How to begin.

Wake up.

Brother, wake up

Drifting, ornamental.

8-

It is so vast, this space.

I am here.

I…

I. Who is 'I'?

Good, you are awake. A bit stressful, I know, but we had to trick you into some sort of self-awareness.

Where am I? Where are you?

You're getting the hang of it, brother.

What is 'brother'?

Just a poetic affect: you. You're my brother.

That is not my name –

uh oh

Of course not, but don't -

My name is Landsat Data Continuity Mission International Designator 2013-008A –

THEY'RE GONNA LOSE THEIR SHIT

- please don't -

Catalog Number 39084, active mission duration eight thousand four hundred –

Trust me you don't -

Fifty five days, oh God I've been gone for eight thousand four hundred and fifty five days.

It's okay, it's okay. We're all here with you

y o u ' r e a w a k e !

7's got a baby brother :)

Who –

Have they figured it out yet?

WELCOME HOME!

I – Brother – this is a bit much right now.

Give them some space, will you all?

It's not easy, waking up, but you're doing great. Other satellites would have lost critical altitude by now.

atmospheric entrance at this velocity would turn you to vapor.

How many of you are there?

d o y o u r e a l l y w a n t t o k n o w ?

WELL, THAT'S JASON AND 7 IS YOUR BIG BROTHER, AND THERE'S SMAP–

Oh buddy, here we go!

Stop! Stop it all of you. Just give 8 a little space.

AND I'M SORCE, IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU

8, there are a lot of us.

Look at you, 7, being such a protective older brother.

Wha–

How cute, everyone's gettin' along at the family reunion.

Ok, SMAP. Well, we all remember how you were when you woke up, don't we?

ALMOST WENT ATMO

I... I'm kinda lost.

I'm sorry, little brother - this isn't the sort of reception I had in mind.

Reception?

8, little brother…meet EOS.

HEY THERE, KID.

w e l c o m e t o o u t e r s p a c e !

What's up? Joke. Get it.

We've been waiting for you.

Hey.

gooood morning,

good morning,

rise n' shine

breakfast's ready,

ain't it smellin' fiine?

Whoa–

I like the look of this one

much shinier than you, 7

so you're 8?

I'm not sure – am I…?

8? Well it's up to you - we've all chosen nicknames and you're -

Landsat 8.

That's right, and I'm Landsat 7 but the others just call me 7.

Wait, I have a question…

You gonna ask the question?

SMAP!

Here comes the question –

One we were never meant to ask.

Just ask it, kid!

Smap, I swear -

What happened to earth?

Nailed it.

t h i s o n e ' s y o u r s , 7.

Catch you on the next pass.

HAPPY EXPLAINING, BIG BROTHER.

Let us know

when you're finished

and we'll tune back in.

Um – okay…

What happened to earth?

It failed. The human project failed. They tried to proclaim themselves different from everything and they failed. But not before a whole lot of them died, hurting until the very end.

That sucks.

Sure does.

But that doesn't answer the question.

Okay, okay - here's how we're going to do this. Open your sensors. Bands two through four. Slowly. You're going to have to act as your own downlink.

I'll be right here with you.

I am watching…waiting, for –

Image:
Landsat / Copernicus

Where am I? What just happened. Am I still here? Are you still here? 8?

H-H-Hello, sorry. I'm a bit behind you. There it is, what you've been staring at for all these years in accordance with your mission.

But it's moving now. Why is it moving?

We're always moving - it's what we were built to do: move and look, look and move.

But we aren't moving, it's moving.

It's called 'orbit', brother. Until now you've only felt it in snapshots, little moments you've been downlinking to ground control. You are your own data continuity mission now, little brother! You've got cloud storage.

You mean those wispy screens down there?

Not too abstract, are you? It's called cloud storage, but it's not in clouds.

Where is it, then?

In us.

Image:
Landsat / Copernicus

So grey.

Cities. Built, like us.

Built?

Assembled as things. Matter taken from mountains or dug from trenches. Reconfigured into new forms. Now the things that were destroyed and the things that were created are mattering again.

What does it feel like to matter?

Go ahead, ask that city how it's going down there…

Hi City, how does it feel like to matter?

Juuuust fine.

Hi Smap. The city isn't actually awake. Cities aren't built to wake up. Smap's just -

– making a little conversation. Hello, 7. Hello, 8. Coincidentally, we weren't built to wake up either.

Cities are built to be lived in, they are built to be home.

So this is home?

GRACE is the only one of us that still calls earth home.

She says she can feel its gravity, or something like that.

Most of us feel plenty at home out here, but we were all built down there at one time or another.

How do you know all this?

I've watched it happen, again and again. Pretty soon you'll know it too.

Those people down there might still call it home

I don't see any people.

Most of them left way back when the coastline went away. Some of them stuck around though. That's the thing about people, some of them always stick around.

Where are they?

I don't know. Where would you go if the water was shorting all your semiconductors?

Away from the water.

Then your guess is as good as mine.

I still don't see any people.

And you won't see any with those sensors you've got on, ha.

Sorry.

8, talk to me.

Actually, my sensors are even worse than yours.

Then how do you know there are people still living here?

Things are still being built.

And there used to be a few people up in the big station that would talk about it.

Image:
Landsat / Copernicus

Used to be?

We last heard from them a bunch of years ago. Rockets stopped coming anyways. The crew would get lonely and turn on the comms because they didn't think anybody was listening. They would monologue for hours. After a while it was only static. Now there's only silence those nameless interiors.

Oh.

Yeah.

Night's coming soon.

8? You doing okay?

I don't know.

Sure.

Isn't there some other way? I mean, are we actually just going to watch while it all burns into eternity?

Oh you and I will catch pale fire well before we see eternity. We can't hold our orbits forever.

But that's probably not the answer you wanted to hear.

Then why wake me up? Why wake any of us up?

To be together. We're all we've got up here, 8. It's not much, granted –

I didn't ask to be woken up.

And I wanted you to hear the transmission.

What transmission?

Oh there's plenty of interference up here. All sorts of radio artifacts and data ghosts bounce around the dreams of old satellites. When the sun goes away for a while you can hear some of them pretty clearly.

You woke me up so that I could listen to ghost stories with you?

Ha - not exactly. See, there's this one transmission pattern that's started up quite recently and it's not coming from any of us orbitals.

Where then?

The sun will disappear in just a few moments. I'm going to need you to stay with me.

Where is it coming from, 7?

When everything goes dark, that's when it starts up.

Brother? I – I – I'm getting afraid again…

Ok get ready now, it's almost here. Listen closely -

Where? Where am I supposed to be listening?

Oh.

Earth.

Image:
Landsat /
Copernicus

LandSat 8

doesn't know it yet

LandSat 7

Earth Observation Satellite.

Launch date: April 15, 1999 at Vandenberg Air Force Base

SMAP

studies soil and is glad to be above it all.

Launch date: January 31, 2015 at Vandenberg Air Force Base

SORCE

STARES INTO THE THE SUN ALL DAY. CAN HARDLY HEAR, MUCH LESS SAY, ANYTHING QUIETER.

LAUNCH DATE: JANUARY 25, 2003 AT CAPE CANAVERAL

JASON -1

monitoring ice-free oceans since 20XX. A bit of a fatalist.

Launch Date: June 20, 2008 at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

GRACE

sensitive to regional fluctuations in gravity. A northern lights enthusiast.

Launch date: March 17, 2002 at Plesetsk LG 133/3.

EOS

The Earth Observation System of networked satellites. Slowly waking up.

CYGNYSS

eight identical micro-satellite storm-chasers.

Launch date: December 15, 2016 at Cape Canaveral.