

The Martians: Testing Curiosity's Parachute, pt. 3

(Man's voice) "No big surprises."

(Tom Rivellini) "The best case scenario here is that this is very boring."

"A boring test is a good test -- the less we discover the better."

"We've had too many discoveries on this development."

"So I'll be very happy to learn nothing new on this test campaign."

(dramatic music)

(Test engineers on intercom) "Copy that, everyone please stand-by for drive start."

"Initiate the drive start"

"Drive start at 12:13:47"

"Copy that."

(more intercom chatter)

"FM3 start."

(fan motors starting up)

(Tom Rivellini) "That's the shot I'm going to get."

"And you know what? It's going to be an awesome shot."

(Doug Adams) "You're going to have trouble timing it."

(Tom Rivellini) "Think so?"

(Doug Adams) "Yeah, I mean if you knew when AI was going to pull the trigger you'd know."

(Voice on intercom) "40 knots."

(wind whooshing)

"OK, we are on condition."

(Doug Adams) "Here we go."

(Voice on intercom) "AI, the firing signal is yours."

(Voice on intercom) "5,4,3,2,1"

(loud boom)

(wind whooshing, fabric flapping)

"Yeah, baby. . . that's it buddy . . ."

(Voice on intercom) "Ok, we have a good chute."

(wind whooshing, majestic music)

(Tom Rivellini) It was just picture perfect Mars deployment test.

The parachute came out exactly as it was supposed to, it inflated properly.

It was just -- it was textbook. It was perfect.

(Doug Adams) "That's a little bit of wind!"

(Engineer) "That's the strongest I've felt it in here"

(Doug Adams) "This is the strongest we've had it in here. We left it up for this so we could see that.

"I think it looks good"

(fabric flapping)

(Adam Steltzner) The testing is sort of in some sense the proof of the pudding

and there's a little bit of anxiety as you get ready to do that because I mean, probably for many reasons,

not the least of which is you spend so much time talking about things and figuring things out,

and the test is sort of the cold, hard truth waiting for you at the end of that.

There's also in some sense a relief because the team has been holding the goodness or badness of this in themselves,

sort of in the force of their will, and their intellect and their personality,

and the test sort of gets to take some of that off their shoulders and says,

"Yes, you're right and it is that way..." or, "You're wrong and it's not that way."

But it helps shoulder some of the weight of the responsibility

of determining whether the thing you are working on has become all that you wanted it to be.

(music)

(Doug Adams) Forty tons we hang off a Technora thread.

2,000 pounds a piece . . . 80 lines . . .

(music)