARD (INTO HEADSET)

The view's beautiful, Dad. Just like you described it all those years ago. Over.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)

I knew you'd like it. How was the trip up? Over.

A beat; Richard finds himself suddenly on the verge of tears, wanting this journey to last forever.

RICHARD (INTO HEADSET)

Fast. It's all going too fast. Over.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
I remember that feeling very well.
But Richard...

Surprised by his own emotion, Owen has to pause...

RICHARD (INTO HEADSET)
Yes, Dad? Over.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
I can promise you this. It's a
feeling that will stay with you for
the rest of your life. Over.

RICHARD (INTO HEADSET)
Dad, that time you space-walked?
Over.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER RADIO)
What about it? Over.

RICHARD (INTO HEADSET)
Was it incredible? Over.

OWEN GARRIOTT (OVER INTERCOM)
Yes, son. It sure was. Over.

Suddenly, an explosion of STATIC and unintelligible noise-

RICHARD (INTO HEADSET)
Dad? Dad? Hello? Over.

Richard realizes their connection is broken.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
Shit.

He pulls off his headset. The camera stays on his face,
recording his private emotions-

He raises a hand to block the lens.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
(quiet)
Not now, Yuri, okay?

Yuri, who's been filming, lowers the camera.

YURI LONCHAKOV
Okay, Richard.

Yuri "swims" away with his camera.

Richard returns to looking out the window. He remains there, staring back at the earth, thinking about his dad.

Until finally, in a rush of self-belief, he realizes what he's going to do.

RICHARD

Fuck 'em. What are they going to do, put me in space jail?

INT. ISS - JOINT AIRLOCK MODULE - DAY

Richard and Sergey (both in fully pressurized space suits, with SAFER jet-thruster packs on their backs) enter the airlock. Behind them we see Yuri filming with his digital camera-

And Mike looking worried.

TITLE:

"INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - DAY NINE"

Sergey closes and locks the interior airtight door behind them, sealing them off from the rest of the ISS. Now they can only communicate with Mike over INTERCOM.

MIKE FINCKE

Richard.

RICHARD

Mike.

MIKE FINCKE

Just checking. Safety tether.

Richard pats the long coiled safety tether hooked to his waist belt.

RICHARD

Check.

MIKE FINCKE

SAFER pack.

Richard pats the jet-thruster pack on his back.

RICHARD

Check.

MIKE FINCKE

Sergey...

SERGEY

I look after Richard like my brother, Mike.

MIKE FINCKE

Anything goes wrong out there, I'll never forgive myself.

SERGEY

What can go wrong? So Roscosmos kicks us out for letting crazy American do space-walk - so, we get work in my uncle's garage in Kiev, no problem.

MIKE FINCKE

This was my call. I take full responsibility.

RICHARD

If you guys are finished chit-chatting, I'd like to go on my space-walk now.

MIKE FINCKE

Copy that. Good luck, buddy.

Sergey looks at Richard. *Ready?*

Richard nods. They both close their visors.

NOW WE ARE IN RICHARD'S POV (connected to Sergey via radio) -

As Sergey opens the hatch to the exterior airlock and climbs out into the void.

Behind him Richard hesitates, his own BREATHING heavy in his ears...

Then slowly...

EXT. SPACE - ISS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

Richard emerges through the opened external hatch into...

The immensity of space. His sharp intake of breath somewhere between a gasp and a sigh. Mesmerized, amazed, stunned - not thinking, only existing in this unbelievable, inexpressible moment-

SERGEY VOLKOV

(warning)

Richard, handrail!

Too late, with a sickening jolt, Richard realizes he's forgotten to hold onto the handrail and is already starting to drift away from the space station!

RICHARD

Shit!

He grabs in weightless slow-motion for the nearest handrail attached to outside of the ISS-

AND MISSES-

RICHARD (CONT'D)

No!

SERGEY VOLKOV

Richard!

With every ounce of strength he possess, Richard makes a last-ditch reach of his arm-

And grips hold of it by two gloved fingers.

