

SCENE ONE

SAL  
L.A.

*(Lights up on MONET walking across the stage, carrying a portable easel, his paint box and a staff.)*

*(In back of him is a projection of his painting of the Cathedral of Rouen at dusk.)*

MONET. During an exhibition of my work, I watched a woman scrutinize one of my paintings. She had her face so close to the canvas, I was afraid that she would come away with a glob of paint fixed to the end of her nose. I heard her say to her companion, "I'm sorry, but there are too many colors here. I have no idea what I'm looking at." I said to her, "if you step back, Madame, perhaps you'll have a better view." She did as I suggested. "Oh, is it a building?" "Yes, It's the Cathedral of Rouen." "I live in Rouen," she said, "but this isn't what it looks like." "This is the cathedral at dawn," I said, "perhaps you were still in bed." She went to the next painting. "And what is this?" "What is the cathedral at ten in the morning." "I don't see it," she said. She went to the next. "And what about this?" "That's the cathedral at noon." "No, I still don't see it." I was about to tell the woman that she had about as much perception as a slug, when she stopped in front of a painting of the cathedral at dusk. She stared at it for a moment then said, "Yes, I recognize it now." "You must be a very late sleeper," I said. And she looked at me with a terrible sadness in her eyes, "No, Monsieur, this is the time of day when I go to light a candle for my husband."

*(The projection cross-fades to an aerial view of the French countryside.)*

Elizabeth: <sup>Beck</sup> ~~mean~~ the  
teacher: Oh you mean  
impressionist?

ELIZABETH. Yeah.

TEACHER. Honey, that's wonderful.

ELIZABETH. Guess what it is.

TEACHER. Is it a flower garden?

ELIZABETH. No.

TEACHER. Water lilies?

ELIZABETH. No.

TEACHER. Clouds?

ELIZABETH. No.

TEACHER. A sunset?

ELIZABETH. Noooo. It's spaghetti!

TEACHER. Ohhh.

ELIZABETH. (pointing) See?

TEACHER. I see. Come on, kiddo, it's time for bed.

ELIZABETH. I haven't touched the ceiling yet.

TEACHER. All right, are you ready?

(The TEACHER lifts ELIZABETH up.)

Did you touch anything?

ELIZABETH. No, I wasn't high enough.

(They do it again.)

TEACHER. Anything this time?

ELIZABETH. Uh-uh. I have to do it again.

TEACHER. Come on, you have to reach!

(ELIZABETH stretches her hand up and touches a  
panel.)

ELIZABETH. Oh Mommy!

TEACHER. What did you touch?

ELIZABETH. The rings of Saturn.

TEACHER. What did they feel like?

ELIZABETH. Donuts!

Teacher - you silly. C'mon, let's brush  
your teeth.

TEACHER. Now.

LQ 4

LO7

## SCENE FOUR

PAGE (The TEACHER is standing in front of her class. Behind her is a projection of a cathedral.)

TEACHER. It took an average of one hundred years to build a cathedral like this. Which means that the masons who laid the first stones could work an entire lifetime on the cathedral and never see it finished. Jason? (a beat) Well, actually, yes, that's true, many of the workmen were killed on the job, especially in the later years of the construction when they were working at a tremendous height. (a beat) Jason has brought up an interesting point, which is that some of the workmen who died were then buried in the walls of the cathedral. It was considered an honor. But no, they were not buried alive. As I was saying, it took a long time to build a cathedral and it was a very costly project. The church, which was very wealthy at the time, thought it was better to fund a cathedral than to give relief to people who were suffering from famine. Does anyone have any thoughts about that?

(No one responds.)

Well, think about it. Heather, would you change the slide?

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(The projection changes to a picture of the pyramids.)

No, Honey, that's backwards.

PAGE (The projection changes a couple of times and we land on a picture of Monet's painting of the Cathedral of Rouen.)

No, you've gone too far. Back. Go back two more.

(The projection changes back to a picture of a flying buttress.)

All the towns were competing with each other to see who could build the tallest cathedral.

And for a long time you could only build to a certain height before the pull of gravity would cause the whole thing to collapse. But then in the thirteenth century they invented the flying buttress. (a beat) But, very funny. It broadened the base of the cathedral so the walls could rise hundreds of feet into the air. People always believed that if you defied gravity you were that much closer to God. Heather?

(The projection changes to the vast arched interior of a cathedral.)

