

THERE ARE CRACKS IN THE SKY

Written by Bill Albert

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(THERE ARE CRACKS IN THE SKY - 1)

EXT. SPACE

TITLE CARD: XLR-8 MISSION TIMELINE
XLR-8 LEAVES EARTH ORBIT 12:42:12
LUNAR ORBIT 13:25:18

TITLE CARD: NEXT EVENT
L.O.S. (LOSS OF SIGNAL) 13:27:27
A.O.S. (ACQUISITION OF SIGNAL) 13:27:31
CURRENT MISSION TIME 13:26:27 (COUNTING)

EXT. SPACE - THE MOON

The moon fills the screen. Even the stars beyond it seem insignificant compared to this. There is an unusually bright light moving towards the moon. It is a spaceship glistening in the night.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)
L.O.S. in one minute. A.O.S
in one minute and four seconds.

COMMANDER (V.O.)
Roger that.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)
Are you go or no go for the dark
side of the moon?

COMMANDER (V.O.)
We are go.

PILOT (V.O.)
We'd better pull over at the
next station.

COMMANDER (V.O.)
Negative. I told you to go
before we left.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)
Cut the unauthorized chatter.
We are recording this for the
record books.

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ENGINEER (V.O.)

So are we at 1.4 gigabytes of storage every second.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)

L.O.S. in 6 seconds.

COMMANDER (V.O.)

See you on the other side of the moon, Mission Control.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.)

Roger...3...2...1

(MORE)

The reflective dot disappears as the ship goes around the dark side of the moon. The mission time clock continues from 03:27:27 to 03:27:31 and beyond. Nothing emerges from the other side. Silence.

MISSION CONTROL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

XLR-8 do you copy, over?

(silence)

XLR-8 we are past acquisition of signal. Do you copy?

The mission time clock keeps counting.

INT. HOSPITAL MEETING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

It is a plain hospital room. Nothing fancy, a table in the center and six chairs. There is a man in the room looking out the only window at the sky. This is MIKE REAGAN, the mission engineer, 30, ruffled hair, calculating. He turns quickly as the door opens and is relieved to see JOHN FARBROTHER, mission commander, 40, gray haired, steady. They are still wearing their flight suits.

REAGAN

Commander Farbrother!

FARBROTHER

Mike.

REAGAN

Any idea what's going on? We made a hard landing exactly where we were supposed to, ground crew opened us up, then practically dragged to an ambulance and brought here and whipped through an exam.

FARBROTHER

I've got nothing more after they separated us. We should have gone straight to debriefing. Nobody will say a word.

REAGAN

I asked lots of questions, but no one would answer.

FARBROTHER

I couldn't get an officer, either. No project leaders anywhere to be seen, just medics. Could we have done something wrong?

REAGAN

No! All tag lights were green. It was a perfect flight.

FARBROTHER

Then why go off book and bring us here?

REAGAN

It makes no sense.

They look around the room. Check the door hoping someone would enter.

FARBROTHER

2 hours and 27 minutes from Earth orbit, around the moon, to the California desert.

REAGAN

(flatly)

2 hours, 27 minutes and 52 seconds.

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FARBROTHER

And 52 seconds...

REAGAN

We were exactly where and
when we were supposed to
be every stage of the flight.
Green, green, green all the way.

FARBROTHER

Until now. What changed?
Nothing else.

REAGAN

There is one thing.
(gets Farbrother's attention)
From the ambulance, I could barely
see through the window, but they
were pulling the quartex hard
stacks in the field.

FARBROTHER

(stops)
Are you sure?

REAGAN

I saw the retrieval team.

FARBROTHER

Before complete engine wind
down and transport?

REAGAN

Yes.

The door opens and DAVID FISHER, mission pilot, very animated
and active, enters.

FISHER

Great! People with faces who
will talk.

FARBROTHER

I just wish I had something
to say.

FISHER

You either?

FARBROTHER

Nothing.

