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To the Moon

A play by

Heath Houseman

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To the Moon

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CHARACTERS

1F/2M

STEPHANIE GROVE BUTLER: *A lawyer, tall, wearing nonprescription eyeglasses that give the impression she's not a woman to be trifled with. Her briefcase is always within reaching distance.*

DR. NEVILLE BUTLER: *A doctor, shorter than Stephanie. He carries lollipops in his pockets and mumble-sings when he's examining or thinking about something, a subconscious "doctor habit."*

PROFESSOR WELLINGTON: *76 years old with an enormous amount of physical and mental energy and a white mop of Einstein hair.*

SETTING

The living room of a log cabin high in the Colorado Rockies

TIME

The present

To the Moon by Heath Houseman

A Full-length Play in One Act

SETTING: *The living room of a log cabin high in the Colorado Rockies.*

An untidy couch, Center, is covered in a blanket, pillows, notebooks and reams of paper with complex mathematical equations on them.

An old fashioned TV, the screen facing Upstage, sits in front of the couch.

A 1950s dinette table, Downstage Right, has a laptop, a pile of books and a small circular fish tank on it. The fish tank is filled with water. A lone goldfish floats on the surface, dead.

Two chairs, scattered about the living room.

On the floor, Downstage Left: A coffee machine, cups and creamer. The coffee is brewing.

Next to the coffee machine is a book of love poems, a framed black and white photograph of a young woman, an open bag of M&M candies and a large model rocket with the words AMOR VINCIT OMNIA (LOVE CONQUERS ALL THINGS) painted on its side.

AT RISE: *PROFESSOR WELLINGTON skips into the room, crosses to the model rocket and picks it up.*

WELLINGTON

(Imitating Ralph Kramden)

One of these days, Alice, one of these days, bang, zoom, straight to the moon... *(Makes the sound of a rocket)* ... whoooooosh!

WELLINGTON puts the rocket down, holds a beat, an intense, thoughtful moment. Then he laughs with a sudden burst of insight and energy.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

([L]: "I came, I saw, I conquered!")

Veni, vidi, vici!

He crosses to the fish tank, pulls out a vial of white nitroglycerin pills from a pocket and dumps them into the tank.

He drops to the floor and does push-ups.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

One! Two! Three! Four! Five! Six! Seven! Eight! Nine...! And... ten!

Pulls himself up, out of breath, a little worse for wear, then looks heavenward.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

To us, my love.

([F]: "If youth only knew, if age only could!")

Si la jeunesse savait seulement, si l'âge pourrait seulement! Ready or not, here I come.

He closes his eyes and hums "Love me Tender."

He sinks to the floor in front of the couch, wrapping himself in the blanket.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

I'll count to a million, then come and get you. One, two, three...

The sound of a door opening and slamming shut is heard, then stomping – someone knocking snow off boots, offstage.

STEPHANIE

(Offstage)

FATHEAD!

WELLINGTON doesn't react.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

(Offstage)

FATHEAD! FATHEAD! You think you can run away and hide? Like a mouse, like a teeny tiny mouse? Did you really think you could do that? I'm smarter than you and bigger than you, Mr. Teeny Tiny Mouse Man, and I've found you! Found you, found you, found you!

STEPHANIE enters from Upstage Right.

Neville!
STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

She jerks to a stop, holds a beat, scanning the room.

WELLINGTON is well concealed by the blanket and couch.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)
Come out, come out, wherever you are...

She removes her layers of clothing during the following speech, winter coat, hat, gloves, etc.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)
No? OK, Mr. Fathead. Then let me tell you something: Your mom and dad knew. My mom and dad knew. Your dumb-ass sister and her dumb-ass kids knew. Even your dumb-ass sister's dumb-ass next door neighbors knew – them, their fat-fat-fatty kids and even that damn stupid dog of theirs. I hate that damn dog. I hate it. Because it's so freakin' stupid – and it knew! We all knew where you went! Your disappearing act was not a big surprise. Nothing a rocket scientist couldn't figure out. And since you won't, they're all expecting me to take charge. So here I am, taking charge. Neville...? Neville...? I swear to God, if you don't come out this very second I'm gonna rip off your head, scoop out your brains, shove a candle in your skull and use it for a pumpkin next Halloween! (*Hysterical*) Ha, ha! Ha, ha! You hear that? Ha, ha, ha! That's you, Neville! An empty headed pumpkin with scooped out brains! Ha, ha, ha!

She sees WELLINGTON on the floor, clutches her briefcase.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)
(*Whisper*)
Professor? Wellington...?

She crosses to WELLINGTON, leans in close.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)
Gramps...?

WELLINGTON
Boo!

STEPHANIE screams. WELLINGTON jumps up, laughing.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

Scared you there, didn't I? Ha, ha, ho! Well, well, well. You have arrived. I heard you arrive. I think every creature within a five mile radius heard you arrive. And here you are: Finally arrived. Took you long enough. Longer than I thought it would.

STEPHANIE

(All hard-line lawyer)

I-70 was icy. Some idiot from Texas thought snow, ice and poor visibility meant he should drive his SUV faster. The laws of physics did not agree - I'm exhausted, Professor. Where's that grandson of yours?

WELLINGTON

Coffee?

STEPHANIE

No. Thanks. Got enough espresso in me to stun an ox, so don't ask, don't want any, where is he?

WELLINGTON

No, I mean plain, old, crappy coffee from a can. Folgers. Maxwell House. Good to the last crappy drop. That kind of coffee. It turns your brain into jelly, and I think the best brains in any human being are jelly brains. You're cold, you had a lousy, stressful drive up here, so why not put it in neutral and have a cup of crap? Warm the cockles o' your frozen heart and jelly up your brain - if anyone needs their brain jellified, it's you, honey.

STEPHANIE

I am not going to allow myself to be bullied into one of your verbal games, Professor. All I want is a—

WELLINGTON

Cup o' Joe?

STEPHANIE

You play with me, you'll lose: Zero acquittals, baby. Everyone I've sent to death row is dead. Try to control yourself. Be helpful. That's all I ask. Then I'm gone.

WELLINGTON

I'll do my damndest, Steph, but I can't promise to control my bladder. Sometimes it just goes whenever the hell it pleases. Embarrassing, I know, but what can you do when you're my age? Drink less coffee, I suppose, or perhaps have the bladder of a wolf surgically implanted. I hear they can hold it forever.

STEPHANIE

I know you don't want anything to do with us, so—

WELLINGTON

Uh-uh-uh! With your divorce. Not with you. Not with us. There is a big difference.

STEPHANIE

Look. Things have gotten very out of—

WELLINGTON

Control? Well, duh. Look at you. About as in control as my bladder.

STEPHANIE

(Robotic, practiced)

The family is tired. They want to move on. Don't you think this has gone on long enough? They do. And since Neville won't behave like an adult, it's my responsibility to deal with what he's been avoiding. I'm here to get things under control again. Order. That's what they want. That what we all want.

