

VERVE

R I D E

Written by

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*THIS SCRIPT IS DEDICATED TO EVERY WOMAN WHO HAS EVER LIVED
OUTSIDE OF THE BOX...*

AND ALSO...

FOR EVERY WOMAN WHO WASN'T ABLE TO.

EXT. PODIUM - RICE UNIVERSITY - DAY

ON A MASSIVE AMERICAN FLAG BLOWING PICTURESQUELY IN THE BREEZE. Just BEYOND it... is a PERFECTLY BLUE SKY... THE MOON is showing itself in the bright light of day, reminding us that we're part of something much BIGGER than ourselves.

WE PULL BACK ON JOHN F. KENNEDY (45). He's at the podium staring out into a sea of students. Behind him, members of the faculty are sitting, hanging onto his every word as if he were Aristotle speaking to a mass of young Alexander The Greats.

SUPER: SEPTEMBER 12, 1962

JOHN F. KENNEDY

...No man can fully grasp how far and how fast we have come, but condense, if you will, the 50,000 years of man's recorded history in a time span of but a half-century. Stated in these terms, we know very little about the first 40 years, except at the end of them advanced man had learned to use the skins of animals to cover them. Then about 10 years ago, under this standard, man emerged from his caves to construct other kinds of shelter. Only five years ago man learned to write and use a cart with wheels. Christianity began less than two years ago. ...The printing press came this year, and then less than two months ago, during this whole 50 year span of human history, the steam engine provided a new source of power.

JFK adjusts his tie, looks out into the crowd, gripping the podium, refocusing...

JOHN F. KENNEDY (CONT'D)

Newton just explored the meaning of gravity... Last month electric lights and telephones and automobiles and airplanes became available. ...Only last week did we develop penicillin and television and nuclear power, and now if America's new spacecraft succeeds in reaching the moon, we will have literally reached the stars before midnight tonight...

(MORE)

JOHN F. KENNEDY (CONT'D)

(beat)

This is a breathtaking pace, and such a pace cannot help but create new ills as it dispels old. New ignorance. New problems. New dangers. Surely the opening vistas of space promise high costs and hardships, as well as high reward...

Full of HOPE, the students begin to CLAP. The faculty follows soon behind... everyone in attendance is giving the president a standing ovation. America is ready to, *Go Where No Man Has Gone Before*. At least for a little while...

HARD CUT TO:

BLACK SCREEN. RUN CAPTIONS:

Christmas 1972. Apollo 17 ushered the last 12 men into space and onto the moon.

America's interest in space travel by that time was DEAD.

The government had turned it's attention and investments toward the Vietnam War. Thus forcing the Apollo program to SHUT DOWN.

During that time The Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed. Authorizing the illegality of discrimination based on gender. Every government agency was ordered to comply.

After the Vietnam War ended, America looked toward the stars once more...

With a small budget, a new program to create a shuttle fleet was set into motion. A program that had to INCLUDE women.

FADE IN...

INT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - HOUSTON TEXAS - MORNING

SUPER: *NASA'S APOLLO PROGRAM TRAINING FACILITY, 1975*

DARKNESS. WE SEE NOTHING BUT CAN HEAR THE RATTLING OF A LARGE AIR DUCT. FOOTSTEPS... A SWITCH is TURNED ON... OLD APOLLO ASTRONAUTICS TRAINING EQUIPMENT is ILLUMINATED EXPOSING DUST from years of SITTING UNUSED in the DARK. THE MOON LANDING MODULE'S AMERICAN FLAG HAS FALLEN OVER. THE SUBMERGENCE TANK IS EMPTY. THE LUNAR ROVER'S TIRES HAVE DEFLATED... NASA ADMINISTRATOR, JAMES C. FLETCHER (50's thin, tall) WALKS INTO FRAME... his hands in his suit pockets.

He HALTS and takes in the relics as if they were old comforting friends. GEORGE ABBEY (44, dark hair, kind eyes a reassuring face) HEAD of FLIGHT OPERATIONS and the ASTRONAUT SELECTION BOARD, ENTERS. James doesn't turn around, his focus stays on the Apollo toys as if he were standing at a grave site.

JAMES C. FLETCHER

Hello, George.

George looks around at the machines indifferently. He clears his throat -

GEORGE ABBEY

...They're ready whenever you are.

James nods.

JAMES C. FLETCHER

...When man learned to walk, do ever think that it may have hurt?

George considers it. He looks at James' stern glare. He tries to break the tension -

GEORGE ABBEY

...Not if he walked slow.

James' doesn't laugh.

JAMES C. FLETCHER

I can't help but feel as though NASA is crippled. That, or mankind is reverting... people only see what's in front of them these days.

George peers up at the large rafters.

GEORGE ABBEY

Whenever I'm feeling down, my wife always tells me that every accomplishment starts with the decision to try...

Glancing over -

JAMES C. FLETCHER

You're feeling down?

GEORGE ABBEY

Not today, no.

JAMES C. FLETCHER

But, you like it here...

GEORGE ABBEY
Of course. ...It was an example,
James.

James exhales. Straightens himself up.

JAMES C. FLETCHER
An *example*. This entire operation
was an example. An example of what
we could become... and now, *what*?
We mull around, orbiting the
Earth... releasing satellites? We
won the race but lost the marathon.
(beat)
There will never be another *John*
Glenn, Gus Grissom, John Young...

Optimistically -

GEORGE ABBEY
There could be someone just as
exciting. Just as good even...

James shakes his head and places his defeated hand on
George's shoulder, turning to him -

JAMES C. FLETCHER
You can tell them I'm ready.

George nods, walks out. James moves toward the Moon Landing
Module... he runs his hand along the ladder. BRIGHT SUNLIGHT
EMERGES THROUGH as the MASSIVE SLIDING DOORS OPEN... James
turns, SQUINTING as the facility's LARGE GOVERNMENT TRUCKS
BEEP, BACKING UP onto the SIGHT. The men EXIT the trucks. One
of the drivers hands James a clipboard -

GOVERNMENT OPERATOR
Mister Fletcher?

James nods.

GOVERNMENT OPERATOR (CONT'D)
Just sign here... and here...

James reluctantly signs. The man whistles. The men begin
unemotionally disassembling the Apollo equipment. WE TRACK
BEHIND James as he WALKS OUT OF THE -

EXT. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

He looks back as the men TOSSING the equipment into the
trucks as if it were nothing more than a play-set. James
PEERS UP at the SKY and CLOSES his eyes.

"GOOD MORNING STARSHINE" by OLIVER BEGINS to PLAY OVER... and PLAYS INTO:

EXT. TREE/OPEN FIELD - ENCINO, CA - EARLY MORNING

"GOOD MORNING STARSHINE" by OLIVER CONTINUES OVER:

WE'RE WATCHING THE SUN RISE OVER the San Fernando valley... ANGLE ON TWO HANDS HOISTING UP, GRIPPING a tree branch... WIDE: ON an attractive brunette woman with curly feathered hair and piercing blue eyes. THIS IS SALLY RIDE (24). She PULLS HERSELF UP INTO the orange tree, barefoot, wearing flannel pajamas and a tote over her shoulder. She looks WILD.

Sally BEGINS picking the oranges, placing them in her tote. She continues watching the SUN RISE over the mountain, she loses her balance, she CATCHES herself... ALL of her oranges FALL out of her bag...

