

LIFE POD

Written by

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INT. YOUNG BOY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A BOY (8), with his eyes shut tight, sleeps soundly.

His MOTHER sits nearby with her elbows propped up on his bed. Her fingers rub her forehead as she MUTTERS under her breath.

She's praying.

After a moment she rises and looks down sweetly at her son, as though wanting to touch him. She refrains.

Instead, she exits the room.

The boy's eyes immediately open. He's fully alert -- wasn't sleeping.

His expression is flat, betraying no emotion.

He shifts to his back and stares up at the ceiling. Littered above him are glow-in-the-dark stickers of stars and distant planets.

It looks like the whole cosmos laid out before him.

CUT TO:

INT. CREW RETURN VEHICLE (CRV) - SPACE

Welcome to the CRV, an emergency life pod for desperate astronauts.

BANG!!

The CRV violently SHAKES like it's going to be ripped apart.

The LIGHTS flicker off and on.

Metal SQUEALS from strain, and the CRV ROLLS end over end.

The g-force HURLS a loose BODY against a bulkhead. There's a GROAN of pain before the body is thrown the other direction as the pod continues to ROLL.

SLAM! The body -- a MAN connects hard against a large plexiglas compartment.

There's a GASP from behind the plexiglas.

The terrified face of a WOMAN looks out at the MAN in a flight suit. Stitched in the suit is his name: SPECIALIST AKERS.

Akers holds on for dear life as the CRV SHAKES and TUMBLES over again. The force PULLS at his weightless body before SLAMMING him back into the plexiglas compartment.

Akers looks up and spots a SAFETY RESTRAINT dangling above his head. He carefully reaches out with one hand to grab it.

Straining fingers grasp the ends of it when -- THUD!

The CRV ROLLS and Akers is FLUNG in the other direction. The WOMAN instinctively reaches for him -- but is helpless with the plexiglas between them.

A KLAXON SOUNDS through the small confines of the life pod.

Akers is TOSSED again, but manages to snag the SAFETY HARNESS and quickly straps himself in as the ship continues to ROCK.

He secures himself to what looks like a gurney that is embedded into the wall.

As soon as he does, two plexiglas sheets slide in front of him like elevator doors, and lock with a HISS.

The CRV SHIMMIES, giving one last violent SHAKE before finally coming to a rest.

The KLAXON silences.

The LIGHTS flicker back to life.

The life pod is still moving, turning over, end over end, but at a significantly slower rate.

Akers looks around, examining the state of the CRV.

It's small, holds ten crew members, but tightly. Every inch of space in the cone shaped ship is utilized, all 360 degrees.

Panels of sophisticated electronic instruments align most of the walls and provide means of keeping tabs on the vital systems that keep the crew alive and the ship functioning.

There are stations for basic crew needs. A bathroom station. A kitchen of sorts, with food and water compartments. An exercise station, to prevent muscle atrophy in the zero gravity environment.

And of course, a medical station, which doubles as the sleeping quarters for the crew, and is where Akers and the remaining crew are strapped in.

The medical pods are stacked two high in a row.

WOMAN (O.S.)

You okay?

Akers looks down at his feet. Below him he sees the woman strapped in her medical pod. She looks up at him. She's in her 30s; short black hair, dark brown eyes, pinched features. She looks fragile.

He just stares at her.

WOMAN

Are you okay?

(beat)

Akers?

Akers shakes his head.

AKERS

Sorry. I forget your name.

She opens her mouth to say something, but stops. She looks down at the sewn name on her flight suit: SCIENCE OFFICER HARPER.

She laughs slightly.

HARPER

It's Harper.

She looks back up at him.

HARPER (cont'd)

I forgot it myself for a second.

Akers forces a smile. He unlatches his safety belt.

The plexiglas folds back and Akers drifts out.

We see him well for the first time. Late 30s, small frame -- his legs especially thin. But despite the gauntness of his body, his eyes convey a strength, a hardened determination.

He has a small bleeding gash over his eye.

There's a SCREAM of pain.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Easy! Easy!

Akers looks down to see SPECIALIST BANIK (30s), female, thin, short curly hair.

She PLUNGES a SYRINGE into the leg of COMMANDER DOLAN (40s). His flesh is blackened and badly burned, covering much of his body.

Dolan pulls against his restraints, the harness peels his skin like cheese as the pod continues its ROLL.

He SCREAMS.

BANIK

Akers! I need some help!

Akers shoves off down toward her.

BANIK (cont'd)

His skin is tearing against the restraints. Help me get it off.

Akers grabs the latch on the restraint and works to unfasten it as the pod continues its ROLL.

Banik cuts through Dolan's flight suit, exposing the charred skin and exposed bone underneath.

BANIK (cont'd)

Oh god.

HARPER (O.S.)

What can I do?

Banik looks back to Harper who has emerged from her medical pod.

BANIK

Gauze. Bandages.

Harper crosses to a compartment and starts rifling through it.

The life pod continues to ROLL. Banik has to adjust herself as the force pulls her away from Dolan.