WELLINGTON

Order out of chaos, eh? Hm... No crappy coffee then. Too bad.

STEPHANIE

Professor. Pleeese.

WELLINGTON

Today is a very special day—you did not know that. This is the day Neville's grandmother and I first made love, our Coitus Anniversary, we call it. She was twenty-four and I was twenty-five and we were on our honeymoon in Vegas. We were both first timers and once our marriage had been consummated, we consummated it three times a day for the next three months. Animals! We were sexual animals! Let me ask you a question, dear Stephanie: I know you don't celebrate your Coitus Anniversary, but can you recall the first time you and Neville made love?

STEPHANIE

(Robotic, practiced)

I am not going to allow myself to be bullied into one of your verbal games – what? Oh my god. Oh. My. God! What did you just ask me...? *(Beat)* If I answer your question, will you get Neville from wherever the hell he's hiding?

WELLINGTON

Not making any promises.

STEPHANIE

What was the question again?

WELLINGTON

Something to do with love, as in, the physical act of. If you wanna get Greek: Eros, not Agape. In other words, the first time you scooted the goose, shucked the salami, got some stankie on the hang down and you get the idea.

STEPHANIE crosses to the couch, sets her briefcase on an armrest, opens the case and pulls out a tablet.

STEPHANIE

Oh. Let's see if I can find it. (*Scrolls.*) Hm... Big "M" – no, no, little "m," as in, "married to your little grandson." Whoops, too late. Let's try "S": "Sex," "Sexual," nope. How about "First Times"? Hm... "First Time with Neville." Ah, yes, here it is: "Dear Diary, October first. Cold. Cloudy. Rainy. Neville and I did it. I feel sick. Remember to buy a bottle of Nyquil." There. Happy?

She throws the tablet into the briefcase.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

That's what I remember.

STEPHANIE snaps the briefcase closed.

WELLINGTON

Doesn't cut the mustard, honey. You wanna cup of coffee to help jellify that awfully tight brain of yours?

STEPHANIE

(Shouting)

Neville!

WELLINGTON

(Shouting)

Sit down!

STEPHANIE sits.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

Shouting is not gonna help. He can't hear you.

STEPHANIE

Professor –

WELLINGTON

I hated this whole damned thing from the very beginning. It's wretched, predictable and you don't have time for old people bullshit like this. You're young, for heaven's sake.

WELLINGTON crosses to the model rocket, sits down and plays with it.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

But I stayed out of it. I have. Didn't wanna have anything to do with it. Both of you had just plain pissed me off and I had more important things to do. 'Sides, I figured, if you wanted to piss your marriage down the drain, then piss it down the drain you would. Didn't make any sense, me getting involved. You'd just tell me to mind my own business. I know. I tried.

STEPHANIE

Everyone is upset.

WELLINGTON

You've been using words like that, have you noticed? Everyone. We. All. They. What about: You?

STEPHANIE

You're a polypragmatic ass.

WELLINGTON

And you are a bitch. I have never known a woman to be a true-blue-bitch before, to actually fit the stereotype – and I've known plenty of bitches in my time, let me tell you, honey – but you? You are the in and in, through and through and out and out truest and bluest bitch I have ever known.

STEPHANIE

Thank you, Gramps, for reminding me why I never come here.

WELLINGTON

Stephanie, I'm just being honest. I sat Neville down too and said the same thing, except I used the word asshole. Fact is, since both of you decided to come waltzing into my life with your divorce – and you have, there's no denying it – I don't wanna waltz with the bitch and the asshole, I wanna big band swing.

He pours himself a cup of coffee; sips.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

See! See! It's working! My brain's starting to jelly up!

STEPHANIE

The first time Neville and I made love was in the afternoon on the side of the road in the Buick. We didn't take our clothes off. It was cramped and uncomfortable. I left footprints on the windshield. Elvis was playing on the radio. It was one of those almost teenage-like moments that changes your life for... forever.

WELLINGTON

I hate Elvis.

STEPHANIE

We made love! Lovelovelove! That's what you want to hear, isn't it? Sweet L. O. V. and-delusional-E.! A few seconds later, Neville started the car and we went on our merry way to work and, God knows why, marriage!

WELLINGTON

Did you do it a lot?

STEPHANIE

Profess – yes. A lot. A bunch. A boatload.

WELLINGTON

Was it great?

STEPHANIE

You can't be serious?

WELLINGTON

Was-it-great?

STEPHANIE

Of course it was great. It was always great. The best sex I've ever had.

WELLINGTON

Really? Wow. Scale of one to ten?

STEPHANIE

This is absurd. When two people love each other as much as Neville and I do you cannot reduce the act of making love to a ratings system designed by Peter Pan.

WELLINGTON

Oh, but you can. Peter Pan may have been prepubescent, but he seduced women in a way they could not resist – read the book. There's more to Peter Pan than you realize. But if a number system bothers you, we could always base it on how many beers you've had.

STEPHANIE

Seven and a half, eight, maybe... No, OK, yeah, Neville was an eight. Maybe even a nine. Definitely a nine. Oh my god. I admit it. Sex with Neville was a nine... Now, look. I've played along. I've answered your question so—

WELLINGTON

Interesting.

STEPHANIE

What? What's... interesting?

WELLINGTON

Just comparing numbers, uh, notes.

STEPHANIE

You asked Neville? The... the same question...? Oh. What, um... what number did he give me?

WELLINGTON

Why was it the best sex you've ever had? Can you remember?

STEPHANIE

Uh... no. No. It's spectral, mechanical, forgotten clockwork. I'm sure you don't understand.

WELLINGTON pours another cup of coffee. He offers it to STEPHANIE. She accepts it but does not drink.

WELLINGTON

The longest, most beautiful year of my life was the one year I had with my wife. But when she passed, I couldn't remember a damned thing. Just like you. The why went to some alien world and was lost. All that was left was an irritating, enigmatic scratching, a ghost-mouse caught in the forgotten machinery of love, meaningless tick-tocking clockwork. I couldn't find it. God knows, I tried.

STEPHANIE

(A hint of hope)

... but you found it again, didn't you?

WELLINGTON

Well, if you sip that coffee of yours, perhaps—

STEPHANIE puts the coffee down.

STEPHANIE

Whether it did for you or not doesn't matter, Wellington. It hasn't for me. And it won't. I made sure of that. The only one who doubts that is you. I wish you'd just accept it and move on like the rest of the family has.

WELLINGTON

Ah, but as usual, you don't allow me to finish my thought, sweetheart. Always have so much to say, don't you? Always the Law with you, isn't it? Always taking that hard-line.

STEPHANIE

Professor, I don't enjoy being your entertainment. This is arduous. For everyone involved.

WELLINGTON

You most of all.

STEPHANIE

The meaning in my life went away and I... can't fix it. But I can finish it. It's the least I can do.

WELLINGTON

The meaning in my life went away too.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry Alice died. That was a long, long time ago.