EXT. DALE & CAROL RIDE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

"GOOD MORNING STARSHINE" by OLIVER FADES OUT.

Sally is RUNNING barefoot towards a pretty, ranch style home. Her parents house. She PULLS her tote off as she gets to the side (kitchen) door.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Sally's mother, CAROL JOYCE RIDE (late 40's) is making breakfast. There's a small television on the counter in the corner, the SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN is on. Sally ENTERS and PULLS her tote over her head setting it on the counter. Kissing Carol's cheek -

SALLY
(cheerfully)
Morning mom...

Taking in sally's wild bed-head and attire -

CAROL RIDE
My god, you were out there
barefoot?

Grabbing an orange, pulling up a chair, sitting in it backwards -

SALLY
I wanted to get grounded...

CAROL RIDE
And pajamas? Really, what would the
neighbors think?

SALLY
They would probably think, flannels
are really hot for California... I
need new clothes now that I'm
home...

Carol SIGHS and shakes her head as she continues to cook.
DALE BURDELL RIDE (50's, a political science college
professor) ENTERS in corduroy slacks, collard shirt and tie.
Kissing Sally on the head as she watches the SIX MILLION
DOLLAR MAN -

DALE RIDE
There's my little dropout...

Sally puts the orange peel over her teeth and smiles at him.

DALE RIDE (CONT'D)
Hope you're not wearing those to
your first day of school...

SALLY
I'm hoping Bear can loan me
something...

Setting down a plate of pancakes and eggs -

CAROL RIDE
It's still snowing in Swarthmore?

Turning her chair around, fixing her plate -

SALLY
It was when I left.

The last to ENTER is KAREN "BEAR" RIDE (17). She's fully
dressed for school in a floral shirt and (short) skirt with
knee high boots. She takes a seat next to Sally.

DALE RIDE
(to Bear)
I hope you know you're not wearing
that...

BEAR RIDE
It's not like I'm at your school,
daddy...

DALE RIDE
If you were at my school I'd send
you home...

SALLY
If Bear were at your school she
wouldn't take your class, dad.

Sally elbows Bear and smiles.

BEAR RIDE
I like Political Science...

Taking a seat at the table -

CAROL RIDE
(to Sally)
I wish you had transferred to Santa
Monica College... you and dad could
carpool.

DALE RIDE
No. It's a hard enough keeping
track of my students, let alone my
own daughter...

SALLY
UCLA has the best tennis program,
mom.

Carol and Dale glance at each other. Sally notices.

SALLY (CONT'D)
...And yes, that's the only reason
I'm even going back to school...
And before you say anything, I know
what you're both thinking-

DALE RIDE
You should. ...You *should* know what
we're thinking... You dropped out
of Swarthmore College as if it
were nothing...

SALLY
It was nothing, dad.

Dale slams his coffee down, chewing fast, upset.

DALE RIDE
To you maybe. ...You can't float
around on this- this- pipe dream
like some *hippy*...

SALLY

I was a nationally ranked tennis player... something you used to love to brag about...

DALE RIDE

You're not getting any younger. And the older you get the further tennis gets away from you...

Sally focuses on the tv. The SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN aka STEVE AUSTEN is boarding a SPACE SHUTTLE.

CAROL RIDE

...I just don't understand why you couldn't just stay and play tennis in Swarthmore?

Sally is getting upset.

SALLY

You can't play tennis in the snow mom. ...You're both acting like you're not happy that I moved home...

DALE RIDE

Just concerned.

BEAR RIDE

I'm happy you're home, Sally.

Sally leans her head on her sister. Her wild brown hair getting in Bear's eyes.

SALLY

(to Bear)

Can I borrow an outfit?

Dale GROANS, drops his fork.

EXT. UCLA CAMPUS - AFTERNOON

Sally is holding her class program. She's sporting a backpack, with a tennis racket hanging out, shorts, a tee shirt, knee high socks, converse and a baseball hat that she's turned backwards. She looks LOST as she PEERS around, looking for her next class.

Sitting under a tree, jotting down last minute notes is JOHN TOMPKINS (30, blonde, tall, tan, handsome). He NOTICES Sally. Her wild demeanor stands out.

He curiously WATCHES her as she GLANCES around, moving in one direction then stopping, looking down at her program again. He SMIRKS and PACKS up his books, heading over to her.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Need help?

Sally TURNS, glancing up at John. He notices her tennis racket -

JOHN TOMPKINS (CONT'D)
Tennis courts are just beyond the football field...

SALLY
I'm not playing tennis. ...I mean, I am. ...Just not now. I'm looking for the *Elementary Quantum Physics class*?

John takes a step back. He looks her over, *scraped knees, pretty face*, surprised and perplexed... *What and who is she?*

JOHN TOMPKINS
That's my class.

Now, it's Sally who is surprised.

SALLY
You're teaching *Quantum Physics*?

JOHN TOMPKINS
Kinda. Well... No. ...I'm the volunteer teaching assistant...
(smiling)
...I'll walk you there.

INT. ELEMENTARY QUANTUM PHYSICS CLASS - MOMENTS LATER

ON JOHN sitting in the corner beside the professors desk, SMILING, he looks down.

PROFESSOR (O.S.)
As we look at a part of the derivation for Schrödinger's equation... We'll find that he had finally grasped that the atomic world is full of chaos... When you break down an atom, you will find everything and nothing...

WIDE: ON THE CLASS. It's a room full of NERDY MEN. Sally is the ONLY WOMAN. She's not looking at the professor but at his assistant John (smiling). She smiles back.

INT. ELEMENTARY QUANTUM PHYSICS CLASS - DAY

The class has been paired in groups. Sally is with four (male) students that look annoyed to have her on their team. They've huddled around their table. Sally is standing on the tips of her toes to try to get a peek at the words that have been placed by the professor and John.

Reading the question out loud -

PROFESSOR

When we are considering the total system as a composite system of two subsystems A and B, the wave functions of the composite system are in a... what?

The groups chatter amongst themselves. Poking her teammates -

SALLY

Hey guys... ...Guys?

The group ignores her. To herself -

SALLY (CONT'D)

It's Hilbert space...

The next team overhears her and RUNS up with the answer, hands it to the professor.

PROFESSOR

Correct. *It's Hilbert Space.*

Sally crosses her arms. The professor reads the next question...

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

What is synonymous to wave function?

John glances across the room at Sally as she contemplates the question... Her eyes light up, she moves around her team's table and FORCES her way in... She shuffles through the words on the table.

TEAMMATE

Hey, stop. You're messing it all up...

Grabbing the STATE VECTOR card, shoving her teammate out of the way -

SALLY
I'm fixing it.

Sally RUNS to the front and hands the professor the STATE VECTOR card.

PROFESSOR
Correct! Table two and four are tied...

Sally's teammates look at each other. One of the boys moves over to give her room to see the cards. John has been watching the entire time. He smiles. Sally's demeanor shifts from lighthearted to competitive. She hovers over the words, ready to grab them -

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
A large number of copies in a system is called what?

Sally glances over her shoulder at the other tables... They're talking amongst each other.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
Remember if you bring the wrong card up... a point is taken away from the group...

Sally pushes the cards around, trying to trigger her memory.

TEAMMATE
It's *Pure State*.

TEAMMATE 2
You sure?

Sally is staring the cards down as if they'll start talking to her.

SALLY
No...

TEAMMATE
What do you mean, *no*? It's *Pure State*...
(grabbing the card)
I'm going up.