BANIK (cont'd)

Damn it.

AKERS

We got to stop this roll. Worn!

WORN (O.S.)

I'm alive.

AKERS

I don't hear the thrusters.

WORN (O.S.)
Don't feel'em either.

FLIGHT ENGINEER WORN exits from his medical pod. He's tall, middle-aged, with floppy blonde hair and cool blue eyes.

WORN
(seeing Dolan)
Shit.

AKERS
We need control of this ship.

WORN
Right.

Worn pulls himself over to the command console.

Harper floats back to Banik and Akers.

The three work to carefully dress Dolan's wounds. Flakes of dead skin, globs of blood and bits of clothing float off of him.

AKERS
(to Worn)
Sounded like we were pelted pretty bad. What was the alarm?

WORN
Might've torn the radiator panel.
(pressing a com-button)
Run. Diagnostics.

The COMMAND INTERFACE registers his request.

COMMAND INTERFACE
(computer voice)
Diagnostics. Running.

BANIK
(to Dolan)
How bad is the pain?

DOLAN
It hurts here. A lot.

He points to a reddish portion of skin that's far less burnt than the rest.

Harper and Banik exchange knowing glances. Means he has nerve damage. Third and fourth degree burns.

BANIK

Okay.

She smiles sadly.

AKERS

(to Worn)

What's protocol for C.I.'s for
engine shut-down?

WORN

I'm not sure. On the X-28's --
cracks in the cathode, or a leak in
the propellant tank. But it may not
be a shut-down.

DOLAN

Could be... could be... the
propellant... MS... c-- controls.

AKERS

(to Worn)

Dolan says propellant management.

WORN

Eh? Yeah, maybe.

BANIK

(to Dolan)

Here. Drink this.

Banik holds out a packaged water for Dolan to drink from.

Akers crosses to a communication system. He flips a switch
on the unit and detaches a mic from the wall.

The mic looks like it's from a CB radio.

AKERS

(on mic)

Houston. Come in Houston.

Silence.

Akers flips a couple of more switches.

AKERS (cont'd)

(on mic)

Houston, please respond.

A CRACKLE of STATIC.

Akers flips a few more switches trying to boost the signal.

HARPER (O.S.)
Are they dead?

All eyes turn to Harper. She looks in a daze.

HARPER
Are the rest dead?

Beat.

BANIK
(reassuringly)
There's other life pods. They could
have--

AKERS
They're dead.

Beat.

AKERS (cont'd)
(on mic)
Houston, please respond.

HARPER
How many?
(beat)
How many people were on board?

DOLAN
With the new... the new...
arrivals, the count was thirty.

BANIK
It's a miracle any of us made it
off that thing.

WORN
Thank God for this ship.

AKERS
Thank NASA.
(on mic)
Houston, please respond.

COMMAND INTERFACE
Diagnostics complete.
(beat)
Three system failures detected.
(beat)
Ion Thrusters: Offline. Structural
damage detected.
(MORE)

COMMAND INTERFACE (cont'd)

(beat)

Reaction control system thrusters:
Offline.

(beat)

Backup thrusters: Offline.

WORN

How is that even possible?

COMMAND INTERFACE

Communication systems: Online.
Structural damage detected.

(beat)

Radiator Panel: Online. Structural
damage detected.

The ship continues to ROLL slowly, end over end. The astronauts have to continue to adjust their bodies to the rotation.

WORN

All thrusters out? That's got to be
a software problem. Or
instrumentation.

HARPER

We should say something or... have
a moment of silence.

Attention turns back to Harper.

BANIK

(beat)

You're right. We should. We should
take a moment.

Banik bows her head, Harper and the others do likewise.

Short moment.

AKERS

(on mic)

Houston this is Olympia CRV Alpha,
please respond.

BANIK

Akers, godsake, we're having a
moment of silence.

AKERS

Just how long of a moment are you
people thinking of taking?

HARPER
Twenty-five souls passed--

AKERS
You want to make it an even thirty?
(beat)
Look, I don't mean to be an ass,
but right now our number one
priority has got to be getting back
control of this ship. And to do
that it might be jolly-well helpful
if we could speak to goddamn
Mission Control.

There's a sobering moment.

DOLAN
He's right.

AKERS
(on mic)
Houston, come in Houston.

WORN
(to Dolan)
You said it could be the PM system,
where is that?

Dolan shakes his head.

DOLAN
Check the schematics.

BANIK
(to Dolan)
You need to rest. Come on.

Banik helps ease Dolan back into his medical pod.

Worn maneuvers his body to a locked compartment. He flicks the lock and pulls out a large binder -- the ship's manual, with schematics.

AKERS
Harper.

HARPER
What?

AKERS
Keep trying the line.

He holds out the mic to her.

She crosses over to him.

AKERS (cont'd)
We're going to need Houston.
(beat)
Okay?

She still looks shaken.

HARPER
Yeah.

He hands her the mic.

HARPER (cont'd)
(on mic)
Houston, do you copy?