WELLINGTON

Hey, how much do you weigh? Looks like you've gained a pound or two. How much?

STEPHANIE

I did everything I could to save this marriage. What more do you want from me?

WELLINGTON

Your weight, please. Here. Do it yourself. I'll show you.

*WELLINGTON guides STEPHANIE to the laptop.
He pushes a button or two and then watches
STEPHANIE punch in the data.*

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

Ah, just as I thought. A couple pounds. Nothing to worry about. Height?

STEPHANIE punches in her height.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

How's that coffee?

STEPHANIE

What are we doing here, Professor? I've said sorry a billion times. I'd say it billions and billions of times if I thought it could fix anything. I don't know what else to do except what I'm doing now.

WELLINGTON

Have you ever thought of travel?

STEPHANIE

(The hard-line returns)

OK. That's it. Enough. Enough of this. I am going to be very polite and ask you one last time where my husband is and if you don't give me a straight answer but continue to play these imbecilic games of yours, I will not and cannot be held accountable for my actions. Have I made myself clear?

WELLINGTON

He's up there. In the rocket ship.

He points Upstage Left.

STEPHANIE

Get him down. Now.

WELLINGTON pulls out the vial of Tic Tacs and shakes them at STEPHANIE.

WELLINGTON

Tic Tac? You've got bitchy-breath.

STEPHANIE

I don't think so, no.

WELLINGTON

M&M?

STEPHANIE

Damn it, professor, get him down here this instant or – !

WELLINGTON

Boogiedee-boogiedee-bop...! Ah-ha! Cut you off, didn't I? So that's what it looks like. I swear, I've never seen that expression on your face before, Stephanie. Ha, ha! Always a first time for everything. Now, Neville will come down when he's finished the final inspection. Till then, it's just you and me and I want you to know something: I love you. I love you both. Even though you're a bitch and he's an asshole. Truth is, you haven't got a clue what it's about and you keeping proving it to me every damn day. Trust me. I've been around for a long time, honey. I've seen Elvis come and I've seen Elvis go, and I'd like to know, exactly, when this very large bug crawled up your backside and took over your brain?

STEPHANIE

When did you say Neville was coming down?

WELLINGTON

I didn't say. 'Cause I'm telling you, Steph, what you need is a mental enema, flush that bug right on outta there.

STEPHANIE

You don't love me, Gramps. You hate me.

WELLINGTON

I hate Elvis, honey. Not you. You're probably just a functioning psychotic, one of millions in this country. Like Neville. But that doesn't mean I don't love you.

STEPHANIE

Why do you hate Elvis then?

WELLINGTON snacks on the M&Ms.

WELLINGTON

Well, I will tell you and thanks for asking: Every time I hear an Elvis tune I wanna throw up. It's purely a negative reaction to his music. And idol worship. I mean, you wanna talk assholes? Elvis was the king.

STEPHANIE

This was a mistake. This was such a big mistake. I shouldn't have come here.

WELLINGTON offers her the M&Ms. She takes some.

WELLINGTON

You see, Elvis was one messed up guy with a pelvis thrust problem. Now he's a god, a modern myth. We have a misplaced sense of celebrity today, wouldn't you agree? The people who should be famous, not the movie stars, not the politicians, but the real people doing real and amazing things, they're the ones who worship Elvis, all the while thrusting out their pelvises at every given opportunity, thrust, thrust, thrust. Look at me! I'm a wannabe thrusting god! Makes my stomach react in a rather negative fashion – fusion, fission? Well, whatever the case may be, atomic nuclei forming heavier nuclei or the splitting of an atomic nucleus, the end result is the same, the release of a fairly large amount of energy: I vomit.

STEPHANIE

I don't believe a word you're saying.

They're both eating out of the bag of M&M'S and sipping their coffee.

WELLINGTON

You don't, do you? Disbeliever. Heretic. Well, how's this? Open your mouth. Wide. Wider. That's it.

WELLINGTON throws some candies into STEPHANIE's mouth. She catches and chews them – done this before.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

Elvis also reminds me of Alice. Smart, talented and beautiful, easy to fall in love with, effortless worship. I hate Elvis 'cause he was all that and still got caught believing all the lies everyone told him, including himself. Imagine what he could have done. Imagine the possibilities. Limitless, I tell you, limitless! Squandered on Hollywood and the Self, the ego I. What a waste of life. Alice never had any of those opportunities, but more than anything, she never had the time. 'Sides, have you ever been to Graceland? Walked through Elvis' most beloved and holy home? All that power and wealth and he had an entire room carpeted with green shag, floor, walls and ceiling. So sad. Of course, our honeymoon was in Vegas, so there's another connection, and today Vegas is Elvis, the funnest and saddest place on earth. So you see? Lots of hateful connections. Go ahead. Toss some at me.

STEPHANIE throws candies into WELLINGTON's mouth.

STEPHANIE

And the rocket ship? That your way of taking back time?

WELLINGTON

Oh, ye of little faith. Got those jailhouse blues?

STEPHANIE

Gramps, you and your rocket have complicated an already complicated...

WELLINGTON

Mess. So why not make it messier?

STEPHANIE

Neville has become very...

WELLINGTON

What?

STEPHANIE

Nothing.

WELLINGTON

More coffee.

He fills her cup.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

Nothing: "Something that does not exist, a person or thing of little or no value or importance." That's quite something your little nothing.

STEPHANIE

I just remembered something, that's all.

WELLINGTON

About nothing?

STEPHANIE

About Neville, which is close to nothing. No. That's not fair. It's just that, I haven't seen him act this way in a long time. If it wasn't for you and your rocket ship we'd be divorced and remarried already, I'm sure of it.

WELLINGTON

Well... you don't have to worry about it any longer. It's finished. The rocket. I'll be blasting-off right outta your nothing filled world as soon as you two leave, getting away from you, Elvis and everyone else forever.

STEPHANIE

You've finished it?

WELLINGTON

You're a part of history, my dear. Thirty years of endless back breaking work and hard cash spent on rocketry and lawyers. Thirty years! Perfect timing too, considering what day it is: Alice's Day. And, yes, the timing is no accident. Everything I do is planned mathematically, right down to the heart of it. Like you, I want to remember everything and I intend to do just that.

STEPHANIE

Gramps, you're not blasting-off anywhere, not if I have something to say about it.

WELLINGTON

Well, sorry, kiddo, you don't. Soon as Neville's done, it's aloha oe, a biento, ad majorem Dei gloriam. Professor Wellington has left the building.

WELLINGTON thrusts his hips like Elvis.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

(Imitating Elvis)

Thank you. Thank you very much.

STEPHANIE

No one's going to let you fly that thing, and not just because you're an old man with a broken heart who's gone totally crazy. *(Beat)* Why the hell'd you build it anyway?

