

Homebound: STS-M1301

A Study on Television Writing in the Science Fiction Genre

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2019

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

This project is a scene-by-scene outline of an original television pilot script in the science fiction genre. The outline is based on research conducted in both the television and science fiction fields, providing the project with a firm foundation in television screenwriting structure as well as insights into the characteristics of the science fiction genre. Additional research was carried out on the topic of developing realistic, engaging characters for the screen. This project serves to broaden the writer's portfolio upon graduation while giving him a chance to study the world of television, which contains numerous differences from the field of cinematic arts.

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Introduction**Television Screenwriting Structure**

Homebound: STS-M1301 is a science fiction television series about a search and rescue astronaut crew in 2133 A.D. who are sent to find a missing freighter, or Space Transportation System (STS), and its crew who disappeared on Mission 1301 (M1301) while enroute to Earth. Over the course of the first season, the search and rescue crew encounter a strange new world, malevolent alien life, and a shocking secret that could potentially alter the fate of humanity. The discovery of this secret will propel the television series into multiple seasons that will result in an all-out war for the fate of planet Earth and the continuation of the human species as is known today.

The field of television writing contains two basic formats. The first type is known as a procedural and is defined as “individual episodes linked by the same characters and settings, with the chain of cause and effect resolved at the end of each episode. Series are marked by stability rather than change” (Pearson and Messenger Davies). Basically, each episode has a self-contained story that never affects later episodes in the series. Some examples of procedural television series are *The Andy Griffith Show* and *CSI*. Procedural shows were very popular before Netflix and other streaming services, as audiences would be able to miss episodes without any serious consequences (Pearson and Messenger Davies). However, as audiences grew smarter and as networks began experimenting more, a second type of format developed.

The second kind of television series is known as the serial. Serials are shows like *Stranger Things* and *Lost* where “events continue to generate effects across the boundaries of individual episodes, sometimes across the boundaries of individual seasons” (Pearson and Messenger Davies). Each episode becomes merely a chapter in an ever-evolving story as opposed to being a closed-ended narrative. A drawback to serials is that they require a large, committed audience that is willing to watch every episode in order of release (Landau 55). If a person misses a couple episodes, the story will have moved on and it may be difficult to catch back up. Video streaming services have negated this drawback considerably, as they allow a viewer to easily catch up on missed content. The strength of writing a series in this format as opposed to a procedural is that a serial allows for much more complex storylines and character arcs. *Homebound: STS-1301* is a serial, as the plot continues across multiple episodes and even seasons. At this point, it may seem as if serial television shows are little different than a hyper-extended Hollywood film. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

Television story structure is far different than the structure used to write Hollywood films and is also more complex. Almost all movies follow a three-act story structure. Act one introduces the protagonist and sets up the conflict. Act two follows the protagonist on his journey of confrontation as he attempts to solve the problem and achieve his goal. By the end of this act, the protagonist will seem to have failed. All is lost. However, in act three, the protagonist faces his problem one final time, emerges victorious, and the situation resolves (Field 200-02). While some films differ on the content in the acts, virtually all movies contain the basic three acts – no more, no less. Television series dramas, as opposed to half-hour sitcoms, usually follow a four-act

structure, though some shows may have up to five or even six acts (Cook 157). The reason for the large number of acts comes down to money. The more commercial breaks that can be included, the more money the series will make off of advertising (130-131). After all, television, just like filmmaking, is a business.

Despite money being the core reason behind so many acts, each of the four acts does have a specific and artistic purpose in moving the story forward. Even if the television series has more than four acts, the following structure still applies but is more spread out (131). Act one introduces the main character and sets up the problem that he will face in that episode. If the series is a serial, this problem may last throughout multiple episodes to come (Landau 172). For future episodes, the same act structure still applies as escalating stakes will require fresh problems that fall under the same story arc.

For example, in the Netflix show *Stranger Things*, the problem is that the boy, Will Byers, is missing. While that problem never goes away, later episodes reveal new problems that increase the stakes; not only is Will missing, but he is trapped in another dimension and a government lab is trying to stop the people who want to rescue him. Each episode introduces new problems that build on the ones established in previous episodes while still maintaining the same basic act structure. The only elements that really change are the stakes.

In act two, the characters are facing the problem and the resulting conflict head-on, but by the end of act three, they appear to have lost. This ushers in act four, the finale, in which they are victorious against the problem and the adversaries that caused it (Miyamoto). Of course, this victory may be little more than a set-up for larger conflicts in future episodes. Certainly, the main characters will not win a definitive victory with

every episode, or the series would become too predictable. Victories come in all shapes and sizes and learning a key piece of information or coming one step closer to solving a large mystery definitely counts.

