

AFTERWARDS
(SILENT VERSION)

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EXT. SPACE

Black. Silence. Nothing. Not even the twinkling of the stars.

Then, a blinding white explosion that covers the entire screen.

The BIG BANG.

As the white fades, we see a small ROCK shooting out from a colorful explosion.

We track this rock as it travels through space, seeing stars, galaxies, the universe as we know it being formed at an incredibly fast speed.

But, as the rock approaches a solar system, the scale of time starts to slow down.

The rock travels towards a habitable-looking planet, EARTH, and as it gets closer, we see the formerly dark side of the planet light up with thousands of small lights - cities being built in an instant.

A satellite zooms up from Earth, and the rock pings against it and travels further into the solar system.

As it flies through space, we see the technological progress of mankind progressing before our very eyes: the Moon is quickly consumed in a myriad of lights and colonies. An asteroid belt is eaten up by massive mining machines, and a space station is built on a particularly bulky one.

We see its destination now: a dusty, red planet in the distance, MARS. Massive freighters and ships blink past us, still signaling that the passage of time is accelerated.

As we get closer, we see Mars being briefly covered with an atmosphere, then the atmosphere disappearing. Oceans being filled, then evaporating seconds later. Failed attempts at terraforming. What's left are isolated pockets of lights - the colonies of Mars.

The passage of time slows to real time, evident by the sun stopping in its tracks - it's dawn on Mars.

The rock enters Mars' atmosphere. Glows bright red. It sheds more and more of its mass until all that's left is a fist-sized rock.

But it keeps on going. Persevering.

We enter a dust storm. Lose sight of the rock for a few seconds.

When we regain visibility, we and the rock are above a small collection of solar panels with a building nearby. The rock continues forward until it smashes through a solar panel, finally coming to a rest in the sand.

EXT. SOLAR ARRAY - DAWN - CONTINUOUS

The wind picks up and buries the rock beneath layers of sand.

As the sun peaks above the horizon, the solar panels expand and turn towards the sun, trying to catch its rays. Except the one that's been smashed through - it flickers its last breath of life, and remains still.

Nearby, a door opens, and a PANEL OPERATOR comes out, stretching his arms.

A rover drives by, and his REPLACEMENT gets out of the rover. He and the operator talk for a bit, before the panel operator walks away and the replacement enters the building.

The disabled panel crumbles to the ground.

EXT. WEATHER FORECAST - DAWN

Radars the size of buildings wake up and perk up towards the sky. Except for one, who remains dormant.

INT. WEATHER FORECAST - DAWN

Various scientists walk around and tap on touchscreen panels.

One of them that's dozing off, a SLEEPY SCIENTIST, tries to keep himself awake.

As he falls to sleep again, a flashing red light wakes him up, but as he opens his eyes, the light stops, replaced with a green one.

Satisfied, he begins to fall asleep again, when a phone startles him awake.

Annoyed, he answers.

INT. SPACE STATION - CONTINUOUS

In a split screen, a FURIOUS ASTRONAUT on the right yells at the confused Scientist on the left.

When the Scientist doesn't get the Astronaut's point, the Astronaut turns the camera towards the surface of Mars, where a large dust storm is seen gathering size.

INT. WEATHER FORECAST - CONTINUOUS

The Astronaut hangs up, and the Scientist looks around to see other scientists running around in a panic, their screens full of red. He looks back at his screen. Still green.

A scientist picks up a phone and dials to a colony. Its leader picks up.

EXT. A MARS COLONY - DAY

Soldiers set up a giant forceshield that surrounds the whole colony as worried onlookers gawk at an oncoming dust storm.

INT. WEATHER FORECAST - DAY

Another scientist dials another colony leader.

EXT. ANOTHER MARS COLONY - DAY

Through dusty wind, we see colonists ushering others into protected buildings. The last colonist to go in looks up to see a gigantic dust cloud rushing towards the colony. He gulps and goes inside.

INT. WEATHER FORECAST - DAY

Our Sleepy Scientist nervously picks up a phone and dials. He holds it to his ear. No answer. He dials again.

This time, we see the signal as it comes out from his phone and into a subterranean collection of wires. The signal branches off and ends up in a

EXT. DEFUNCT TELEPHONE POLE - DAY

In a heavy dust storm, a telephone pole fizzes. The wind knocks it to the ground.

INT. WEATHER FORECAST - DAY

The Sleepy Scientist is now tapping aggressively on his phone as his coworkers gather behind him to watch him work.