WELLINGTON

Oh, boy, oh, boy! You've finally asked! Hooray! This is progress. I used to think that perhaps you'd never seen the thing, big as it is. Thought you needed real glasses, the kind that come with a prescription. On the other hand, I had toyed with the idea that you were living in some sort of psychotic denial and chose to believe my rocket ship wasn't a rocket ship at all but, instead, was a very large and shiny tree unique to the cool climes of Colorado.

STEPHANIE

... do you mind if I smoke? I need to smoke.

WELLINGTON

Yes, I do mind. But I will allow you to hold a cigarette in your mouth without lighting it if that will help.

STEPHANIE

Yes. It will.

She sucks on an unlit cigarette.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

Ooooh, that's good. That's sooooo good.

WELLINGTON

You can't ignore reality, Stephers. When a tree falls in the forest and there's no one around, it makes one helluva big sound – and you've finally asked me why! What a big, wonderful sound!

STEPHANIE

You win, Professor. I give in. I am not going to fight anymore. I'm just going to sit here and... wait, sip coffee, jelly up my brain and let you throw M&M's into my mouth. Go ahead. I'm ready for more.

WELLINGTON tosses candies into her mouth.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

I'm not the devil, you know. I didn't set out to steal your grandson's soul. He isn't perfect either.

WELLINGTON

I know that, Stephanie. He's a short little asshole.

STEPHANIE

I... I never looked at him like that – as short. He always seemed as tall as me, taller sometimes. The Giant Doctor Butler, that cool doctor distance and scalpel-sharp wit of his slicing every major artery I chose to expose. Got used to standing in his shadow. He's cruel, Professor. Sadistic even. He just hides it better than I do... Although, I have to admit, not as well as he used to.

WELLINGTON

How so?

STEPHANIE

Oh, well, lately, his reaction to strong emotional stimuli causes him to make jungle-animal sounds, jump up and down and slap the top of his head.

WELLINGTON

Really?

STEPHANIE

Have you seen him do that since he's been up here? What is it, his way of dealing with it? Not dealing with it? I dunno. Better than mine, I suppose.

WELLINGTON

Making jungle-animal sounds, jumping up and down and slapping the top of your head is not necessarily better or worse than being a monster bitch and screaming fathead loud enough to cause an avalanche. It does, however, lend credence to my conjecture that you're both functional psychotics.

STEPHANIE

Thank God we never had children.

WELLINGTON crosses to the rocket and picks it up.

WELLINGTON

I built the rocket ship for two reasons: For Alice and me. Before she died, she told me about a place called Heaven and she believed in it. Then she died.

STEPHANIE

What are telling me? That after all these years you believe in Heaven now?

WELLINGTON

No. I've always thought Heaven was a nice idea, a wonderful hope, and I've never laughed at it or at those who choose to believe in it, although, I tend to think too many of them are emotional banana-heads and a solid third are dangerous. I could, however, argue the same about the scientific community. I may be a scientist who's enamored with the wonder of this life and universe, but that doesn't mean I'm dishonest. Scientists can be as fanatical as the banana-heads and as dangerous as suicide bombers bent on violent jihad. We are, after all, human beings. But I think like a scientist, Steph. I've never had the power of faith that it takes to believe in Heaven, like Alice had.

STEPHANIE

"Give me a Slide Rule and I'll measure the mysteries of faith," that it?

WELLINGTON

Yes, and no. After years of personal scientific research, combined with the staggering breakthroughs we're making in microbiology, astronomy and genetics today, not to mention the quantum world, I came to the conclusion that... I should trust Alice. God has yet to be proved, of course, but I think what we're finding suggests, in the very least, that she may have been on to something.

STEPHANIE

I'm surprised at you, Professor. I didn't think you believed in hocus-pocus.

WELLINGTON

As I said, belief has nothing to do with it.

STEPHANIE

What is it then, love?

WELLINGTON

Thus endeth the lesson.

STEPHANIE

So what are you saying? You may not believe but Alice did –

WELLINGTON

And maybe she's got enough faith for the two of us. I trust her and our love, and I trust the data I've gathered through observation and experiment. And based on that I've formulated my hypothesis.

STEPHANIE

... you're going to try to prove it.

WELLINGTON

Why not? If anyone needed direct evidence that God exists it would be me, and since the good Lord Almighty has seen fit to let me live 76 years on this rotten old rock and I'm not dead and Heaven-bound yet, then I'm gonna do the next best thing and that's fly there.

STEPHANIE

Into Heaven itself.

WELLINGTON

Correct-o, baby! Hell, I've been trying for most of my life, just didn't know it until I started building my rocket ship.

STEPHANIE

We should have had you committed a long time ago, Gramps, 'cause this is pure lunacy.

WELLINGTON

Of course, I didn't think it would take so damn long to build, but now that's it's finished, I am good to go.

STEPHANIE

You are not going anywhere but into an assisted living facility. When I'm done here with Neville? Better pack your bags, Gramps, 'cause that's the first thing I'm doing when I get back to Denver.

WELLINGTON

As beautiful as this world is and as miraculous as we are, I wanna get the hell off this damned planet, Stephanie. I can't stand it anymore. And, clearly, the sooner I do it, the better.

STEPHANIE

You have a death wish. Suicide by rocket ship. You're already locked away and I have the key.

WELLINGTON

You can't stop me.

STEPHANIE

We'll see about that.

WELLINGTON

You know, most of the time hangin' around with humans just plain sucks, especially when they're family.

STEPHANIE

I could not agree more. But it does not suck. Not all of it.

WELLINGTON

Ah! You mean love.

STEPHANIE

Yes. Like you and Alice. That was love, that was true love.

WELLINGTON

Yeah, it is. What you and Neville have, that's true love too. But I have a radical theory: True love exists, but not necessarily on this planet. Maybe what we think true love is down here is just a shadowy reflection of what true love is out there. Of what it could be.

STEPHANIE

Not a lot we can do about it, is there? This is all we've got.

WELLINGTON

It's all you've got. I'm outta here.

STEPHANIE

Then you're cheating.

WELLINGTON

Ha, ha, ho! The very laws of nature in this world were meant to be broken. And I'm just the man to do the job.

STEPHANIE

Some work, some loves work down here. They have to. And if you don't believe that, then you're just a... just a cynical, intolerant, crazy old fart.

WELLINGTON

Cynical? Yeah. Crazy? You bet. Old? Without a doubt. Fart...? OK, OK, sometimes I just can't help myself and I really let 'em rip. I'm good at it, you know. When you reach my age, you should be. I used to play a fart game when Tom Brokhaw did the TV news. You remember Tom Brokhaw? The best NBC news anchor there ever was. Why? Because he made depressing world news fun! Every time Brokhaw stumbled or mumbled over a line, and he stumbled or mumbled almost continuously, I'd fart. That's the game. I'd end up farting for minutes on end. "Good evening. I'm Tom Brokenhmumblemumble." Fart! "This is NBC Newsh." Fart! "Thirty thousand dead in Pakistaneemumblemumblemumble." Fart! Fart! Fart! I think my Tom Brokhaw farting record was twenty minutes, minus the commercials. But intolerant? No. Not me. Never been party to it. But you have. All that giddy open-mindedness you always brag about having? Dump it out the ol' proverbial window whenever the hell it suits you, altering objective reality to fit your narrative.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

You're as hypocritical as the right-winged hypocrites you love to hate. That's real intolerance, baby-cakes.