She continues trying to reach Houston as Akers and Worn examine the ships schematics.

WORN
Propellant lines look like they run
along here.

He points at the schematics.

COMMAND INTERFACE
Warning. Battery at 75 percent.
(beat)
Deploying solar array.

There's a WHIIIRING sound as the solar array unfolds above them.

Banik slides up next to Worn and Akers.

WORN
Propellant Management -- here.
Backup -- here.

Worn points at the diagram. A drop of blood PLOPS on it.

Worn looks up at Akers, who is applying pressure to the injury on his brow.

WORN (cont'd)
You alright?

AKERS
I'm alive to answer that question.
I'm better than most.

Banik tosses Akers a bandage.

BANIK

Last thing we need is loose liquid
shorting out our circuits.

AKERS

I got it.

Worn wipes off the blood from the paper. He glances back at Dolan, who is now wrapped in bandages and locked in his medical pod.

WORN

(to Banik)

How is he?

Banik shakes her head, dismayed.

She runs her hand through her hair.

BANIK

(muttering)

How the hell did this happen?

WORN

Space stations are dangerous. A
thousand things can go wrong.

AKERS

It doesn't matter.

BANIK

(incredulous)

It doesn't matter?

AKERS

Right now, the only thing that
really -- and I mean desperately
matters -- is getting this ship
pointed home.

WORN

You have a one track mind Akers.

AKERS

And that's a problem?

WORN

No. But it can make you overlook
things.

Worn glances over at Harper.

WORN (cont'd)
Relax Akers, we've got enough life
support for ten people.

Worn returns his attention to the schematics.

COMMAND INTERFACE
Solar array deployed. Battery
charging.

As Akers and Worn look through the schematics, Harper
continues to hail Houston and stares out the only window on
the life pod.

HARPER
Houston, come in Houston.
(beat)
Houston do you copy?
(beat)
Houston, please re--

Harper's mouth droops open.

She leans in close to the window.

The pod continues to roll, she stares intently out the
window.

The CRV slowly ROLLS. Her eyes go wide.

HARPER (cont'd)
(in a whisper)
Oh my god...
(then)
GUYS!

All eyes look to her.

HARPER (cont'd)
Get over here.

WORN
What is it?

HARPER
Look.

She points at the window. Akers, Banik and Worn peer out.

WORN
I don't--

HARPER
Keep looking! When she comes back
around...

The CRV continues it's ROLL and suddenly they see it.

A large chunk of debris that looks like the remains of a
fractured and scorched space module is moving towards them.

HARPER (cont'd)
THERE! You see it!?

They stare intently at it.

WORN
Don't panic. It's okay. It's okay.
The trajectory is off... it's going
to pass us.

The CRV rolls, and the debris moves from their view.

HARPER
You're sure?

WORN
Yeah. We're -- we're okay. It's
going to pass right over us.

They all continue to stare out the window, waiting with
baited breath till the ROLLING life pod shows the debris in
their window again.

The CRV ROLLS and the debris is closer now -- heading right
for them.

AKERS
It's going to hit us.

WORN
Shit. You're right. Shit, shit,
shit.

AKERS
We need those thrusters online!

Worn moves quickly, heading to the navigation panel.

DOLAN
Solar array.

Banik hears Dolan, and moves to a control panel.

WORN
It's got to be software.

HARPER
And if it's not!?

WORN
It is! I'm going to shut it down
and restart the power sequencing.

BANIK
Wait!

Worn powers the Command Interface down.

BANIK (cont'd)
Shit.

Banik shakes her head.

Thinking quickly, Akers scrambles to the manual, and flips through the pages.

HARPER
How long to power up?

WORN
Few minutes.

Akers runs his finger along a diagram outline of the emergency oxygen lines.

AKERS
Harper, help me suit up!

WORN
What are you doing?

AKERS
Plan B.

Akers grabs a space suit in a storage compartment. Harper comes along side him and helps him put it on, moving as quickly as they can.

HARPER
You're going out there?

AKERS
If I can get to the oxygen
canisters, I can sever the pressure
valve. Stir the tanks, the
pressure--

HARPER
(catching on)
It'll rupture -- giving us thrust!

The lights shut off, and the emergency lights kick on,
bathing the CRV in a yellow glow.

WORN
Powering back on.
(muttering)
C'mon baby, c'mon baby...

BANIK
You should've waited till I
retracted the solar array.

WORN
Power's not gonna matter if we're
smashed into fuckin' pieces.

Akers hands Harper a wireless head set.

AKERS
Watch the gauge.

She puts it on as Akers secures his helmet.

AKERS (cont'd)
You read me?

Harper nods -- the wireless headset works.

HARPER
Yeah. I got you.

Akers moves to the hatch.

HARPER (cont'd)
You won't be depressurized.

AKERS
Better sick than dead.

HARPER
And if you're sick then dead?

AKERS
I'm open to better ideas.
(to Worn)
How much time?

WORN
Just a few more minutes.