For the television series *Homebound*, the pilot episode begins by introducing some of the main characters, predominately Alec Bowen, the captain of the search and rescue spacecraft that is sent to find the missing freighter. In act one, Bowen's commander orders him and his crew to find the ship. During acts two and three they prepare to leave, but Alec finds out that he and his crew are not being told the whole truth about the freighter. By act four they have journeyed to the place where the vessel went missing and are sucked into the same nebula field by a strong gravitational pull coming from a massive planet hidden by the nebula. The episode ends with them preparing for a crash landing on an unknown world.

Along with acts, there are also a few other key ingredients to an episode's structure. The first of these ingredients is called an act break. An act break occurs, not surprisingly, at the end of every act and traditionally serves as a place for commercial breaks. Every break "must end with a mini-cliffhanger so the audience will hang in there with you through the commercials in order to see what's going to happen next" (Cook 131). If the act breaks are not compelling enough, audiences may be tempted to switch channels or, even worse, start watching another show. *Homebound* uses act breaks in this way. However, since the story is still in its early stages, most of the cliffhangers for the pilot episode tend to introduce compelling questions that serve to keep the audience intrigued rather than place the main characters in any mortal danger. While not all shows air on platforms that have commercials, many writers still include act breaks anyway to

escalate tension (Landau 198). Other writers have dispensed with them, feeling that act breaks are unnecessary if there are no commercials.

Teasers and tags are also important elements in television screenwriting structure. Teasers come before the first act and can be used to hook the audience as well as “establish the world and tone of the show” (Landau 220). The BBC show *Sherlock* uses teasers in this way to set the stage for the episode usually by revealing a murder or other such mystery followed by the title sequence. Tags occur at the end of the episode and consist of a short scene that either wraps up the episode or presents new information that leaves viewers hanging until the next episode (197). Many shows, like *Grey’s Anatomy*, or *Once Upon a Time* do not include teasers or tags. The teaser for the pilot episode of *Homebound* features the freighter traveling through space on its way back to Earth. As the ship enters an uncharted nebula field, alarms go off around the ship, leaving the pilot and crew in a panic. The scene then ends, effectively setting up the mystery that will consume most of season one.

Another technique used in writing television series are the episodic storylines. All episodes contain at least an A story and a B story. The A story is comprised of all the scenes that follow the main premise of the series (Landau 194). In *Homebound*, the A story is about the search for the crew of the missing freighter. In *Stranger Things*, the A story is about finding Will Byers and bringing him home safely. The B story is “a personal story, with more internalized, emotional stakes...[and] serves to make the main character relatable and vulnerable” (194). This is where television may be the most different from film in terms of story. While movies hopefully have good character development, virtually all the scenes focus on the A story. Television has more latitude,

and may include scenes, that while still advancing the story, concern themselves mainly with the characters' relationships. *Homebound* has a couple of different B stories that each focuses on the conflicts or emotional bonds developing between the main characters of the rescue ship, along with Alec's desire to return to his family back on Earth. As the first season progresses, resentment and anger will grow between some of the astronauts, resulting in estrangements that will have consequences on the A story. Television shows may also include C stories, or even possibly D stories that often tell temporary minor stories, like running jokes (195). Each of the A, B, and possibly C or D storylines all serve the common purpose of presenting an engaging television series that gratifies the audience on not only a mental but also an emotional level.

While a discussion on the theories and strategies in television story structure could prove endless, there is one more topic that is especially important for mystery stories like *Homebound*. Questions keep an audience engaged, and a well thought out central question that drives the whole show forward is crucial. Audiences are "waiting to see how a crime story or a love story is going to play out. As long as [they] keep wondering and anticipating and discussing and posting—[they're] going to keep watching. As soon as all questions are answered, the series is forced to either introduce new central questions or end" (Landau 56). *Homebound's* central question is, *will Alec and his crew ever be able to return to Earth safely and live happily ever after?* This question will drive the story forward since Alec's main goal is to return home to Earth safely. However, the achievement of this goal will repeatedly be put in doubt as he goes through danger after danger. The series also employs many other smaller questions that span anywhere from one to two episodes to the entire first season of the show.

Television story structure can be quite complex and there are many guidelines to implementing it properly. What has been presented here are the most basic, fundamental guidelines that the majority of shows in existence today follow. The four or more acts, act breaks, teasers, tags, A, B, C storylines, and central questions form the basis of television screenwriting and almost all are implemented into *Homebound*. While such a strict adherence to the rules might not always be necessary or encouraged, when starting out, writers generally ought to follow the rules until they master the purpose of the rules enough to then break them.

Character Development

The characters in a television series are vitally important to the success of the show. While movies can sometimes succeed with only mediocre characters and rely on the plot and, at times, visual effects to make up the difference, television shows do not have this luxury. Movies usually last around two hours in length. Television shows hopefully will last hundreds of episodes, and while a strong story may keep the audience engaged, fascinating characters are what will make a show truly last. David Trottier, in his book *The Screenwriter's Bible* says that “effects are wonderfully helpful, but audiences generally fall in love with characters more than they do events and effects” (57). If the characters Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson were not in *Sherlock*, the show would just be a basic whodunnit crime series. *Stranger Things*, without the character Eleven, would not be nearly as engaging and would lose key emotional elements of the story. Every television show's success is built upon its characters.

