

"FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE"

*Homestead on the Corner - Apollo Creator Special
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by

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Based on story and characters from
"Homestead on the Corner"
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1. EXT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - NOON - 9/21/2015

A vast, sweeping high-desert landscape: sagebrush and loose, dry dirt all the way to the low, distant mountains. Insects sing, and a few small scurrying animals make furtive moves to avoid the glance of airborne predators.

On a small elevated platform, a bored SPOTTER sits slumped in their chair, half-asleep and already more than a little sunburned.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
(over radio, slightly
crackly)
Spotter one, this is flight control
-- do you have a visual?

SPOTTER
(ANNOYED GROAN -- then
into radio, professional)
Negative flight -- still looking.

From the dry air, a low rumbling roar grows louder and closer. The desert animals notice it before the spotter, scurrying into burrows and dens with noises of alarm.

SPOTTER (CONT'D)
(not quite sure)
Wait... standby, flight.

The spotter reaches down and grabs their binoculars, focusing on a distant speck...

The moment before that speck shoots past their station with an earth-shattering BOOM as it breaks the sound barrier.

SPOTTER (CONT'D)
(staggered, amazed)
Holy shit... they actually got that
thing to fly.
(into radio, excited)
Flight, confirm visual: the
Bumblebee is in the air, repeat,
the Bumblebee is in the air.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
(over radio, slightly
annoyed)
Copy that -- can you confirm ground
speed?

SPOTTER
She's hauling ass, sir... nearly
knocked me out my chair.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (increasingly annoyed)
 Received and noted -- keep the
 aircraft in your sights.

The radio clicks off abruptly.

SPOTTER
 (muttered, to self)
 The hell's his problem?

After a second, the spotter leans over and switches
 frequency: chatter from the flight controllers spills into
 the silence.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (unhappy, but complying
 with orders)
 [Mark 4 Actual, this] is CAPCOM:
 Flight requests you throttle back
 below Mach 1 and continue the
 diagnostic.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (like she's talking about
 a wild horse)
 She wants to run, Ren -- I can feel
 it.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (biting his tongue --
 wants to let her do her
 thing)
 As glad as I am to hear that...
 flight is still requesting you
 decrease speed.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (unhappy, but can't risk
 her job)
 Mark 4 Actual, complying.

On the radio, the whine of the engine decreases. Ren switches
 his mic over to the internal frequency.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 ("lighten up, would you?")
 Marcus, we really don't have that
 many sub-sonic tests left to run.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (asserting his control)
 We're still going to run them,
 Park.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 ("we both know this")
 They're not going to tell us
 anything the drone flights didn't.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (not having this argument)
 That's a hundred million dollar
 aircraft she's flying, and I'm not
 going to risk it. By the book, down
 the line. Got it?

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (disappointed)
 Roger, WILCO.
 (switches frequency)
 FIDO, how we looking?

FIDO (O.S.)	SPOTTER
Got a little shimmy, but	(muttered, to self)
that's expected at these	Christ, what an asshole.
speeds... won't be a problem.	

As they speak, the aircraft roars closer, banking into a turn directly over the spotter's station.

SPOTTER (CONT'D)
 (HOOTS, impressed)
 Goddamn.
 (into radio)
 Flight, you'd better authorize her
 to go supersonic... I think she's
 getting bored up there.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (confused, then realizing)
 What do you mean -- FIDO, what's
 her altitude reading?

FIDO (O.S.)
 (hesitant)
 It's uh... little lower than it
 should be.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (irritated order)
 Ren...

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (into radio,
 uncomfortable)
 Mark 4 Actual, ascend to cruising
 altitude and maintain heading.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
(beat, unhappy)
Could you please repeat that, Ren?
I don't think I heard you right.

REN PARK (O.S.)
(unhappy, but following
orders)
Mark 4 Actual, CAPCOM confirms --
Flight is requesting you climb and
level off for the next phase of
testing.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
(pause, then trying
something)
You designed this thing, right
Park?

REN PARK (O.S.)
(thrown off)
Yes, I did... me and my team, but--

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
(pushing advantage)
And you know how it flies?

REN PARK (O.S.)
(hesitant)
Uh... theoretically.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
(growing annoyance)
Ren, what are you doing?

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
And all the tests you did... they
were level flights? Nice remote-
controlled basics?

REN PARK (O.S.)
(not sure what she's
getting at)
That is... that is correct.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
You shouldn't have bothered then.
You already know this thing can fly
in a straight line... you want to
know what a pilot can do with it.
That's the whole point of this
project, right?

REN PARK (O.S.)

(pause, then to Marcus)
 She isn't wrong, Marcus. It would
 be a waste of time and fuel to have
 her just repeat the drone tests.
 And I mean... she's already up in
 the air...

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)

(pause, annoyed but
 caving)
 CAPCOM, you have permission to go
 supersonic -- but on your head be
 it if anything goes wrong.

REN PARK (O.S.)

(trying not to smile too
 widely)
 Roger that.
 (to Susan)
 Mark 4 Actual, you are clear to
 punch it.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)

(grinning)
 'bout damn time.

The engine roars high above as the air is shattered by a
 sonic boom. The sound recedes quickly as the aircraft shoots
 up and away from the spotter station.

SPOTTER

(smiling, proud)
 Godspeed, Bumblebee -- godspeed.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)

(growing focused, heart
 hammering)
 Mach 2... Mach 2.5... Mach 3 --

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)

(to another flight
 controller)
 Propulsion?

PROP (O.S.)

(focused, then relieved)
 Engines 4 and 5 firing in 3... 2...
 1... we have ignition.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)

(GRUNTS with G-force,
 SLIGHTLY BREATHLESS)
 Hot damn, this thing can cook.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
Surgeon, what's her status?

SURGEON (O.S.)
(reading biometrics)
Blood pressure dropping, but still
acceptable -- she should be good up
to 10 g's.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
(ALMOST OUT OF BREATH,
ecstatic)
Mach 4! Mach 4!

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
(stunned, not ready for
this)
Holy shit -- FIDO, what's the
status of the aircraft?

FIDO (O.S.)
(a little surprised too)
She's holding, Flight... all lights
are green, and she's still
accelerating.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
(frustrated)
Dammit -- all controllers, we're
ending the test. Bring her back in,
Ren.