Do you see? The effect it had? All the weight and stress is relieved on the outside of the building so that the inside can look like this! Do you see? Do you see how light it is? It's as if the whole interior is held up by nothing but air. And if you follow the lines of the pillars up, straight up, you are led to what many people thought was heaven. Before the airplane, this was the closest that we ever came to the experience of flight. (a beat) Do you think it was worth it? (a beat) Anyone?

LO8  
SQ

C.B. Well, it's looking pretty good. The skies are supposed to clear up.

ED. I hear you've been having / a lot of delays.

BETTY. The weather has been terrible around here hasn't it?

C.B. Pardon me?

BETTY. The weather.

C.B. Yeah, it's been bad.

BETTY. I hear there've been some delays.

ED. Betty, I said that already. *(to C.B.)* So what's your position with NASA?

C.B. Ground crew.

ED. Ah

BETTY. *(to DONNA)* Do you know any of the astronauts?

DONNA. Yes Ma'am. *(pointing to the wall)* They signed that picture for me.

BETTY. *(to ED)* Honey, look, that's their picture.

ED. I see it.

BETTY. *(to DONNA)* What does it say?

DONNA. "To Donna".

BETTY. To Donna.

ED. Uh-huh.

BETTY. Do you know the teacher? Is she nice?

DONNA. Oh yeah, she's a real good lady.

ED. *(to C.B.)* So what do you do on the ground crew?

C.B. Right now, too much.

BETTY. It must be exciting, though, to send people up to space.

C.B. Oh yeah.

ED. Anything interesting going up? In payload?

C.B. Well, we got a communications satellite and some gizmo that's gonna measure the comet. But we've / got something going up next month...

BETTY. We're going back to Arizona to see the comet.

C.B. Oh, uh-huh. Is that where you're from?

BETTY. No, we're from / Oregon.

ED. Oregon.

C.B. Uh-huh.

BETTY. Ed took an early retirement and we sold our house and bought a Winnebago.

ED. I worked in engineering...

BETTY. We're traveling now. Ed loves to take pictures.

ED. I have an interest in photography...

BETTY. We started down the coast of California and we saw the Redwoods and the Gold Country and the Wine Country and then we went to San Francisco and saw the Golden Gate Bridge...

ED. A nice piece of construction...

BETTY. It's just beautiful.

ED. Got some nice shots of it in the fog...

BETTY. And then we went to Carmel in time for the butterflies.

ED. Monarch. They migrate once a year...

BETTY. And then in Big Sur we saw the whales. And then we saw Hearst Castle which was unbelievable...

ED. A lot of money went into that project.

BETTY. And then we went to Los Angeles and took the studio tours which were a lot of fun.

ED. They had a demonstration of special effects...

BETTY. And then we went over to New Mexico. I wanted to see the pueblos and Ed wanted to visit the atomic bomb site.

ED. And then we went up to Arizona to see the Grand Canyon / which was just magnificent.

*(Over this, ED wanders over to MONET and watches him sketch.)*

ED. *(to MONET, re: BETTY)* That's a very good likeness. You got her expression.

LQ 10

Betty, Honey he pants!  
ED: I know, 6' night

SO

(Lights up on ELIZABETH. She is holding a toy space shuttle.)

ELIZABETH. That Christmas, I had asked my mother for a Cabbage Patch Doll. But she didn't have time to get me one. All the presents she got us that year were from the NASA gift shop.

(The TEACHER joins ELIZABETH.)

She gave me a plastic space shuttle and a package of astronaut ice cream.

TEACHER. (to ELIZABETH) See? It's freeze-dried!

ELIZABETH. My mother was going to read me *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* but she kept getting phone calls.

TEACHER. (into phone) Hello! How are you!

ELIZABETH. While she talked on the phone, I played with the shuttle.

(ELIZABETH bangs the shuttle on the floor.)

TEACHER. (into phone) I'm going back next week. I'm having the time of my life...hold on. (to ELIZABETH)

Honey, what are you doing?

ELIZABETH. (to TEACHER) I'm trying something. (to audience)

I was trying to break the wing.

TEACHER. (back to phone) It's a real madhouse here. We have the family tomorrow. I thought I'd cook a roast.

ELIZABETH. Too many people were coming to the house.

TEACHER. No, thank you, we have tons of food. I keep telling everyone, if I gain anymore weight they'll have to add extra fuel just to get me off the ground.

ELIZABETH. She kept saying the same thing over and over again.