Though much could be said about what goes into making characters memorable, there are four general theories and guidelines that have been proven to work, and thus are

a good starting off point. The first guideline advises writers to center the series around a family as “family stories are universal.” By making the cast of characters into a family unit, the audience can more easily identify and empathize with them and their struggles. This family unit need not be a literal one and can consist of coworkers, a group of friends, or something similar. What is important is that the characters interact like a real family would with arguments, squabbles, and at least some of the power dynamics (Landau 97). The popular show, *The Office*, is an excellent example of a family dynamic outside of a literal family unit. *Stranger Things* blends real families with a group friends that are inarguably closer than brothers. For *Homebound: STS-M1301*, this theory will be implemented by having the astronaut crew become a family that will trust and fight for one another’s survival as season one progresses. In addition to this, Alec Bowen has a wife and two children back on Earth and his main goal is to return safely to them, strengthening the family dynamic in the show.

All of the characters also ought to have an internal flaw. This will make them relatable and give them room to grow (Cook 250). In real life, every person has traits that they would rather not have, and that sometime causes serious consequences in their lives. The characters in film and television should be no different. Any television series would quickly become boring if every episode was comprised entirely of perfect people. Every story relies upon conflict to further the plot, and, without internal flaws, stories would merely consist of flawless people perfectly working together to solve external problems. As this never happens in the real world, it should never happen on screen.

Another reason to give the characters flaws is that they will have a chance to grow and mature and the series will be set up for a long life-span. This is one reason why

movie sequels are usually not as well rated as the originals. The screenwriter gave the protagonist a flaw that the character overcame in the first movie, but this also leaves nowhere for the character to go in the second film. New character issues must be invented, and, at times, these issues feel forced and unnatural as they were not originally part of the character. In *Homebound*, Alec Bowen's main flaw is his controlling nature that stems from a natural fear of failing his crew or putting them in danger. This flaw escalates conflict amongst the astronauts and ends up causing serious consequences for Alec and the others part way through the first season.

Another method for creating compelling characters is to make them physically or emotionally vulnerable. Neil Landau writes, "We need the audience to worry about [the] characters and feel what they feel on a visceral level. And the key to this entry point is through character vulnerability" (122). In *Stranger Things*, the creators of the show, Matt and Ross Duffer, make the character Eleven vulnerable by putting her in a world she does not understand or is used to. Despite her powers, she needs the help of Mike and his friends to help her navigate the world and stay safe. For this project, the astronaut crew becomes incredibly vulnerable on a physical level when they are stranded on an alien planet after a crash-landing. Without a way back to their space station, and without the life support supplies to survive more than a couple of weeks, the astronauts are stripped of their main strength, technology, and must find a way to survive without it.

All characters must also have a goal, something they are striving towards. This goal must be "specific and measurable" (Trottier 58) and helps push the story forward. Without a goal, all the characters would likely be doing...nothing. At least, they would not be doing anything that would progress the story in measurable ways. The goal should

also be opposed in some way, and hopefully cause the characters to face their fears in order to achieve it (Trottier 58). This goes along with giving the characters flaws. If the character has a goal that is opposed and can only be overcome by the character overcoming his flaw, what results is growth. For this project, Alec Bowen and his team's initial goal is to rescue the missing astronauts. However, once they crash-land and discover pieces of the missing freighter on the planet, their goal changes to surviving by finding the missing crew who may be better supplied than they are. Both of these goals are specific and measurable and will involve lots of opposition from forces of nature, monstrous creatures, and other entities.

The Science Fiction Genre

So far, different theories and guidelines used in writing for television have been discussed. The two primary types of television series were covered, along with an overview on television screenwriting structure. The importance of characters and the methods used for creating memorable ones were also reviewed. All of this information serves as the backbone for *Homebound: STS-M1301*. However, as this project is a science fiction television series, the genre of science fiction must now be discussed, along with some of the theories and guidelines associated in writing in such a genre.

Science fiction is not as straightforward of a genre as one may think and over the years has proven tricky to define. Adam Roberts, in his book, *The History of Science Fiction*, states "There is . . . no single consensus as to what SF is." He goes on to write that while most people agree that works of science fiction contain a world that has significant differences to the one we live in today, nobody can seem to quite agree on the types of differences that set science fiction apart from other genres, like fantasy (2).

Unfortunately, in the world of writing, not all the rules are as clear as one would like them to be.

Despite this debate, there are a couple of guidelines that tend to make science fiction unique. First off, science fiction must be set in a real world where physics and other natural laws apply, not merely in a world of imagination where anything is possible (Hollow 3). Secondly, there must be futuristic technology consistently in use throughout the story, showing the audience what could be possible in future times. Science fiction needs “sheet metal and plastic. [Science fiction] need[s] rivets.” (Card 5). *Star Wars*, *Alien*, and *Star Trek* all follow these guidelines. *Homebound* follows the same pattern with its astronaut crew based at a large space station far from Earth and having a spacecraft that contains lots of metal plates and bolts. However, to realistically design and write about such ships and places requires the writer to know how to create realistic worlds and creatures.

World building is at the heart of science fiction writing and knowing how to construct a world properly is a skill that cannot be understated. The first principle to world building is to know the rules of the world. The writer must know how everything works, from the natural laws of the universe that the story is set in, to how a certain gun will fire in any particular scenario. When all the rules are in place, the rules will free the writer to know what can and cannot happen in any particular place in the story.

Audiences tend to be especially good at noticing when a filmmaker breaks a rule, and this sometimes happens because the writer was not sure of all the rules when he wrote the script in the first place. A good example of a rule being broken happens in the film *Iron Man 3*. In the first film, Tony Stark’s suit survives being hit by a missile. However, in

Iron Man 3, his suit, which has been updated several times since the first film, completely falls apart when he is hit by a truck. This discrepancy weakened the movie and broke the suspension of disbelief for some of the audience.

Along with knowing the rules to the world, the writer should also know the history of the world he creates (Card 53). In essence, “you can’t know too much” (63). For *Homebound*, thousands of personnel live and work on several mammoth space stations far from Earth. While the space stations have technology that simulates gravity, the spaceships do not as they are too small to house such massive technology. Another rule that has been created is that interstellar space travel is not as safe and simple as pulling a lever. Travel to Earth takes around five weeks and only the largest and safest of ships are fit to make the journey. These are just two examples of world building rules for this television series and more have been and are being developed.

Another key element to working in the science fiction genre is knowing how to create realistic creatures and aliens. Aliens are a staple in science fiction movies and television. *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Stranger Things*, *Doctor Who*, and many other science fiction stories all contain alien life. *Homebound* is no exception. In the first season, Alec Bowen and his team of astronauts crash land on an alien world and encounter a malevolent and intelligent alien species. These monsters are the key physical antagonists in the first season and become a major obstacle in the rescue of the missing crew. While whole books have been written on how to create realistic and compelling creatures for the science fiction and fantasy genres, there are three main proven theories and guidelines to monster creation that provide an excellent starting point for any writer.

First, a monster has to be terrifying. Philip Athans, in his book, *Writing Monsters*, states that “A monster can be a lot of things, but ultimately it all comes down to one word: *scary*. If you describe a creature that’s no more threatening or frightening than the average bunny rabbit, it might be a weird sort of animal you’ve described, but it’s not a monster” (ch. 1). This definition of a monster may seem obvious, but *scary* is an important place to begin. Different people are scared by different things, but there are some universal fears that can be used when designing monsters. For instance, research has shown that the two most common phobias among people are a fear of heights and a fear of animals (Curtis, et al. 213). Designing monsters that exploit these phobias can help ensure that the monster is universally scary.

Another theory in monster creation involves making the monster’s behavior unpredictable. Athans writes, “predictability is the enemy of horror. But add an unexpected element to a predictable situation and you enhance the potential for fear” (ch. 2). Human beings like to understand things and naturally are nervous of things and creatures that they cannot figure out. One of the reasons why the alien monster in the movie *Alien* is so scary is that its behavior is so unpredictable. The astronauts do not understand its behavior or its goals and neither does the audience. Nobody knows when or how the creature will strike.

The final guideline discussed here is closely related to the second and concerns the importance of mystery. Mystery and unpredictability go hand in hand for, oftentimes, as soon as something becomes predictable, it also becomes much less mysterious. Keeping a monster unseen for a period of time enhances its mystery and allows the audience’s imaginations to run wild, which usually increases their level of fear (Athans

ch. 2). The movie *Jaws* uses mystery in an excellent way. For most of the film, the killer shark is never shown. All the audience sees is what this creature can do to people. By only showing the effects of the shark's attacks, director Steven Spielberg was able to escalate fear in his viewers. Mystery can also be implemented by keeping the characters ignorant of the monster's capabilities, and especially its weaknesses (ch. 2). While every creature must have a weakness to be well rounded and realistic, keeping the characters in the dark about the weakness will make the monster seem all the more powerful and terrifying. The alien creatures in the movie *Signs* seem plenty terrifying until everyone learns at the end of the movie that they can be dispatched with a glass of water. If this fact had been known at the beginning of the film, all suspense and fear would have gone away.

For this project, the monsters will be huge worm-like creatures that range in size from a horse to a blue whale. Mostly living in a system of underground caverns and tunnels, they will remain unseen for a period of time, enhancing their degree of mystery. On top of this, their feeding times will occur at night when little can be seen of their features and methods. Also, since they come from beneath the surface and can therefore strike with little warning, their unpredictability will constantly keep the astronauts and the audience guessing.

Analysis of Style

This project, as defined earlier, is a science fiction television series about an astronaut crew who are sent to find a missing freighter and its crew who disappeared while traveling home to Earth. The creative style of *Homebound: STS-M1301* is a science fiction action thriller in the vein of *Aliens*, *Stranger Things*, and *Black Hawk*

Down. Like *Aliens*, it features a crew of astronauts in a future world who are sent to rescue another group of humans who are stranded on an alien world. On the planet, the astronauts encounter deadly beings who seek to destroy them. Both *Aliens* and *Homebound* are science fiction action thrillers. The differences between the two result from a very different cast of characters, a jungle-like planet instead of a cold and barren world, and because the alien creatures end up not being the main adversary but merely serve as a large obstacle to the crew completing their mission. Despite these differences, *Homebound* will be greatly inspired by this classic film and use some of the same techniques to inspire fear in its audiences.

Homebound also seeks to have a similar style to *Stranger Things*. While the two shows will be different on several major levels, the bond of friendship that develops and exists between the children in *Stranger Things* will be something *Homebound* will seek to emulate among its characters. The last example that evokes a similar style to the one *Homebound* will have is the film *Black Hawk Down*. While not a science fiction film, *Black Hawk Down* contains a level of grit and realism that *Homebound* will seek to capture. This project does not desire to hold back on its punches, and everything in the series should seem real and gritty. The cinematography of *Black Hawk Down* is something this project seeks to emulate as well. As described by one critic, “The cinematography . . . avoids the bright colors of upbeat combat movies, and its drab, dusty tones gradually drain of light as night falls. The later scenes of the movie feel chilly and forlorn” (Ebert). This style that *Homebound* seeks to borrow provides its audiences not with a sense of the wonder and grandeur of outer space, but instead puts the audience in

the astronauts' shoes as they attempt to survive in this highly dangerous world, far from any form of external aid.

Target Market

The target market for *Homebound: STS-MI301* is primarily males aged 13-29. While anticipating demographic reactions to any film or television series is far from an exact science, one can look at similar past projects and see what demographics gave the project the highest ratings. For the movie *Aliens*, the film scored the highest amongst males under the age of 18 and then ages 30-45 (IMDb.com). *Black Hawk Down* also scored the highest amongst males under 18, and then the next highest was males 18-29 years old (IMDb.com). *Stranger Things* scored highest among females aged under 18 to 29 years of age. The males were close behind in the same age categories (IMDb.com). The reason for this reversal in *Stranger Things* could be due to the presence of Eleven, a female character who is a lead in the series and one who has astonishing powers. *Homebound* does not have a female lead, thus males under 18 to 29 should be the main category. As mentioned previously, despite the research, anticipating which age group will most enjoy a film or show is not an exact science and one must always be ready for surprises.

Summary of the Project

Homebound: STS-MI301 is a science fiction television series in the style of a gritty action thriller. The first season follows a team of search and rescue astronauts who are sent on a mission to find a missing crew of a freighter that mysteriously vanished while enroute to Earth. The pilot episode opens on the freighter as it is traveling home to Earth. All seems well, but suddenly alarms go off and ship systems start going down.

The scene cuts to a large space station where one week later Alec Bowen, a search and rescue astronaut, is packing up his belongings as he prepares to head home to Earth. However, he is alerted to an impending mission and heads out to help rescue some astronauts whose ship has been hit by an asteroid. Following the mission, he is informed by his commanding officer of the missing freighter and his return home is subsequently put on hold. After assembling his team, Alec leaves on the mission. During the five-day flight to the last known location of the missing crew, Alec learns more details about the freighter and wonders how much of the truth he has been told. Upon arrival they are sucked into a large nebula field that hides asteroids and ultimately a large planet. Unable to get away, Alec and crew prepare for a rough landing.

HOMEBOUND: STS-M1301
Episode 1 Outline

Written by Matthew Crouch

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. DEEP SPACE - DAY

A vast expanse of stars and cosmic dust--nothing else. Then a streak of light flashes by.

EXT. SPACE FREIGHTER - DAY

A giant spaceship traveling at twice the speed of light throttles forward. Its name is UNSI Fraus. Hundreds of cargo containers labeled "OI" are fixed to the vessel.

SFX - TRANSMISSION.

INT. SPACE FREIGHTER COCKPIT - DAY

The captain, MARIO HERNANDEZ, 40's, leans back in his seat and speaks into a floating microphone as he relays a message to "Home Base" on the status of their mission. His co-pilot, ADAM, 35, looks over holograms of navigational charts. He closes out of them just as an alert message pops up on the charts. He does not notice.

INT. CREW QUARTERS - DAY

JUSTIN, ASHLEY, GEORGE, and UTTON float around over their bunks in a small room illuminated by a sterile white light.

They talk about the situation and growing tension on earth. Utton mentions that he is glad "to just be away from it all."

George teases Justin about his large Adam's apple. Utton grabs George in a headlock while Ashley watches, amused.

INT. CARGO ACCESS BAY - DAY

ZACH and ELIJAH, two of the Fraus guards, watch over the entrance to the cargo containers. Signs on the hatch display warnings about the danger and sensitivity of the cargo.

INT. SPACE FREIGHTER COCKPIT - DAY

The ship comes out of high-velocity travel without warning. Adam pulls up the charts and sees a warning about a massive nebula field. They look up and see the massive

gaseous expanse right in front of them.

EXT. SPACE FREIGHTER - DAY

Their ship drifts forward into the nebula field.

INT. SPACE FREIGHTER COCKPIT - DAY

Mario attempts to reengage the engines. Nothing happens.
Adam alerts the crew and activates the emergency sirens.

INT. CREW QUARTERS - DAY

As the sirens blare, the crew fling on space gear and push themselves out of the room.

INT. SPACE FREIGHTER COCKPIT - DAY

A RUMBLE sounds in a distant part of the ship. Lights flicker.
Adam stares at a hologram of the freighter. Red lights flash in the bowels of the ship.
The warning lights in the hologram spread till the entire spacecraft is a blinking red light.
Mario and Adam scramble. Mario tells Adam to “lock down the cargo”.

EXT. SPACE FREIGHTER - DAY

The nebula engulfs the freighter and it disappears from view.

MAIN TITLES

END OF TEASER

ACT 1

FADE IN:

EXT. HOME BASE SPACE STATION - DAY

A massive space station with multiple hangers and docking bays floats in space.

SUPER: Home Base, One Week Later.

INT. ALEC'S CABIN - DAY

Loud music blares in a small, metal room. ALEC BOWEN, 45, stumbles through piles of clothes, books, and other personal belongings. Containers and suitcases are scattered about.

He tosses a promotional hologram aside that advertises the UNSI: “Explore Space, Save Earth”. He tosses clothes and other belongings into the suitcases. A uniform boasting an Inter-Planetary Search and Rescue (IPSR) logo lies next to the desk.

He looks at a hologram that features a younger version of himself with a woman and two children. A notification buzzes on his radio. A female voice tells him he is “going out again”.

EXT. IPSR SHIP (UNSI EDMON) - DAY

A small, fast vessel weaves its way through a meteor shower. Invisible energy shields cause some of these blazing hot rocks to shatter before they hit the ship. It approaches a medium-sized freighter that lies powerless, a gaping hole in its side.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec pilots the craft above the freighter and issues orders to his crew. MARIANA, 25, his copilot, teases him.

INT. EDMON RESCUE BAY - DAY

An ASTRONAUT works furiously on a hi-tech tablet. A hologram shows that their ship’s protection shield is extending to the stranded freighter. He gives a thumbs up to two SEARCH & RESCUE PERSONNEL who open a door in the bottom of the ship and descend to the freighter.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec watches their progress while keeping an eye on the controls.

EXT. FREIGHTER - DAY

The two Search & Rescue Personnel bring the crew from the freighter up to the rescue ship. A large meteor flies by and almost hits someone. The shield did not stop it.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec sees that the shields have extended too far and are failing. He throttles the ship in closer even as parts of the freighter catch fire. Mariana presses overrides and diverts as much power as possible to the shields.

EXT. FREIGHTER - DAY

The last of the crew exit the ship. As they enter the IPSR vessel, Alec pulls the ship away just as the freighter explodes.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Mariana gives an exclamation. Alec seems almost bored with the whole affair.

EXT. HOME BASE SPACE STATION - DAY

The IPSR vessel flies toward Home Base.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Alec and Mariana stride down a crowded hall in the space station. Mariana chatters about her trip over from earth, mentioning nothing of importance for all the talking she is doing.

Alec looks and sees a TECHNICIAN struggling to open a door. Despite Mariana's protests, Alec pushes the Technician aside and sticks his hand into the circuit box. The door opens.

INT. COMMANDER OFFICE - DAY

Alec storms into the office of IPSR Commander DOUGLAS SMITH, 63, followed by Mariana. Alec is angry that he keeps being sent out on missions. He wants to go home on the next transport.

Douglas attempts to appease Alec and then informs them of the missing freighter. Alec asks why they are just hearing about this. Douglas evades Alec's question and continues to inform them of their mission that for some reason is "Top Secret".

Douglas talks briefly about the reason why they are all in space and its importance.

They are dismissed but Alec stays and presses his commander on when he will be sent home. Douglas tells him after this mission.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

FADE IN:

INT. EMPTY ROOM - DAY

Alec vents to Mariana. He wants to know why this ship disappeared. They go over all the information they have been given: flight coordinates, the transmissions by the pilot, the manifest, etc. Mariana seems unconcerned about the mission, but for Alec, something is not adding up.

INT. IPSR HANGER - DAY

They check on their ship. Alec requests that guns be installed but is denied.

They meet SAMUEL CHESTERTON, 70's. He will be their navigator. Mariana already knows him and the two of them hit it off while Alec watches.

He leaves them to their over-friendly banter.

INT. ALEC'S CABIN - DAY

He glances at the hologram of his family, then watches a video transmitted by his wife and son. The video was made weeks ago but has just reached the station.

They both want him to come home--he's been gone two years longer than planned.

Alec sends them a transmission and promises that after this one last mission, he will

return to them.

EXT. HOME BASE SPACE STATION - DAY

The station seems very fragile in the vast cosmos.

INT. SIMULATOR ROOM - DAY

KEAGAN HUNTER, 24, trains in a zero-gravity simulator by firing at space debris and small asteroids. He pukes at the end of the session and storms out. He is followed by his trainer, MATTHEW DAVIS, 28, who attempts to calm him down.

They both receive alerts about the impending mission. Keagan is grumpy about this.

INT. CREW CABIN - DAY

CAMILLA, 25, and SARAH ANDERSON, 38, argue in their room. Camilla knocked over some of Sarah's books to annoy her and Sarah is ticked. Camilla plays innocent. Photos are tacked around the room showing Camilla and Sarah on different search and rescue missions.

Someone knocks at the door. Sarah opens it to find Mariana and Samuel. Mariana, after giving a hug to Camilla, lets them know they are needed in the briefing room in 15.

Sarah lets Mariana know that she wishes that Mariana had just followed protocol and slams the door on them.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Alec briefs his crew on the mission ahead. Everyone objects to the lack of data and information, and Matthew asks why they are just being told about this when the freighter has been missing for a week.

Alec has no satisfactory answers. He tells everyone to get ready for the extended mission and that they will leave early the next morning.

EXT. HANGER - NIGHT

Alec walks toward their ship.

INT. EDMON ENGINE ROOM - NIGHT

Alec walks inside and finds Samuel at work fine-tuning instruments and thruster settings. Samuel says he always goes over the engines when he's nervous. He states his worries: they are going far out into space with limited life support and looking for a ship that vanished seven days ago.

They talk about Samuel's relationship with Mariana. Samuel knew her back on earth. Samuel asks about Alec's life on earth. Alec just says that he "just wants to get back."

INT. ALEC'S CABIN - NIGHT

Alec goes over all the transmissions sent from the missing freighter. Something's not right. Alec looks at the audio files and notices that some of the transmissions are

missing. Douglas has not given him everything.
He frowns then turns off his tablet.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

FADE IN:

SERIES OF SHOTS - NIGHT BECOMES DAY

- 1) An LED Sign switches from “Night” to “Day”.
- 2) Lights in all of the corridors come on.
- 3) Alerts announcing the start of another day blare through the intercoms.
- 4) People crowd through the corridors on the way to their stations.

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER LOBBY - DAY

Alec walks into the lobby with a record of the transmissions from the missing freighter. He waits to be let in and overhears an argument between two high-level officers about the Fraus.

INT. MISSION CONTROL OFFICE - DAY

Alec shows HARVEY, 43, the mission control lead, the records. Harvey agrees with Alec that some of the transmissions seem to be missing. However, the same number of transmissions appear on his computer. He does not know what happened. Harvey suggests that maybe the Fraus crew forgot to send some, but Alec isn't sure.

INT. CREW CABIN - DAY

Camilla and Sarah pack up their supplies. Sarah lets Camilla know that she doubts Camilla's abilities, especially since this is Camilla's first real mission. Camilla turns and storms out.

INT. HANGER - DAY

Alec and his crew bustle around their ship while other workers fill up the tanks with fuel and load supplies.

Camilla marches up to Alec and tells him what Sarah said, but Alec doesn't want to get caught in the middle and tells her to figure it out herself.

Matthew and Keagan look over their weapons and double check everything. They have some impressive firepower. Alec asks if it is all authorized. Matthew says “yes”, unless Douglas comes around. Sarah seems annoyed by this.

INT. EDMON - DAY

Alec walks through the ship to the cockpit.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Alec sits down next to Mariana and looks at holographic navigational charts with her. Samuel also watches.

They go over the information. It will take five days to travel to the spot of the disappearance, and they then will have enough life support to search for two weeks. Alec controls the conversation. Then he sees Douglas walking up to Matthew and Keagan. He rushes out.

INT. HANGER - DAY

Douglas asks about the weaponry, which is mostly packed away. Alec lies and tells him everything is authorized. Then Alec confronts him about the missing transmissions. Douglas tells Alec to come with him.

INT. COMMANDER OFFICE - DAY

Douglas informs Alec that they have just received a new captain from earth who is willing to go in Alec's place. Alec can go home now on the transport ship if he wants. Alec refuses. "This is no job for a newb."

INT. HANGER - DAY

Alec strides through the hanger. Everything is ready to go.

INT. EDMON - DAY

They put on their space suits. Keagan huddles in a corner next to his gear. Matthew lounges in a chair next to him, unconcerned. Camilla, Mariana, and Samuel talk so much Alec tells them to shut up. He goes to the cockpit.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

He runs through the pre-flight checklist and receives the approval from mission control. Then he watches the transport ship he could have gone home on leave the space station. Alec turns back to the controls, turns on some loud, upbeat music, and launches the space craft.

EXT. HOME BASE SPACE STATION - DAY

The Edmon flies away from the station.

INT. EDMON - DAY

Everyone not strapped down floats in the air. There is no gravity. Keagan hates it. Sarah reads a book, wearing headphones to drown out Alec's music. Camilla floats around aimlessly, a big smile on her face. Samuel grins and checks the engine controls. Mariana pushes herself towards the cockpit.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec alerts everyone to strap themselves in while he and Mariana prepare to make the jump.

Alec goes over the charts, making sure that they have a clear path. Mariana, sure of herself and her calculations, is annoyed that Alec is double-checking them.

Alec punches in the command and the Edmon lurches forward as the music continues to play.

INT. COMMANDER OFFICE - DAY

Douglas receives a call confirming that the Edmon has left the station. He tells the caller to relay the information to “Command” and to let them know that they’ll have to give him a new search and rescue ship.

END OF ACT 3

ACT 4

FADE IN:

EXT. EDMON - DAY

The ship hurtles precariously through hyperspace. The entire hull is coated with ice and frost.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Mariana tries to teach Alec Spanish, but Alec doesn’t bite. He puts on headphones and keeps listening to the radio transmissions, going over every detail of the missing flight. Then he pulls up the profiles of the missing crew. Mariana gasps as she sees a certain profile. It is her younger brother. According to her, he was not scheduled to be on that vessel.

Alec pulls up the profile of the captain, Mario Hernandez, and notices that Mario was also overdue to return to earth.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Camilla probes Matthew about his past, but Matthew doesn’t want to talk about it. Camilla lets him know that she has been space for two weeks and will go home to finish university in two years.

Keagan pushes himself into the room and straps himself down in a corner. His face looks green and Matthew taunts him about it.

Keagan just turns away. “It’s going to be a long five days”

SERIES OF SHOTS - TRAVELING TO LAST KNOWN CONTACT

- A) Sarah inspects all of the rescue gear and glares at Camilla.
- B) Mariana keeps chatting to Alec till he walks away.
- C) Alec sits in his tiny cabin and looks at a photo hologram.
- D) Dinner scene. More tensions between some of them develop.
- E) Matthew and Keagan examine the weapons. Matthew shows Keagan a large rifle that will obliterate large boulders.
- F) Alec lays on his bed and watches the stars go by.

EXT. DEEP SPACE/EDMON - DAY

The Edmon comes out of hyperspace in the exact same place the freighter disappeared. Nebula fields enshroud them like an oppressive fog.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec and Mariana look around for any sign of a ship. All seems empty. Alec throttles the ship deeper into the nebula field and informs the crew to get ready.

INT. EDMON RESCUE BAY - DAY

Samuel, Keagan, Matthew, Camilla, and Sarah all put on full space gear. Matthew and Keagan both grasp handguns.

EXT. EDMON - DAY

The ship pushes forward. Space lightning flashes in the distance. The floodlights turn on.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec becomes more focused. Even Mariana remains silent. Lightning intensifies, and several asteroids emerge from the nebula. The engines fail, but they continue to drift forward.

INT. EDMON ENGINE ROOM - DAY

Samuel tries to restart the engines but can't. He tells Alec that the nebula field may be affecting the thrusters.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec curses. Mariana pulls up a hologram of the nebula and studies it, brow furrowed. She says that the nebula should not affect the ship.

INT. EDMON RESCUE BAY - DAY

Keagan freaks out a little. Matthew calms him down.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

They move faster. They are caught in some unknown gravitational pull. Mariana sees a

piece of a ship. More asteroids and a moon fly by. Then they see a giant planet, previously hidden by the nebula field. They rush towards it.

Alec tells the crew to brace for impact as he continues to pull the “Engine Restart” lever.

INT. EDMON RESCUE BAY - DAY

Everyone straps themselves down. All are in various states of panic.

EXT. EDMON - DAY

The ship enters the atmosphere. A heavy fog envelops the vessel--nothing can be seen.

INT. EDMON COCKPIT - DAY

Alec and Mariana prepare for the worst. Warnings go off: “Terrain, pull up! Terrain pull up!” Alec stares out, but all remains grey--until a giant mountain forms feet from them.

END OF ACT 4

Conclusion

The goal of this project is to gain experience and knowledge on how to write an original television series in the science fiction genre. Writing for television has many differences from writing a feature film screenplay and this project serves to broaden the writer's abilities along with diversifying his portfolio of work. This project may eventually be turned into a complete show bible, with a finished pilot episode, a summary of the rest of the first season, and character biographies in case the writer chooses to pitch it to a network later in life.

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