

PHOENIX RISING

FADE IN:

INT. NORAD COMMAND CENTER - DAY

Chaos. A claustrophobic room with no windows. Three huge monitors on the wall display the inbound trajectory of a fast-moving object while a dozen military officers frantically track it from their terminals. The cadence of high-speed printers matches the flurry of voices criss-crossing the room. Admiral COLLETT stands to the side, flanked by an official.

COLLETT

Time!

LIEUTENANT 1

Thirty minutes until Exodus
breaches the Ionosphere!

Collett checks the time on an overhead display. 22:56 Zulu.

COLLETT

I want AWACS on top of this
thing the minute it gets near
orbital altitude! Scramble SAC
fighters at Langley and get me
a grid of all D-2 ships and subs!
Thompson! How're those numbers
crunchin'?

Lt. Thompson quickly plots a series of coordinates into his terminal then glances up at the big-screen which displays a map of the massive object in relation to North America.

THOMPSON

Uh, okay! Close as we have it
we're lookin' at an M-Class
asteroid bearing in at about-

COLLETT

Cut the crap Thompson! Is this
thing gonna hit us!?

THOMPSON

It won't hit us sir--the
numbers don't add up. But it's
gonna be close.

Collett turns to ARCHIE, at his side. Civilian dress, steady demeanor.

COLLETT

Archie, for God's sake tell me
the President's already airborne.

ARCHIE

Air Force One touched off an

hour ago. Got the word off CNN.

COLLETT
(rolling his eyes)
Okay Thompson, story-time!

THOMPSON
(checking his figures)
Uh, it's big sir, probably the
biggest we've seen this close.
The fucking velocity alone--

COLLETT
Language!

THOMPSON
The freakin' velocity alone
is the only thing savin' us.

COLLETT
Meaning?

THOMPSON
Meaning if this thing was any
slower we'd be vaporized. Mankind
that is. The planet would recover,
but we wouldn't be around to see it.

LIEUTENANT 2
(just off the phone)
National Guard's been called out,
and the North Fleet's been called
in! President's addressing the
nation in twenty minutes.

CAPTAIN 1
Best reports show a loss of ten
percent of orbiting satellites.

COLLETT
We need more eyes on this thing!
Get a feed through our observatories
in the Pacific and the towers--

ARCHIE
(quietly)
They're already on it, Jack.

COLLETT
Right. Thompson, what're we
lookin' at--I mean, how big is
this thing? A mile across? Two?

THOMPSON

Uh, more like Mexico, sir. Old
not new.

Collett stares at Archie, who pulls a small metal flask from his pocket
and offers it to the Admiral. Collett ignores the offer.

COLLETT

Do we know where the hell this
thing's goin'?

THOMPSON

Tough to pin down--it's so
goddamm close--!

COLLETT

Language, goddammit!

THOMPSON

We can't tell how our gravity's
gonna affect the trajectory.

Collett rears back and gives Thompson "the look."

THOMPSON

Okay, okay! Best guess is that
it passes Earth, arcs around the
other planets, then hits the sun.

ARCHIE

Wouldn't it just pass through
the solar system?

THOMPSON

The angles are wrong, it's gonna
enter the sun's gravity. If it
gets that close it'll burn.

A loud beacon erupts on Monitor A. High-speed printers fly into action.

CAPTAIN 2

Exodus entering the ionosphere!
Say again, Exodus has breached--

Archie quietly pulls Collett aside.

ARCHIE

Jack, we've got a bigger problem
here. An asteroid that big is gonna
have a gravitational pull.

COLLETT

(puzzled)
Wave activity? Earthquakes?

ARCHIE

More like tsunamis on both coasts,
and a shitload of electrical storms.

COLLETT

Language, Arch.

ARCHIE

If this thing passes over us--and
I'm just sayin' if--we could lose
Florida, and half of California.

Collett exhales deeply, then extends his hand. Archie pulls the flask from his pocket and hands it to his old friend. Collett takes a swig.

COLLETT

My mother wanted me to be an
accountant, but nooooo...

(a beat)

Get me the President.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

An upper-middle class house in California. An HD TV broadcasts the news while the family (typically suburban) prepares for a camping trip. DAD is cinching his back-pack, MOM is running around in the background. BRAD, age 19, is coaxing his 17-year old sister, LISA, into coming along. From head to toe, she is ALWAYS dressed in black.