TEACHER. Well, as I've been telling everyone, I'm more nervous about getting in the car and driving on the freeway. It's a chance in a lifetime. I wouldn't miss it for the world.

(Elizabeth starts banging again)

LG 157  
pg 9

(Projection: the stained glass Rose Window of Chartres Cathedral.)

(lights up on TEACHER)

TEACHER. Even if you were very poor, you were free to walk into the cathedral and look up at something as magnificent as this. People came from hundreds of miles around on something called a pilgrimage. Can anyone tell me what it must have been like to be a pilgrim and to walk into a cathedral like Chartres?

(a beat)

Can anyone tell me what must have gone through your mind if you had never been outside your own village and you lived in a stone hut without any windows, and you couldn't read or write, and you spent your days pulling a plow through the mud and you slept in the same room with your pigs and you walked two hundred miles over primitive, rocky roads in a pair of sandals that started giving you blisters after the first day and you ran out of food and a band-of-robbers stole your last coin and no one would even offer you a ride, and finally, finally you arrived at the cathedral and you saw this?

(She motions to the projection.)

Anyone? (a beat) Jason? (a beat) Yes, many people were burned at the stake. (a beat) Yes, alive. Can we talk about that later? Heather?

(The projection changes to a picture of a reliquary.)

Most cathedrals were built around a patron saint. And some of these cathedrals contained something called a relic which was held in this, a reliquary. Can someone tell me what a relic is? (a beat) Patricia? (a beat) That's right, a relic is a piece of the body of someone believed to be a saint. It could be a piece of bone, or some hair or even a fingertail.

people... blessed. That if you touched them, you would be close to God. Patricia? (a beat) Well, my feeling is that most of the saints were ordinary people who happened to have been put in extraordinary situations. I think it's what people said about them later on that turned them into saints. But then again, they might have been, as you said, of God. Jason? (a beat) Yes, many of the saints suffered terrible deaths. Unfortunately that is one of the things that qualified a person to be a saint. In any case—can anyone think of a modern example of a relic? Anything that held some kind of magic for you? (a beat) No one? Well, remember when we took that trip down to the Air and Space Museum and we stood in line to touch the moon rock? Do you remember how exciting it was to touch something that had come from the surface of the moon? Mathew? (a beat) Well, I know we've been to the moon many times and brought back many rocks. But it's still a miracle that we did it at all, don't you think?

(long beat)

No? Oh, well then how many of you are going to fly to the moon for your summer vacation? Anyone? No? All right, then how many of you know someone who's been to the moon—your grandparents, a neighbor, a friend? No? All right then, one last question. If you were given the chance, how many of you would like to go to the moon?

(The TEACHER waits. We see shadows of hands appear in front of the projection as one-by-one, the children raise their hands.)

LQ 14

*over in a panic.)*

Straighten up.

DONNA. Don't let go.

TEACHER. I won't. Keep your eyes open, keep looking up.

*(DONNA slowly straightens up.)*

That's a girl. All right, I'm going to let go of your hand.

*(The TEACHER does so. DONNA is standing by herself on the stool.)*

DONNA. OK I did it, thank you, let me down now.

TEACHER. Not yet.

DONNA. I don't like where this is going.

TEACHER. Reach your hand up, try to touch the ceiling.

DONNA. Damn, why am I listening to you?

TEACHER. Because I'm the Teacher. Come on. Reach.

*(DONNA reaches her hand up, touches the ceiling. She puts her hand down.)*

How are you doing?

DONNA. I'm doing OK.

TEACHER. Just stay up there for a minute and take in the view.

DONNA. All right. *(a beat)* Oh man, there's a bunch of dead bugs on top of the TV. What'd you send me up here for? Get me down, I don't need to look at that.

*(The TEACHER helps her down.)*

I'm gonna send you up there next time. Send you up with a broom, clean all that shit out...hey, are you all right.

*(The TEACHER holds her hands up. They're shaking.)*

Oh man, is it that thing that I said? Come on sit down.

*(DONNA moves behind the bar.)*

TEACHER. I wet my pants in training today.

DONNA. Oh don't worry about that, happens to the regulars all the time. Which ride did they put you on?

TEACHER. The escape basket.

DONNA. The one with the wenny story drop?

TEACHER. Straight down, eighty miles per hour.

DONNA. Oh yeah, I know about that one.

*(DONNA hands the TEACHER her drink.)*

TEACHER. They told me to keep my eyes open.