Sally's eyes LOCK ONTO a card that reads: *Statistical Ensemble*... She GRABS it and MOVES PAST her teammate... handing it to the professor. He reads the card...

Sally bites her thumb, waiting, she glances at her table, they all look mad at her...

PROFESSOR

Correct... Very good, Sally. The answer was *statistical ensemble*.

Sally's posture relaxes. She glances over at John. He winks at her. She looks down, trying not to smile as she heads back to her table. She puts her hand up to high five her team...

SALLY

Good job guys...

None of them high five her.

TEAMMATE

(to the other teammates)

Why do I feel like we still lost?

Teammate 2 motions toward Sally and rolls his eyes as she happily clears the cards from the table.

EXT. TENNIS COURT - UCLA - LATE AFTERNOON

"TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE" by LOU REED PLAYS OVER:

ANGLE ON a TENNIS BALL AS IT SPINS in MID AIR... DESCENDING to EARTH... aka the TENNIS COURT... A RACKET MEETS it in the AIR and IT'S THRUST FORWARD ACROSS the NET... WE PULL BACK ON Sally... IT'S GAME DAY. She's POISED ready for the ball to FLY back over...

IN THE STANDS: JOHN is watching. He's wearing sunglasses, but WE CAN TELL the only woman on the court he's staring at is SALLY.

"TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE" by LOU REED FADES OUT.

Sally LUNGES FORWARD and HITS the BALL with ALL of her MIGHT... MAKING A HEAVING NOISE... She WIPES her face with her wrist band and GLANCES UP at the SCORE. It's 15 to 40. She's LOSING. WE SEE her EYES LOCK onto her opponent with fervor as a SWATTING MATCH ENSUES, a BACK and FORTH...

TEN MINUTES LATER...

Sally looks EXHAUSTED. Her face is BEET RED. Her hair is dripping with SWEAT... Her opponent, a 17 year old USC player looks like she's just warming up. Sally LOSES her FOOTING as she JOLTS FORWARD to SMACK the BALL... SHE MISSES.

CHAIR UMPIRE
GAME POINT!

Sally LOST. She DROPS her tennis racket, and BENDS down to catch her breath, frustrated with herself. BEAT. She moves across the court and shakes her opponent's hand. She GLANCES up in the stands and FINDS John... he RAISES his glasses up and smiles at her as people begin to clear out. She RUNS her hand through her hair and motions for him to WAIT there...

EXT. TENNIS COURT - UCLA - EARLY EVENING

Sally and John are sitting on the now EMPTY tennis court. She's peering at the stands.

JOHN TOMPKINS
What do you want to be Sally?

SALLY
Seriously?

She nudges John playfully with her shoulder.

SALLY (CONT'D)
I mean, I know I'll never be an Arthur Ashe... I'm not here to change the world... but... look, you didn't know me when I was a national player... I was good. I just need to get my rhythm back, that's all...

JOHN TOMPKINS
I thought you were good today...
(beat)
With a mind like yours... you could really do anything you wanted.

Sally shrugs.

SALLY
I could say the same about you...

JOHN TOMPKINS
You're smarter than I am.

SALLY
If I were smarter than you, I wouldn't be chasing tennis...

Sally leans forward, resting her head in her hand.

JOHN TOMPKINS
You should be scientist.

With a groan -

SALLY
You sound like my dad.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Your dad must be a smart man.

SALLY
He taught me the basics...

Completely intrigued -

JOHN TOMPKINS
Who taught you the rest?

Looking up at the sky -

SALLY
I did. ...I like figuring out how things work... What something is made of...
(peering over at John)
What are you made of, John?

OFF JOHN PEERING HELPLESSLY AT SALLY.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL - OSHKOSH WISCONSIN - MORNING

WE'RE INSIDE A LARGE MANUFACTURING FACILITY RAMP AS WE TRACK BEHIND NASA'S ADMINISTRATOR JAMES FLETCHER. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER'S DIRECTOR CHRIS KRAFT (50'S). AND GEORGE ABBEY, HEAD OF THE ASTRONAUT SELECTION BOARD AND HEAD OF FLIGHT OPERATIONS.

They're being lead by Rockwell International's President...

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT
We've just started on the crew module for STA-099...

JAMES C. FLETCHER
And the vibration and thermal testing?

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT
It went well. It held up for 12 months and counting...

The GROUP of men EMERGE OUT INTO a LARGER PORTION of the assembly facility, OVERLOOKING the CREW MODULE for STA-099 aka *CHALLENGER ORBITER* beginning to be constructed below... BESIDE IT the almost completed, STS-1 aka the *COLUMBIA ORBITER*.

James GRIPS the railing, leans closer...

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT
(CONT'D)

It will fit up to five astronauts
of course as requested...

Watching a man CLIMB UP and INTO the side of the SHUTTLE -

GEORGE ABBEY

(to Rockwell President)
It's being constructed for the
accommodation of women of course...

James looks over as if he forgot. Rockwell's President looks taken aback. George glances over at Chris, he shugs, it's out of his hands.

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

The what?

GEORGE ABBEY

Women. We're -
(glancing over at James &
Chris)
We're considering a woman or women
for all future missions...

Straightening up defensively -

JAMES C. FLETCHER
Not *all missions...*

Scrambled -

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

..We hadn't discussed the
accommodations. It's something that
needs to uh, well... We'll have to
alter some things... with NASA'S
approval of course...

Finally speaking up -

CHRIS KRAFT
Like?

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

Well, the urination process for one
thing... and then, we... We don't
want women sleeping too close to
the astronauts...

GEORGE ABBEY

The women would be called
astronauts too.

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

(uncomfortable)

Oh, I- I see.

JAMES C. FLETCHER

I want to go down and get a closer
look at shuttles...

ROCKWELL INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

(flustered)

Of course.

GEORGE ABBEY

(in jest)

I'll measure for bed sizes...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. JOHN'S MUSTANG - EARLY EVENING

"MOONLIGHT" by STARBUCK PLAYS OVER:

WE'RE IN John's white Mustang with the top down. Sally and John's hair is WHIPPING around as he drives down the Pacific Coast Highway. Sally STANDS UP and PUTS her arms out -- CAREFREE. John PULLS her back down... She WHISPERS something to him and he glances over and mirrors the GLEAM in her eye before PULLING OVER... He gets out, Sally SLIDES over to the drivers seat she stares at the ocean that seems to go on forever as John walks around to the passengers seat.

He pats her leg, ready to go. She gives him a devilish smile and PUTS the stick in gear, FLOORING IT... CAUSING a WAVE OF DUST BEHIND THEM...

EXT. DALE & CAROL RIDE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sally and John PULL up in his convertible. Her HAIR is CRAZY from driving FAST. She doesn't care. John looks nervous as he straightens out his hair and shirt, exiting the car.

Taking him by the hand -

SALLY
I swear they don't bite...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

ON the Ride's family (Collie) dog as it NIPS John's hand under the table. He winces to himself and pulls his hand up. WIDE: Sally's parents and sister are sitting around the table focused on John as they eat. Sally's hair still mussed from the car ride.

CAROL RIDE
You're the first boy Sally's
brought around to these parts...

SALLY
He's not a boy Mom.

CAROL RIDE
Man. Either way it's true...

DALE RIDE
Sally says you're a science
professor like myself...

