

LOVE IN THE AGE OF SPACE EXPLORATION

An original screenplay

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE - NEAR FUTURE

EROS INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION orbits the Earth.

EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER (HOUSTON, TX) - BUILDING 30 - NIGHT

FLIGHT DIRECTOR JIM PRESCOTT (40s), rugged professional, a guy still preserving some of that cowboy bravado, hustles from his car to the entrance.

INT. BUILDING 30 - MOMENTS LATER

Prescott continues down a long corridor, where he's met by -

ASSISTANT FLIGHT DIRECTOR CAROL "C.J." LOCKHART (40s), dedicated, determined, the true heart of the space mission.

C.J.

Sorry to do this to you, Jim, I know it's your anniversary. How's Helen?

PRESCOTT

Well, a hundred-and-thirty-billion-dollar space station the size of a football field's about to drop out of the sky. Yeah, she's pretty pissed about it--

(off her look)

Oh, you mean about dinner? She'll get over it. What happened?

C.J.

About an hour ago, we had Yuri's wife on the loop to Eros so she could say "Hello". You remember Anna, the girl from the pre-flight party who thought Lance Armstrong was an astronaut? Well, she tells Yuri she wants a divorce. At this point, 'distraught' would be an understatement. He's threatening to bring the whole thing down.

INT. MISSION CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

FLIGHT CONTROLLERS man consoles around the four-tiered auditorium. A big screen at the front of the room displays telemetry data and a Mercator projection of the Earth.

FLIGHT SURGEON RICHARD ROCKWELL (50s), miserable, over-worked, slips his headset off, rising from his seat as -

Prescott and C.J. enter.

ROCKWELL
(shaking his head)
He's refusing to communicate.

PRESCOTT
Where's the girl?

ROCKWELL
The green room.

C.J.
(to Rockwell)
Talk to her. Don't let her leave.

ROCKWELL
I'm not a marriage counsellor--
(then, off her look)
I'll see what I can do.

Rockwell exits.

Prescott and C.J. turn their attention to -

CAPCOM MIKE HONEYCUTT (30s), desperate, a walking tragedy, his console is decorated a love-shrine to the only man he's ever truly loved... Lance Armstrong.

C.J.
How're we doing, Mike?

HONEYCUTT
(sighing)
God, if only Lance could save us.
Everything's in the red. CMGs,
ELCSS and boosters are all off-
line. A fart in the wrong
direction and the whole thing goes.

He passes his headset to Prescott and another to C.J. An array of video images pops up on the big screen.

BIG SCREEN

Eros, a cramped labyrinth of modules, airlocks and storage facilities. It's lone inhabitant -

ASTRONAUT YURI SHEVCHENKO (30s), the pride of the Ukraine, a hero to children everywhere, has been reduced to an emotional wreck.

MISSION CONTROL

Prescott talks into the headset.

PRESCOTT

Hey, Yuri, it's Jimmy. Can you hear me, buddy?

YURI (V.O.)

Jimmy? Is that you?

PRESCOTT

Yeah, buddy, it's me. Look, Yuri, these guys down here are telling me you're thinking about crashing the space station. How crazy is that?

YURI (V.O.)

I don't want to live, Jimmy, not without Anna.

PRESCOTT

Yeah, well, look, I'll tell you what, I'm gonna send some guys to come and get you, but it's gonna take a bit of time.

YURI (V.O.)

I'd rather kill myself.

PRESCOTT

That's fine, but not like this, OK?

YURI (V.O.)

You don't know how this feels.

PRESCOTT

No, you're right about that, but, I'm your friend and I'm still trying to help you out here.

YURI (V.O.)

She's gone, Jimmy. Anna's gone.

C.J.

It's not that bad, Yuri. We're gonna get her back in here so you can talk about this a bit more.

Prescott scans the room, looking for someone to pin this on. He spots Honeycutt trying to blend in with the locals.

PRESCOTT

Hey, Yuri, Honeycutt's here. He's got something he wants to say--

Honeycutt reacts like a deer caught in the headlights.

INT. GREEN ROOM - THAT MOMENT

Rockwell is seated on a small sofa next to -

ANNA SHEVCHENKO (20s), a wholesome beauty, naive to the ways of the world.

ROCKWELL

--So, when I found out my wife had been screwing this guy, I wanted to shoot the bitch, but, then, there's the death penalty for that, so, I dunno, what happens in the Ukraine when something like that happens? Pretty similar, I guess, yeah? I suppose if you had the right lawyer they could always get you off, but, then again, I-I really don't know--
(off Anna's look)

OK, I'm gonna see if they need me back in the control room--

INT. CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

C.J. catches Rockwell exiting the green room.

ROCKWELL

That went... well, I guess. Let's just get her back in there, OK?

INT. MISSION CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Honeycutt is on the loop with Yuri.

HONEYCUTT

...And, I mean, Lance would never do that, that's ridiculous. So, I bet you didn't know his heart's thirty-percent larger than average, I don't know if that means he's got more love to give, or it just pumps more blood, I guess. But, then again, they always say, "Everything's bigger in Texas". After all, that is the reason I moved here in the first place...

C.J. and Rockwell return with Anna. C.J. slips a headset on as Honeycutt turns his position over to Anna.

C.J.

Yuri, I've got Anna here--
(encouragingly)
Go ahead, it's OK to talk.

YURI (V.O.)

Are you there, Annushka?

ANNA

I'm here.

YURI (V.O.)

Oh, Jesus, Annushka, you've got me so scared right now.

ANNA

I know. It's just that you've been gone for so long and it's so lonely here in America, I just don't know what to do. I'm so confused.

YURI (V.O.)

I'm coming back to you really soon, baby, you've just gotta hold on a bit more, can you promise me that?

ANNA

OK, I promise, I'll be here.

YURI (V.O.)

Oh, God, thank you, baby, I love you so much!

HONEYCUTT

(aside, to Rockwell)
God, I love this job.

ANNA (IN RUSSIAN)
I love you, too, Yuri!

Flight controllers exchange hugs and pats-on-the-back. C.J. passes the headset to Prescott.

PRESCOTT
Hey, Yuri, I'm gonna send those guys to come and get you. Hold in there, buddy, OK?

YURI (V.O.)
OK, Jimmy, I'll be here.

Prescott sets the headset down. The room erupts in cheers.

PRESCOTT
(beaming)
Hey, somebody call my wife, tell her I'm comin' home for dinner!

He pumps his fist in the air.

CUT TO BLACK.