TV ANCHOR

--for more on the nature of
the crisis, we turn to our
science editor Kyle Brooks.

KYLE

I'm not so sure I would call
this a crisis, since the asteroid
in question will not hit the Earth.
Let me be clear: this is NOT an
armageddon-type scenario.

Brad is pulling at his back-pack while Lisa sits on it defiantly.

BRAD

Quit bein' a brat! Don't you
wanna get away for awhile?

Annoyed, he waves his hand at a fat fly buzzing between them.

LISA

What for? The camping-trip from hell?
(imitates the family)
"This look like great spot to
desecrate forest. Mmm, fire good!"
Meanwhile the whole world's comin'

to an end!
(points to the TV)

TV ANCHOR
So, to sum up, the world is
definitely NOT coming to an
end. Back to you Laura.

Mom, slightly startled, shoos away the same pesky fly.

MOM
Oh honey, the TV says there's
no danger. You have to look
on the bright side.

Dad complacently munches some potato chips, oblivious of the fly buzzing near. It continues on, landing near Lisa.

DAD
Bright side.

LISA
Dad! The bright side is
something people made up to
avoid dealing with reality!

With her bare hand, Lisa smashes the fly dead.

LISA
That's reality! That's how
everything ends!

DAD
(still munching)
Hundred bucks if you come with us.

LISA
I'll get my things.

EXT. PENN STATE UNIVERSITY - DAY

MATT, black, 22, walks through the campus (ALWAYS dressed in red). Lots of nervous faces contrast with his aimless demeanor. Ahead, a gathering of students chatter at the entrance to the student hall, watching a TV monitor. MARCUS, also black, catches Matt from behind.

MARCUS
Matt!

MATT
Hey Marcus.

MARCUS
Well?

MATT

I think I did okay.

MARCUS

Man, why didn't you sit behind me? You could've copied my shit!

MATT

C'mon, you know Pop wanted us to make it on our own--am I right? Don't tell me I'm lyin' now, I got my good shoes on.

(Marcus chuckles)

Gotta play the hand we're dealt. You got the brains, I got the looks, and that's our terrible fate. Well, yours anyway.

MARCUS

Man, that's funny. You're a real Dave Chapelle--oh sweet Moses!

A stunning girl, also dressed in red, walks by with her friends in the opposite direction. She smiles playfully at the two, then fades away.

MATT

Is that legal? Tell me it's illegal to be that good-looking.

MARCUS

Gives the term Red Fox a whole new--

A mob of students bolt past them, cutting Marcus off.

MATT

What's all this!?

MARCUS

Man, you ain't heard? A meteor's passing right over us. Any minute.

MATT

Meteor!? Serious? Hey, we're still playin' tonight, right?

MARCUS

(rolls eyes)

C'mon....

He pulls Matt toward the crowd gathered at the Student Hall where a TV monitor is broadcasting the President's address. The crowd watches anxiously. Matt's eyes wander; Marcus urges him to pay attention.

PRESIDENT

12 hours ago the asteroid, code-named Exodus, passed over the North Polar Cap. We expect the object to spare Earth entirely, and continue into deep space, wherever God wills it to go.

EXT. NEAR SPACE - DAY

A colossal asteroid streaks over the Earth. The object is a blazing mass of ash and fire. We hear the President in voice-over.

PRESIDENT (V.O.)

In the face of this threat, we stand united. All the Earth's people, in every region, stand united in this challenge. On land, at sea, and in the air.

INT. COLORADO RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - DAY

STAN (ALWAYS dressed in white) sits on his bed, staring at a photo of a small girl happily dressed in a Halloween costume. The girl resembles LISA, but younger. Stan is 60 years old, trim and fit. The faded walls display old photographs and medals from his days in the Marine Corps. In the background, the President's address continues on the radio.

PRESIDENT (cont'd)

In America, we have an old saying. United we stand, divided we fall. Citizens of the world... we will not fall.

Next to Stan sits an old suitcase. He tucks the photo into it, then continues packing. Clothing, a book, etc. He reaches into a drawer and pulls out a packet of "Depends." He stares at them resentfully, then rolls his eyes and slips them into the case as well.

RADIO HOST 1

The President's address, delivered earlier today. Now, for an update, we take you to NORAD air base.