FISHER

Nothing official. Just one offhand remark. They mentioned a quarantine. No one has been quarantined since early Apollo missions.

REAGAN

That makes no sense. If they wanted us quarantined, they would have left us in the capsule or taken precautions.

They look at each other puzzled. Fisher looks over his shoulder as if he expected someone to come in through the door, then looks back at the others.

FARBROTHER

Exactly. Once they opened the hatch any quarantine was useless.

FISHER

Someone better tell us something.

FARBROTHER

They pulled the quartex stacks from the ship on site.

FISHER

(freezes)

Really? Was there something in the files? A virus?

REAGAN

(almost offended)

No. The files were clean. I checked them all the way. Plus, if it were a computer virus, they wouldn't have had to do this to us.

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FISHER

(sober)

So, what do we do?

FARBROTHER

Hurry up and wait.

FISHER

Life in space.

FARBROTHER

Typical. Wait for five hours
then all hell breaks loose.

The door opens, and DOCTOR ANGELA BRUSTER, 60, experienced, tough, enters. They relax and are glad to see her. As Farbrother and Reagan watch her Fisher glances over his shoulder out the window.

BRUSTER

Please, have a seat.

She is carrying a laptop. She opens it but does not show it to them.

FARBROTHER

So, what's going on. No one
will give us an answer,

BRUSTER

As expected, your biomed packs
are scanned and clean. B.P.,
pulse, respers and O2 levels
are good. People like you put
doctors out of business. There's
nothing wrong with you.

FISHER

Then why is everyone treating
us like there is?

FARBROTHER

This is all completely irregular.

REAGAN

There has to be some explanation.

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BRUSTER

Let's go over the mission timeline.

FARBROTHER

We know the time line.

REAGAN

We clocked it perfectly.

FISHER

We were there.

Bruster looks at them deeply troubled. They see that she's worried and backs down. She takes her eyes off of them.

BRUSTER

I've been with you guys since everything was green lit. Just go through this with me. XLR-8 leaves Earth orbit.

FISHER

And around the moon we went and back again.

BRUSTER

XLR-8 leaves Earth orbit.

REAGAN

12:43:12

BRUSTER

Do you remember anything unusual from that moment?
(they shake their heads)
Next ten minutes. What are you doing?

FARBROTHER

Monitoring systems, O2 levels good, circulation good. Reporting to mission control we are on our way to the moon.

FISHER

We are on the flight line. Start countdown to first course correction.

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REAGAN

Speed steady, thrusters nominal,
all tag lights are green.

BRUSTER

First course correction.

FARBROTHER

Reporting to mission control.
No issues.

FISHER

4 second burn from jets 2-4.

REAGAN

12:53:37. Speed and thrust
exactly where they should be.
All tag lights are green.

BRUSTER

Second course correction.

FARBROTHER

Reporting to mission control.
Minor flux in air pressure.
We are go.

FISHER

2.7 seconds burn from 3 and 4.

REAGAN

13:02:12. Air pressure normalized.
All tag lights are green.

BRUSTER

Lunar orbit.

FARBROTHER

Going fast. Two minutes to
L.O.S.. Mission stats good.

FISHER

On the flight line.

REAGAN

Tags green.

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BRUSTER

13:23:18.

FARBROTHER

Faster than anyone ever.

FISHER

Go for a ride!

REAGAN

Tags green.

BRUSTER

13:27:27.

FARBROTHER

Loss of signal.

FISHER

Right where we should be.

REAGAN

Tags green.

BRUSTER

13:27:31.

FARBROTHER

Acquisition of signal.

FISHER

Heading home.

REAGAN

Tags green.

BRUSTER

13:27:31?

(they stumble and look at her)

13:27:31? 13:27:31? 13:27:31?

FARBROTHER

(unsure)

Mission control, XLR-8, A.O.S.

BRUSTER

13:27:31? Where were you?

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FARBROTHER

(takes command)

I was facing out looking for Earth, David was watching the flight panel and Michael was at the tags.

BRUSTER

13:27:31. Where else were you?