His SUPERIOR comes out of the crowd, takes the phone from the Scientist mid-dial, and places it back on the receiver.

The Scientist slumps back in his chair, defeated, as the Superior looks grimly at the Scientist's screen, displaying the green, seemingly okay status of a colony named ALPHA COLONY.

We jump back, showing that the screen is the only green in a sea of red screens.

EXT. HEADQUARTERS - AFTERNOON

In the middle of a dust storm, a soldier stands at attention in front of a formal-looking, imposing building. His body tilts side-to-side, swaying with the strong wind.

A rover drives up. The soldier salutes and opens the door. The Superior walks out and towards the building.

The soldier lets go of the door to salute, and the door blasts clean off the rover with the wind. No one acknowledges this.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - WAITING AREA - AFTERNOON

In a crowd of patiently waiting, affluently dressed civilians, the dust-covered Superior, still wearing his spacesuit, stands out. They all gawk at him.

A secretary opens a door, and calls out.

The Superior stands up, scattering dust and scaring the people around him.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - MAYOR'S RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON

The Superior speaks calmly.

We pan past a window showing the dust storm outside to the MAYOR, eating a salad, who retorts calmly.

We pan past the window again, where we see an aircraft crashing to the ground, back to the Superior, who takes a deep breath to calm himself. He takes off his helmet. States his point again. Bit more aggressive now.

Past the window, a soldier is thrown by the wind against the window. He slides down. The Mayor throws a leaf into his mouth and shrugs. Muttered nonchalantly.

Past the window again, now showing cracks. Streams of dust fly through these cracks. The Superior, done with this little game, shouts his point.

Past the window, which explodes, sending the whole building into lockdown; a metal panel slides over the window to cover the open space.

The shocked Mayor, now covered in dust, wipes his mouth and lets out a weak nod.

The Superior salutes and puts his helmet back on.

EXT. AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

Two hands wave light batons in the air. They stop in the upward position. One of the batons wiggles its way out of the hands and flies away with the wind.

A large collection of landing pads. Soldiers run to and fro as aircraft struggle to land on those pads.

INT. AIRPORT - HANGAR - AFTERNOON

A COMMANDER in front of a large map explains the situation of the dust storm to a large group of soldiers.

He extends a pointer and hits an image of an aircraft, and we follow the pointer as it travels from landing pad to landing pad throughout Mars, finally reaching its destination, Alpha Colony.

The Commander nods confidently to himself and looks back at the soldiers.

A worn-out soldier rushes into the room and says something, out of breath.

The Commander does a double-take.

EXT. AIRPORT - LATE AFTERNOON

A large military convoy. Soldiers cram supplies into large tanks and cars, trying to shield themselves from the dust best they can.

One soldier, a ROOKIE, struggles to carry two large knapsacks of supplies. He gets to his rover and opens the trunk, only for several other knapsacks to spill out.

He sighs and manages to fit his supplies into the cramped trunk. He closes the trunk.

He braces himself against his rover and surveys the scene around him - a chaotic mess best describes it. Vehicles starting up and then breaking down, chugging out dust through their exhaust vents. Soldiers falling with the wind, and those that try to help them also falling. Aircraft racing against each other to try and land on a pad, those out of fuel crash-landing nearby.

But, past all of this, a beautiful sunset past the Martian dunes. The wind clears for a bit, allowing the Rookie to get a clearer view of the scene.

Then, he looks back, in the direction that the convoy is heading, in the direction that he has to go into, and it's simply a mass of dark red - the storm.

The Rookie gets into the rover. Starts it up.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The sounds of wind, over pure black.

Then, rising above a dune, blurry through the storm: a group of flashlights. They drop downwards as soldiers walk down a dune. This is followed by two headlights of a vehicle traversing the dune. Then two more. The convoy.

With the soldiers walking at the front now, they aim their flashlights unsteadily in front of them. The LEAD SOLDIER walks a bit ahead of the group, steeling his nerves best he can.

Suddenly, the beam of light strikes metal. He raises his arm in a "stop" position, and aims his gun at a stopped car in front of him.

The entire convoy stops.

The group surrounds the car, calling out. No response.

A NERVOUS SOLDIER aims his light at the windshield. Sees something.

The Lead Soldier reaches out for the car door.

The Nervous Soldier calls out.

Too late.

The Lead Soldier opens the door, and a mass of dust pours out, alongside the corpse of the car's driver.

As the group gathers around the corpse and as soldiers from the convoy get out from their vehicles, the Lead Soldier gets up as he realizes something.

He walks away from the group as the Nervous Soldier notices he's leaving and runs after him.