DONNA. *(snorts)* What for, the scenery?

TEACHER. I kept my eyes on my knees.

DONNA. That's the thing to do.

TEACHER. But I still lost control of myself. I was so freaked out, I didn't know my seat was wet until they pulled me out of the cage.

DONNA. There's no shame in it, Honey. Astronauts are always messing in their pants. The men who went to the moon? The whole time they were up there they were shuffling around in dirty diapers. When they came back down and they opened up that capsule? Whoop, step back!

TEACHER. It's all still very primitive, isn't it?

DONNA. Naw, it's much better now. The moon landing, they didn't know what they were doing. They got up there with duct tape and prayers. These days—they've sent enough of them up, they pretty much have it down.

TEACHER. Should I be praying?

DONNA. You're asking me? Please, I pray every time I get in an elevator.

TEACHER. Do the astronauts pray?

DONNA. I always pray for them. I've never lost one yet.

TEACHER. I prayed to be chosen to go up.

DONNA. Well, there you go.

(The TEACHER passes by with her cart.)

TEACHER. Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH. Mommy, I couldn't find you! I looked everywhere! You were gone! I thought you went home! I thought you left me!

TEACHER. Silly, why would I leave without you? Why would I do that?

(ELIZABETH is still sobbing. The TEACHER holds her.)

We'll be home in a little while.

ELIZABETH. I stayed very close to the cart.

(ELIZABETH puts her hand on the handle next to the TEACHER's hand. They start pushing the cart together across the stage.)

And when we got in the car, she gave me a granola bar.

LG 18

LG 19  
SQ

(Lights up on BETTY and ED. Sound of the ocean and an occasional gull. BETTY is sitting in a plastic lawn chair. ED is setting up his camera on a tripod. Apart from them is MONET, painting at his easel. BETTY keeps looking over at him, desperately wanting to see what he's painting.)

BETTY. Are you here for the launch?

MONET. Yes.

BETTY. Are you from around here?

MONET. No, I am from France.

BETTY. France. Oh, I've always wanted to go to France. I love the Impressionists, don't you?

MONET. You know of them?

BETTY. Oh yes. Ed and I saw the Van Gogh exhibit in New York. I bought some of his note cards.

MONET. Van Gogh?

BETTY. He did that famous painting, "Starry Starry Night?"

MONET. Yes, I know of him.

(BETTY looks at what he's painting.)

BETTY. You're very good.

MONET. Thank you.

BETTY. You know, if I had tried to paint that scene I would have made it all gray and brown. But look at all those colors. Do you actually see those colors or do you make them up?

MONET. No, Madame, they are all there.

BETTY. (to ED) Honey, you should see what he's doing. He's very good.

ED. Betty, I'm sure the man would like to be left alone. (to MONET) She does the same thing to me when I'm trying to take a photograph. She's always telling me where to point.



LQ

## SCENE ELEVEN

ELIZABETH. I remember a reporter asked me what I thought of my mother going into space. I didn't want to answer so I hid my face behind my grandmother's purse. My brother laughed at me so I hit him on the arm. My grandmother gave us Lifesavers to quiet us down. I told her I wanted a cherry so she peeled the paper down until she found one for me. I put it in my pocket for later. Then my mother joined us and she let me hold her hand while she talked to the reporters. I played with her wedding ring and I was very proud that I was one of the few people who was allowed to touch her hand. She showed the reporters some of the things she was taking up to space. She had a journal and in the journal was a bookmark that I made for her. I had drawn a rocket and stars and Saturn with the rings and I ironed it between two pieces of wax paper so it would be protected from the gamma rays. Then she showed the reporters something her class had given her. I was jealous and I wanted to give her something else. So I took out the Lifesaver. It was fuzzy from the lining of my pocket. While my mother and the reporters talked, I tried to make the Lifesaver presentable. I told myself that I had to pick all the lint off the Lifesaver or my mother wouldn't come back. Finally my mother crouched down next to me. She was wearing her blue space suit. I touched the patches on her shoulders. She looked so beautiful. Suddenly I couldn't grasp that this woman was the same person who every morning sliced banana on my granola. My grandmother kept saying, "say good-bye, honey, say good-bye to your mother." But all I could manage to do was to hold out the Lifesaver which was sticky from the sweat of my hand. My mother took it and put it in her pocket and I knew that everything would be all right.

