

## **The Martians: Testing Curiosity's Parachute, pt. 4**

(Doug Adams) 'Let's take a break. It's gonna be a while before they do this.'

(Tom Rivellini) 'Let's hurry up and wait.'

(Doug Adams) 'Hurry up and wait. (laughter) Faster! Now sit down.'

(Tom Rivellini) It was a nerve-wracking test, because of all the failures we'd had previously,

the difficulties we had had, some of the mysterious things that we'd seen during these tests.

We really didn't have any more backups in terms of ideas of how to fix this,

and it was kind of our last hurrah here -- our last chance to get it right.

So there was a lot riding on these tests.

(dramatic music)

I happened to notice out of the corner of my eye that it was April 1st.

So I was like, 'Oh man, we can't just let a good April Fool's Day go by without doing something.'

So I went to Al Witkowski, and I said, 'Al, how do you feel about having some fun at Doug's expense?'

And so he was up for it. And that's when Pat, the test director, said,

'Hey, why don't we just tell him that we didn't get any data?'

And that was beautiful, because the data is everything on this test.

If you run the test and you don't get any data, you might as well not have run the test.

And you can't go back and redo it, because once you've unpacked the parachute, you can't go back and repack it without damaging it.

(playful jazz music)

'I don't know.' 'What happened?'

(Thom Wynne) 'I heard the mortar, I punched the button, and it was like -- boom -- it was gone.'

(Tom Rivellini) I got the photographers in on it too, to tell Doug for some reason the cameras went out.

(Doug Adams) 'The battery died. No money shot. The big picture shot is gone.'

(music)

'What is up with that?! What, did E.T. land during this test or something?'

(Thom Wynne) 'The D3s had the lens caps on them.'

(Doug Adams) 'What's up with this test?'

(Thom Wynne) 'You know, I uh... (stammers) They did the whole GG thing, and I was -- I had no idea, so...'

(Thom Wynne) I hoped that he wouldn't really believe that I'd be that incompetent as to leave the lens caps on

-- but he bought it.

'You know, I'd taken the drives out, and...left the caps on.' (snickering)

(laughter, music)

(Doug Adams) 'Hold on: we also don't have any facility data, so the only data we have is off those load pins'

(Al Witkowski) 'Maybe.'

(Doug Adams) '...IF we have data off those load pins.'

'But right now, this is the test that didn't happen -- it's the phantom test.'

(music)

(Tom Rivellini) And Doug started saying, 'Well, maybe we can figure out what the parachute load was

'just by the wind tunnel measurements -- how fast the air was going.'

And that's when Pat happened to be standing there, and I'm like, 'Pat, did we collect

wind measurements?'

And he's like, 'Ah...you know, I think we lost that one too.'

(Nicho Onufer) 'That's your total pressure...'

(Doug Adams) 'That's total pressure?'

'Was there some sort of power surge or something? Right at 1:00 a.m.?'

(Tom Rivellini) And Doug was phenomenal.

You show your true character in moments of crisis like this, and it could not have been a worse situation.

Everybody -- in the spoof, in the trick -- everybody had failed. Everybody.

And Doug was totally cool with everybody. He was totally cool.

He didn't take it out on anybody. He didn't lash out at anybody.

And just right at the last moment there, when Anthony from Pioneer told Doug,

'Sorry, but your last data source -- I don't know why, but we lost it.'

(Doug Adams) 'Now Anthony, you're not...you're not playing a joke on me here, are you?'

(Tom Rivellini) Personally, I probably would have lost it.

I probably would have flipped out -- gotten really angry, like right there on the spot.

But Doug just kind of looked up, and I couldn't let him go with the pain any longer.

I think I let him go there for a few seconds, and that's when we gave him the countdown.

(All together) 'April Fools!'

(loud laughter)

(more laughter)

(Doug Adams) 'I'm gonna kill you punks!'

(more laughter)

'This is April 1st? This is April 1st?'

(more laughter)

(Tom Rivellini) He was a really good sport about it too, and it worked out well.

We got you, Doug!

(jazz music)