REN PARK (O.S.)
(surprised)
Sir, she--

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
(sick of insubordination)
Now!

REN PARK (O.S.)
(disappointed, a little
slower than he should)
Mark 4, this is CAPCOM -- we're
ending the flight a little early.
Throttle back and bring her in.

No reply over the radio. After a moment...

REN PARK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(slightly concerned)
Mark 4 Actual, please respond.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (distracted, almost
 sleepy)
 What? Uh... yeah. Roger that.

A moment's silence -- then...

FIDO (O.S.)
 (slightly unnerved)
 Uh, Flight? She's not slowing down.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (warning)
 Ren...

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (growing worry)
 Mark 4 Actual, this is CAPCOM. Do
 you copy?

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (as if waking back up)
 Uh--I copy, I copy. Reducing speed
 and returning to base.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (grateful to hear it)
 Roger that Mark 4 -- we'll break
 out the fine china and finger-
 foods.

Susan doesn't respond, but above the spotter station the Bumblebee slows and turns, beginning the long descent back to the runway.

SPOTTER
 (confused and slightly
 concerned)
 What the hell was that about?

MAIN THEME

2. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - MEDICAL BAY - LATER

A small, sterile doctor's room just off the main hanger -- the buzz of florescent lights and distant radio chatter.

SURGEON
 (methodical, mechanical)
 Look up?

Sitting on the exam table, Susan obliges, and the surgeon switches on a small flashlight, examining her eyes.

SURGEON (CONT'D)
 (satisfied, friendly)
 Yep, they're all still there -- no
 burst vessels today. Hold out your
 arm?

Susan does so, and the surgeon wraps a blood pressure cuff
 around her bicep, pumping it up.

SURGEON (CONT'D)
 (nodding)
 110 over 80, as usual... though I
 still don't know how you keep it so
 low in this job.

SUSAN HART
 (nonchalant)
 Just good clean living, doc.

SURGEON
 (CHUCKLES)
 I'm sure. Any lightheadedness?
 Headaches, spots in your vision?

SUSAN HART
 (a little hesitant,
 masking)
 Actually, uh... nothing now, but --
 I was seeing some... streaks of
 light or something when I was up
 there just now. Any idea what that
 was?

SURGEON
 (curious, slightly
 concerned)
 Just streaks, or flashes as well?

SUSAN HART
 (suddenly closing up,
 trying to pass it off as
 a joke)
 No no, just streaks -- they almost
 looked like something flying
 alongside the aircraft.

SURGEON
 (relaxing audibly)
 And did they disappear once you
 decelerated?

SUSAN HART
 (nods)
 Soon as I was below Mach 2.

SURGEON

(content)

Then you should be fine. Chances are, it was pressure on your eyeballs from the g-forces. Just let me know if it gets worse, we may have to run a few more tests.

SUSAN HART

(masking worry, definitely won't tell them)

Yeah... I'll let you know.

As she speaks, Susan gathers her coat and then heads out the door.

3. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - HANGER - CONTINUOUS

Outside, the intercom echoes in a cavernous hanger, as technicians make repairs and run diagnostics on the Bumblebee.

Seeing her emerge from the surgeon's office, Ren approaches.

REN PARK

(smiling)

Hell of a first flight, Hart.

SUSAN HART

(smiling right back -- she likes this guy)

Hell of a plane, Park.

(pretends to notice something)

Where's the fine china?

REN PARK

(pretends he forgot it)

Oh man, I must have left it back at Mission Control. Did grab the finger foods, though.

Ren produces a couple small bags of chips from the pockets of his lab coat and hands one over to Susan. SHE CHUCKLES, popping it open.

SUSAN HART

(enjoying the banter)

Looks like you owe me a drink after all.

REN PARK
(pretending he wasn't
planning this)
You know, I wasn't going to say
anything, but a couple of the
flight controllers were gonna head
over to Bowman's for some cheap
beers tonight. You want to come?

SUSAN HART
(scowling slightly)
Is Edwards gonna be there?

REN PARK
(sarcastic)
I mean, he'd probably come if he
wasn't so worried about getting his
suit dirty. I didn't ask.

SUSAN HART
(SCOFFS)
You're on, Park. See you at--

CLINK.

4. INT. BOWMAN'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The clinking of old fashioned pint glasses carries us into a noisy dive bar in the small town just outside the test site.

The noise dies down a little further towards the back, where Susan, Ren, and a handful of the flight controllers LAUGH as Susan struggles to get a story out through the beer.

SUSAN HART
So there I was: stick dead, no
rudder control, and some corporate
asshole in my ear screaming at me
not to eject, or I'd "never work in
this industry again" -- despite the
fact that people don't tend to hire
smoking craters either, which is
what I'd be if I didn't eject. But
I'm like: "okay Hart... you've
gotten out of worse. Think it
through." I still had ailerons, but
just barely, and every time I
turned I could feel the whole
fucking plane trying to shake
itself apart.

(MORE)

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)

So all I can do is nose up and hope I've got enough lift to keep from crashing into the San Bernardino foothills, or nose down and just pray for the best. Now... this was all looking pretty grim, but I hadn't lost an airplane yet, and I'd already decided I wasn't gonna until I was at least five years into this thing, so I still had another six months before I was allowed to crash. So I started looking for somewhere, anywhere to land that wasn't someone's front door -- and low and behold, there's a golf course just off to my right: miles and miles of flat, green, empty turf. I just about manage to get the plane turned around without sheering the wings off, deploy every single flap that was still working, and dive straight for hole 3. I nearly ended up on the green, actually -- but I actually landed in the sand trap. Still, seeing as I was starting from a tee about 10 miles off... I'd say that's a pretty damn good shot.

REN PARK

(THROUGH LAUGHS,
recovering)

And did you ever figure out what happened?

SUSAN HART

(bitter)

Oh yeah... some jerk at the airfield forgot to reattach the external fuel tank properly. Whole thing tore off and ripped through my stabilizer at Mach .5.

(mock threat, glaring at
the technicians)

So don't any of you fuckers think about messing with my aircraft, alright? Because I will know, and I will find you.

FIDO

(LAUGHS)

Don't worry -- Edwards is too paranoid to let anyone but the techs in spitting distance of the thing.

SUSAN HART

(SCOFFS, shaking head)

What a dickhead.

(notices something)

Hey -- pitcher's looking a little low. Y'all want me to top it off?