The Rookie walks up to the scene, stunned by it.

With the Nervous Soldier now: he pants as he runs after the Lead Soldier, but the Lead is faster than him, and he stops, trying to catch his breath.

Then, he notices something. He looks up. Darkness. In front. Darkness. Behind. Darkness.

Can't see anything.

He yells out for help. No one answers.

Desperate, he aims his gun in the air to fire, but a flare shooting upwards stops him. However, the flare reveals something else.

A long, crooked line of cars, all stopped dead in their tracks. Hands of corpses sticking out of the sand, gnawing at the air for help that's too late.

From behind a dune, the first rays of dawn peak over the horizon.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - DAY

The convoy continues onwards, travelling alongside the dead colonist convoy which still stretches on. The storm rages.

A rover stops in its tracks, its engine dead. The rover behind it stops just in time to prevent crashing. Its driver gets out and argues with the dead rover's driver as the dead rover's driver grabs fistfuls of dust out of the exhaust vent of the rover.

Another rover drives by, this one piloted by the Rookie.

INT. ROOKIE'S CAR - DAY

The car is considerably less loaded with cargo, its seats now occupied by bored and sleeping soldiers. The rookie looks at the two drivers arguing and the continues.

Suddenly, the car in front of him stops as well. Confused, he gets out, to see that the entire convoy is stopped in front of the colony which got a forcefield up in time (from earlier).

EXT. FORCESHIELD COLONY - AFTERNOON

The soldiers clean themselves off and rest in the colony that's protected from the raging storm outside.

The Rookie gets out of his car, relieved to finally be in the presence of civilization. He looks around.

Colonists poke their heads out of their cramped, dilapidated shelters, fearful. Some get out, clean dust off of their rickety solar panels. A mother holds a baby in her arms, both wearing spacesuits. She points to the orange sky, and the baby reaches out. They all look tired.

A commotion gets the Rookie's attention - he turns just in time to see the Lead Soldier punching a colonist, sending her to the ground. He stands over her and yells, pointing to the long line of dead colonists just outside the colony's forcefield.

A local soldier tries to intervene, but that also results in the Lead Soldier punching him to the ground.

In a matter of seconds, the scene transforms into a tense standoff between the local soldiers and the soldiers passing through, all aiming their guns at each other.

The Lead Soldier spots the mother with her baby rushing into a shelter. Sees the Rookie, who doesn't have his weapon drawn, also seeing the same thing.

The Lead Soldier scoffs and holsters his weapon, causing all the rest to slowly do the same.

EXT. FORCESHIELD COLONY - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

The LEADER of the convoy stands in a quiet corner with the Lead Soldier; behind the Lead Soldier stands a disgruntled group of soldiers.

The Leader talks quietly to the Lead Soldier, who, after some deliberation, nods. The Lead Soldier waves his arm to his disgruntled group.

EXT. FORCESHIELD COLONY - DUSK

The Lead Soldier gets into a rover and turns on the engine.

However, instead of following the rest of the group, his rover, as well as about half of the convoy, turns the other way.

The Rookie looks on as the Lead Soldier's group heads back in the direction where they came from; they take careful attention to head a dune away from the colonists' convoy, shielding them from their sight.

The Leader comes up to the Rookie's rover and knocks on his window.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - DUSK

The Rookie, on foot, leads a small group of soldiers, including the Nervous Soldier, in front of the convoy.

They come to the final car of the colonists' convoy. The Rookie looks onwards, at an empty, desolate landscape of sand.

Taking a breath, he walks forward, as does the convoy.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - DAY/NIGHT

In a sequence of match cuts switching from day to night, we see the convoy moving through masses of landscape, each seemingly the same as the prior, as the number of vehicles and the condition of the remaining ones dwindle.

In the night of each shot, we see a group of soldiers walking at the front of the convoy, lead by the Rookie, their postures becoming more and more slouched, their suits covered in more and more red dust.

About a week (14 shots) passes in this sequence.

By the end, only two vehicles remain in the convoy.

The storm rages on.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - DAY

Red dust covers our screen.

Then, for the first time in a long time, the dust starts to clear, revealing a stunning vista.

The Rookie walks up a dune and looks at the view in awe.

But before he can contemplate any further, footsteps behind him.

He turns to see the Nervous Soldier, alongside the remaining soldiers in the convoy, looking at him, tired, exhausted.

The Nervous Soldier drops a sack of supplies at the Rookie's feet.

A beat.

Then, the Rookie leans down, picks up the sack, hoists it onto his shoulder, and salutes the Nervous Soldier.