Clearing his throat nervously -

JOHN TOMPKINS
Yes and no... I'm an assistant. I-
I don't really want to teach, I'm
more interested in lab work... The
actual breakdown of molecules and
particles...

DALE RIDE
Then why are you teaching?

JOHN TOMPKINS
Assisting? ...College credits.

CAROL RIDE
(to John)
You ought to take Sally on your
next scientific venture...

SALLY
Mom!

CAROL RIDE
You love science.

Mashing her food down, annoyed -

SALLY
I love tennis more.

DALE RIDE
You spend all day reading quantum
physics books and only an hour
practicing tennis... What does that
tell you? I don't need to be a
science professor to give you that
answer...

BEAR RIDE
What do you think, John?

JOHN TOMPKINS
About Sally? ...I think-

He looks at Sally, clearly in love with her -

JOHN TOMPKINS (CONT'D)
I think she's scared.

Sally smacks his arm.

SALLY
I'm not scared of anything.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Except the one thing you're great
at...

Sally takes his words in. She folds her arms.

DALE RIDE
(to Carol, pointing at John)
I like him...

EXT. PING PONG TABLE - PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE ON a PING PONG BALL...

SALLY (O.S.)
von Neumann or Schrödinger?

WIDE: As Sally SMACKS the ball over to John. They begin
playing.

JOHN TOMPKINS
It depends.

SALLY

As a separate mode of time
evolution for a quantum system...
do you agree with it?

Sally HITS the BALL HARDER and FASTER. John can barely keep up.

JOHN TOMPKINS

It has it's difficulties. I like to
stick with unitary time
evolution...

SALLY

But Conditional probabilities are
just as important as one outcome...

JOHN TOMPKINS

How so?

SALLY

Well... for example if you hadn't
decided to give me directions that
day... I may have never ended up
noticing you...

John GRABS the incoming ping pong ball. Insecure -

JOHN TOMPKINS

Really?

Sally sets her paddle down. She'd rather mentally spare -

SALLY

The collapse of a wave function or
theory is just a *theory*... but it's
still a *probability*... although you
didn't have to help me that day...
in which case another amount of
probabilities come into play on
your end...

JOHN TOMPKINS

There was only one *outcome*... I
knew I had to talk to you that day.
...Theories aren't used in
laboratories. ...Just *outcomes*.

Sally stares John down, she's met her intellectual match.

SALLY

I want to show you something...

EXT. ATTIC - MOMENTS LATER

Sally is holding a flashlight, leading the way as John follows...

SALLY
Watch your step...

He trips.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Too late.

She stops and shines her light at a roof hatch... she OPENS IT... a LADDER SLIDES DOWN. John raises his eyebrows.

SALLY
Dad built it last year...

Sally hands John the flashlight and CLIMBS UP... ONTO-

EXT. ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Sally EMERGES out FOLLOWED by John. She takes the flashlight and CLICKS it OFF. WE'RE LEFT with the MOONLIGHT and STARS.

Pointing at the mounted telescope -

JOHN TOMPKINS
Yours?

SALLY
Dad's...

JOHN TOMPKINS
May I?

Sally NODS. John leans down and LOOKS through the telescope... he POINTS it UP and OVER... Sally stands next to him. He STOPS ON SOMETHING -

JOHN TOMPKINS (CONT'D)
Look...

Sally PEERS IN...

SALLY
Nasa's ATS satellite...

John pulls the telescope back, looking impressed by her. He takes a seat on the roof. Sally sits next to him. She takes his hand.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Just think... *Men... Man...*
Humans... put that satellite up
there...

Peering up at the stars -

SALLY
A group of men did.

John leans back -

JOHN TOMPKINS
Sally...

Sally glances over and leans back too. They're laying side by side, John caresses her face, wanting to kiss her, she cups his hand on her cheek.

JOHN TOMPKINS (CONT'D)
...If- If I had to go away for a
while... would you wait for me?

Peering into his eyes, concerned -

SALLY
Is this a *probability* or an *actual
outcome*?

John pulls his hand away. Sits up. Sighs. She sits up -

SALLY (CONT'D)
...John?

JOHN TOMPKINS
It's an *outcome*.

All the wind is taken from Sally's sails.

SALLY
And you're telling me *now*?

Running his hand through his hair -

JOHN TOMPKINS
I didn't... I didn't know how...
and everything happened so fast
and... and... I didn't except -

Hurt -

SALLY
To leave?

JOHN TOMPKINS
To fall in love with you.

This only hurts Sally more. She looks down.

SALLY
Well, I won't be here when you get
back from wherever you're going...

JOHN TOMPKINS
Where would you go?

SALLY
Where are you going?

JOHN TOMPKINS
The UCLA physics department
selected me... I'm going to Moscow.
...It's cutting edge, Sal... I'll
be working with the world's highest
energy proton accelerator...

Standing up, dusting off -

SALLY
Yeah, well... you should've said
something...

Trying to read her expression, standing up -

JOHN TOMPKINS
You're jealous.

SALLY
No I'm not.

Grabbing her shoulders as she tries not to cry -

JOHN TOMPKINS
Sally, you have twice the
scientific mind I have... if you
really aren't here when I get back,
please promise me you'll use it...

Sally turns away from him, heartbroken -

SALLY
Please leave.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Sally...

SALLY
Go.

John pulls his hands away. He stares at her for a BEAT. She won't make eye contact. He kisses his hand and places to her cheek before heading to the hatch... Sally TURNS - HE'S GONE.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BOARD ROOM - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER (NASA) - MORNING

WE'RE LOOKING AT A voluptuous mannequin wearing an IN-FLIGHT SUIT. WE SEE MULTIPLE POCKETS that have been fitted to the legs of the space pants, the top is formfitting and low cut -- shaping a perfect bottle shaped curve.

KEN PRICE (O.S.)

As you can see, gentlemen, we've enhanced the design to compliment the attributes of the female form...

WE PULL BACK ON the board room... ALL of the MEN are PEERING at the mannequin who looks like a double for *Kim Novak*. NASA'S SPACESUIT PROJECT MANAGER, KEN PRICE (late 30's) is enthusiastically standing next to the busty mannequin.

KEN PRICE (CONT'D)

The top gives her breathing room...

Leaning over to Chris Kraft -

JAMES C. FLETHER

I'll say...

Some of the men, snicker. Chris doesn't. George Abbey looks disappointed.

KEN PRICE

And the bottom doesn't hide her femininity...

(turning the mannequin around)

And... as for comfort we've fitted the buttocks with easy access for urination...

The board room is hanging on by a thread, trying not to LAUGH. Some of the men have covered their mouths, others have tears forming from suppressing their giggles. George glances over at James... who's removed his glasses, smirking.

Ken UNZIPS the BUTT of the suit and EXPOSES the mannequin's BUNS. The board ERUPTS. George can't take anymore, he stands up and GRABS the mannequin by the arm -

GEORGE ABBEY

(to Ken)

Get this out of here...

(to NASA officials)

Gentlemen we don't need a special suit for women. Pants fitted with pockets, yes... but when we cross over into altering designs for appearance, I think we've failed at our duty to unify a team...

Eyeing the big boobed, big bunned mannequin -

BOARD MEMBER

I liked it... I'd fly with her.

More snickering. James can see the seriousness on George's face. As the administrator he straightens up.

JAMES C. FLETHER

As fun as it was, George is right. The same suit for both sexes is the only possible way to not get criticized by the media.