He sticks there, barely, his BREATHING riddled with panic...

Sergey several yards away, deftly anchored to another handrail...

SERGEY VOLKOV (CONT'D)

Richard, okay?

RICHARD

...Yeah ...Okay. Jesus.

Carefully, Richard shackles his safety tether to the handrail - what he should have done in the first place.

He turns his agitated gaze to Earth:

Blue, fragile, close and far, huge and small, everything and nothing. Half in darkness and half in light.

And now, to his wonder, he sees:

A SOFT WARM LIGHT begin to emerge over the eastern side of the planet, spreading over the darkened hemisphere.

It's THE SUN RISING over the half of the earth where he lives. Rising, now, over his hometown.

And he hears HIS DAD'S VOICE:

OWEN GARRIOTT (V.O.)

And you understand, in an instant,
that it's this tiny, fragile ball
of life hanging in the void,
protected and nourished by a paper-
thin atmosphere. From up there,
there are no boundaries between
nations. No warring beliefs. No
wars. Just this pale blue dot.
And that's where we come from.

And the voice is gone. Replaced by the profound silence of
space...

Which now calms instead of frightens him.

RICHARD

Yeah, I'm okay.

SERGEY VOLKOV

(points along ISS)

Ham radio antenna number 1. Okay?

RICHARD

Okay. Let's do it.

Carefully following Sergey, slowly moving from one handrail
to another, safety tether unfurling behind him...

Richard approaches the ham radio antenna sticking out from
the exterior of the ISS.

Sergey examines the antenna. It appears loose and somewhat
bent.

SERGEY

Loose bolt. We will fix this,
three hours max. You and your
father, you will talk again.

Sergey pulls a wrench (attached to a tether) from his waist
pack and begins work on the antenna as-

Richard continues to take in the universe around him. The
earth floating in it like a dream.

His panic gone...

His joy just beginning.

RICHARD

Take your time, Sergey. Think I'll
look around a little while I'm
here.

Sergey looks at him-

Sees a capable astronaut, no space tourist-

And shoots Richard a thick-gloved thumbs-up. *Go ahead.*

And Richard, confidently moving his safety tether from one handrail to another, goes off space-walking along the surface of the ISS.

We watch him move - his own man, in his own place - right where he should be.

INT. ISS - RICHARD'S SLEEPING QUARTERS - DAY

Once again we're looking at the ceiling of Richard's sleeping quarters, while listening to the mechanical hum of the ISS.

Richard lies on his back, eyes open. On his last morning in space.

TITLE:

"INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION - DAY 10"

This time, before getting up, he pulls a pen from under the tied-down sleeping bag and-

Writes on the wall beside him:

"RICHARD WAS HERE. 10.12.2008 - 10.22.2008."

INT. ISS - DOCKING PORT - DAY

By the docking port, Richard, Sergey, and Oleg (in space suits) make final checks on their equipment as Mike and Yuri (in jumpsuits) look on.

SERGEY VOLKOV
(to Richard and Oleg)
All good?

Oleg nods, then Richard does. Hugs are exchanged between the three leaving and the two staying behind. As Richard and Yuri hug-

RICHARD
When are we going to see your film,
Yuri?

YURI LONCHAKOV
Oscars!

RICHARD
(smiles)
I'll be there.

Last and hardest, Richard comes to Mike. This is hard for them both.

MIKE FINCKE
I'm pretty sure I won that water-eating contest.

RICHARD
I believe the tie goes to the visitor in space.

MIKE FINCKE
Now that would depend on whether we had a Russian or American judge.

RICHARD
Good point. Tie?

MIKE FINCKE
Tie. Take care of yourself, buddy.

RICHARD
You too, Mike.

They hug.

Sergey opens the first hatch into the docking port. He climbs through it.

Then Oleg is through the hatch.

Reluctantly, not ready to leave his friend Mike, Richard starts to go through-

MIKE FINCKE
Richard.

Richard looks back.