RADIO HOST 2

Thanks Tara. Officials here do confirm the asteroid is moving away from Earth. It seems the effects of the meteor are being felt most strongly in the Atlantic, with tsunamis reported in some areas.

Stan climbs onto a high stool to retrieve something from the closet. Stretching to the limit, he becomes dizzy, losing his balance. He closes his eyes, reaches again, and pulls down a revolver. Climbing down, he

tucks it into his case. Wincing, he grabs a pill-bottle from his dresser. He stares at it, then throws it into the trash resentfully.

Atop the dresser stands a mysterious RELIC. It is a thin shaft of metal, 12 inches long, with a loop at one end. The murky finish makes it look other-worldly, displaying alien markings on one side. We get a good look at it while Stan throws the rest of his pill-bottles in the trash.

He grabs the relic, smiles slightly, then packs it into the suitcase as well. He zips the whole thing up and heads for the door, where he runs into CHARLIE, a friend who looks like he's two hundred years old.

CHARLIE

Stan!

STAN

Hello Charlie.

CHARLIE

Wait a second, where you goin'?
(points to the suitcase)

STAN

I'm heading out. All this goin' on;
it's a sign. We weren't meant to
last this long.

CHARLIE

"Last?"

STAN

We're like dinosaurs, Charlie.
Outlived our usefulness. Aren't
you sick of feeling like a fossil
waiting to be dug up?

CHARLIE

With these nurses? They can dig
wherever they want! Now c'mon,
you're havin' one of your dizzy
spells again. Some medicine--

STAN

No more medicine. I'll only feel
better when I reach my destination.

CHARLIE

Oh? And where's that? You got no
money--

(hacking cough)

STAN

You know...Oregon's the only
state in the union that allows
assisted suicide.

CHARLIE

So?

Stan shrugs his shoulders nonchalantly.

CHARLIE

Oh, now wait a minute!

STAN

I've waited long enough. After Grace left me...every day just got a little bit harder.

CHARLIE

Listen to me, Stan--

STAN

No, you listen.

(sings quietly)

There will be peace in the valley, for meeee, someday....

Stan walks through the hall, out the door, singing every step of the way.

EXT. NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

The sea is breaking violently. At the center of the storm a small commercial vessel heaves against the ocean. The crew on deck, dressed in yellow, works frantically to loosen a crate bolted to the deck. It is marked "Maximilian Industries." MAX himself stands imperially over the crew. 34, dressed in an orange slicker, he is larger than life.

MAX

Get that damn crate off deck!
I'm not about to lose it if
the ship goes down!

Another man, JASON, 28 (ALWAYS dressed in pale blue), emerges from below deck. He resembles Max, but anemic and slight.

JASON

Max, we're taking on too much water! Forget about the cargo!

MAX

You're not paid to make decisions Jason! The crew is expendable but that crate isn't!

The ship buckles suddenly, forcing Max and Jason against the railing. Another flood of water blasts them from astern, sending Max over the railing. He barely hangs on, as the crew scrambles to reach him.

JASON

Max!

Struggling against the elements, two crew-members arrive. The three strain to pull Max back over the rail.

MAX

No! The cargo!

JASON

Take my hand!
(to the crew)
Pull!

The three manage to pull Max up, veins bulging. Once he is squarely on-deck, Max slaps Jason hard across the face. The crew scurries away.

MAX

I told you to save that crate!
You haven't changed since we were
kids, Jason--you're still costing
me money!

Jason takes a clumsy swing at Max, easily dodged.

JASON

I only wanted your respect!

MAX

The only thing I respect is
power. I'm not gonna lose this
company 'cause my baby brother
didn't get enough love!

The Crew Chief makes his way toward them, battling the torrential spray.

CREW CHIEF

Boss, the cabin's flooded! We
barely got out a distress signal
before--

MAX

Who the hell ordered a distress
signal!? Last thing I want is the
Coast Guard stickin' their noses--!

JASON

Max, if you just told us what
we're haulin'--

A catastrophic wave sends most of the crew overboard. One man hangs on to the railing near Max (who struggles with the crate). The ship begins to break apart. Max notices the man is wearing a life-jacket.

Max reaches down and unfastens the man's life-preserver. The man cries

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For the complete script (for production or representation consideration only)
please contact Jennifer Brooks at: info@filmmakers.com