GEORGE ABBEY

Not only the media sir, but whoever the woman is -- needs to not feel like she's being mocked as some sort of afterthought or joke when she's in space...

Defensively -

JAMES C. FLETHER

No one said a woman was going to space, George. The government mandate doesn't say anything about forcing NASA to shoot a woman to the stars... We just need to hire them. If we put a woman in a spacesuit just to look good we'd be shitting on all the men that have worked and trained and put their lives on the line for our country... for *humanity*.
...Besides, the kind of woman it would take to pass training doesn't exist...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SALLY'S HOUSE - SILICON VALLEY - EVENING - 1978

"AMERICAN WOMAN" by THE GUESS WHO is PLAYING OVER:

FUZZY YELLOW COUCHES, A SUNKEN LIVING ROOM, ORANGE BEAN BAGS... MULTICOLORED LIGHTS, BOOKS RANGING FROM SHAKESPEARE TO GERTRUDE STEIN LINE THE MULTIPLE BOOKSHELVES... AS WE DOLLY THROUGH SALLY'S COLLEGE STYLE HOUSE.IT'S PACKED WITH FELLOW STANFORD STUDENTS... SOME ARE DANCING, SOME ARE DRINKING, BEATNIKS HAVE GATHERED IN A CORNER TO RECITE POETRY AND SMOKE WEED...

WE COME TO A HALT ON Sally DANCING her heart out with a group of classmates/friends... LINDA (24) dances closer to Sally (27), putting her hands on Sally's waist, making eye contact with her. They've clearly done this before.

LATER...

"STORMY" by CLASSIC IV IS PLAYING OVER:

Sally and Linda are still dancing. A large number of party-goers have cleared out. Hugging Sally before EXITING -

FEMALE CLASSMATE
Congratulations again Sally... I'm
still working on one degree and to
think you have two now...

Sally stops dancing.

SALLY
You're leaving?

FEMALE CLASSMATE
I have class tomorrow...

Sally brushes the hair from her face and hugs her goodbye. Linda leans over, putting her arm around Sally, whispering -

LINDA
(to Sally)
Do you want me to stay?

Sally grabs hold of Linda's arm, moving off of her shoulder.

SALLY
There are too many people here...

INT. SALLY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone is GONE. EXCEPT for Linda. Sally is cleaning up, holding a garbage bag, picking up various paper cups and plates...

Linda emerges from the hallway and wraps her arms around Sally -

LINDA
Want me to help?

Sally smiles -

SALLY
I'm almost done.

LINDA
Are you going to push me away
again?

Sally turns, unsure what to say, unsure how to feel. Linda brushes her hand across Sally's cheek.

LINDA (CONT'D)
You think too much. ...I'm going to
lay down.

Sally nods, uncertain. She takes a seat on the couch. BEAT. She leans forward staring at the telescope made of frosting on her half consumed graduation cake.

INT. BED - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ON SALLY staring at the ceiling. Beside her, Linda is asleep. Sally glances over and quietly gets out of bed, crossing the room...

ANGLE ON a jewelry box as it's OPENED... there isn't jewelry inside, just years of letters... From JOHN. Post marked from Moscow. NONE of them have been OPENED.

WIDE: Sally takes them out with the heaviness of what she may find inside, she's still hurt... BEAT. She takes the first letter... steadies it in her hand... then DROPS it back into the box, closing it.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. OBSERVATORY - STANFORD UNIVERSITY - EARLY MORNING

WE'RE LOOKING AT a beautiful wooden and glass two story structure. The first story is a classroom lined with glass windows. An exterior wooden staircase wraps around and up to the second story: A GLASS DOMED OBSERVATORY. INTO FRAME: Sally, SPORTING high top converse, ripped jeans and a tee shirt, damp hair and a book bag walking toward the building... She gets out a set of keys and unlocks the classroom, ENTERS.

INT. ASTRONOMY CLASS/OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

The classroom is EMPTY. Sally is prepping, placing advanced astronomy books on each desk...

DISSOLVE:

INT. ASTRONOMY CLASS/OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

The classroom is FULL. Sally is sitting in the corner where John sat when she was a fresh faced student at UCLA. Now she's a Stanford double major graduate. PROFESSOR TATE (60's) a regal looking professor with a white beard and an English accent is standing in front of the class.

PROFESSOR TATE

We're lucky enough to have *Sally*
Ride with us as the active
assistant... Although, Sally's
graduated with distinction, she's
not done-

Sally looks embarrassed, she crosses her arms.

SALLY

We don't need a full bio Mister
Tate...

The class laughs. Sally puts her hand on her brow, wanting to melt into the floor.

PROFESSOR TATE

Sally is working on her
doctorate... I mention this because
when Sally was a student in this
class she was also mastering
literature while balancing
science... Balance is the key to
any form of success...

(jokingly)

(MORE)

PROFESSOR TATE (CONT'D)
And if you're determined enough you
can end up... in the corner where
Sally is...
(to Sally)
I promised I wouldn't praise you
too much...

Sally's face is now beet red.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. ASTRONOMY CLASS/OBSERVATORY - AFTERNOON

DARKNESS. WE WATCH AS the ROOF OPENS UP... LETTING LIGHT IN and ILLUMINATING the students and Sally as they HUDDLE around a MASSIVE TELESCOPE. Everyone is chattering. Sally takes to the helm of the giant telescope...

SALLY
(to class)
Ancient astronomers would follow
points of light that appeared to
move among the stars... Luckily
today we have big toys like this
one that helps us see things a lot
better...

NONE of the students are listening to her. They're chattering. Sally clears her throat... She turns her attention back to the telescope. The professor SNEAKS in and observes Sally with the class.

SALLY (CONT'D)
I'm going to adjust these two
lenses that will focus the light...
This will make whatever object
we're focusing on the object look
closer...

Only a couple of students are actually listening. Professor Tate SPEAKS up from the back, letting his presence be KNOWN.

PROFESSOR TATE
Quiet!

INSTANT SILENCE FALLS OVER THE ROOM. Sally GLANCES at the back where Professor Tate is stoically standing, she looks relieved.

INT. ASTRONOMY CLASS/OBSERVATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Class is over. Sally and professor Tate are the only two left... Sally leans on the giant telescope, defeatedly.

PROFESSOR TATE

No one takes the assistant seriously on their first day.
You're still a student to them.

Peering out of the ROOF at the sky -

SALLY

I don't care if they talk over me... I just don't like thinking that they're clearly not here for this (points at sky)...

Professor Tate stares up with Sally.

PROFESSOR TATE

I'm sure that *Galileo* and *Newton* had students that weren't interested at first. It's the job of the teacher to generate that interest...

SALLY

Great. So I'm just boring then.

Putting his arm around her -

PROFESSOR TATE

Until you're teaching your own class, that's not something you should worry about...

Matter of fact -

SALLY

I'm not going to be a teacher.

PROFESSOR TATE

Really? ...My dear girl, what on earth do you want to be?

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - STANFORD UNIVERSITY - DAY

ON SALLY crouched in a ready POSITION...

WIDE: Linda is on the other side of the court... She SLAPS the BALL FAST TOWARDS Sally... Sally HITS it HARD, taking out her frustrations. Linda side steps, letting the ball hit the fence. Walking toward the net -

LINDA

If this is about last night...

Lowering her racket -

SALLY

It's not. Let's just focus on tennis, okay?

LINDA

Sally... there's no shame in what we feel. It doesn't make you a leper...