MIKE FINCKE (CONT'D)
You were everything thing you should've been up here. And more.

Too moved to speak, Richard nods his thanks to Mike and climbs into the docking port, closing the hatch behind him.

INT. SOYUZ COCKPIT - NIGHT

Richard, Sergey, and Oleg are strapped into their seats in the cockpit of the command capsule.

Sergey pushes several buttons on the instrument dash. Then pulls a lever-

The capsule shudders-

SERGEY VOLKOV

Undocking.

And WE ARE WITH RICHARD, looking out the window-

As the Soyuz begins to drift away from the ISS.

INT. SOYUZ COCKPIT - MANY HOURS LATER - NIGHT

The Soyuz is well on its way home.

Richard stares with mixed emotions at-

The earth looming closer through the window-

The blue fragile planet he's returning to.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOYUZ COCKPIT - HOURS LATER - NIGHT/DAY

The command capsule is shaking violently.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOWS-

A blazing stream of molten sparks and fire-

As the capsule fights to re-enters the earth's atmosphere.

Richard notices wisps of smoke wafting up from beneath the instrument dash. He glances at Sergey-

Sergey pushes a couple of buttons, shakes his head. Nothing more they can do.

Richard closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOYUZ COCKPIT - NIGHT/DAY

Richard opens his eyes.

He is still in the command capsule as it streaks toward earth, sparks and fire streaming by the windows.

But now as he watches over the next few seconds-

Miraculously the fire ceases, replaced by-

Pure daylight around them.

They have entered the earth's atmosphere.

The capsule shaking more violently than ever as it plummets to the ground.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS - DAY

We see the capsule (shockingly small considering it holds three men), its exterior partially melted and still smoking, speeding towards the earth at what looks like far too great a speed-

When suddenly-

The parachute deploys-

INT. SOYUZ COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Inside the cockpit the men are jerked upwards as the chute catches air-

The speed of descent sharply slows and-

WE ARE WITH RICHARD-

Knowing the ground is coming fast. Feeling himself falling back to earth, the great journey almost ended-

And then a series of LOUD THUMPS and shaking and objects tumbling about the cockpit, the men thrown against their safety harnesses as-

EXT. KAZAKHSTAN STEPPE - CONTINUOUS - DAY

The still-smoking capsule hits the dirt in a cloud of dust-

Topples onto its side-

Is dragged a short distance and finally-

Comes to rest, the chute collapsing behind it.

Then for a few uncertain moments, nothing happens. The tipped-over capsule just lies there.

Until, seemingly out of nowhere-

Helicopters land nearby...

Trucks drive up.

Men in heavy coats (it's early winter in Kazakhstan) jump out of the vehicles and-

Run to THE CAPSULE-

They wipe off the charred exterior of the hatch. They bang on it, wait a moment, then-

Push the hatch open.

Arms reach inside the capsule and pull out-

Sergey.

Then Oleg.

And finally Richard. Shaken and exhausted. But filled with grateful wonder at having made it back home.

The men help the astronauts into wheelchairs-

And cover each with an emergency blanket.

It's windy, dust rising off the steppe.

Richard is looking around now. Searching for his dad.

Finally, he sees him-

Getting out of a truck, hurrying toward his son.

OWEN

Richard.

RICHARD

Dad.

OWEN

How do you feel?

RICHARD
I'm ready to do it again.

Owen nods: he knows.

They remain there together. Father and son. Close together but silent.

The wind gusts-

Displacing the top corner of Richard's blanket. Leaving his neck exposed to the cold.

Richard doesn't notice. He's busy staring at the sky. And beyond. At the whole miraculous world he's just come from.

Then to his amazement he feels-

His dad's hand-

Tucking the blanket under his collar. Making sure he's warm.

And Richard, without pausing to think, places his hand over his dad's hand. Holds his hand in a small embrace.

Owen looks surprised. Then not.

And this is how we leave them-

Richard holding his dad's hand in the Kazakhstan steppe-

On the day he finally, truly made it home from outer space.

THE END