LQ

LQ

## SCENE TWELVE

*(Lights up on the TEACHER strapped into her shuttle chair which is angled all the way back in the take-off position so that she's flat on her back. She's dozing.)*

NASA VOICE ON SHUTTLE RADIO. ...T-minus thirty minutes and counting. Checking fuel valves.

*(MONET appears, carrying his portable easel and paint box. He's holding a book mark.)*

MONET. Madame? Madame, you dropped this.

TEACHER. *(waking)* Oh, thank you. Are we in space yet?

MONET. No, not yet.

TEACHER. What am I thinking, everything would be floating by now, wouldn't it. You aren't floating, are you?

MONET. Only in time, Madame.

TEACHER. Are you coming with us?

MONET. I plan to, yes. *(His easel)* Do you know where I might put this?

TEACHER. Oh gosh, I'm not sure. They don't give you a lot of storage space in here. Are those your paints?

MONET. Yes.

TEACHER. I might have room in my locker for a couple of your tubes but I don't think you'll be able to take your easel. You won't really need it up there anyway.

MONET. No, of course I won't. How silly of me.

TEACHER. *(the bookmark)* Did you see this? My little girl made it for me.

MONET. Yes, it's quite marvelous. *(reading)* E-li-z-a-beth.

TEACHER. Oh my God, I didn't see that. She wrote her name. You don't know what a big thing this is for her. I've been trying to help her learn it but she said she couldn't because I gave her a name with too many letters in it. She gets so frustrated, she always tears up

(BETTY looks puzzled. ED looks up from his camera.)

BETTY. Was that supposed to be part of it?

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. One minute, 15 seconds. Velocity 2,900 feet per second. Altitude nine nautical miles.

Downrange distance seven nautical miles.

BETTY. (over this) Are they all right?

(ED doesn't say anything, stares at the sky.)

Oh my God, oh Ed, my God. Oh my God.

(ED puts his arm around BETTY and leads her off. Then.)

NASA VOICE. Flight controller here looking very carefully at the situation. Obviously a major malfunction.

#### SCENE FOURTEEN

(Lights up on the TEACHER. She is facing the kids holding a cage with a dead guinea pig inside.)

TEACHER. All right, everybody let's quiet down. That's enough. Let's try to find out what happened here.

C.B.. I think I figured out what happened here.

TEACHER. Five of you were responsible for feeding Miss Piggy.

C.B.. Sixteen thousand of us were responsible for getting one rocket into space.

TEACHER. All right, who had Monday? Heather was supposed to be Monday.

C.B.. And all of us were divided into different departments, see? And every department was divided up into divisions and subdivisions and mini-mini divisions.

TEACHER. Heather, if you forgot to feed Miss Piggy on Monday, then you should have told the person on Tuesday so they could have given her extra food. Who had Tuesday? One at a time!

C.B.. And every division had it's own technical language, see. For instance, there's this little plastic part the size of my pinkie.

TEACHER. All right, Matthew was sick on Tuesday. And what about Wednesday? Anyone?

C.B.. The guys in tiles and O-rings call it a "C-scale Oxidizer."

TEACHER. Who was Thursday? Jennifer?

C.B.. The guys in air locks call it "an OMS Regulator." And over in propulsion they call it a "Preburner Fuel Thrust."

TEACHER. Someone told you it was for every other week?

C.B.. Hell, I just call it a valve.

TEACHER. Who was Friday? (a beat) I never said I was Friday. Did I?

## SCENE FIFTEEN

*(Lights up on C.B. holding a letter.)*

C.B. *(reading)* "Dear Elizabeth, I'm writing to you on behalf of the men who worked on the ground crew of shuttle flight 51-L. We want you to know how much all of us admired your mother and we offer our sincerest condolences to you and your family."

*(He puts the letter down.)*

I volunteered to write this letter 'cause I feel partly responsible for what happened. I don't know what you remember, but there were a lot of false starts before your mom's ship finally got off the ground. Some of the delays had to do with the weather, but one of the delays had to do with human error. This human error for a lift off. The weather was clear and the sky was a beautiful bright blue. It was as if God just lifted up a giant man-hole cover and said "aim here." Well, at T minus nine minutes they couldn't get the handle off of one of the hatches and they had to get this special drill. But when that arrived it didn't work 'cause someone used it and didn't bother to replace the batteries. Let me just explain the situation. See, I borrowed the drill to fix the door on my van. So after work I used the drill then I stuck a note on it saying to change the batteries. But I used a post-it that I took off someone's door and the sticky stuff on the back was kinda used up and I guess it didn't stay on the drill. I should of just changed the batteries myself but in order to do that I would of had to fill out a form explaining why I needed the new batteries and then I'd have to run it over to another building to get it approved, then wait an hour to have it processed then run to another building to pick the batteries up, then I would of had to get a guy to supervise me while I put the batteries in and hell, I was at the end of a twenty hour shift of regulating a

