

Mission to Mars (2002)

In 2020, the first manned mission to the planet Mars is launched. The *Mars I* spacecraft is commanded by Luke Graham (Don Cheadle) with fellow astronauts Nicholas Willis (Kavan Smith), Sergei Kirov (Peter Outerbridge), and Renée Coté (Jill Teed). Upon arrival, the team discover a crystalline formation within a mountain in the Cydonia region. After transmitting their finding back to the World Space Station orbiting Earth, they head for the site to do further analysis. Once there, they hear a strange sound on their communications system, which they assume to be interference from their planetary rover. While they scan the formation with radar, a large whirlwind springs up and kills Nicholas, Sergei, and Renée. Only Luke survives after being buried alive in the rocky debris. After the vortex subsides, a large humanoid face is exposed within the mountain. Later, Luke manages to upload an emergency transmission to the R.E.M.O. (REsupply MOdule) orbiting the planet. After receiving Luke's garbled message, a second ship is hastily readied for a rescue mission.

The crew of the *Mars II* recovery craft includes Commander Woody Blake (Tim Robbins), Co-Commander Jim McConnell (Gary Sinise), and mission specialists Terri Fisher (Connie Nielsen) and Phil Ohlmyer (Jerry O'Connell). They are sent to investigate the tragedy and rescue Luke. As the ship is prepared to enter Mars orbit, a swarm of meteors collides with the ship, breaching the hull. The crew works quickly to repair the damage, but the external fuel tanks are forgotten, causing a large leakage and later, explosion. They quickly put on pressure suits and maneuver their way to the R.E.M.O. module orbiting the planet. Woody concludes that the only hope of a successful rendezvous with the R.E.M.O. is for him to launch himself directly at it using the remainder of his jet pack fuel, carrying a tether cord from the others. He successfully attaches the cord to the R.E.M.O., but is unable to properly land on it, floating helplessly away toward the planet. Terri begins a rescue bid to bring Woody back, but knowing Terri would run out of positioning fuel in trying to reach him and would die doing so, Woody removes his helmet and dies to save Terri.

When the remaining group arrives on the surface from the R.E.M.O., they find Luke still alive. He has built a greenhouse and has been living on its produce. He tells the rescuers about his crew's find, and that the crystalline structure looks humanoid. He's also discovered that the noise they recorded actually represents a map of human DNA in XYZ coordinates, but missing a pair of chromosomes. They suspect that the recorded signal must have been a test of human presence, inviting completion of the human genome by adding an appropriate nucleotide sequence for the missing pair of chromosomes. The earlier team had used radar to scan the crystalline formation, but without providing the appropriate data sequence they would have failed the test, thereby triggering the destructive vortex.

Wanting to complete the sequence properly, but worried about a repeat of the earlier response to the radar scan, the crew dispatches a robotic rover to reproduce the completed signal close to the humanoid structure. Following the transmission, an opening appears in the side of the structure. Jim, Terri, and Luke head towards it, while Phil remains at the repaired emergency return vehicle with orders to launch, with or without them, at an agreed time. The trio ventures inside the structure and the opening closes, sealing them in and disrupting radio communication with Phil. Soon, a three-dimensional projection of the solar system appears. They see the planet Mars, covered with water, being struck by a large asteroid, the surface subsequently ruined. A Martian then appears before the group.

It reveals that the Martians evacuated their world in spacecraft following the collision. All the vehicles headed towards another star, except one which went to Earth, depositing a sample of DNA into an ocean which at the time contained no life forms. Over millions of years the DNA evolved into fish, land mammals, and eventually humans, who would one day land on Mars and be recognized as descendants. An invitation is offered for one astronaut to follow them to their new home planet. Jim decides to accept the invitation himself. After their farewells, the rest of the crew head back to the ship as Phil calls for them one last time before he is to take off. Still inside the

alien structure, Jim steps into a cylinder which starts to fill with liquid. Fearing drowning, he initially holds his breath but soon discovers that the liquid is highly oxygenated, allowing him to breathe normally. The rest of the crew reach Phil in time and the three successfully lift off from Mars. As Jim is being prepared for what awaits him, he has a flashback of the important memories of his life. Jim's Martian ship blasts away and as it passes by his friends' earthbound capsule, they wish him luck on his voyage.

Cast

Gary Sinise as Jim McConnell
Tim Robbins as Woody Blake
Don Cheadle as Luke Graham
Connie Nielsen as Terri Fisher
Jerry O'Connell as Phil Ohlmyer
Kim Delaney as Maggie McConnell
Peter Outerbridge as Sergei Kirov
Kavan Smith as Nicholas Willis
Jill Teed as Renée Coté
Elise Neal as Debra Graham
Robert Bailey Jr. as Bobby Graham
Taylor Jones as Daniel Lederman
Armin Mueller-Stahl as Ramier Beck

Memorable quotes (with notes on vocabulary)

Woody Blake: You're just not man enough to wear jewelry.
man enough = abbastanza uomo

Jim McConnell: There's pressure in here.
Terri Fisher: Above Mars atmospheric? That's impossible.
Jim McConnell: We're millions of miles from Earth inside a giant white face. What's impossible?
inside a giant white face = entro una faccia bianca gigantesca

Terri Fisher: The genetic difference between men and apes is only three percent. But that three percent gave us Einstein, Mozart...
Phil Ohlmyer: ...Jack The Ripper.
ape = scimmione

Luke Graham: Phil, do you read me?
Phil Ohlmyer: Phil isn't here right now, he left for Earth FIVE MINUTES AGO, please leave a message after

the beep!

Phil, do you read me = Phil, riesci a leggere quello che scrivo? beep = segnale acustico

Jim McConnell: What is she now?

Phil Ohlmyer: A frog...?

What is she now? = In che cosa si è trasformata adesso?; frog = rana

[Leaving the BBQ in his 1959 Corvette]

Woody Blake: Internal combustion, boys. Accept no substitutes.

BBQ = barbecue

Luke Graham: Come on - three commanders. One ship. I don't think that's gonna work. There's not enough rocket fuel in the world to get those egos off the ground.

to get sth off the ground = far alzare/sollevarre dal suolo

Woody Blake: Okay, people let's look sharp now. We're gonna run this simulation one more time. If we overshoot, there's no coming back.

Phil Ohlmyer: Yeah, and drifting through eternity will ruin your whole day.

to drift = vagare

Jim McConnell: Like Maggie said: To stand on a new world and look beyond it to the next one.

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