STEPHANIE

Don't call me baby-cakes.

WELLINGTON

What you and Neville never seemed to understand is that it's always been a two-way street in a quantum multidimensional universe. You can't Tango alone in a place like that. You've got to yin and then he's got to yang or you'll, in the very least, step on some toes.

STEPHANIE

Don't you dare throw me into a bag of liberal and conservative, politically correct hypocrites. Unlike them, I own up to my mistakes. I faced it, head on. It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life and I've lost everything I love because of it. But I faced it. Unlike Neville, and more to the point, Professor, unlike you. I don't have a rocket ship that'll blast me off the planet and into freedom.

WELLINGTON

He gave you a two.

STEPHANIE

Pardon me? He gave me a... a what?

WELLINGTON

Neville gave you a two on Peter Pan's numerical rating system for sex.

STEPHANIE

A... two? Did he tell you why?

WELLINGTON

I'd rather not say.

STEPHANIE

A two's not bad.

WELLINGTON

Depends on your definition of bad, I suppose.

STEPHANIE

Alright, let's be honest: A two is terrible. A two is... a two? I gave him a nine! That's almost a ten! 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and then 10! Nine and ten! Nine and ten! There's not much space between nine and ten...! Oh god. I gave Neville a nine.

NEVILLE enters from Upstage Left. He is wearing a winter jacket, hat, gloves, carrying a space helmet. He stomps his feet to knock snow from his boots.

Beat as NEVILLE and STEPHANIE study one another.

NEVILLE crosses to the table, sets the helmet down, removes his winter layers as he converses.

NEVILLE

She's all set to blast-off, Gramps.

WELLINGTON

Excellent, my boy. Well done. And thank you.

NEVILLE

It's nearly three. Take your pills?

WELLINGTON pulls out the vial of Tic Tacs and pops one in his mouth.

WELLINGTON

Yessir. By the way, your lovely wife is here.

NEVILLE

Thanks for the nine.

STEPHANIE

Thanks for the two.

WELLINGTON

Hey! A two's not bad! Bear hug!

NEVILLE crosses to WELLINGTON and they hug. They scratch one another's backs, making loud "Grrr!" sounds.

After the hug, NEVILLE notices that the goldfish is dead.

NEVILLE

Aw. Look at that. Ralph Kramden's dead. I'm sorry, Gramps. I know how much you loved him. I'll get you another one, kay?

WELLINGTON

No, no. I've reached my Ralph Kramden goldfish quota.

NEVILLE

They don't last long up here. Die like flies. He was number... what?

WELLINGTON

39.

NEVILLE

Must be the altitude. Ah, well. Is Bonko on yet?

STEPHANIE

Bonko?

NEVILLE

Yeah. Bonko. Bonko, the Hobo Clown. You know... Uh, you're not thinking of smoking that thing in here, are you?

STEPHANIE

I'm afraid I don't know Bonko.

NEVILLE

Oh... well, yeah. Why would you? I forgot about him too. Until one day, sitting up in the rocket's cockpit, all of a sudden I remembered: Bonko, the Hobo Clown. Heavy five o'clock shadow, big red nose, dirty, messed up hair and a bottle of, well, I guess it's a bottle of bourbon. *(Laughs)* Just a drunk bum of a clown singing the Birthday Song to a bunch of grinning kids. I love that.

STEPHANIE

You're watching Bonko, the Clown?

NEVILLE

Bonko, the Hobo Clown. And he's still going strong after all these years. We watch him together, every afternoon at three.

STEPHANIE

I could have a field day with this in court.

NEVILLE

Yeah, well, I don't care anymore. He makes me happy, is that so wrong? Makes me laugh. And I haven't been happy and laughing for a long time.

STEPHANIE

Ah. There it is: We haven't been happy and laughing for a long time.

NEVILLE

I don't wanna talk about that right now. I wanna watch the Bonko Show.

WELLINGTON taps the TV.

WELLINGTON

Come on, make yourselves comfortable.

He sits on the couch.

WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

Almost Bonko time.

STEPHANIE

Neville?

NEVILLE

Steph?

STEPHANIE

Look, this male bonding, childhood regression stuff is fine. I'm happy you've found your niche. But we need you to play grown-up for a second so that you can sign these grown-up papers, OK?

NEVILLE sits with WELLINGTON on the couch.

NEVILLE

I said I don't wanna right now. Lollipop?

WELLINGTON

More coffee?

STEPHANIE

Guys. Don't you think I'm handling this well given the highly unusual circumstances and my personal bitch record?

WELLINGTON and NEVILLE nod.

WELLINGTON

Would you be a doll and give me a refill?

NEVILLE

Mind passing the M&M's?

Beat.

STEPHANIE

Sure. What the hell. I don't have a choice anyway, do I?

WELLINGTON

Uh, but my dear, you do. You do indeed.

STEPHANIE hesitates, then crosses to the coffee machine, glances at the photograph, picks it up.

STEPHANIE

... beautiful.

WELLINGTON

Yes. She was.

STEPHANIE

I wish...

NEVILLE

Come sit over here and watch Bonko.

STEPHANIE doesn't move.

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

Look. Can't be that bad, to sit next to me? I mean, I may have regressed a number of years here, but I still have to shave in the morning. Come on. Sit with me.

She doesn't move.

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

You wanna know why I watch Bonko?

STEPHANIE

'Cause he makes you laugh.

NEVILLE

This may sound absolutely stupid to you, but I realized that somewhere along the way I lost the ability to wonder, that I actually forgot how to do it, and I've never been more frightened in my life. Seems as if the whole planet has lost it. Hell, maybe we never even had it in the first place. It's a rotten old world out there, Steph, and there's not much left in it that's worth dying for, that's worth living for, and the sad thing is, everyone seems to know it, absolutely everyone, that is, except for maybe Bonko. I tell you, man, if Bonko goes down, I think I might lose all hope and completely give up.

STEPHANIE

Are you telling me it's possible to find wonder... again?

NEVILLE

That's why I came up here. I hoped you'd follow me.

STEPHANIE

Oh...

WELLINGTON does push-ups.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

Gramps. Stop that.

WELLINGTON

Listen, honey, astronauts gotta be in great shape for liftoff. They say that's the most dangerous part.

He jumps and runs in place.

STEPHANIE

Neville, speak to your grandfather.

NEVILLE

I have and it doesn't do any good. Read one of Alice's poems. We've got time before Bonko.

STEPHANIE

Alice's?

*NEVILLE points to the book of poems.
STEPHANIE opens it and reads.*

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

"To my beloved Professor. Amor Vincit Omnia. Alice."

WELLINGTON jogs back and forth behind the couch.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

"The Cure."