SALLY

Can we just play? ...Are you gonna pick up the ball or should I?

LINDA

I just wish you'd acknowledge in broad daylight how you're feeling...

Sally leaps over the net, grabs the ball and jumps back over to her side. Pushing back her emotions with a joke -

SALLY

You should really start bringing more balls to the court...

Linda shakes her head. Sally smiles.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE - MORNING

ON MOCK MOON ROCKS as WE PAN ACROSS the set and STOP ON space boots...

DIRECTOR (O.S.)

Now Nichelle when we go, I want you to cross over to the rocket... and hold-

WIDE: NICHELLE NICHOLS (44) aka Lieutenant Uhura from Star Trek has been fitted into a NASA suit customized with her name. She's standing on a set as makeup and hair artists primp.

NICHELLE

I hold on the line that says, as a
woman who has gone where no man has
gone before?

Flipping through his script -

DIRECTOR

Correct.

WE PULL BACK FURTHER... James and George are standing off to
the side, watching.

Concerned -

GEORGE ABBEY

A commercial with a known face from
television isn't going to pull in
the women we're looking for. We'll
just end up with a bunch of would-
be actresses knocking on Nasa's
door... You were the one that told
me you were afraid that mankind had
given up on space... and that Nasa
was crippled, this won't help the
cause... People will take it as a
joke...

James crosses his arms, thinking.

JAMES C. FLETHER

Women aren't applying to our call
for candidates. If we don't
broadcast how on earth do you
expect us to find anyone?

George glances over at Nichelle as she leans against the
rocket. BEAT.

GEORGE ABBEY

A tour. ...We have Nichelle go on a
college tour as a recruiter...
Throw away her corny lines and give
her facts about training... Hell,
we can show her first hand... If
she's in front of college women
looking to make their mark on life
and she's authentically talking to
them about our program -- I think
they'll take it more seriously...

James mulls this over.

JAMES C. FLETHER
They'd have to be scientists of
course...

GEORGE ABBEY
*Of course. ...And what scientist
wouldn't want to work for NASA?*

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. ASTRONOMY CLASS/OBSERVATORY - STANFORD UNIVERSITY -
MORNING

ANGLE ON *THE STANFORD DAILY...* the headline reads: NASA to
recruit women. Rally begins at 3pm on the east lawn. With
guest speaker, Nichelle Nichols.

SALLY (O.S.)
It's just a gimmick...

WIDE: Sally is holding the paper. Professor Tate is clearing
the classes shadow line (experiment with shadows and light
sources) length projects from each table...

PROFESSOR TATE
What you call a gimmick others in
your position will call an
opportunity...

Sally looks down at the NASA article. Shakes her head.

SALLY
It's convenient. They don't want to
hire women, they *have to...*

She balls up the paper and tosses it in the trash. Professor
Tate, stops cleaning and sits on top of one of the desks -

PROFESSOR TATE
A cracked door can be opened,
Sally.

SALLY
A character from *Star Trek* isn't
going to convince me to willingly
fall for some desperate attempt to
convince women that they're all of
a sudden welcome in a field that
looks at us as a weaker, less
intelligent sex...

Removing his glasses, cleaning them with his sweater -

PROFESSOR TATE
And how will that view ever change
if the ones that are meant to
change it, won't?

Crossing her arms -

SALLY
I'm not a pilot. I'm a scientist.

PROFESSOR TATE
And who better to go to space?
That's the point of this bloody
thing... they want *change* Sally.
They want scientists. If it's a
sideshow, make it *your* sideshow...
and let's be honest, the odds of
them actually replying are slim to
none anyway...

Smirking -

SALLY
Is that a threat or a promise?

Professor Tate sighs, shakes his head and puts his glasses
back on -

PROFESSOR TATE
It's always the ones with a gift
that never want to give it away...

EXT. TENNIS COURT - STANFORD UNIVERSITY - MOMENTS LATER

The courts are EMPTY. With the exception of Sally. WE CAN SEE
just beyond/below the tennis court... a HUGE crowd of women
has gathered on the east lawn as Nichelle Nichols takes to
the podium... A NASA banner is hanging overhead.

Sally is working up a SWEAT -- SWATTING tennis balls as they
SHOOT out of the ball machine. She CHARGES them, trying to
get out her pent-up energy.

EAST LAWN

The large crowd applauds. Nichelle is sporting NASA'S in
flight suit. She adjusts the microphone as the clapping dies
down.

NICHELLE
Thank you so much... As I look out
at all of you...
(MORE)

NICHELLE (CONT'D)
I can't help but feel hope and
pride knowing that you answered my
call for a higher purpose...

TENNIS COURT

Sally ROLLS her eyes as she listens to the speech echo out
from the microphone as she HITS another incoming ball.

EAST LAWN

NICHELLE (CONT'D)
What defines us as a species?
Unlike the animals that roam on the
planet, mankind has always
questioned itself... *Who are we?*

TENNIS COURT

Listening -

SALLY
Oh god...

EAST LAWN

NICHELLE
Where do we come from? From the
time of cavemen who carved their
questions into the rocks, to the
Egyptians who created unearthly
gods to explain their existence...
(beat)
These records of human history, *man*
always left one imoporatant thing
out...
(beat)
WOMEN.

TENNIS COURT

Sally stops hitting the tennis balls. BEAT. That resonates.

EAST LAWN

NICHELLE (CONT'D)
Women have been ruled out when it
comes to questioning. We've been
subjected to assisting rather than
participating in these quests for
the questions to life...
Ironically, we're the ones that are
responsible for growing it...

TENNIS COURT

WE WATCH Sally CROSS the court. She turns off the ball machine. LISTENS... before heading to the chain link fence that looks out below the east lawn to watch Nichelle give the rest of her speech.

EAST LAWN

NICHELLE (CONT'D)

I'm not here to tell you that you should apply to NASA because I think that it's ready for women. I'm here to ask you to apply because I think that it's the only way we can begin to write our own history... and define who we really are...

Nichelle steps away from the mic and the crowd ERUPTS with applauds. There's an application booth beside the stage, students are swarming to it.

TENNIS COURT

OFF SALLY.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SALLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON THE NASA, "MISSION SPECIALIST" APPLICATION. It's thin. A pen is being tapped over and over again.

LINDA (O.S.)

What happens to us if you're accepted?

WIDE: Sally and Linda are sitting up in bed as Sally attempts to fill out the application.

SALLY

I'm not allowed to talk to you if I'm at NASA?

LINDA

You know what I mean...

SALLY

...The odds of them actually responding are not in my favor.

Linda sighs. Sally glances over, looking at Linda's troubled face.

SALLY (CONT'D)
If you don't want me to fill it
out, I won't...

Sally takes the application... folds it up, stuffs it in her drawer. Linda relaxes. Sally turns the light off.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ON SALLY staring up at the ceiling, unable to sleep. She glances over at Linda sleeping... then... slips out of bed...

INT. LIVING ROOM - SALLY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE ON THE NASA, "MISSION SPECIALIST" APPLICATION.

WIDE: Sally lying on her shag carpet. She's WATCHING the BIONIC WOMAN outrunning THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN. There's a pint of ice cream beside her. She stops tapping her pen and eats a spoon full of ice cream. She glances down at the application and flips it over... they ask for her medical history, her academic record, any legal offenses... AND...