REAGAN

Where we were supposed to be.

FARBROTHER

Nowhere-

FISHER

(glances quickly over his shoulder.)

What the hell is going on? You know exactly where we were. You were monitoring in mission control.

FARBROTHER

Come on.

FISHER

Be straight with us. What's going on?

BRUSTER

What happened after L.O.S.?

FARBROTHER

A.O.S.!

BRUSTER

Before that? Between those two moments?

They are confused and getting frustrated.

FARBROTHER

Even on a ship that complex nothing really happens in four seconds. Especially at that speed.

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BRUSTER

But on this flight, for those
four seconds, where were you?

FARBROTHER

(distracted)

You blink.

FISHER

You breath.

REAGAN

Then it's over.

BRUSTER

(pause)

What if it was more than four
seconds?

REAGAN

It wasn't.

BRUSTER

What if it was?

FISHER

We were on the flight path.

BRUSTER

What if it was 17 seconds?

She shows them the laptop screen. It is a replay from the flight recorder we saw at the beginning from just before the ship disappeared behind the moon. 17 seconds later, 13:27:44 it emerges and Farbrother announces A.O.S. with mission control. It continues with ship and mission control time running with a 13 second difference.

FISHER

That's not possible.

REAGAN

Ship time reads four seconds.
I read it, logged it, and double
checked on the way back.

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BRUSTER

These are the signals from your
biomed sensors right now.

(MORE)

Three identical readouts including time stamp. They each look at
the readouts and nod.

BRUSTER (CONT'D)

Now mine.

A fourth is added, it is 13 seconds ahead of theirs.

REAGAN

That's not possible.

BRUSTER

Everyone involved in this
project has the same identical
time stamp except the three
of you.

They each take a moment. They can't deny what they are seeing on
the monitor. Reagan moves to the window and looks up.

FISHER

What happened?

FARBROTHER

Dilation from our speed? It
took us four second to go
around the dark side of the
moon. Apollo missions took 48
minutes. Could that have changed
something?

BRUSTER

We worked that possibility a
long time ago. You would have
to go beyond the speed of light
for time dilation to take effect.

FARBROTHER

Ok, something mechanical went
wrong, or, at least, changed
something.

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FISHER

(looking over his shoulder)
But nothing unusual happened.

BRUSTER

Let's go through it second by second. Give me your report to mission control. It's 13:27:23.

FARBROTHER

See you on the other side of the moon, Mission Control.

BRUSTER

It's 13:27:27. What are you doing?

FARBROTHER

Looking out the porthole at the moon.

FISHER

Eye on the flight path indicator.

REAGAN

(joining them at the table)
Tags all green.

BRUSTER

It's 13:27:28. What are you doing?

FARBROTHER

Looking out the porthole at the moon.

BRUSTER

It's 13:27:29. What are you doing?

FISHER

Eye on the flight path indicator.

BRUSTER

It's 13:27:30. What are you doing?

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REAGAN
Tags all green.

BRUSTER
(pause)
13:27:31.

FARBROTHER
(pause)
Looking for Earth.

FISHER
(pause)
Eye on the flight path indicator.

REAGAN
There was a light.
(they all look at him quickly)
There was a flash of something.

FARBROTHER
From the tag board.

REAGAN
(remembers)
No, someplace else, someplace off.

FARBROTHER
A flicker in the tag lights?

REAGAN
No, it was the wrong color. It
was...orange? Red? It was deep,
yet bright, like molten lava.

BRUSTER
(finally)
Did you feel anything?

FISHER
So, there was a light, a flicker,
all sorts of things happening
at the same time. It could have
been anything.

REAGAN
It wasn't from us.

FISHER

It had to be. There was
nothing up there but us.

(pause)

Wait until they finish the
inspection on the ship. A
crack in a casing or a glass
chip creating a reflection. It
was a mechanical cause and effect.
Nothing else.

(looks away from them to
the window at the early
evening sky)

FARBROTHER

(flatly)

There was singing...

