

Ending the Chapter of dearMoon

To my friends, family, and colleagues,

In the winter of 2022, I wrote you a letter to share the news that I had been selected for the opportunity of a lifetime: chosen from one million candidates as a crew member of dearMoon, the first ever civilian lunar mission with SpaceX that would send eight artists and creatives around the moon. After a yearlong selection process it was a profound honor to be chosen for this historic mission. For the first time, a crew of artists would have the opportunity to travel around the dark side of the moon, interpreting through their unique perspectives the immensity of the experience. As a filmmaker, I felt like I was contributing to something so much bigger than myself – worth all the risk, in a shared vision that had the potential to send a ripple effect across the world.

Today, it is with a heavy heart that I write to you to share that the dearMoon mission has been canceled. Yusaku Maezawa (MZ), the Japanese billionaire who financed the trip and led our selection process, has decided that due to SpaceX's delayed timelines of the development of Starship, he is making the decision to end this project. SpaceX's publicly available timeline was known to be optimistic, originally targeting 2023 and incrementally shifting beyond with its first test flights. MZ's decision to end our mission is stated X and dearMoon's [website](#).

This was MZ's decision and not a reflection of our crew or the commitment of SpaceX to safely bring us on this journey. Our crew, from the many conversations we've had together, were ready to wait as long as it took for this flight to happen. It was hard to stay patient and keep our lives on hold but we were tough. As many of us know, shifting timelines are the inherent nature of spaceflight. Every day the space industry is achieving a milestone that at one time was thought to be impossible. Through these years, our crew has stayed well informed of Starship's development through publicly available information and discourse, and were well aware that we would potentially be investing many years into this mission. The cancellation of this mission was sudden, brief, and unexpected.

As you can imagine, I have been hit with a flood of emotions—many highs and lows as this chapter closes for our crew. I wanted to write this letter to bring you into this moment with me personally. To reflect on the incredible experiences and personal growth that these three years have brought me.

I was never someone who dreamed of going to space. Even as a “dreamer” myself – a spirit that helped bring me and my camera to remote corners of the world on just about every form of

transportation imaginable – going to space felt beyond the realm of possibility. That all changed in 2021 as I got further and further into dearMoon’s selection process, weighed against artists and creatives from 150 countries. It was terrifying to walk into our main in-person interview round where I’d have to share my best and most confident self around other candidates - globally published photographers, a world renowned choreographer, influential YouTube educator, Olympic gold medal winning snowboarder, a Korean pop star, a famous DJ, Indian television actor, and many others. Of them all, I had the fewest social media followers and the smallest inkling of hope that I was worthy of this. Little did I know, I would not only be selected and find the courage to stand alongside them as crew members, but they would become some of my closest friends and supporters.

More than anything, I am most moved that being selected for dearMoon gave me the confidence to take on these challenges. The power within myself to rise up and feel worthy of these opportunities was always there, but I didn’t know it. Even towards the end of the selection process I had plenty of intrusive negative thoughts; imposter syndrome, not being fit enough, not having strong enough work, and not knowing how to dress for my interview (I bought seven pairs of pants at a mall to try on before first meeting MZ in Houston, TX). Crossing each threshold was tough, but each time their belief that I should be in that room kept me going.

This process planted a seed that is still growing within my heart: we are all capable of walking in the paths of astronauts. While I hope that we all have the opportunity to travel to space, what is just as important is realizing that we all have the opportunity to live by our best values and be the best citizens we can of this “spaceship earth”. And as my friend and mentor Nancy Conrad once told me, we all have superpowers within us that can be pulled out, but sometimes we need a little help. It can be from someone who loves you deeply or a stranger, but someone who really sees you, sees what you’re capable of, and believes in you enough that you start doing the same for yourself. It is through the values and this walk of life that we can heal, and create a more empathetic and value-driven society together.

Over these past three years, I could have never imagined getting to travel to Baikonur, Kazakhstan, the site of Sputnik’s launch and the first human space flight of Yuri Gagarin, to see MZ launch to the International Space Station in his first private space mission. I couldn't have imagined getting the chance to speak in news [articles](#), [podcasts](#), classrooms, and workshops, all the way to the [TODAY Show](#) in New York City, my home for the past decade. I’d pinch myself every time I sat at tables with astronauts and sought their advice on how best to handle this opportunity of going to space. I sought out counsel from friends, from idols, from Indigenous communities I’d worked with, doing three years of professional and spiritual development to feel worthy and prepared to carry this important endeavor. I threw my whole soul into every opportunity dearMoon brought, and will always be grateful for the learning journey it has brought me on.

Throughout it all, I also invested deeply into filming towards the goal of a long form documentary project, using personal funds to film with crew members around the world. I didn't want to miss any big moments in their lives. It's been an incredible ride journeying out to spend time with them in their homes, meet their families, and connect with their partners. Capturing behind the scenes of ballet in Prague with Yemi A.D. to swimming with humpback whales in Tonga with Karim Ilya, and exploring the Salton Sea with Rhiannon Adam. The relationships we forged together out there shone when we were brought together for SpaceX test launches in Boca Chica Texas, riding bumper cars and sipping morning beers in taco shops as we waited for the vessel we'd take one day to blast into the heavens. Meeting the very highest executives of SpaceX, and standing underneath the engines of their nearly 400-foot Starship. And more than anything, through this all, to share the absolute wonder of living on this planet through the dream of someday leaving it.