STEPHANIE reads the poem.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

Black roses are the cure
Red roses are the cause
When love is fresh
Red flows with demented delight, while
Black covers like the night, and in
The end, when all is said and done
The red is washed away and
The black has won
In darkness beautiful light.

WELLINGTON gasps for air, hand over his chest.

WELLINGTON

Yeah. Alice had a thing for black roses. They gave themselves to you, she said – a black rose places itself in your hands, its death. You see?

STEPHANIE

That's sad.

WELLINGTON

But beautiful too. That's why you can never give black roses like regular flowers. A black rose must be found by the one you want to give it to, and then it must be used. You don't just stick it in a vase to look at. You use it. If you don't, its purpose is lost, its death wasted, like Elvis. There's plenty of power in a black rose, let me tell you.

STEPHANIE

Power?

WELLINGTON laughs.

WELLINGTON

I'm talking serious Gs!

STEPHANIE

Do we have any black roses here?

She looks at NEVILLE. Their eyes lock and hold.

WELLINGTON

Oh, oh, oh! Bonko! Bonko! Turn it on! We're missing Bonko!

NEVILLE jumps up and turns on the TV.

NEVILLE

Stephanie. Come here and watch with us.

STEPHANIE crosses to the TV. All three of them stand side by side, watching the show.

BONKO, THE HOBO CLOWN'S goofy clown laugh can be heard coming from the TV.

BONKO

(From the TV)

Uh-har-de-har-de-har-har!

NEVILLE

Cool, we haven't missed it. This is my favorite part. He's going to sing Bonko, the Hobo Clown's Birthday Song.

BONKO

(On the TV)

Well, boyz and girlz. It's time for us to sing da Birfdy Song, hardy, hardy, har.

NEVILLE turns up the volume. Birthday/circus music comes up.

BONKO (Cont'd)

(On the TV)

We're gonna sing da Birfdy Song for little ol' Kathy-wathie here. Wave to everybody, Kathy. Good girl. Boy oh boy, she's turning a big ten years old today! Hooray! Hooray! Sing with me everyone! Hah, hah, hah!

WELLINGTON, STEPHANIE and NEVILLE sing with BONKO.

BONKO (Cont'd)

(On the TV)

Dis is yor birfdy song! Dis is yor birfdy song! We will celebrate all day and really get a-long!

A TEN YEAR OLD GIRL can be heard screaming on the TV.

TEN YEAR OLD GIRL

(On the TV)

I hate clowns, you drunken bum!

Gunshots come from the TV, blam, blam, blam! THE TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL laughs.

Beat.

AUDIENCE screams fill the air. WELLINGTON turns the TV off.

Beat.

NEVILLE jumps up and down, slapping the top of his head and making jungle-animal sounds.

STEPHANIE

(To the TV)

No! Damn you, no! I don't know what to... I don't know what to do, do something, Gramps!

WELLINGTON

Working on it!

He drops to the floor and does pushups.

Almost... WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

NEVILLE stops jumping up and down, slapping the top of his head and making jungle-animal sounds.

... almost... WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

STEPHANIE and NEVILLE's eyes are locked on one another, ignoring WELLINGTON.

Give me the papers. NEVILLE

No... now? STEPHANIE

Yes. NEVILLE

... time... WELLINGTON

WELLINGTON stops doing pushups, pulls himself up, breathing hard.

But... but what about Bonko? STEPHANIE

Bonko's dead. NEVILLE

... almost time to blast-off. WELLINGTON

WELLINGTON staggers Upstage Right, grasping his chest, in real pain.

He turns, smiles and waves goodbye to STEPHANIE and NEVILLE.

Blasting off! Love you guys! WELLINGTON (Cont'd)

NEVILLE

OK, Gramps. Fine.

*NEVILLE gives WELLINGTON a careless wave.
WELLINGTON exits Upstage Right.*

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

We're alone now. We don't have to pretend anymore. We don't have to be nice. It's what you want. It's what we all want. I'm just giving you what everyone wants. Don't attack me because of Bonko.

STEPHANIE

No. I mean, I didn't... please. Can't we just, uh, can't we go back to where we were a couple of minutes ago?

NEVILLE

Stephanie. This is no time to get sentimental.

She opens her briefcase and pulls out the divorce papers and a pen.

STEPHANIE

But maybe... maybe Bonko's OK? Maybe that little girl didn't kill him? Maybe –

NEVILLE

I can't stand it when you're hopeful. Desperation doesn't suit you. *(Beat)* What I meant to say was...

STEPHANIE

(Hopeful)

Yes...?

NEVILLE

What I meant to say was...

STEPHANIE

What? Neville...?

NEVILLE

I'm giving you the freedom to spread your legs for whatever screaming penis comes your way. You and your vagina can go to Vegas, just like Elvis. That's what I meant to say.

STEPHANIE

Ah... the Great Doctor has returned.

NEVILLE

Yes. Yes, he has. And as a doctor I have a right to use words like penis and vagina on a regular basis, even in everyday casual conversation. I am allowed to say words like penis and vagina on a regular basis because I am a doctor. In fact, because I am such a great doctor I can say penis and vagina and spread your legs without blushing.

STEPHANIE

This has nothing to do with my vagina.

NEVILLE

I beg to differ. And you're blushing.

STEPHANIE

This has everything to do with your penis. Now who's blushing?

NEVILLE

I think you're confusing modesty with rage. And, again, when it comes to penises, I beg to differ. My penis was not involved. But your vagina certainly was. What was his name, by the way?

STEPHANIE

Duke.

NEVILLE

Don't tell me he was named after John Wayne?

STEPHANIE

Duke was the name of his penis.

NEVILLE

Ah... well, I hope he had his shots. Had I been involved as a medical advisor, I would have been more than happy to thrust a needle full of penicillin into the tip of Duke's foreskin, just for good measure. And what did he call your vagina?

STEPHANIE

Virginia.

NEVILLE

Well, they say Virginia is for lovers.

STEPHANIE

As I recall you named your penis Tiny Tim.

NEVILLE

As I recall you named my penis Tiny Tim. I've always referred to my penis as Mighty Joe Young. And I never would have dared call your vagina Virginia because of the fact that the great state of Virginia was named after Queen Elizabeth I, otherwise known as the Virgin Queen. When my penis met your vagina for the first time – in the front seat of a Buick, as I

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

recall – I knew without a doubt, like the well-plowed fields of Virginia, your vagina was no virgin queen. I think I should have settled for Poppy instead. It's got a nice, loose sound to it, and there's that narcotic connection too. Poppy, the singing vagina.

STEPHANIE

Tiny Tim, the malnourished, lame penis. I should have bought a tiny crutch for your balls last Christmas.

NEVILLE

Did Mr. Wayne's wang, that is, Duke, use a prophylactic?

STEPHANIE

I've said sorry a billion times.

NEVILLE

Did you at least wash your hands for twenty minutes afterward with hot, soapy water?