(they turn to him)

I was counting down the seconds
for A.O.S. and getting ready
for mission control. There was
singing. Just for a second.

BRUSTER

What were they singing?

FARBROTHER

(looking for it)

A chorus...? No. A phrase... Just
a few words...

FISHER

You keyed the mic to early or
ID signals bouncing around.
There were signals going in
and out all the time.

REAGAN

No. Going out, yes, but not
coming in. Not for those seconds.

FISHER

No sounds, no lights, just
three people going around
the moon.

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BRUSTER

(to Fisher)

Do me a favor. 13:27:30. Just think about it. What did you see?

FISHER

Flight path screen, eyes on the center, it was the most intense part of the flight, we were out of touch.

BRUSTER

What did you hear?

FISHER

Nothing.

BRUSTER

Nothing?

FISHER

Nothing.

BRUSTER

Not the hum of equipment?
Farbrother taking a breath
before A.O.S.?

FISHER

(stumbles)

Nothing. Just 13 seconds of nothing.

They all turn to face him.

BRUSTER

You said 13 seconds.

Fisher shakes head.

FARBROTHER

Yes, you did.

FISHER

It doesn't mean anything.
Just listening to all this
bull from you three.

(to Farbrother)

Like what you said before.
It doesn't mean anything.

(they wait)

BRUSTER

(to Farbrother)

You said you were looking
for Earth when we came out
of L.O.S.. Looking for it?
Like it wasn't there?

Farbrother is shocked but can't deny it. They are all becoming more frustrated.

BRUSTER

Ok, so, let's just say nothing
happened to you. We still have
these two, Farbrother heard
something and Reagan saw something.

(Fisher protests)

Just indulge me for a moment. If
something happened what could it
be? Look at it scientifically.

FARBROTHER

There are lots of things it could be.

BRUSTER

Agreed. Let's rule out what it
isn't? A black hole.

REAGAN

No. We know the gravity signature
of a black hole. Even at our speed
we could never escape that.

BRUSTER

Power surge?

REAGAN

Not from our ship.

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BRUSTER

Solar flares?

REAGAN

At that time we had the Earth
and the moon in position.

FARBROTHER

(pauses)

What if it's something we don't
know?

FISHER

What the hell does that mean?

FARBROTHER

People, a century ago, knew we
couldn't fly to the moon. A
decade ago, they knew we couldn't
make it there and back in a few
hours. It's not impossible to
think there are ways to get to
the moon and back in a few seconds.
We just don't know it yet. We know
of some mechanical ways to get there.
There are others.

BRUSTER

So, you are thinking that
something happened? Maybe, for
those 13 seconds, you went some
place. A natural occurrence?

REAGAN

There still must be an explanation.
I need an explanation.

FARBROTHER

So, do I. I'd love one! Something
that makes some kind of sense. Did
we go someplace? Reagan saw a light.
I heard singing.

FISHER

Warmth.

(others pause)

With the singing. There was warmth.

The astronauts remember it now.

BRUSTER
What did they sing?

FARBROTHER
A tone... Notes... Three notes...

REAGAN
(remembers now)
Repeating, three notes, under
a lyric.

BRUSTER
What three notes?

Farbrother tries to hum a few notes. Reagan suggests a few changes.

FISHER
Stop! It wasn't notes, it
was words. Yes, goddamn it,
I heard something, too. No
chorus, no notes, just three
simple words.

REAGAN
You did hear them!

BRUSTER
What did you hear?

REAGAN
(concentrating)
Something... Whispers off in
a distance... I thought it was
one of you.

BRUSTER
(to Farbrother)
Your humming triggered something.
What did you hear?

FARBROTHER
Lights... Music... Words... Turn?
Yes, turn was one of the words.

(THERE ARE CRACKS IN THE SKY - 20)

BRUSTER

What else?

REAGAN

Lights... Warmth... Music... Your
turn? There! Almost there.
Your turn!

FISHER

Not... Words... Your... Warmth... Turn.
Exactly. I can clearly hear them
now. Those three words.