A LIST OF: REFERENCES. She taps her pen on the paper again... her hand wants to write but her mind doesn't... The pen waivers over the paper... until... she FOLDS it and closes it in her book. She PEERS up at the screen, her head resting in her hands... THE SIX MILLION DOLLAR MAN is professing his LOVE to the BIONIC WOMAN, he's telling her that, *they're two sides of the same coin and no matter how hard she tries she won't be able to deny it.* Sally internalizes this, she glances over at her book and OPENS it. She PULLS the paper out... and PEERS at the blank REFERENCES... she jots down: JOHN TOMPKINS.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

ON ASTRONAUT COMMANDER JOHN W. YOUNG. He's sporting a helmet that is mic'd up. He NODS. John is strapped inside a GIMBLE RIG. His left hand rests on the radio transmission switch as his right clings to a nitrogen jet controller. He gives a THUMBS UP to the test engineer and PULLS BACK igniting the JETS. The test engineer begins rotating the RIG.

WIDE: Johnson Space Center's Director Chris Kraft, is watching/sitting silently in the corner.

The three caged RIG BEGINS to SPIN... John is piloting the AXIS of the machine as the SPINNING BUILDS.

REVERSE ANGLE... WE'RE SPINNING FAST, WE CAN SEE John's reflection in motion from across the room on the glass... WE DOLLY TOWARD IT...

INT. STATISTICAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

WE'RE ON THE OPPOSITE side of the glass in a room full of NASA specialists, recording his reaction time, and his ability to control the rig is jotted down. James is watching John Young maneuver the rig. George ENTERS and stands next to James -

GEORGE ABBEY

(to James)

Out of the twenty five thousand applications we sent out, eight thousand came back...

James doesn't seem to care too much, he's locked onto the astronaut on the other side of the glass.

JAMES C. FLETCHER

Well... anyone that stood out?

(pointing at the rig)

Anyone that could ride that?

GEORGE ABBEY

I'm sure with training... I want to narrow the selection down-

JAMES C. FLETCHER

Majors in Astrophysics should be the first to qualify...

Putting his hands in his pockets -

GEORGE ABBEY

I did. That doesn't narrow it down too much. I was thinking we could interview the applicants references to sharpen our focus...

Through the glass WE SEE the rig come to a halt. John Young PULLS his helmet off and gives a thumbs up through the glass. James smiles with pride at the astronaut. George looks frustrated.

GEORGE ABBEY (CONT'D)

Is that a yes?

JAMES C. FLETER

Do what you have to. We just need a handful of women that won't cry at the first sign of challenge... We still need men to do the dirty work...

James EXITS. George stays in front of the glass watching John who is getting unbuckled from the rig. Chris pats him on the back like an endearing father. James ENTERS and gives John a hearty embrace. George looks down.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. TENNIS COURT - STANFORD UNIVERSITY - AFTERNOON

ANGLE ON a TENNIS RACKET as it SMACKS the tennis BALL... WE HEAR a GROAN...

WIDE: WE'RE WATCHING a women's doubles match. STANFORD vs. USC. Sally wipes her sweaty hair from her face and looks up at the score... 45 to 35. She and Linda (same team) look exhausted as the BALL is SMACKED back to their side... Sally lunges for it, HITS it back... a SWATTING MATCH ENSUES.

The spectators in the stands are glancing back and forth as the ball is quickly hit from one side of the court to the other. One observer in the stands ISN'T looking at the ball, but at Sally...

It's JOHN TOMPKINS. His sunglasses don't give away his glare but his lack of head movement does.

ON THE COURT: Sally SLAMS the BALL across the NET SCORING. They're tied 45 - 45. Linda embraces her. Sally smiles, she glances out at the stands and raises her racket up, competitively. Her smile morphs as her eyes lock onto John...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TENNIS COURT - STANFORD UNIVERSITY - POST GAME

Spectators are flooding out of the stands... Stanford WON. John stands with his hands in his pockets, staring at Sally on the court. Sally wipes her face with a towel as Linda pulls it away from her, playfully -

LINDA

I'm going to go home... Should we meet up tonight?

Sally glances up at the stands, John is GONE. Glancing around...

SALLY
Sure...

Linda slides her hand across Sally's back.

LINDA
I'll see you tonight...

Linda EXITS. Sally crouches down with her back turned away from the stands.

JOHN TOMPKINS (O.S.)
So the girl with the big mind
decided to use it after all...

Her eyes are searching for words, reluctant to turn around.
BEAT. Sally turns and takes John in.

SALLY
...I was expecting you to be
wearing a red army hat.

John pulls his sunglasses off, his emotions on his sleeve -

JOHN TOMPKINS
I wasn't gone that long. I looked
for you when I came back...

Holding back -

SALLY
I know.

JOHN TOMPKINS
I wrote-

SALLY
I know.

Shrugging -

JOHN TOMPKINS
That's all you can say?

SALLY
What am I supposed to say?

JOHN TOMPKINS
Did you read any of my letters?

Defensively -

SALLY

...No.

John shakes his head in disbelief -

JOHN TOMPKINS

I was expecting you to be
welcoming, but instead I find the
exact girl I left on the rooftop.

SALLY

My emotions can't change all of a
sudden just because you decided to
pop back into my life.

JOHN TOMPKINS

Pop back in? Sally... you *popped*
back in, not the other way around.
Writing my name down as a reference
wasn't a probability. It was a
definite outcome. You knew that.

Picking up her tennis bag starts walking, John follows -

SALLY

I'm past probabilities.

JOHN TOMPKINS

I know. And I know you'd be great
at NASA... I told them you were
brilliant.

Finally letting her guard down a bit -

SALLY

You did?

JOHN TOMPKINS

Of course. What did you think I'd
say?

(beat)

...Or did you put me down as a
reference thinking I'd be an ass? I
know how you like to self sabotage
yourself...

Glancing down -

SALLY

I put you down because...

(beat)

Because I saw myself in you.

JOHN TOMPKINS
I still see myself in you.
Sally...

Sally looks back up at him, her arms crossed protectively.
She heads toward the EXIT. John continues to follow.

JOHN TOMPKINS (CONT'D)
Have dinner with me.

SALLY
(torn)
...I can't.

JOHN TOMPKINS
Tomorrow then.

SALLY
...I can't any time soon.

Coming to a halt -

JOHN TOMPKINS
So this is it then? You can just
walk away?

SALLY
(upset)
You walked away.

Boiling point -

JOHN TOMPKINS
When I came back home you were
gone. You ran. You're still
running. ...You spend all these
hours analyzing the stars,
searching for some sort of
meaning... and the irony is, you
can't even analyze yourself...

Sally's face is flushed, upset -

SALLY
Are you finished?

Regretfully -

JOHN TOMPKINS
I'm sorry.

Sally turns away from John, hurt, she opens the chain link
door, EXITING.

INT. FRONT DOOR - LIVING ROOM - SALLY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sally drops her tennis bag onto the ground and leans against the door, hurt/angry. She rubs her face and heads across the room. Turns the radio on...

"BLUE BAYOU" by LINDA RONSTADT BEGINS TO PLAY OVER:

INT. SALLY'S SMALL HOUSE - SILICON VALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

"BLUE BAYOU" by LINDA RONSTADT CONTINUES TO PLAY OVER:

Sally grabs her jewelry box... she DUMPS out ALL of John's letters onto the floor and sits. She takes one of the envelopes and steadies it in her hand. BEAT. She OPENS it and begins to read... After a few lines she shakes her head in frustration and BALLS the letter up, THROWING it across the room.