STEPHANIE

I went home. I had a shower. I scrubbed my skin raw. I made you dinner. You didn't show. I waited for hours at the table. You finally came home and then I told you.

NEVILLE

But you never told me he named his penis Duke. And you never told me you were on a first name basis with his penis. And you didn't tell me he called your vagina Virginia. This is all new news to me. And I'm never going to forgive you for any of it.

STEPHANIE

I thought, if anyone could fix it, it would be you. I wanted to believe that so badly then. But you didn't, couldn't, wouldn't be bothered, got caught believing everything everyone was telling you, including yourself. And you were so God-like, Neville, I actually believed you'd forgive me the instant I confessed to you.

NEVILLE

Sorry to disappoint. Merely human after all. Shocking discovery.

STEPHANIE

But it's a two-way street in a quantum multidimensional universe. You can't Tango alone in a place like that. We tried and failed. What I did was wrong and I'm totally accountable to it, absolutely responsible, and I am so sorry for it—but I don't know how else to say sorry anymore. I've said it so many times. So let's be honest: Yes, you didn't loosen the guy's belt, but—

NEVILLE

No, that was clearly in your hands, I'm happy to say. If I'd loosened the guy's belt it would have been to circumcise the bastard.

STEPHANIE

—but in the least, in the very least, you held the bedroom door open and gave us your blessing.

NEVILLE

Shut up. You are not a victim. Stop thinking like a victim.

STEPHANIE

Tiny Tim was as deeply buried in your career as Duke was buried in—

NEVILLE

For the love of God, don't say it, please, just don't. I get it. OK? I see it. Right here, in front of my eyes all the time. I can't unsee it. You and the Duke, buried alive. What is this supposed to accomplish, walking hand in hand down your multidimensional two-way street, this Quantum Memory Lane? Tell me, why did you really come all the way up here?

STEPHANIE

I... wanted you. I wanted you to know that finding you was... easy. Because you're a fathead.

NEVILLE

OK, so I'm a fathead. Anything else?

STEPHANIE

I want you to confess. Like I confessed.

NEVILLE

Oh. What do you want me to say that I haven't said already? That you nailed it? Well, OK. Fine. You nailed it. It's true, I made love to my career. I allowed myself to be seduced by her power. Her big swinging breasts and thrusting hips drew all my attention and I didn't give a damn about little old you, our marriage or our love, and at any given time I found the prettiest Candy Striper on the floor, took her to the broom closet and showed her 101 ways to use latex gloves and flexible catheters.

STEPHANIE

Is that true?

NEVILLE

What part, the latex gloves and flexible catheters or the Candy Stripers in the broom closet?

Beat.

STEPHANIE

I forgive you.

NEVILLE

You do?

STEPHANIE

Yes.

Beat.

NEVILLE

I forgive you too. *(Crying)* Wow. Will you look at that?

Neville touches his cheeks, looks at the tears on his fingertips.

STEPHANIE

I feel so... marooned.

NEVILLE takes STEPHANIE's hand.

NEVILLE

I just witnessed a ten-year-old girl shoot a clown on a children's television show that I happen to be a fan of. I guess it upset me. Opened the valves. I'm sorry. *(Beat)* I want you to know that I never could have done what you did, confessed like that right after you did... and then make dinner. And I didn't mean to insult your vagina. You've got a lovely vagina.

STEPHANIE

You've got a lovely penis.

NEVILLE

I do?

STEPHANIE

Mighty Joe Young.

NEVILLE

Elizabeth I, the Virgin Queen.

STEPHANIE

I like that better than Virginia.

STEPHANIE places the papers on top of the TV set.

NEVILLE

Let's get this over with, huh?

NEVILLE signs the papers. He mumble-sings as he does this. STEPHANIE listens to his mumble-song and then, after a moment, mumble-sings with him.

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

There. Done. Now it's back to plain old Grove.

STEPHANIE

I preferred Grove-Butler.

*She puts the papers and the pen in the briefcase.
NEVILLE digs into a pocket, pulls out a Lollipop.*

NEVILLE

Want one?

STEPHANIE

No thanks. Got a smoke.

NEVILLE

I better get the rocket ship ready for Wellington. If you want to stay for the launch, you're more than welcome to. I know Gramps would like that.

STEPHANIE

No. I can't... I mean, I couldn't stand around and watch you two do this, you know that, and I can't stop you. Neville? Can I...? No. I didn't think so. It's better if I just go.

NEVILLE

If you need anything... else... sign something or whatever, you know where to find me. I'll be here.

STEPHANIE

No. That's it. We're done.

She sucks on her unlit cigarette.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

You know, the damn things work even when they're unlit.

NEVILLE

OK. Time to blast off. Safe trip back. Gramps...? Professor...? *(Beat)* I'll be... I'll be right back.

He exits Upstage Right.

STEPHANIE crosses to the model rocket. She's about to pick it up when NEVILLE enters with WELLINGTON in his arms.

STEPHANIE

Oh, no... No.

NEVILLE puts WELLINGTON on the couch.

He finds the vial of Tic Tacs in the Professor's hand and pockets it. He has a medical kit with him.

NEVILLE

He's not breathing.

NEVILLE checks WELLINGTON's vitals. During the examination process, he uses a stethoscope and listens for his heartbeat. He does not rush; no sense of urgency.

STEPHANIE

Phone, where's the phone?

NEVILLE

Uh...

NEVILLE searches through the junk on the couch, locates the phone and hands it to STEPHANIE.

NEVILLE (CONT'D)

... here.

She picks it up and listens.

STEPHANIE

It's not working.

She follows the cord. It's been ripped out of the wall.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

This the only phone, Neville? Don't tell me this is the only phone in the house.

NEVILLE

It's the only phone.

STEPHANIE

Cell phone?

NEVILLE

Don't work up here.

STEPHANIE

I've got a cell phone. It'll work. It always works.

STEPHANIE pulls out her cell phone, dials, listens, dials, listens.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

It's not working... That's crazy. This is crazy. Neighbors?

NEVILLE

Five, ten miles from here, give or take.

STEPHANIE

Hospital?

NEVILLE

Thirty, forty. Stephanie?

STEPHANIE

What can I do?

NEVILLE

Cover him with the blanket.

STEPHANIE covers WELLINGTON with the blanket while NEVILLE continues to check his vitals. When she's finished with the blanket, NEVILLE pushes himself away from WELLINGTON's body.

THE PROFESSOR is dead.

STEPHANIE

Is he...?

NEVILLE

Yes.

STEPHANIE

Fix him. You're the doctor.

NEVILLE

Steph.

STEPHANIE pushes NEVILLE away and feels for WELLINGTON's pulse.

STEPHANIE

I don't feel anything. Gramps had a bad heart?

NEVILLE

Honey, Gramps had a diseased heart.

STEPHANIE

You're so calm. I'm shaking all over. He's so cold. Is that normal? Do they get cold that fast?

NEVILLE

Help me cover him with the blanket.

They cover WELLINGTON with the blanket.