bunch of LOX bleed valves and my next shift was in five hours. So instead I went to a local place to wind down. It's a place where a lot of us hung out with your mom and the other astronauts. Once, I played her a game of darts. She beat the heck out of me. You would of been proud. She also won the football pool. What I'm trying to say here is that we saw your mom every day. The last thing any of us wanted to do was to send her up in a ship that was gonna fall apart. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I never meant to take your mommy away from you.

*(going back to the letter)*

C.B. *(cont.)* "She was a great example to us all and will live long in our memories as a pioneer of our times. We extend our best wishes for your future and hope that as your mother did, you will be able to follow your dreams. Sincerely Yours, C.B. Williams and the men of Ground Crew number 7749, Division Eighty-six, Department K699-99, Kennedy Space Center.

SCENE SEVENTEEN

*(Lights up on the bar. DONNA is cleaning up. C.B. is drunk.)*

C.B.. P.F. Flyers. Do you remember those?

DONNA. Uh-huh.

C.B.. If you put them on you could fly. Remember that?

DONNA. Oh yeah.

C.B.. I remember the TV ad. They showed a kid putting on a pair of P.F. Flyers and then he'd walk out of the shoe store and jump over a building. We believed it. Every kid who watched that ad believed it. I jumped off a roof in a pair of those shoes. Those fucking shoes. I knew a kid who got himself killed 'cause of those God damn shoes.

DONNA. C, I'm closing up soon.

C.B.. They're scrapping the telescope, did I tell you that?

DONNA. Yeah, you did. I'm gonna drive you home, OK?

C.B.. No, I'm fine.

DONNA. You're in no condition, Hon.

C.B.. I gotta get rid of my van. The fuckin' door fell off again, did I tell you?

DONNA. Yes, you did.

C.B.. I killed seven people to fix that door and the God damn thing fell off, can you dig that?

DONNA. Listen, Sugar, I hate to be the one to tell you, but you're not that important. You had nothing to do with what happened. Maybe there are a few puny things down here that you can control, but there's a master plan out there that you can't change, let alone read. Maybe we weren't meant to send that telescope up. Maybe there's something out there God doesn't want us to see. Maybe He thinks we just aren't ready.

C.B.. I wouldn't of screwed up if you let me get my sleep that night.

DONNA *Fructose mad*

*(C.B. doesn't say anything.)*

DONNA. *(cont.)* How dare you? Don't you go putting blame on my head. You want to climb on the cross for this one go ahead, but I'm not having any part of it. You understand? I've had it with you tonight. I'm locking up. Go call yourself a cab.

*(DONNA pushes C.B. off his bar stool.)*

*(He walks off.)*

*(DONNA turns to the audience.)*

A reporter came in here, wanted to know, what was the last thing the astronaut said to me. What did they say to me?, I said. Yes, he said, exactly what did each of them say to you that last night when they left the bar? *(a beat)* "Goodnight Donna," "Goodnight," "Night." "Goodnight Donna," "Night, Donna," "Goodnight." - was that seven? Oh right, one more, "Good night." He actually wrote all of that down. Then he wanted to know if I remembered anything else they might have said to me, it didn't have to be that particular night, "any little tidbits," he said I said, Honey, a tidbit is something you feed to a dog. He then amended himself, asked, did any of them confide in me. Yes they did, I said, but confide comes from confidential and it will remain that way. I could see the hair in his ears start to vibrate with excitement, ooh, this lady has tidbits! How am I gonna get them out of her? He decides to distract me, he looks over at the picture I have of my astronaut, What's that?, he says. It was such a dumb-ass question I didn't even bother to answer, just kept wiping the bar. You must have felt very close to all of them, he said. I just kept wiping.

Then he leaned in towards me, real close, trying to get into some confidence with me, he says, do you think they knew? I just kept wiping and wiping the bar until he went away.