The Nervous Soldier returns the salute.

Then, the Nervous Soldier and the rest of the convoy departs the Rookie, leaving him and his rover.

The Rookie gets in his rover and attempts to start it, but it won't start.

He gets out of the rover, opens the cover of the rover, and sees that its entire interior is covered with dust.

The Rookie takes a fistful of dust out of the engine, watches as it blows away from his fingers.

He takes another fistful out.

Then, angrily, throws it aside.

His anger turns into determination as he attempts to remove the dust in the engine. But all the dust he takes out is instantly replaced with more dust from the storm.

He looks at the ground to see the tracks of the departing rover. He traces the path of the tracks, looks in the direction that the tracks head in.

He gets up, takes the sack the Nervous Soldier gave him, and takes a step in that direction.

But he pauses.

Looks in the opposite direction, towards his destination.

Looks back, towards his home.

And then he turns, in the opposite direction of the tracks, towards Alpha Colony, and starts to walk as the storm covers our screen.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - DUSK

When the storm clears, we see the Rookie trying to get footing on a particularly steep dune. He slips and falls.

At the base of the dune, the Rookie scrubs dust from his helmet, but he stops.

In front of him, a seemingly abandoned colony.

But his noise has attracted attention - colonists wearing makeshift, obsolete space suits and rags poke their heads out of their shelters.

EXT. MARTIAN COLONY - DUSK

The Rookie peers over a map with the leader of the colony. The leader points him in a direction. The Rookie thanks him.

EXT. VARIOUS PLACES - VARIOUS TIMES

A sequence of shots:

- The Rookie climbs the walls of a steep canyon in the DAY.
- By DUSK, the Rookie marvels at the skeletal ruins of an early colony.
- By DAY, the Rookie walks across an otherworldly expanse of sand. Antennas and the tops of domes from buried buildings poke out of the ground.
- By NIGHT, the Rookie camps out in the crashed frame of an aircraft.
- By DAWN, the Rookie walks the deserted streets of another abandoned colony. We see the skeletons of its former inhabitants littering the sidewalks.
- By DUSK, the Rookie walks the bed of a drained ocean.

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The Rookie, exhausted, walking by flashlight, stumbles onward.

He sits down to catch his breath. Reaches into the sack. Pulls out a singular tin.

Desperate, he looks inside the bag, but it's completely empty.

It's done. He's done now. He throws the bag away, but it's instantly carried away by the wind.

At the end of his wits, he lets out a loud, deep, primal YELL.

It echoes, without response.

He aims his flashlight around, and sees a building in front of him.

With the storm still raging, he hurries for shelter.

INT. BUILDING - NIGHT

The Rookie slams the door shut behind him and looks around the building.

It's a small, residential one. A corpse wearing a spacesuit lies against a wall, its arm hugging another corpse.

The Rookie walks towards the corpse.

Then, he notices something.

On the corpse, he pries away a dogtag. Looks at the insignia.

Recognizes it.

With excitement, he drops the tin on the ground and rushes outside.

EXT. ALPHA COLONY - DAWN

The Rookie runs from the building towards a collection of other buildings - ALPHA COLONY.

In his hurry, he doesn't notice that the storm has cleared, and that the sun is beginning to rise.

EXT. ALPHA COLONY STREETS - DAWN

The Rookie runs through the deserted streets.

We see the Rookie's destination - the TOWN HALL.

INT. ALPHA COLONY TOWN HALL - DAWN

The Rookie runs through the dead interior of the formerly-opulent town hall.

INT. ALPHA COLONY TOWN HALL - OFFICE - DAWN

The Rookie kicks a door down and sees a computer terminal with a RED light on it.

He runs to it and starts typing some things into it.

The terminal flashes GREEN.

The Rookie stands in awe for a moment.

His mission is finally complete.

Then, the first rays of dawn come streaming through a window, catching his attention.

EXT. ALPHA COLONY TOWN HALL - DAWN

The Rookie walks down the steps of the town hall, seeing for himself the magnificent sunrise that comes over the horizon.

Tired, exhausted, and out of breath, he sits down to rest, facing towards the rising sun.

He smiles.

We pull back, giving an overhead view of the colony, and keep on pulling back, until we're in

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

In a sequence opposite of the intro, we pull back from Mars, rushing past the boundaries of the Solar System, past the Milky Way, and its surrounding galaxies, until we're met with the black expanse of space.

Only this time, the blackness is peppered with twinkling little sparks of light.

FADE OUT.