Red Resurrection

In the year 2029, humanity took its boldest step yet. The Starship Endeavour blasted off from Kennedy Space Center carrying six astronauts on the first manned mission to Mars. After a grueling seven-month journey through the void, they would become the first humans to walk on another planet.

Captain Anya Petrova floated in the command module, her eyes fixed on the rusty horizon growing larger by the second. At forty-two, she was one of the most experienced pilots NASA had ever sent into space. The loss of her husband in a training crash years earlier had hardened her into a pragmatic, no-nonsense leader.

“Thirty seconds to landing,” she announced, voice steady over the comms.

The ship shuddered as retro-thrusters fired. Dust billowed in slow-motion curtains under the Martian sky. Then, with a gentle jolt, Endeavour touched down in Jezero Crater on March 12, 2030.

“Earth, this is Endeavour Actual,” Petrova said, a rare smile breaking through. “We have landed.”

The world erupted in celebration.

Three days later, while scouting for water ice, Dr. Lena Kowalski’s drone picked up something impossible.

“Captain, you need to see this,” she transmitted, her Polish accent sharp with excitement.

The team gathered around the tablet. Ground-penetrating radar showed a perfect three-sided pyramid, eighty meters tall, buried beneath layers of dust. Its surface was made of an unknown black crystalline material that blocked every scan.

Mission Control hesitated but eventually gave the green light for a 48-hour EVA expedition.

The seamless door slid open the moment Dr. Marcus Hale approached. As if it had been waiting for human DNA.

Inside, the corridors were lit by soft blue glyphs that pulsed like living veins. The air was breathable — thin, but breathable — and carried a faint metallic scent mixed with something ancient.

At the heart of the pyramid lay the central chamber.

A translucent sarcophagus stood in the middle. Inside rested a three-meter-tall being. Its body was a nightmarish blend of insectoid and reptilian features, covered in ritualistic scars.

Against Dr. Sofia Alvarez’s protests, they opened the sarcophagus for samples.

The moment the seal broke, a fine red mist sprayed into the air. The suits’ sensors screamed: “Unknown organic aerosol detected.”

Commander Theo Grant, standing closest, flinched as a drop landed on his visor. He wiped it away.

They sealed the mummy in a containment bag and returned to the habitat.

Back at base, the symptoms began subtly.

Grant’s eyes turned bloodshot. He grew irritable and complained of raging hunger.

Hale started sleepwalking, muttering words no one could understand.

Fever swept through the crew. Mission Control called it “Martian dust exposure” and ordered strict quarantine.

Communications began glitching. The pyramid seemed to interfere with every signal.

On the second night, Grant collapsed in the galley. Massive cerebral hemorrhage. He died within minutes.

Thirty minutes later, his body sat up.

His eyes were completely black. Veins glowed angry red beneath his skin. With terrifying speed in Mars’ low gravity, he smashed through the bulkhead door as if it were paper.

Lt. Raj Patel barely escaped, screaming over the intercom.

The first zombie had risen.

The creature that had once been Theo Grant moved with horrifying grace. It leaped ten meters in a single bound, its body adapted to the thin atmosphere. It tore through Kowalski in seconds, ripping her throat open. Her body convulsed on the floor… then stood up minutes later, eyes black, joining the hunt.

Alvarez, barricaded in the medical bay with Petrova, had been frantically running the portable sequencer on blood and tissue samples from the infected. The results hit like a gut punch.

“This isn’t a natural virus,” she whispered, her voice trembling as the holographic display spun through the genetic map. “Look at this — the genome is fully

synthetic. Chimeric segments spliced from at least a dozen unrelated microbial and viral lineages, with perfect codon optimization for both human and insectoid cellular machinery. No evolutionary history, no phylogenetic noise, no natural mutation patterns. This was designed in a lab."

She zoomed in on a cluster of glowing sequences. "These are clean insertion scars — unmistakable evidence of advanced gene-editing tools, like CRISPR analogs but far more precise. And here… this is the worst part. A deliberate reanimation module. It doesn't just kill the host — it shuts down apoptosis, rewrites large sections of the brain and nervous system, and turns the corpse into a biological factory. The dead exhale infectious spores optimized for aerosol dispersal in various atmospheres. It's a closed-loop weapon system: infect, kill, reanimate, spread."

Petrova stared at the data overlay, horror dawning on her face. "A doomsday device."

"Exactly," Alvarez said, her hands shaking. "The targeting is terrifyingly efficient. It homes in on highly conserved mammalian DNA repair genes using hyper-specific promoters that no natural pathogen could evolve in a billion years. This thing was engineered to sterilize an entire biosphere — to rewrite planetary life from the ground up. Every dead body becomes a mobile vector. The pyramid wasn't a tomb. It was a delivery system. They planted this weapon here, waiting for intelligent life to come and trigger it."

Hale, already half-turned, began clawing at the airlock.

"Let the Red God breathe!" he screamed.

Patel stayed behind in the reactor room, recording his final video log while rigging the nuclear core to explode.

“Tell my family I love them… and that Mars was never empty.”

Petrova and Alvarez made a desperate run for the ascent vehicle, dragging the still-living but infected Hale as a potential specimen for Earth.

They never made it far.

In the shadow of the pyramid, under the cold stars, the four zombified crew members attacked. The low gravity turned the chase into a nightmarish ballet — bodies leaping across the Martian desert, blood freezing into red crystals the instant it hit the -60°C air.

Alvarez turned mid-fight, her face twisting. Petrova had no choice. She shot her friend through the helmet.

Alone now, mortally wounded and feeling the virus burning through her veins, Petrova reached the ascent vehicle.

She overrode the autopilot and aimed the ship directly at the pyramid.

As the infection took hold and her vision darkened, she activated the remote self-destruct sequence Patel had prepared.

From orbit, the last camera feed captured the final moments.

The ascent vehicle slammed into the pyramid at full speed. A blinding flash followed as the rigged nuclear reactor detonated.

The ancient structure erupted in nuclear fire, sending a plume of dust and spores high into the thin Martian atmosphere.

The screen cut to black.

A final automated transmission played:

“Mission Control, this is Endeavour Actual... tell my daughter... the Red Planet is already occupied.”

High above Mars, countless red spores surged through the upper atmosphere, carried on solar winds toward the blue planet waiting in the distance.

Humanity’s greatest triumph had become its first interstellar extinction event.

And the Red Resurrection had only just begun...