*(a beat)*

## SCENE NINETEEN

*(Projection of one of Monet's paintings of the gardens at Giverny.)*

*(Lights up on MONET and ELIZABETH. MONET hands her a bouquet of flowers.)*

MONET. My mother was a wonderful gardener. When I was a little boy I used to help her. I got a half a *centime* for every snail I killed. She had every kind of flower imaginable. Hollyhocks and columbine, tulips, lilies, pansies, sweet William, forget-me-nots. Her favorite flowers were poppies. They were very big, very bright. Orange and red. Fantastic colors. She told me, "Claude, the secret to poppies is to plant them firmly in the ground. If the roots are firmly set, then the flowers will grow tall. And never water them from above or the flowers will be weighted down by the drops which would defeat the purpose of the poppy, because the purpose of the poppy is to float above the other flowers. They are nature's balloons." Whenever I would cut them, I held tightly on to the stems for fear that they would float away. My mother died when I was ten. She caught pneumonia while trying to tie up some roses during a storm. her last words to me were, "I love you Claude...don't forget the snails." After she died, I wouldn't have anything to do with her garden. In two weeks, the snails had chewed everything down to the stems. My mother's garden was lost. I took great pains to punish myself for my neglect. I went to confession. I wouldn't take dessert. I wore my woolen coat without a shirt. I offered to cut my father's toenails. But the next Spring, everything started to bloom again. I killed the snails and I brought my mother's garden back to life. One day in late Spring, the sun was warming the air and the most wonderful perfume rose up from the garden. It was my mother's scent. And I felt my mother bending next to me, guiding my hand as I dug

in the earth. And I felt her breath in my ear, and she whispered, "Claude, always turn the soil in the spring, don't hurt the worms, feed the roses twice a year and please, don't ever water poppies from the top."

*(MONET digs in his pocket and pulls out the lifesaver. He carefully picks a piece of lint off then hands it to ELIZABETH.)*

*(C.B. runs shouting and whooping across the stage.)*

C.B. It's up! They got it up! God damn! They got the telescope up! We're gonna see to the edge of the universe! OOOOOOWHEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!

SCENE TWENTY-ONE

*(The projection changes to another shot of the Earth as seen from the surface of the Moon.)*

*(Projection changes to an out-of-focus shot of the Moon.)*

*(Lights up on BETTY and ED sitting in their lawn chairs in front of the screen. ED has one of those automatic slide changes in his hand. He clicks it.)*

*(Projection: another fuzzy shot of the Moon.)*

BETTY. Ed, how many of these did you take?

*(Click. Projection: another bad shot.)*

Honey, I thought you sorted these.

*(Click. Projection: another bad shot.)*

ED. *(to audience)* Let's see, I think this one was from the Sea of Tranquillity.

*(Click. Projection: an out-of-focus Earth rising over the moon.)*

BETTY. Honey, what happened?

ED. I was trying a different lens.

*(Click. Projection: the famous picture of footprints on the Moon.)*

That's a shot of man's first step on the moon.

BETTY. *(to audience)* He bought that one.

*(Click. Projection: a shot of BETTY floating.)*

Oh, now this is me in our hotel room. It orbits the Earth every twenty minutes.

ED. Ninety minutes.

BETTY. Ninety minutes. We stayed in the zero-gravity wing of the hotel. They don't have any beds in the room. You just shut your eyes and float. Ed was always dozing off.

ED. Well, you tired me out. *(to audience)* You get a lot of honeymooners up there.

BETTY. *(embarrassed)* Well, of course, that too.

ED. *(to audience)* Would you like to know what it's like?

BETTY. Ed, stop.

ED. *(to BETTY)* They'd like to know.

BETTY. I don't think so.

ED. *(to audience)* It was the best experience in our marriage that we ever had.

BETTY. It was very nice.

ED. That's not what you said to me.

BETTY. Well. *(to audience)* At first it was silly. It was very silly.

ED. *(to audience)* It takes some practice. You can't make any sudden moves.

BETTY. It can be dangerous. I almost killed poor Ed.

ED. That's right, she almost killed me.

BETTY. I accidentally kicked his leg and he went sailing into the air lock hatch. *(to Ed)* You remember our clothes?

ED. That was pretty wild

BETTY. *(to audience)* We didn't put our clothes away so they just hung there --

ED. In mid air.

BETTY. And the more we moved, the more the clothes would tumble around.

ED. Tumble around.

BETTY. And they kept tangling up in our feet. It was like being inside a giant washing machine.

ED. It's like being under water.

BETTY. That's right, under water.

ED. Betty looked like a mermaid.

BETTY. Oh, stop.

ED. Her hair was floating out from her head and her bosoms...

BETTY. Ed...

dusk. I have been painting for four straight days now. I have no desire to eat or sleep. My body is no longer of consequence. I have only eyes and a hand and a brush and paint and the sun endlessly bouncing colors off the Earth. And I will continue to paint as long as this wonderful rocket will keep me in space.

### SCENE TWENTY-THREE

*(lights up on ELIZABETH)*

ELIZABETH. About a year after my mother died my father took us to the Mingus Family Circus. Even at that age my brother and I could tell it was a pretty raunchy operation. The men who set up the tents and shoveled the elephant poop all had tattoos and bad teeth. My brother told me they were all drug addicts. We saw one of them throwing up behind a trailer. At intermission I stayed in the tent and watched them set up the trapeze for the high wire act.

*(Over the following, G.B. and ED play the roustabouts. They roll a very tall ladder on to the stage.)*

About a dozen of them ran around fitting metal poles into the ground and hoisting lines of rope. I saw two of them trying to keep a giant metal pole taut against the wires. It wasn't long enough so they stuck a rubber tire under it. That didn't work so they kept slipping pieces of wood between the tire and the pole, like you slip match books under a table leg to keep it from wobbling. I thought maybe I should tell someone about this but then the lights dimmed and my brother pulled me back to my seat.

*(MONET steps out, wearing a top hat.)*

*(Tacky circus music starts to play.)*

MONET. Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls, if you will direct your attention to above the ring, the Mingus Family Circus proudly presents the Fearless First Family of Flight, the Flying Hernandez!

ELIZABETH. And then the Hernandezes came out, dressed in blue tights and sparkles and smiling and waving. They were nice looking people. I wanted to run up and grab them and shout, "Don't fly! Don't fly! Something will happen, don't fly!" But I just sat there and ate

**TEACHER.** (cont.) Let's see...Gravity: (reading) "Graveness or seriousness; solemnity, heaviness."  
(The TEACHER closes the dictionary and lets it float away.)

If someone told me a year ago that I'd be doing somersaults in outer space I would have told them it was impossible. I don't use that word anymore. Because whatever seems impossible now will be possible later on. It could happen in your lifetime or now. I will never see all the miracles of mankind but one miracle is enough for me to know that anything we dream, anything is possible. OK, they're signaling back to work now. Um, hello to everyone down there. Hello to my class and hello to my family. Elizabeth, eat up here. I really am. Please don't anyone stop on my account. It's all right. Go on.

## END OF PLAY

## COSTUMES

### ELIZABETH

Jeans w. belt, shirt, corduroy shirt  
High-top sneakers

### TEACHER

Plaid dress w. red sweater  
Shoes with hose  
Earrings, ring, watch

Scene 4: Remove red sweater

Scene 10: NASA flight suit w. Space Center patches/Boots

Scene 11: Add NASA helmet

Scene 13: Remove helmet

### DONNA

Jean shorts w. belt, tshirt  
White shoes w. socks  
Jewelry, watch

Apron

Scarf

Scene 19: Remove apron

### BETTY

Reversible jacket (solid showing), blouse, plaid pants  
Sneakers w. socks  
Ring

Scene 9: Reversible jacket (plaid showing)  
Scene 10: Remove jacket/Add vest and sun hat

Scene 12: Remove beach apparel/ Add jacket, wool hat, mittens

Scene 15: Remove jacket, hat, mittens

### ED

Tan trousers w. belt, polo shirt, windbreaker  
Boat shoes w. socks

Ring and watch

Scene 10: Add cap

Scene 12: Remove cap/Add wool scarf, hat, mittens

Scene 15: Remove scarf, hat, mittens

Scene 20: Remove windbreaker



**STAGE LEFT**

- circus drum
- 1 shopping cart
- 2 chairs
- 2 tables
- steering wheel
- 2 glasses w. ginger ale
- toy shuttle
- camera
- pamphlet
- purse w. sunglasses (Betty)
- Monet palette
- tag
- 2 white brushes
- sketch pad
- drawing pencil
- pencil sharpener
- bookmark
- easel w. painting

**HOUSE RIGHT**

- chair
- 2 stacked bar stools
- red basket

**PERSONAL PROPS**

- letter (C.B.)
- wallet w. money, sunglasses, lens paper (Ed)
- bookmark in inside jacket pocket (Mone)

**SET**

- Bare stage with set pieces