All of us on this earth have some kind of connection to looking up at the stars – being in a planetarium, dreaming of being an astronaut, or being struck by the wonder of space. It is a thread that unites just about every human who has ever lived. Of all my experiences, bringing strangers one step closer to space was always my favorite. It'd pull on that thread I spoke of, filling their eyes with a wonder and curiosity that wouldn't be there moments before, causing us to believe in something a bit brighter. It felt similar to my work in the U.S. national parks – where so many people have a story of connecting with them. It's a joy to speak with strangers about something we mutually love.

To carry this around, this mission of bringing artists around the moon, felt like being Santa Claus on Christmas Eve. It would instill most people who heard about it with awe. That awe was shared between people of all ages: from elementary schools to my 95 year-old Grandfather; from my hometown of Marlborough, CT to strangers in nations like India, Nigeria, and Ireland. I always felt that even if it wasn't me doing this, what a wonder it was to know that a crew of people were able to spend some years planting those seeds within people's hearts. With the end of dearMoon, there's a lot of heartbreak with undoing that magic.

So many of these experiences were shared alongside my partner Gaby. We've been together for 6 years, and she has supported me since the moment I began interviewing for dearMoon to this letter I write now. I cannot overstate the gratitude I have to have her by my side, as someone who has never based her love for me on grand achievements or external accomplishments. The stress of taking this life risk weighed on me, that I would get on board the largest rocket ever built while such a beautiful partner and vibrant home life was waiting for me back home. Thinking through the years ahead, it was inevitable that between training, the flight itself, and the change of life afterwards, it would bring a great deal of sacrifice and difficulty. We were nervous, but ready. Taking it one month at a time. The morning I told Gaby the news of our mission being

canceled, she said: “this was the biggest journey of your life, so it was going to be one of mine too.”

My hope moving forward, and all that I could ask of you all, is that we do not let the end of dearMoon lessen the dream of sending artists to space. Even better, we can offer this loss as the beginning of a new chapter. One where art stands firmly alongside science in this era of cosmic exploration, and the benefactors and financiers who use their power to bring artists to space have the courage to see their projects all the way through.

Whatever wonder or support you were ready to invest in my own lunar journey, I would love nothing more than if you could hold onto those good feelings and pass them on to the next group of artists that gets to achieve this historic milestone. Even if it is not this crew, artists *will* go to space and interpret their experiences traveling around, and one day, on the moon. It has been the honor of my lifetime to carry the baton of this legacy for these few years.

As I move ahead, I’m still picking up the pieces, but am excited to keep making the best art possible and see where this unexpected path takes me. I have fallen in love with the space industry and still aspire to make work documenting this incredible era. There are so many stories unfolding that need to be told. And as for the cosmos, this newfound dream of going to space and traveling around the moon as a filmmaker is one that I will still carry with me.

Here on earth, I’m also excited that my journey to share films and impact people’s lives through storytelling continues on. Last year I premiered my first debut feature length [documentary](#), *Out There: A National Parks Story*, and screened it at festivals across the country winning a number of awards. We had a dreamy sold-out screening in my hometown, and most recently screened for the staff of Pixar Animation Studios on the eve of my 30th birthday alongside the former director of the National Parks Service. I have pursued my passion for public speaking and have been featured in festivals, workshops, film screenings, and online platforms. Last year, I became a member of the Explorers Club, and am honored to be speaking at their Global Exploration Summit in the Azores this month. I am contributing to storytelling to ocean fisheries, coral reef restoration, and global conservation efforts through collaborations with partners such as The Nature Conservancy. I am also developing my next long form project, which will explore art and storytelling across thousands of years of time, incorporating moments and lessons from this dearMoon era.

Aside from this though, I am taking a step back to breathe, process, and recalibrate my footsteps. I am holding my anger tenderly, and learning to lean on my support system fiercely. I am taking an extra pause to appreciate each morning, water my cactuses, and let some fresh air through my window. Life is a gift, and I am eager to create a time where nourishment happens in more abundance than stress.

I am profoundly grateful for the family, friends, and support system that have supported me through the highs and lows of this process. My parents, Gaby, her family, close friends, and all of those who lent your calls and texts of encouragement and deep conversations around being selected. You all made me feel worthy of being a part of making a real impact on the world, and I don't intend to let that go.

Lastly, I wanted to share an opportunity for you to share your thoughts with me too. In the wake of this announcement, I've set up a voicemail where you can call and share a message with me – how you feel about dearMoon, its cancellation, your thoughts on art in space, or any words you have for me as I continue on my path as an artist and human on this earth. I will listen to every message and would love to hear what you have to say.

You can call this number and leave a message at any time: **855-394-1968**

Thank you all so much for being a part of this. This is just the beginning of a whole new chapter.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brendan Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.