INCO

(trying to be sensible)

I think I've had enough for one night.

FIDO

(annoyed)

Oh come on, it's only 8 o'clock!
We've barely started!

INCO

("why am I the only one
worried about this?")

You know we have another test flight tomorrow, right? I'd prefer not to lose my job over a hangover.

FIDO

(realization)

Ah shit, you're right... I'd better/slow down--

SUSAN HART

(exasperated)

Oh come on, now -- don't tell me that Quentin Aerospace really is as boring as everything says? We just got the Bumblebee off the ground! It's time to celebrate!

(picks up pitcher)

I'm gonna fill this up. Any of you want to help me finish it, you're welcome to.

Susan turns and marches off towards the bar, SHOULDERS PAST a few other patrons on the way.

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Hey Eddie! Fill'r up, would ya?

EDDIE
 (Susan's already a
 regular)
 Aye aye, captain.

Eddie grabs the pitcher and starts to fill it from a nearby keg. A set of quiet footsteps approach Susan, then --

REN PARK
 (stubbornly helpful)
 Here -- let me put this one on my
 tab. You covered the first three
 before I could stop you.

SUSAN HART
 (resisting)
 Oh come on Ren, you know I've got
 this...

REN PARK
 (firing back)
 Actually, I don't. I know exactly
 how much QA is paying you, and it's
 a lot, but... not that much.

SUSAN HART
 (closing up suddenly)
 It's enough. Eddie, do not take
 this man's credit card.

EDDIE
 (confused, a little thrown
 off)
 Uh -- got it, I'll, uh... I'll just
 put it on your tab.

The bartender retreats, and Susan picks up the refilled pitcher of cheap-as-dirt pilsner.

REN PARK
 (trying to slow her down)
 Wait... hold up, Susan. What's
 going on with you?

SUSAN HART
 (thinking she's been
 hiding it well)
 What are you talking about?

REN PARK

(trying not to pressure
her too much)

You're putting on a good show, but
I know something's wrong. You've
only been halfway-here ever since
you touched down this afternoon. Is
there something on your mind?

SUSAN HART

(pause, annoyed)

Look Park -- I like you. But you're
pushing your luck. I'm fine,
alright?

REN PARK

(realizing)

What happened at the end of the
test?

SUSAN HART

(thrown off -- this wasn't
what she was thinking of)

Sorry?

REN PARK

(seeing a chance)

You sounded like you... I don't
know, like you saw something you
didn't expect up there.

Susan goes quiet... THEN SIGHS.

SUSAN HART

(reluctantly trusting Ren)

Can you keep a secret?

REN PARK

(trying to lighten the
mood slightly)

Well I've signed about two hundred
NDAs working for QA alone, so --
yeah, I guess.

SUSAN HART

(heavy)

I'm serious -- you can't tell
anyone. Ever.

(beat, DEEP BREATH,
collecting thoughts)

I did see something up there. Right
when I hit Mach 4.

REN PARK
(pulling it out slowly)
What did you see?

SUSAN HART
(hesitates, then honest)
Lights. Long, thin streaks of
colored light, just outside the
cockpit. I think they were blue
or... maybe violet? I only saw them
in the corner of my eyes and I was
starting to get tunnel vision,
but... I could have sworn they were
following me. Every turn, every
maneuver... they were still there.
But as soon as I slowed down past
Mach 2 and looked away from the
controls... they were gone.

REN PARK
(confused, slightly
concerned)
Why didn't you say anything?

SUSAN HART
(SCOFFS, incredulous)
Are you kidding me? You know how
many pilots I know who've been
laughed out of the business for
saying they've seen little green
men? Edwards is already gunning for
me as it is.

REN PARK
(confusion at this
reaction)
There are external cameras on the
Mark 4... INCO could have checked
them.

SUSAN HART
(anger and fear)
I'm not about to risk my career
over...
(realizing)
They weren't recording during the
flight, were they?

REN PARK
You really think QA would let that
data go to waste?

SUSAN HART
(hesitant, not wanting to
ask for help)
Could we... could you show me?

CLUNK.

5. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - MISSION CONTROL - LATER

Near midnight. A noisy hard drive spins up, reading the flight data as the sounds of the bar fade away.

REN PARK
(slightly distracted,
turning back to Susan)
Alright... I think I found it. Just
give it a second, these old hard
drives are a bit slow.

SUSAN HART
(concerned, badly masked
anxiety)
You're sure we won't get in trouble
for this?

REN PARK
Nah... Edwards likes to talk like
he's in control, but he's just a
mouthpiece. The board put him in
charge because they thought I
needed someone older and wiser to
keep me in line.

SUSAN HART
(raised eyebrow)
"Wiser?"

REN PARK
(SCOFFS)
Maybe just older. But give him some
credit -- he's been doing this a
long time. He knows his stuff. He's
just too stuck in the mud to do
anything useful with it.
(notices something)
Alright -- looks like it's loaded.
Pull up a seat, Captain Hart.

Susan drags a small metal stool over to the console as Ren presses play.

MARCUS EDWARDS (V.O.)

(on recording)

Alright everyone -- let's keep this nice and simple, I want a good clean baseline here. Controllers, give me a go, no-go for launch. PROP?

PROP (V.O.)

Go flight.

MARCUS EDWARDS (V.O.)

Systems?

SYSTEMS (V.O.)

Go flight.

SUSAN HART

(annoyed, over V.O.)

Yeah, yeah, I got all this. Can you skip to the end?

REN PARK

Uh... yeah, sure, let me just scrub forward here...

Ren speeds up the recording, rushing past the launch, start of the flight, and everything leading up to Mach 1 before slowing down.

SUSAN HART (V.O.)

(SLIGHTLY BREATHLESS)

Hot damn, this thing can cook.

MARCUS EDWARDS (V.O.)

Surgeon, what's her status?

SURGEON (V.O.)

(reading biometrics)

Blood pressure dropping, but still acceptable -- she should be good up to 10 g's.

SUSAN HART (V.O.)

(ALMOST OUT OF BREATH,
ecstatic)

Mach 4! Mach 4!

MARCUS EDWARDS (V.O.)

(stunned, not ready for
this)

Holy shit -- FIDO, what's the status of the aircraft?

FIDO (V.O.)

(a little surprised too)

She's holding, Flight...