STEPHANIE

He can't be dead. He just needs a cup o' Joe, smell the coffee, jelly his brains up, that's all...

She takes NEVILLE's stethoscope, pulls the blanket aside and listens for WELLINGTON's heartbeat.

NEVILLE

Hey, hey, heeey.

STEPHANIE

I don't... I don't hear anything. I don't feel anything. His heart has stopped. It's stopped beating. After 76 years. His heart has stopped beating. For the first time. I can't hear it, Neville.

NEVILLE removes the stethoscope from STEPHANIE's ears.

NEVILLE

He's gone, Steph. This wasn't unexpected.

STEPHANIE

I was screaming at him, being a bitch, Neville. I said terrible things. And he was running all over the place, push-ups, sit-ups, like he was twenty or something. What the hell's up with that?

NEVILLE

I couldn't stop him.

He opens the vial of Tic Tacs and sniffs. He shakes it and chuckles.

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

See what I mean?

STEPHANIE

What? Heart pills? Nitroglic –?

NEVILLE pops a Tic Tac in his mouth.

NEVILLE

Tic Tacs. Winter Green, I think. Minty. His favorite.

STEPHANIE

But you're a doctor. Why weren't you better prepared?

NEVILLE

I wasn't here to heal him, Steph. *(Beat)* He made me swear on the Bible and my junior high Basic Algebra math book: No life saving measures. Hell, he'd been preparing to blast himself off the planet for thirty years, you think serious heart disease was gonna stop him now?

STEPHANIE

No.

NEVILLE

He knew the odds. If liftoff didn't kill him... I guess he decided to get where he wanted to go the old-fashioned way. Not as dramatic as a rocket ship to Heaven, but certainly more efficient, and much faster.

They embrace.

STEPHANIE

I came here because I wanted to get...

STEPHANIE/NEVILLE (TOGETHER)

... your attention.

Beat.

NEVILLE

(Imitating Ralph Kramden)

One of these days...

STEPHANIE

... one of these days...

STEPHANIE/NEVILLE (TOGETHER)

... bang, zoom, straight to the moon.

They release weary laughter and tired tears.

STEPHANIE

I loved it when he did that.

NEVILLE

Yeah. Me too. Go Ralph—

STEPHANIE

– and Alice –

NEVILLE

—Kramden. *The Honeymooners*. (*Beat*) Anyway. I was going to... I was prepared enough to know that, uh, should he pass before liftoff, I was going to blast him into space. He'd want that, I think.

STEPHANIE

Oh...

NEVILLE

It's aimed at a black hole. He found one. Yeah. He found a black hole close enough to fly to. Ship's designed for long term space travel. He figured, blast-off here, live out there for a while, then dive into the hole.

STEPHANIE

And I know where he thought that black hole goes.

NEVILLE

To Heaven.

STEPHANIE

To Alice.

STEPHANIE looks at the model rocket.

STEPHANIE (Cont'd)

He faces thirty years of legal battles building a gigantic spaceship in his backyard and when it's finally finished – after all that – he doesn't even get to see the thing blast-off? Damn it, Neville, I'm a good lawyer. I could have done something. I could have helped. I have failed in almost every way I can imagine. Unlike him. He never gave up. He was always doing something, always up to... something. (*Beat*) Did the... did the Professor give the ship a name?

NEVILLE

Yeah. The Black Rose.

STEPHANIE crosses to the laptop.

STEPHANIE

You know how to work this thing?

NEVILLE

What's on your mind, Steph?

STEPHANIE

He ever ask for your weight, height, punch it into the laptop?

NEVILLE

Yeah, yeah, he was always doing stuff like that. Wasn't unusual. He questioned everything. All the time.

STEPHANIE

No, no, no. I mean... Come here.

NEVILLE

What exactly are we looking for here?

NEVILLE checks the computer's files.

NEVILLE (Cont'd)

You OK? Need a pill or something? I've got some homegrown, high altitude marijuana, might help.

STEPHANIE

There. That. What's that?

NEVILLE

What's what? The Fun Ship? No big surprise there. You've been inside the rocket. It's like NASA on a tropical cruise.

STEPHANIE

No...

NEVILLE

Uh, weight, body mass, number of spacesuits, four – he likes backups – reserves, um... Passenger List.

STEPHANIE

Yeah.

NEVILLE

Number of passengers. Two.

STEPHANIE

Yeah.

NEVILLE

That can't be right.

STEPHANIE

Yeah. That sneaky bastard.

NEVILLE

I know what you're thinking and no way in hell.

STEPHANIE

Why not?

NEVILLE

'Cause I know my grandfather. I know how obsessed he was. There's no way he'd... get rid of that look in your eye. It's outrageous, Stephanie. That was not his plan.

STEPHANIE

Yeah, but plans change. Hearts change.

NEVILLE

Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

He knew he wouldn't survive the trip, Neville. And he's got this huge rocket ship in his backyard, so what's he go and do? He changes his plan.

NEVILLE

Uh-uh.

STEPHANIE

We waltzed into his life and now he's asking the bitch and the asshole to big band swing. If he can't fly straight into Heaven maybe we can. Let's finish the experiment for him.

NEVILLE

No way in hell-oooo? I'm not going up in that thing.

STEPHANIE

He's given us a chance of a lifetime. The rocket is our black rose, Wellington's gift to us. You know I'm right. You know it! We don't have a chance in hell if we try to make it down here – Gramps understood that. But up there, maybe we've got a chance in finding Heaven together.

NEVILLE

Listen to yourself! You're talking about blasting-off the face of the earth in a homemade rocket ship, living in outer space for who knows how long and then diving into the open mouth of a black hole! A black hole! Doesn't that sound just a little bit crazy and what one might call risky?

STEPHANIE

What relationship isn't without risk?

NEVILLE

Ohohoho! Very funny. Ha, ha. Yeah, and that's easy for you to say, but most relationships don't ask the couple to throw themselves into a massive star following total gravitational collapse, i.e. a black hole with a gravitational field so intense that nothing, not even electromagnetic radiation, including light, can escape! (*Big breath*) You're talking about a serious commitment here. You get in that rocket ship and blast-off, it's not coming back. You're talking about one helluva long lasting second honeymoon, and when I say second honeymoon, honey, I mean hey-honey-there-goes-the-mooooon!

STEPHANIE

It's a chance I'm willing to take. How about you?

NEVILLE

No.

STEPHANIE

You don't mean that.

NEVILLE

Oh, yes, I do.

STEPHANIE crosses to NEVILLE, their faces inches apart.

STEPHANIE

No, you don't.

NEVILLE

Yes. I do.

Their lips are almost touching.

STEPHANIE

No. You don't.

NEVILLE

I admit it sounds enticing, yeah, sure, and if we had terminal heart disease like the Professor, I'd say go for it. But it's another thing altogether when you've got your entire life ahead of you. No. Uh-uh. No way. Ain't gonna happen.

He pulls away from STEPHANIE.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes