

ORBIT

Written by

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Concept By

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OVER BLACK:

A loud CLICK.

STATIC.

1

EXT. SPACE

1

A ray of light POURS across the screen, emerging from the darkness; a sliver of blue. THE EARTH.

EDWARD (O.S.)

(Into Comms)

Exodus III to Houston, initiating approach to the Hab. Distance at 20 meters, closing at point-five meters per second. Systems are green, preparing for station-keeping.

ISAAC (O.S.)

(Into Comms)

I gotta tell you Houston, I wish you could see the view from up here.

The sun crests the horizon, casting a hard light over the ENDLESS BLACK.

As it sweeps across the curvature of the Earth, a tiny capsule emerges from the shadow, adrift, 1500km in the air, spinning slowly in the fragile grasp of low Earth orbit.

2

INT. CAPSULE - LOW EARTH ORBIT

2

The interior is TIGHT. Claustrophobic. A modern day version of the Gemini 8. Cramped with Instruments, dials, and glowing screens. Electronics HUM. Metal STRAINS under the heat of the sun.

HOUSTON (O.S.)

Roger that, Exodus III. Stand by for station-keeping. And uh, don't worry the view from in here is pretty spectacular too.

A hand tightens a strap.

Another hand secures a buckle, SNAPPING it into place with a sharp CLICK.

ISAAC (O.S.)  
The straps aren't going anywhere  
Ed.

Fingers adjust a control panel, hovering over switches,  
double checking.

EDWARD (O.S.)  
And neither am I. I suggest you do  
the same.

The flight suit pulls taut across his chest as he leans  
forward, checking each strap, every detail. NO SLACK.

His breathing steadies, slow and deliberate, in perfect  
rhythm with the faint hum of the capsule.

HOUSTON (O.S.)  
Exodus III, go ahead and confirm  
your approach for us.

Finally, we see his face: calm, controlled, his eyes dart  
between readouts. He scans everything, calculating. This is  
Commander EDWARD GARRISON, 59.

EDWARD  
(Into comms)  
Docking alignment confirmed.  
Approach is clean. Holding steady  
at 7.3 meters.

Across from him, ISAAC REED, 26, his face illuminated by the  
soft blue glow of the controls. His fingers hover near the  
joystick, but his attention is elsewhere.

HOUSTON (O.S.)  
Roger that, stand by for docking  
clearance.

Edward glances over, catches Isaac staring out the viewport.  
Through it, the EARTH LOOMS LARGE. Blue. Alive. For a moment,  
Isaac's guard drops. It's his first time in orbit, and awe  
has overtaken him. His breathe catches, eyes wide, absorbing  
the view as if it might disappear.

Edwards gaze hardens. He watches Isaac for a moment longer  
then gently taps his arm. Isaac blinks, snapping out of his  
trance.

ISAAC  
Sorry.

They return to their controls.

HOUSTON (O.S.)  
Exodus III, you are a go for  
docking.

EDWARD  
Roger that, Houston.

Edward's hand moves, he toggles the switch to docking mode. The panel lights shift, displaying cold numbers: proximity, velocity. He checks the attitude control, steady, stable. For now.

Across from him, Isaac flicks two switches. The RCS thrusters FIRE brief bursts. His hand hovers over the manual joystick, ready for corrections.

The two ships inch closer. Exodus III and the looming Hab Module. Silent, the stars bear witness to the mechanical dance.

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
(tight, focused)  
Five meters.

ISAAC  
Copy.

Isaac's fingers twitch on the controls. Thrusters FIRE in sharp bursts.

The ship inches closer, the docking clamps twitching, ready.

The numbers drop. Edward's jaw clenches.

EDWARD  
Two meters...

Isaac, eyes locked on the display.

ISAAC  
Easy...

EDWARD  
Half a meter.

A slight jolt.

ISAAC  
Soft capture.

Edward exhales, still focused.

EDWARD  
 Hard dock confirmed.  
 (into comms)  
 Houston, we're locked.

HOUSTON (O.S.)  
 Glad to hear it. Running telemetry.

A quiet beat. Isaac grins, the tension breaks. Edward turns, meeting his look. They share a brief smile, a handshake.

No words. They both know.

HOUSTON (CONT'D)  
 Exodus III, you are go to  
 pressurize.

ISAAC  
 Pressurizing.

Isaac's hand hovers over the pressurization control, the final step. He presses down.

BANG!

Chaos. Isaac and Edward are JOLTED in their seats. Alarms SCREAM. Loose straps and tools SLAM against the walls. Red lights flare in rapid pulses.

The Hab twists violently, the explosion rippling through its docking port. Exodus III is THROWN backward, SPINNING UNCONTROLLABLY, small bursts of debris flicking off into space.

Edward's eyes are locked on the readouts. His hands fly over the RCS controls, flipping switches. His movements are fast, deliberate, hyper focused.

ISAAC  
 (quick, clipped)  
 Exodus III to Houston! We've  
 detached from the Hab!  
 Requesting immediate support!

EDWARD  
 RPM's Rising! Firing reaction  
 control system.  
 (ignores Isaac, voice  
 taut)  
 We'll stabilize on my mark.

The RCS jets FIRE. The capsule bucks, but THE SPIN WORSENS. Isaac looks at the spin rate, already recalculating.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
 That won't work, the RCS is  
 offline!

EDWARD  
 (interrupting, sharp)  
 It's fine. Focus on roll control.

ISAAC It's not fine! We're spinning faster- I can't see the nav ball!	EDWARD (CONT'D) Exodus III to Houston, we have detached from the Hab. Do you read? (quickly recalculating)
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ISAAC (CONT'D)  
 I'm blind here, I can't see!

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
 Fire manual you've got everything  
 you need!

Isaac ignores him, attempting to reset the screen. The capsule GROANS under the strain.

ISAAC  
 I'm recalibrating the screen. I'm  
 not flying blind-

EDWARD  
 (cutting him off,  
 pointing to the window)  
 -You have a point of reference!  
 Fire now!

Isaac's YANKS the joystick. The capsule JERKS VIOLENTLY, but the spin slows. A moment passes.

ISAAC  
 Thirty Two RPM and decreasing...  
 (under his breath)  
 Almost there...

The screen flickers back to life... Isaac chuckles.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
 Just when we needed it...

The capsule SHUDDERS as the thrusters fire in sequence. Both men are silent for a beat, their hands still poised over the controls.

The spin stops. The alarms still WAIL, but the capsule stabilizes. Both men sit, breathing hard, adrenaline still running high.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
 The SM's antenna must be down. I'm  
 going to try and switch over to the  
 CM's backup.

A beat of silence. Red lights still pulse in the background. The capsule is steady now, but only barely.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Exodus III to Houston, please come in. We have detached from the Hab. Exodus III to Houston, please advise.

Edward is already moving, flipping switches, pulling up fuel levels, speed readouts, orbital data.

EDWARD

Battery's stable. Attitude control's still online... How much delta V for the deorbit burn?

Isaac reaches across him, pulling up the fuel display, recalculating orbital velocity. Sweat drips down his temple.

ISAAC

(pointing to the readout)  
361 meters-per-second, but once we separate there's no going back. Let's hope the heat shield holds better than that screen...

They both pause for a beat, staring at the numbers. The moment's too short to process the weight of it.

Edward's eyes narrow. He checks the orbital map, sees their position. The clock's ticking down fast.

EDWARD

Shit. We're fifty-seven seconds from the window.

ISAAC

(already recalculating)  
I'm plotting the descent angle hold on.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(calculated)  
Burn time calculated.

Both men work fast, hands flying over the controls, recalculating, adjusting burn times. They can't afford a single mistake.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

(focused)  
Descent angle's too shallow—that doesn't look like enough delta V, I'm calculating manually.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

(glancing at their position)  
We're running out of time. forty- five seconds.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
We undershoot, we skip.

Edward punches in the burn duration, his voice clipped, measured.

ISAAC (CONT'D)	EDWARD
We still need to rotate retrograde, give me a second!	I'll handle the thrust timing. You monitor attitude.

Isaac SLAMS the thrusters, gripping the joystick to adjust their angle. The altimeter TICKS up. The capsule spins retrograde.

The clock hits 10 seconds.

ISAAC (CONT'D)	EDWARD (CONT'D)
pitch is off by one degree, correcting!	Nine seconds to burn! six seconds!

Isaac SLAMS a switch.

ISAAC (CONT'D)	EDWARD (CONT'D)
Reaching Apogee!	Five seconds!

The capsule adjusts. Isaac's breath is SHARP, eyes glued to the numbers.

ISAAC (CONT'D)	EDWARD (CONT'D)
(correcting)	Four seconds!
Descent angle holding.	

Isaac's eyes dart to Edward. The lights flicker, the controls barely visible.

ISAAC (CONT'D)	EDWARD (CONT'D)
We need to correct by another half degree!	Hold it steady. Two seconds—No time!

EDWARD (CONT'D)  
Burn!

Edward SLAMS the thrust control. The capsule jolts, engines ROAR. Both men are THROWN back in their seats.

The altimeter ticks downward as the capsule begins its descent toward the upper atmosphere.

ISAAC  
Thrust holding. Pitch steady.

They SOAR across the horizon, flames BLASTING from the engine.

The flames decrescendo, the capsule floats powerless. It's fate in the hands of gravity.

EDWARD

Preparing for separation. Service  
module jettison in three... two...  
one...

He hits the release.

The capsule RECOILS as the service module separates, the effects are minimal, they're still in micro-gravity.

A breath.

ISAAC

Separation complete.

Isaac leans back, closing his eyes for a moment, processing, letting out a slow breath. Grounding himself.

Edward glances at the oxygen readout: 50 minutes left.

EDWARD

Oxygen's low... We've got 50  
minutes, maybe less. It'll be  
enough to get us on the ground but  
that's it. No second chances.

Isaac lets out a half-laugh, shaking his head as he stares at the readout. He stretches his arms out, feeling the weightlessness around him.

ISAAC

50 minutes... They couldn't spare  
us some time for a victory lap?  
(pointing to a screen)  
No good shows either...

Edward glances at him, almost disapproving, but then something gives. He starts to check the readings, but his usual tension seems to slacken.

EDWARD

(going along)  
We'll have to make some adjustments  
for the next trip.

Isaac's chuckle this time is deeper, genuine relief surfacing but only for a moment... Isaac's mortality setting in. Edward catches it.

EDWARD (CONT'D)

Hey, we're still here.

Isaac looks at Edward and sees, for the first time, a flicker of warmth.

ISAAC  
(smiling)  
I'll give you that one.

They both breathe, the weight of their survival settling in. For a moment, they simply exist, hanging in the stillness of space.

The capsule drifts, silent and untouched, through the endless void. The sun glows on the horizon, casting long shadows across the lifeless structure. It's peaceful, almost serene.

Inside the capsule, the altimeter ticks down slowly: 400,000 meters... 350,000... 300,000.

The capsule hangs in the vast black, a tiny speck above the Earth. Far below, the planet turns in silent indifference, unaware of the two lives drifting toward it.

The altimeter ticks faster: 200,000... 150,000...

Isaac watches the numbers fall, eyes narrowing, ready. Edward's fingers hover over the controls, bracing for the moment to come. All they can do is wait...

The silence stretches, heavy, filling the capsule. A pen floats weightlessly beside Isaac, hanging in the air, suspended. As if gently pushed, it moves... slowly gaining velocity.

Then, without warning, it SHOOTs BACKWARD, slamming into the wall beside them.

Isaac's eyes flick to Edward. The soft moment is gone.

FOUR G'S of force SLAM into them, crushing them back into their seats.

Their chests heave as the weight of gravity bears down, pulling them harder and faster toward Earth, every muscle fighting the invisible hand dragging them from the sky.

Flames SOAR past the windows. The heat shield takes the brunt of the atmospheric re-entry.

EDWARD  
Re-entry systems nominal, shields  
holding up.

ISAAC  
Screens still working too...

Edward glares at him, then to the screen, actually working... Velocity, altitude, and their projected apogee displayed. Isaac takes a closer look...

ISAAC (CONT'D)

Maybe not, that projected perigee  
doesn't look right.

90,000 meters... 87,000... The capsule SHAKES violently, metal STRAINING under the load.

A sudden LURCH. The inside of the capsule is completely still. The ship shakes, GROANING under the force. 86,000... 85,500...

The numbers crawl: 85,200... 85,100... 85,050... 85,000.

Then... nothing.

Everything stops. The altimeter freezes at 85,000 meters. Isaac grips the controls tight. Edward stares, motionless.

A long, painful beat.

The whole capsule groans again, then—

The altimeter moves... BACKWARDS.

85,050... 85,100... 85,200...

The numbers climb faster.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

We're skipping—

The altimeter RACES upward: 86, 87, 90, 95,000 meters. The flames outside the window vanish, swallowed by the cold black of space. 100,000...

BRUTAL SILENCE.

The capsule creaks, but inside, nothing. Microgravity sets in, and the pen that was slammed against the capsule slowly floats into the air, weightless.

Both men are frozen, eyes locked on the altimeter.

Edward's fingers twitch, but he doesn't move. Isaac watches the pen float, his breath shallow, the reality sinking in.

Not a word.

The pen drifts across Isaac's line of sight. He watches it, eyes unfocused, his mind wandering. It passes in front of the hatch, catching the light.

That's when he notices it.

Edward's hand; firm, steady, is flipping a series of switches, UNLOCKING and opening a small plastic cover... Underneath, a button reading "HATCH".

Isaac's eyes widen. He freezes, then—

ISAAC  
(half-yell, startled)  
What the fuck are you doing!?

He just stares back, silent, intense.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
You're just gonna open it? We've  
got time left—

Edward finally speaks, his voice low, cold.

EDWARD  
I'm not waiting for the oxygen to  
run out.

Isaac stares at him, trying to make sense of it. He shakes his head.

ISAAC  
You'd rather what—suffocate out  
there? You'd rather die like that?

EDWARD  
Better than waiting for nothing.

ISAAC  
Nothing? You think this is nothing?  
We're coming back around, just  
because we won't be there to see it  
doesn't mean our bodies shouldn't  
get home. We open that hatch...

They're face to face now, tension high. Edward's hands are hovering MILLIMETERS above the button.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
I'm not dying like that... I want  
to be buried back home.

Edward's face remains stone. His breathing is faster now, more shallow, his hands trembling, just slightly.

EDWARD  
(barely audible)  
I'm not waiting...

Isaac stops, catching the slight tremor in Edward's voice. He stares, seeing something in Edward's eyes, a flicker of fear he didn't expect.

ISAAC  
You're scared.

Edward freezes. His face begins to crack, the mask slipping. He's holding it together, but barely. The silence between them is thick, suffocating.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
So am I.

Edward's breathing is uneven now, his chest rising and falling. The walls are closing in on him, the fear of waiting. The fear of losing control. His hand shakes.

Finally, something inside breaks.

Edward collapses back into his seat. His eyes are wet, his breathing ragged. The tears come, but not as sobs, at first, they're just silent. His face crumples, and before long, his shoulders are shaking with the force of it. He can't hold it in anymore. Years of repression, of bottled-up emotions, of needing control... finally pouring out of him.

Isaac watches, stunned.

Instinctively, Isaac moves. He reaches out, placing a hand on Edward's shoulder.

An uncomfortable beat, Edward's sobs echoing in the cramped space, the sound almost surreal in the silence of the capsule.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
It's okay.

Edward doesn't respond. He just cries, all the weight of his life pouring out of him. And Isaac just lets him.

Finally, after what feels like an eternity, Edward's sobs slow. His breathing steadies, though the tears don't stop completely. Isaac lets go, watching him, giving him space.

Edward leans forward, staring out the window, seeing the Earth for the first time. Really seeing it. His eyes, still wet with tears, catch the light of the sun rising over the horizon. It's beautiful.

With shaking hands, Edward reaches for the hatch button... closing the cover. His movements are slow, deliberate, but not out of desperation. He's calm. Ready.

He reorients the capsule, the stars outside shifting as they move. The vast darkness gives way to the sliver of blue and green. The Earth rises slowly before them, the sun stretching its light across the planet.

The light hits Isaac's face first... warm, soft, the light of a new day. Edward remains in shadow, his face still partially obscured, but there's a sense of release in his expression. His breathing slows. He's finally letting go.

They sit there for a moment, watching the Earth turn below them, one last time.

Edward, for the first time in a long time, smiles. A real smile, not forced, not tight with control. It's soft, almost peaceful. He's finally free.

Isaac looks at him, knowing this is the end. His face reflects something different. He's not ready, but there's nothing left to do.

They turn to each other, reaching out. Their hands meet. A firm, final handshake.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

It's been a pleasure flying with you.

EDWARD

And you.

(beat)

I'll see you on the other side.

No more words. Just the quiet hum of the capsule, just space.

The CO2 alarm begins to BEEP, softly at first, a quiet reminder that time is running out. Neither man reacts. They just sit there, staring out at the Earth below, the soft glow of the sunrise stretching across its surface.

The beeping grows louder, insistent.

The view outside the window shifts, the planet slowly turning beneath them. The alarm morphs from a steady beep to a longer, more sustained wail, but it doesn't disturb the quiet. It's just another sound, fading into the background.

And then, as if gently letting go, the camera begins to drift away from the capsule, as they float in the immensity of space.

The Earth swells, its curves taking over the frame, vast and alive. The alarm's wail becomes more drawn out, the pitch lengthening until it's more of a held note than a sound of urgency, fading as our distance from the capsule grows.

Once so close, so full of life, the capsule shrinks. Slowly becoming a tiny speck, drifting alone in the darkness, as the planet looms beneath... endless... eternal.