(MORE)

FIDO (V.O.) (CONT'D)
all lights are green, and she's
still accelerating.

MARCUS EDWARDS (V.O.)
(frustrated)
Dammit -- all controllers, we're
ending the test. Bring her back in -
-

SUSAN HART
(focused, trying to see)
There. Stop it there.

Ren does, pausing the recording. They both squint at the
screen showing the external cameras for a moment -- then...

REN PARK
(confused)
What the hell?

SUSAN HART
(needing to know)
Scroll back a bit, see if it clears
up.

Ren does so, rewinding the footage slowly, then playing it
again. The same dialogue plays out, but...

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
(growing intense)
Again. Slower.

REN PARK
(cautious)
Susan--

SUSAN HART
(anger, obsession)
Just do it, Ren.

Ren pauses, then rewinds the tape, playing it at half speed.
After a moment

REN PARK
(SIGHS, frustrated)
Nothing.

SUSAN HART
(scowling)
Shit.

REN PARK
Looks like the footage got
corrupted on the way in.
(MORE)

REN PARK (CONT'D)
I can hand it off to IT and see/if
they can clear it up a bit--

SUSAN HART
(suddenly worried)
No. I'm sorry, but... no. I can't
risk anyone else knowing.

REN PARK
(trying to convince her,
now he's curious)
I mean, even if they do clear it
up, there's no way to say they'll
know what they're/looking at--

SUSAN HART
(shutting this
conversation down)
I said "No" Park, and I meant it. I
just...
(softening slightly)
If I'm seeing things up there, I
don't want anyone else to know. I
need to keep this quiet.

REN PARK
(disappointed, but
accepting)
Alright. I mean... even if it is
"little green men," they don't seem
like they're a danger to the
aircraft. We should be able to
continue testing just fine.

Susan doesn't respond -- her face is unreadable, lost in
thought.

REN PARK (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Susan? Susan?

6. INT. MK 4 COCKPIT - DAY

Susan suddenly comes back to herself as Ren's voice echoes
over the radio. The engines scream outside the cockpit,
halfway through the next day's tests.

REN PARK (O.S.)
(over radio, slightly
crackly)
Susan? ...Mark 4 Actual, do you
copy?

SUSAN HART
 (into radio, as if waking
 back up -- hungover)
 CAPCOM, this is Mark 4 Actual,
 reading you loud and clear.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (relieved)
 Copy that.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (annoyed)
 What the hell is she playing at?

SUSAN HART
 (irritated)
 CAPCOM, please advise Flight that
 his mic is connected to the
 outgoing channel.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (growing more angry)
 Who the hell -- INCO, why am I--

The radio crackles slightly, and Edward's voice disappears.
 SUSAN CHUCKLES, then glances down at her instruments.

SUSAN HART
 (into radio, automatic)
 Still maintaining Mach 1.1 and
 level flight.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (equally automatic)
 Roger that, Mark 4 Actual --
 maintain speed and heading for
 another three minutes, we're nearly
 finished.

SUSAN SIGHS, bored and a little hungover -- despite going
 faster than the speed of sound, it feels like she's sitting
 still.

She slumps back in her seat, GROANING SLIGHTLY and squeezing
 her eyes shut... then she CUTS OFF, noticing something above
 her.

SUSAN HART
 (mix of worry and
 excitement)
 CAPCOM, are there any other
 aircraft in the area?

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (confused)
 Negative Mark 4, your airspace is
 clear. Why?

SUSAN HART
 (pause, then making a
 decision)
 Requesting permission to begin high-
 altitude testing.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (clearly arguing with
 Edwards off-screen)
 Uh... standby on that request, Mark
 4.

Ren cuts his mic -- or thinks he does, as a muffled argument
 plays out.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (muffled, angry)
 I thought you said you talked to
 her about this?

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (muffled, defensive)
 I did, but she's... it's not that
 simple!

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (muffled, threat)
 Well I'll make it simple -- tell
 her to get in line, or you're both
 fired.

SUSAN HART
 (frustrated and done with
 this asshole)
 Oh, fuck this.

Susan pulls back on the stick, and the engines roar as the
 Bumblebee climbs.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (masking panic)
 Susan -- Mark 4 Actual, reduce
 speed and return to level flight.

SUSAN HART
 (feigning ignorance)
 You sure? I thought my three
 minutes were up... isn't this the
 next test on the schedule?

The radio goes silent again -- then finally.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (cautious edge)
 Mark 4, Flight advises you that
 you're, uh... please just complete
 the high altitude tests as
 directed.

SUSAN HART
 (vindicated, smug)
 Roger WILCO, CAPCOM. Ready to push.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (nervous)
 Copy that, Mark 4 Actual --
 secondary ignition in 5--4--3--2--1--
 -Ignition.

The conventional rockets fire, pushing Susan back in her seat
 with a faint GRUNT as the G-Forces increase.

SUSAN HART
 (pushing the words out)
 Mach 3... Mach 3.5... Mach 3.7...

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (urgent, but measured)
 Mark 4 Actual, check your angle --
 you're a little steep.

SUSAN HART
 (pushing the words out)
 Affirmative -- leveling off...
 (pause, watching
 measurements)
 Mach 4... 4.1... 4.2...

REN PARK
 Alright Susan, that's target
 altitude -- go ahead and level off.

SUSAN HART
 (sudden idea, still
 struggling slightly)
 CAPCOM, what's the X-15's record?

REN PARK
 (uncertain, but answering)
 Uh... airspeed record for crewed
 flight is Mach 6.7.

SUSAN HART
 (still struggling
 slightly, mischievous)
 You know when that was set?

REN PARK
 (not quite liking where
 this is going)
 Uh... 1967, I think.

SUSAN HART
 (grinning, still
 struggling slightly)
 I think 50 years is enough to let
 that record stand, don't you?

Before Ren can reply, Susan slams the throttle forward, and the rockets and scramjet scream as the plane begins to shake.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (everyone in the control
 room is shouting)
 Mark 4 Actual, Flight is -- standby
 for wing retraction.

Motors whir as the Bumblebee's wings are drawn further into the fuselage, shifting the plane into its hypersonic form factor. The cockpit shakes, then stabilizes.

SUSAN HART
 (shaking slightly, pushing
 words out)
 CAPCOM, we are tucked in and
 knocking on Mach 5.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 Mark 4 Actual, Flight is still
 requesting that you reduce speed
 and resume the test.

SUSAN HART
 (trying to catch her
 breath)
 You can tell him, to go--

Susan cuts off as she sees something just outside the cockpit. A high, faint ringing rises, and the roar of the engines fades away.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (worried, voice growing
 fainter)
 Please repeat Mark 4 -- I didn't
 get that.

(MORE)

REN PARK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(beat)

Mark 4 Actual, please respond.

(beat)

Susan? Susan, can you hear me?
INCO, give me a status report [on
the network]...

SUSAN HART

(breathless, awed)

They're... beautiful...

The ringing comes to a crescendo -- then cuts out. A loud *bang* shakes the cockpit as one of the rocket engines fails.

SUSAN CRIES OUT IN PAIN, ALARM, AND SURPRISE as the plane jerks to the right, spiraling out of control.

REN PARK (O.S.)

(on the edge of panic)

Hart! Talk to me Hart -- Mark 4
Actual, respond!

SUSAN HART

(through gritted teeth and
crushed lungs)

She's spinning, Ren -- Engine 5...
failure.

REN PARK (O.S.)

(immediately taking
control)

PROP, cut power the number 4, now!
Surgeon, status.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)

(muffled, distant, angry)

Park, return to your station/and
let me--

REN PARK (O.S.)

(not to be questioned,
sharp and fast)

Edwards, I'm relieving you of duty
and saving my pilot.

(to Susan)

Susan, your thrust should be
equalized... can you reduce spin?

SUSAN HART

(rapidly losing
consciousness)

I -- I'm trying -- Lateral G's are -
- I'm not...

Susan trails off, then goes silent as she passes out. The air rushes by as the plane continues to spiral down towards the far-off ground.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (mounting panic)
 Mark 4 Actual, respond -- surgeon,
 is/she--

SURGEON (O.S.)
 (nearly panicked, muffled)
 She's under nearly 20 g's, Ren --
 she's passed out.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (mind racing)
 Shit -- FIDO, can we take over
 remote control?

FIDO (O.S.)
 (fast and panicked)
 We can try, but the signal's patchy
 -- I don't know if I can pull her
 out of this dive.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 We have to try -- INCO, standby for
 remote takeover/and prepare for
 emergency maneuver Lambda 9--

SUSAN SUDDENLY GASPS, COUGHING AS SHE COMES BACK TO
 CONSCIOUSNESS.

REN PARK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (hearing her)
 Susan? Susan, can you hear me?

SUSAN HART
 (distracted, disoriented,
 weak)
 I... I hear you, Ren.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (urgent, trying to get her
 attention)
 Susan, you need to slow the ship
 down and stop it spinning -- we
 can't extend the wings or use the
 parachutes at this speed. Can you
 do that?

SUSAN HART
 (coming back to herself,
 focused but pained)
 (MORE)

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
 I... I can. Standby on that
 parachute, I'm gonna need it if I
 black out again.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (confused)
 What?

With a GRUNT OF EFFORT, Susan forces the yoke down and into
 the spin, pushing the aircraft into a steep dive.

REN PARK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (almost panicked)
 Susan, pull up! You're going to run
 out of air at that speed!

SUSAN JUST SCREAMS -- a sound of controlled pain and sheer
 willpower to survive. She starts to pull back on the stick,
 and...

FIDO (O.S.)
 (muffled, excited)
 She's pulled out of the spin,
 Flight! She pulling up!

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (realizing what's
 happened, speaking
 quickly)
 Standby to extend wings as soon as
 she's subsonic. Susan, are you
 still with us?

SUSAN HART
 (CATCHING HER BREATH,
 passing on info to keep
 herself alive)
 I don't have any yaw control and
 the elevators are busted... I'm
 gonna land where I'm gonna land,
 Ren.

REN PARK (O.S.)
 (calming down, then
 accosted by someone)
 Copy that, rescue crews are
 already... What? What are you
 doing? Who are you?

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (muffled, smug)
 These gentlemen are with the Air
 Force, Ren. You know, the people
 we're contracted to?

(MORE)

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

They have some questions they want to ask you about why you subverted the chain of command during a routine test flight.

REN PARK (O.S.)

(growing panicky)

Marcus, this is no time to make a power play, not with Susan's life on the line...

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)

(muffled, smug)

Don't worry -- I'll make sure the aircraft makes it safely to the ground. FIDO, take remote control and bring her down before she does any more damage.

FIDO (O.S.)

(muffled, uncomfortable)

Sir, I'm not confident/I can--

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)

(yells)

Do it!

SUSAN HART

(stunned, terrified)

I hate to say it Edwards, but this conversation is about to be--

FLOOMF. The parachutes trigger automatically at low altitude. CRUNCH. The Bumblebee comes down hard on the salt flat below. SUSAN CRIES OUT as she's thrown forward, flight harness catching her as he neck is whipped forward.

After a few terrifying seconds, the aircraft comes to a stop, rocking back on its tail and jostling Susan one more time as she hits the seat WITH A GRUNT OF PAIN.

SUSAN BREATHES HARD, then undoes her oxygen mask to keep from hyperventilation.

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)

(frustrated, angry, and scared)

Goddammit.

(GROANS IN PAIN, rubbing her neck)

Ah shit, my neck...

Susan trails off as she hears the sound of approaching sirens. The sound rises, then fades to...

CLICK.

7A. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - MEDICAL BAY - LATER

The surgeon shines a flashlight into Susan's eyes, checking them. Susan remains silent.

SURGEON

(mostly to herself,
slightly on edge)

Pupillary response seems normal...
look up?

(Susan does so silently,
surgeon moves on)

Hmmm... capillaries are a little
swollen, but thankfully they're all
intact. Should be good as new once
the inflammation goes away.

MARCUS EDWARDS

(from across the room,
butting in)

Wish I could say the same for the
Mark 4.

SURGEON

(DEEP BREATH, controlling
anger)

Director Edwards, I must again
request that you leave the room
until I'm finished. This is a
civilian operation, and Susan still
has a right to patient/doctor
confidentiality under medical law.

MARCUS EDWARDS

(smug, victorious)

For now.

Edwards turns and swaggers out the door into the hanger. The
SURGEONS SIGHS IN RELIEF, then turns back to Susan.

SURGEON

(stress vanishing)

Alright, let's take your blood
pressure/and--

SUSAN HART

(defeated, deflated)

No more tests, Doctor. There's no
point. He's never going to let me
fly again.

SURGEON

(growing a little serious)
We don't know that yet. And
besides, I need to make sure/you're
okay before I let you--

SUSAN HART

We do know that. Ren's probably
sitting in some military police
cell right now awaiting a court
martial, and he's the only one who--

A knock at the door cuts her off. The surgeon turns, annoyed.

SURGEON

(moving to open the door)
Goddamnit, what does Marcus want
now...?

He cuts off as he opens the door to see Ren, standing behind
it.

REN PARK

(grinning, a little tired)
Hell of a flight, Hart.

SUSAN HART

(endlessly relieved,
standing up in surprise)
Ren? You're -- how?

REN PARK

(a little smug)
Turns out Marcus... *misrepresented*
the situation to our friends with
the Air Force. A few calls to the
board made it clear they sided with
me on the matter, not him.

SUSAN HART

(steps towards him, then
pained)
But what did they -- ow.

SURGEON

(annoyed, hiding relief)
Sit down Susan, you're going to
hurt yourself.

REN PARK

Listen to her, Susan. You need to
take it easy if you're going to be
ready for the next test.

SUSAN HART

(confused, slightly
overwhelmed)

The next... but I crashed the
plane.

REN PARK

(shrugs, devil-may-care)

Eh, the line between crashing and
landing has always been a bit...
fuzzy, in my books. And it turns
out most of the damage came from a
faulty aerospike on number 5, not
the crash itself. Should be fairly
easy to repair with the parts we
have in the shed.

SUSAN HART

(mind reeling)

But... There's no way Marcus is
going to let me fly the next test
after/what I did before--

REN PARK

(growing more serious)

Can you tell me what I said this
project was all about, Susan? When
we first met?

SUSAN HART

(mind slowing as she
remembers)

Putting the pilot in control again.
Making spaceflight human-centric.

REN PARK

(nodding)

You know what the first rockets
were? An explosion, with a person
on top. An ICBM, with a chair.
Things have gotten a little better
since the Apollo days, but it's
still the same principle: a tiny
capsule on a pillar of fuel, with
nothing for the pilot to do but
hang on for dear life until they
reach orbit. The engineering
demanded it. But now... we're
trying to put the pilot back in
control of how and when they get to
space... making space somewhere you
can fly to on your own power. And
that means taking risks on the
pilots we believe in.

The medical bay falls silent -- then Susan turns to the surgeon.

SUSAN HART
 (uncharacteristically
 genuine)
 Doc, could you give us a minute
 here?

SURGEON
 (slightly confused)
 Uh... sure. But I still want to
 finish those tests before you
 leave, understood?

Susan nods as the surgeon retreats out of the room, leaving her alone with Ren.

7B. CONTINUOUS

Susan sits quietly on the edge of the exam table for a long moment -- THEN SIGHS.

SUSAN HART
 (difficult to voice her
 own insecurities)
 Ren... I don't know if you should
 be taking these risks. Not on me.

REN PARK
 (growing concerned)
 Why not? The crash wasn't your
 fault, it was a mechanical/failure
 you couldn't have predicted or--

SUSAN HART
 (difficult, but needing to
 get it out)
 No, Ren, I'm not -- I'm not talking
 about the crash.

REN PARK
 (concerned confusion)
 What then?

Susan goes silent, collecting her thoughts.

SUSAN HART
 (slow, deliberate, almost
 like she isn't there)
 Just before the engine failed...
 just before I passed out... I saw
 the lights again.
 (MORE)

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)

Just outside the cockpit, just like the first time. Except they were closer. I could see them more clearly this time. I turned to look at them, and... they were there. It wasn't g-pressure, it wasn't an optical illusion... there were lights flying outside my cockpit, keeping up with me at Mach 4. I don't know how, but... it looked like they were barely breaking a sweat. Like going that fast was easy for them.

(beat, longing)

They were the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

REN PARK

(unsure what to make of this)

O-kay...

SUSAN HART

(pushing on)

And then the plane was spinning. I started to black out, and I knew I probably wasn't going to wake up again. But when I lost consciousness... I could still see the lights. Except they weren't outside the cockpit now, they were... I don't know where. It was dark, but I could hear the sound of wind howling and... I think I saw other lights, but they were hidden by... I guess they were clouds? But I could see the lights hovering in front of me, clear as day. Except they weren't just streaks now, they were people -- human figures made of light, sparking and buzzing in the dark. And they spoke to me.

REN PARK

(unsure if he can believe her)

What did they... what did they say?

SUSAN HART

(struggling to find the words, edge of fear)

It wasn't... it wasn't words exactly. More like... emotions. Feelings.

(MORE)

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)

It felt like they knew me though... like they'd been watching us for a long time now. Not just the Bumblebee project, but -- humanity itself. That they'd been testing us, trying to see if we were a danger to them. And this project, it... it worried them. I don't know why, but... I don't think they want space travel getting any easier for us.

REN PARK

(hesitant)

And do you think you... actually saw these aliens? Or are you worried it was some kind of... hallucination?

SUSAN HART

(back in the present,
shaking with uncertainty)

I don't know. I thought... I hoped that it was -- either way, I don't know what to do. If I'm crazy, then I/don't know if I should keep trying to--

REN PARK

(reassuring half-truth)

Hey, hey... listen to me. You're not crazy. I don't know what else is going on, but I know that much. If that's what you think you saw... I believe you.

SUSAN HART

(can't quite believe it)

You do?

REN PARK

(qualifying, trying to
keep her safe)

But I think you were right: you can't tell anyone what happened. If Edwards hears about this -- we're both sunk.

SUSAN HART

(a little weak, uncertain)

O... Okay.

REN PARK
 (making sure she
 understands)
 I'm serious... you can't tell
 anyone: friends, family,
 partners... you need to keep this
 from them. All of them.

SUSAN HART
 (WORN OUT SCOFF)
 Oh trust me... that won't be a
 problem.

REN PARK
 (confused)
 Why not?

CLUNK.

8. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - SUSAN HART'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

A few hours later, Susan throws the deadbolt on the door to her small room off the main hanger. The distant sounds of welding and repair carry through the thin walls.

SUSAN HART
 (sarcastic, to no one)
 Honey... I'm home.

Susan throws her coat onto the small cot, then crosses to the utility sink and splashes cold water over her face.

SHE SIGHS, hunched over the basin -- THEN WINCES, rubbing her neck.

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
 (pained)
 Shit, I really pulled something,
 didn't I?

SHE EXHALES, then crosses back into the main room, pulling open the small mini-fridge and retrieving a bottle of cheap beer.

She opens it and takes a LONG SWIG, then sets it aside and begins scanning the contents of the fridge.

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
 (muttering, tired and
 hungry)
 Let's see... ready-meal, ready-
 meal, MRE, takeout... when was that
 from?

She pulls the small paper container out and opens it, SNIFFING THE CONTENTS. She hesitates, then makes a faint "EH" sound, placing it in the microwaves and starting it.

The microwave hums as she turns to a small pile of mail on the counter, leafing through the envelopes.

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
 (muttering, distracted)
 Bill, bill, ad, bill... letter from
 Mom...
 (very deliberately opening
 the trash and tossing it)
 Another bill, another--

Susan cuts off, noticing one of the envelopes. The microwave DINGS behind her, but she doesn't move towards it. Instead, she carefully opens the envelope in her hand, unfolds it, and silently reads.

The ticking of the small wall-mounted clock grows louder and louder in her ears. Her heart hammers -- then skips a beat.

The world goes silent around her. The letter falls from her hand, and the sound of paper hitting counter is like a gavel.

SUSAN HART (CONT'D)
 (entire world falling
 apart)
 Shit.

She sits in her lonely, quiet apartment with her leftovers rapidly cooling in the microwave.

MARCUS EDWARDS (O.S.)
 (over the intercom,
 officious)
 All flight controllers to Mission
 Control, all flight controllers,
 report to Mission Control.

9. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - MISSION CONTROL - MORNING

The room holds a tense silence and energy not unlike a final exam. People file in silently, shift in chairs, and shoot nervous glances to one another.

Finally, the door opens, and a set of hurried footsteps is heard as Ren rushes in.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (undisguised contempt)
 Park.

REN PARK
 (biting his tongue,
 rushed)
 Edwards.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 Better late than never.

REN PARK
 (lashing out briefly)
 I thought that was the point of
 your little stunt during the last
 test.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (annoyed, simmering anger)
 My *point* was to save the aircraft.
 Nothing more.

REN PARK
 (SCOFFS, muttered)
 Save your career, more like.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 ("get real")
 Don't pretend like you disobeyed
 orders because you care about
 Captain Hart so much. You have just
 as much riding on this as I do.
 Forgive me if I'm a little more
 honest about it.

REN DRAWS A DEEP BREATH, but doesn't otherwise respond.
 Instead, he sits at his console and puts on his headset.

REN PARK
 (into radio, to Susan)
 Mark 4 Actual, this is CAPCOM. Are
 you receiving?

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (through radio, slightly
 crackling, unreadable)
 10-4 CAPCOM, receiving loud and
 clear.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (taking charge,
 authoritative)
 Alright everyone - listen up. No
 surprises this time. No
 unauthorized maneuvers, no airspeed
 record attempts, no tomfoolery.
 (MORE)

MARCUS EDWARDS (CONT'D)

We will get the Mark 4 to 90 kilometers, complete the high-altitude testing, and return the Mark 4 safely to the ground. Anything else will result in the immediate termination of any ground crew found to be culpable. Flight controllers, give me a go/no-go for launch. PROP?

PROP

Go flight.

MARCUS EDWARDS

Systems?

SYSTEMS

Go flight.

MARCUS EDWARDS

FIDO?

FIDO

We're a go.

MARCUS EDWARDS

INCO.

INCO

Go!

MARCUS EDWARDS

Surgeon.

SURGEON

Go flight.

MARCUS EDWARDS

(masked contempt)

CAPCOM.

REN PARK

All systems go.

MARCUS EDWARDS

On my mark -- 10... 9... 8...
7... 6... 5...

SYSTEMS

Primary induction spooling.

PROP

Turbines to speed.

MARCUS EDWARDS

4... 3... 2... 1... Launch
sequence.

FIDO

Launch sequence initiated.

On the monitors and over the speakers, the Bumblebee's primary scramjet roars as the linear induction motors catapult the aircraft forwards.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (pressed back in her
 chair)
 Pulling up...

The engine roars louder, and the Bumblebee pulls away from the launch system into the open air.

FIDO
 (relieved excitement)
 Up and away, flight!

REN PARK
 Nice launch, Mark 4... ascend to
 cruising altitude and standby for
 secondary ignition.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (unusually flat)
 Roger WILCO, CAPCOM.

The radio crackles off.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (confused)
 She's being unusually... compliant.

REN PARK
 (theorizing, a little
 unsure himself)
 Maybe she's nervous about the test,
 after/what happened last time--

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (annoyed)
 Did I ask you something, CAPCOM?

REN PARK
 (refusing to rise to it)
 Negative, flight.

FIDO
 (just in time to break the
 tension)
 She's reached altitude threshold 1.

PROP
 (slightly tense... this is
 where it went wrong)
 Engines 4 and 5, standing by.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (DEEP BREATH, genuinely
 worried)
 Alright everyone -- let's get it
 right this time. CAPCOM?

REN PARK
 (muttered rebellion)
 Now he asks me something...
 (into radio, clearer)
 Mark 4 Actual, we are standing by
 for secondary ignition. You ready?

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (DEEP BREATH, oddly heavy)
 Ready as I'll ever be.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (not hearing her tone)
 Propulsion -- on my mark. 5... 4...
 3... 2... 1... Ignition.

Propulsion throws the switch, and the whole room holds its
 breath... but nothing happens.

They switch the toggle back and forth a few times, then look
 up sheepishly.

PROP
 (sweating)
 Uh... standby flight, there seems
 to be an, er -- some kind of
 problem.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (annoyed)
 INCO, is this a network issue?

INCO
 (just as confused as
 anyone)
 Negative, flight... she's still
 receiving.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (growing anger)
 Then why the hell isn't--

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (slightly shaky,
 emotional)
 So... I'm sure you've noticed that
 the engines didn't fire just then.
 Don't worry...

(MORE)

SUSAN HART (O.S.) (CONT'D)
nothing's wrong on your end. I've
just disabled the remote control
module on mine.

MARCUS EDWARDS
(annoyed)
CAPCOM, patch me through to her,
now.

REN PARK
(so thrown off he can
barely resist)
Uh... copy, flight.

MARCUS EDWARDS
(into radio)
Captain Hart, you are in direct
violation of your contract with
Quentin Aerospace and the United
States Air Force. You will return
to base and surrender yourself and
the aircraft immediately.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
(LAUGH SOFTLY)
Will I? Because as far as I can
see, I'm all alone up here. This is
my aircraft.

MARCUS EDWARDS
(eyes narrowing)
If you attempt to leave Mojave
airspace, I will have no choice but
to have the nearest AFB scramble
fighters and shoot you down.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
(this is easier now that
he's threatening her)
I'm sure you will. But in the
meantime... the pilot is in control
of her own destiny. And I'm not
giving that up for the likes of
you.

REN PARK
(into radio, pleading)
Susan, please... it's not too late.
If you come back now, I can
convince the board to keep this
under wraps. Just please... come
back.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (defeated, but determined)
 No. It was always too late. I was
 just buying time.

REN PARK
 (pleading, trying to reach
 his friend)
 Susan, please... don't do this.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (heartbroken, soft)
 I really think I'm going to miss
 you, Ren.

REN PARK
 (completely thrown off by
 that)
 You... what?

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (screwing her courage to
 the sticking place)
 Attention all flight controllers
 and QA personnel -- this is Captain
 Susan Hart of the BBE Mark 4
 prototype single-stage vehicle.
 This will be my final flight. You
 might not be able to see them, but
 I do believe our esteemed observers
 are in attendance... and I intend
 to put on a show.

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (completely lost)
 What is she talking about?

Before Ren can form a reply, the radio crackles, and "Flight
 of the Bumblebee" begins to blast over the comms.

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 Secondary ignition, on my mark --
 now.

Even above the music, the rockets scream, and SUSAN GRUNTS
 SLIGHTLY as G-forces push her back in her seat.

SUSAN HART (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (STRUGGLING TO FILL HER
 LUNGS)
 Mach 3... Mach 4... Mach 5...

FIDO
 (worried)
 She's climbing, flight... 80
 kilometers... 90... 100...

MARCUS EDWARDS
 (furious, desperate)
 Stop her, Park!

REN PARK
 (completely lost and
 terrified)
 How?

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (barely able to breathe
 from G-forces)
 Mach 6... point... 5 -- point... 6 -
 - point... 7.

PROP
 (stunned)
 Holy shit -- that's the record.

REN PARK
 (pleading)
 Susan, you just broke the X-15's
 record. You did it. Just come back.

FIDO
 (worried)
 She's heating up, flight...
 atmospheric drag is reaching
 critical levels.

REN PARK
 (full on desperation)
 Susan, please -- you're going/to
 break up--

Suddenly, the sounds of the roaring engine and shaking
 fuselage disappear as the music crescendos. It almost seems
 like they've lost signal, when suddenly...

SUSAN HART (O.S.)
 (stunned, moment of
 revelation)
 My god... it's true. It's all
 true...

And then the signal cuts out to noisy, dead static.

REN PARK
 (desperate, but already
 knowing)
 Susan? Susan, do you copy, over?

INCO
 (hollow, completing duty)
 We've lost her signal, Flight.
 Noting LOS at 1134:22.

The room is silent besides the horrible static.

10. INT. MOJAVE TEST SITE - REN'S OFFICE - EVENING

Several days later, Ren sits in his nearly-empty office, speaking into a small digital recorder. The hanger outside is quiet and still.

REN PARK
 (somber, tired)
 Doctor Ren Park, personal note.
 October 10th, 2015. It's
 official... the QA board just
 voted. I'm out. Effective
 immediately. The BBE project is
 being mothballed, with all designs
 and experimental data being handed
 over to the US Air Force. It's
 over. We lost.
 (beat, heavier)
 There's no sign of Susan. Military
 and civil aviation agencies ran a
 thorough search, but no one was
 able to find any trace of the Mark
 4's wreckage, much less a body. The
 current theory, based on her
 altitude and her last known
 trajectory, is that the Mark 5's
 wings failed to retract. The
 combined aerodynamic stress and
 atmospheric drag caused the plane
 to break up in the upper
 atmosphere, and debris was
 vaporized at hypersonic speeds. If
 they're right -- then there's
 nothing left to find. Ash in the
 wind.
 (longer beat, faintly
 hopeful)
 But I have a different theory...
 one I've kept to myself for fear of
 being laughed out of a job I've
 already lost. That Susan was right.
 (MORE)

REN PARK (CONT'D)

That something was watching our tests, and finally decided that the Mark 4 was too dangerous to leave in human hands. That they took it -- and its pilot -- away. It would explain her final transmission... a transmission that Marcus is only using to push the theory that Susan lost her mind. Stress and rejection... it's a potent combination.

(beat)

He found the letter on the first day of their investigation, when they searched her apartment -- a letter from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's astronaut training program. A rejection letter... her fifth in as many years. She wanted to see the stars... and I think in the end, she did. Wherever she is... whatever happens to her.... I think she's earned her wings.

Ren goes silent... but before he speaks again, his phone rings.

REN PARK (CONT'D)

(confused)

What the...

(picks up)

Hello? Doctor Ren Park of Que... Park here.

DANA CALDWELL

(cool and level)

Hello Doctor Park. This is Doctor Daniella Caldwell of the Institute for Stellar Propulsion, Heuristics, and Aeronautics. Is this a good time?

REN PARK

(slightly flabbergasted)

Uh... Doctor Caldwell, hello. Yes, yes, this is a good time.

DANA CALDWELL

(she already knew it was)

Excellent. It's come to my attention that your employment with Quentin Aerospace was recently terminated. Is that correct?

REN PARK
(sheepish)
Unfortunately, yes.

DANA CALDWELL
I wouldn't call it unfortunate.

REN PARK
(realization, but keeping
a lid on excitement)
No? Why not?

DANA CALDWELL
Because it frees you up to work for
ISPHA. There's a vacancy in our
Experimental Projects Division in
Ventura... do you have a moment to
discuss the position?

REN PARK
(cautiously enthusiastic)
Do I... yes, yes, of course! One
second, just let me turn off my
recorder--

BEEP. The recorder cuts out.

ROLL END THEME
AND CREDITS