FARBROTHER

Not.

REAGAN

Your.

FISHER

Turn.

There is silence as they all agree what they heard and try to understand it. Fisher is hiding something.

FARBROTHER

Past A.O.S.

FISHER

Where is the Earth?

REAGAN

13:27:32, 33, 34, 35?

They sit in silence for several seconds. Fisher looks over his shoulder as if he heard something.

BRUSTER

So, what was it? What happened?

FARBROTHER

Where did we go?

REAGAN

Cosmic string? Temporal waves?
Anything anyone ever dreamed of?

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FARBROTHER

We went someplace. Someplace else. We were nowhere or everywhere? What if we just went through a crack in the sky?

REAGAN

No. That's not good enough.

REAGAN

We have to have gone somewhere.

BRUSTER

How did you get back?

They have no answer.

FARBROTHER

We all felt it. Something sent us back.

REAGAN

Don't confuse it more. Maybe it was a crack, okay, maybe we just passed through it and came right back.

FISHER

What do you think was there? An alien intelligence? A saint? God?

FARBROTHER

Something unknown.

REAGAN

No more! No more guesses. I want answers. I need something better. I need this to make sense.

FARBROTHER

What kind of sense is there in any of this? What kind of explanation? We admit something happened. We know it. We were there.

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FISHER

And then we weren't.

BRUSTER

What do you want it to be?

REAGAN

I'm an engineer. I've spent my life studying how things work. I want to know what happened.

BRUSTER

I do, too. We all agree something happened, but we can't explain it. We may never explain it. Can we accept that?

One by one they nod their heads.

FARBROTHER

So, what's next?

BRUSTER

We go on. We go back. We keep moving as planned. The tech crew examines the ship from bow to stern, every centimeter. In three days, we are prepped and go for a second test flight. You are all fit to fly. If the ship checks out-

REAGAN

It will.

BRUSTER

We'll be good to go. The flight records are secure, mission control personnel are covered and no one else will ever know what happened.

REAGAN

Including us.

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BRUSTER

Mission commanders will sign off, a second test flight, then a new era of space travel will begin.

FARBROTHER

Earth to the moon and back in a few hours. Mars just days away. Our next step.

REAGAN

Our next leap.

BRUSTER

With your footprints. Get your belongings and we'll meet at the mission office. You'll be home in a few hours.

FARBROTHER

2 ½ hours to Huntsville. 45 minutes to the moon.

REAGAN

43 minutes and 16 seconds.

Farbrother and Reagan nod and Bruster collects her laptop and notes. Fisher gets up and walks to the window. It is now night outside and he looks at the sky.

BRUSTER

What is it?

FISHER

I need you to do me a favor.

BRUSTER

Sure.

FISHER

Get me off that damn flight.

BRUSTER

What?

FARBROTHER

We are go, Mike.

REAGAN

One giant leap, Mike.

FISHER

Ground me! Find a way to
ground me! Appendix, flu,
anything. Please!

BRUSTER

There is nothing wrong with
you! In fact, you have a better
health history than both John
Farbrother or Michael REAGAN.

FISHER

Then make it wrong, Angela!
Make it wrong! If you don't
I will.

BRUSTER

I thought we came to understand
this. Or, at least, accept it.

FISHER

If you don't come up with a way
I will! If I have to, I'll go
through this window headfirst!
Walk in front of a bus! Jump
off the launch gantry.

Farbrother and Reagan move in close to comfort him.

BRUSTER

Ok, ok, ok. Calm down. You're
not going to hurt yourself.

FARBROTHER

What else is there? Is there
something you saw or heard that
we don't know about? Something
you didn't tell us?

FISHER

(frantic)

Not your turn! Not your turn!
They're wrong. You are all wrong.
Something sent us back but "Not
your turn" wasn't the reason for
saving us.

(trembling, pounding on the
window looking at the night
sky moon)

They don't want us to come back.
Not your turn. It was a WARNING!