--KNOCKING--

BEAT.

SALLY
(shouting)
Go away.

--KNOCKING--

Standing up -

SALLY (CONT'D)
I said, GO AWAY!

--KNOCKING--

Sally shakes her head and STORMS OUT INTO-

INT. FRONT DOOR - LIVING ROOM - SALLY HOUSE

"BLUE BAYOU" by LINDA RONSTADT CONTINUES TO PLAY OVER:

Sally kicks her tennis bag away from the door...

SALLY
(opening the door)
What part of go away don't you
unders-

GEORGE ABBEY is standing in front of her. His eyes glance around her house as the music blasts.

GEORGE ABBEY
Have I come at a bad time?

SALLY
Are you looking for someone?

Trying to talk over the music -

GEORGE ABBEY
Yes. I'm George Abbey... from NASA.

Pulling her tennis headband off -

SALLY
Oh, gosh... Hi... hold- just hold
on a minute...

Sally CLOSES the door in George's face. She TURNS the music off and returns to the door, OPENING it.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Sorry about that...

GEORGE ABBEY
Music is good for the soul.

SALLY
Yeah... Yeah it is... Come in-

George ENTERS. Looks around. Sally gestures toward the couch -

SALLY (CONT'D)
Do you want to sit?

Removing his hat -

GEORGE ABBEY
Thank you.

George takes a seat on her couch.

SALLY
You thirsty? All I have right now
is water... but I can put ice in
it...

GEORGE ABBEY
I'm fine.

Sally sits across from him, Indian style.

SALLY
I'm almost afraid to ask...

GEORGE ABBEY
You play tennis?

Leaning forward -

SALLY
You tell me...

Smiling -

GEORGE ABBEY
You do... you spent your youth
playing and then pursued it as a
profession before switching gears
into science.

SALLY
Well, actually, it was always
both... Why did you ask if you knew
already?

GEORGE ABBEY
Just a way of getting you to relax.

Sally takes this in, processing it, analyzing it. George can tell that she's in her head.

GEORGE ABBEY (CONT'D)
I'm not here to give you bad news.
I'm here to invite you to Johnson
Space Center for two weeks. All
expenses paid of course...

SALLY
For... a tryout?

GEORGE ABBEY
For medical tests, interviews...
the gamut.

Sally is mulling it over. BEAT. She shakes her head.

SALLY
I don't know.

George can tell that she's almost too smart for her own good.

GEORGE ABBEY
Sally... We had over eight thousand
submissions. I narrowed it down to
two hundred and eight.
We're inviting ten groups. Twenty
applicants per group...

SALLY

How many are women?

GEORGE ABBEY

Twenty one.

SALLY

I'm sure you'll find one then...

GEORGE ABBEY

It's not about finding someone to fill a position... it's about finding the one that will prove that women have a place in space.

SALLY

Valentina Tereshkova proved that already.

GEORGE ABBEY

I mean the first *American* woman. And in Valentina Tereshkova's case she flew once and Russia made sure she never flew again. I'm talking about a permanent place in history and in space for women...

Sally stands up, unsure, arms crossed, thinking.

GEORGE ABBEY (CONT'D)

What do you have to lose?

HARD CUT TO:

INT. FRENCH RESTAURANT - EVENING

ON LINDA smiling across a candlelit table in an upscale restaurant.

LINDA

If I knew we were coming here I would have dressed up...

WIDE: Sally and Linda are siting at a corner table.

SALLY

It's pretty dark, I doubt anyone is paying attention to us...

Reaching over, playfully -

LINDA
Is that why you brought me here? So
we can hide in public...

Sally PULLS her hand away. She swallows, straightens up.
Linda peers at her, trying to read her face.

LINDA (CONT'D)
What?

Reluctantly, Sally looks down, she fiddles with her napkin,
before -

SALLY
I... I've been invited to NASA.

LINDA
For what?

SALLY
...To be evaluated.

BEAT. Realizing what she means -

LINDA
...I can't believe you.
(raising her voice)
You said you weren't going to
apply!

Glancing around -

SALLY
Shhhhhh-

LINDA
I don't care! I really DON'T CARE.
You're never going to find
happiness if you keep hiding who
you are...

Lowering her voice -

SALLY
I'm not hiding...

Laughing -

LINDA
That's the saddest part... You
don't even realize you're doing
it...

Sally looks down. Linda stands up, grabs her napkin and tosses it in Sally's face -

LINDA (CONT'D)
Screw you Sally Ride...

Sally watches Linda STORM out. She glances around, everyone in the restuarant is staring at her. Embarrassed, she turns her head toward the window.

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA BEGINS TO PLAYS OVER:

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BUS - ROAD 1 - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA CONTINUES PLAYS OVER:

WE PAN ACROSS an ARRAY of FRESH FACED MEN. ALL of their ATTENTION is FOCUSED ON... SALLY as she stares out of the window.

EXT. BUS - ROAD 1 - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - HOUSTON TEXAS - MORNING

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by CONTINUES SANTANA PLAYS OVER:

WIDE: A (NASA) BUS ZOOMING DOWN a DIRT ROAD PASSING a SIGN that reads: NATIONAL AERONAUTICS & SPACE ADMINISTRATION.

Just BEYOND it is a sprawling array of massive facilities buildings.

EXT. BUS - ROAD 1 - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Sally EXITS the bus with the other candidates. She LOOKS UP at a scaled to life model of a NASA JET mounted with a SHUTTLE that sits stoically in front of the main facility as a promise for the future.

GEORGE ABBEY
Welcome to NASA. Can I have
everyone inside please... We're
going to give you a briefing on the
shuttles and their operations...

George notices Sally lingering/gazing at the staged jet/shuttle. He SMILES.

INT. SMALL WHITE ROOM - NASA - MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE ON a WHITE CHAIR in the middle of a small empty white room. There's a stationary camera mounted across the room, focused on the chair. Sally is ESCORTED IN. She is wearing ONLY a BRA and SHORTS. The escort exits. Sally folds her arms uncomfortably.

OVER SPEAKER: *Ms. Ride...*

Sally glances around.

OVER SPEAKER: *Have a seat, please.*

Sally sits. Her eyes wander around.

OVER SPEAKER: *Eyes forward.*

Sally sits up, suspiciously glancing around. Then looks forward. a BULB FLASHES. She BLINKS.

SALLY
(rubbing her eyes)
Jesus! You could've warned me...

OVER SPEAKER: *Two more. Turn to your right please.*

Sally turns to her right, still blinking.

OVER SPEAKER: *Eyes open.*

Sally reluctantly OPENS her eyes wide. The bulb FLASHES. She cups her eyes.

SALLY (CONT'D)
(groaning)
Good god... Does it have to be so
bright?

OVER SPEAKER: *One more. To your left please...*

Sally squints and turns to her left. The BULB FLASHES.

INT. MEDICAL DEPARTMENT - NASA - MOMENTS LATER

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA picks back up, PLAYING OVER:

ANGLE ON BLOOD being extracted.

WIDE: Sally sitting on the bed, in NASA issued training clothes.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - MEDICAL DEPARTMENT - NASA - AFTERNOON

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA CONTINUES PLAYING OVER:

Sally is JOGGING on a treadmill as two physicians jot down notes.

INT. BATHROOM - MEDICAL DEPARTMENT - NASA - DAY

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA CONTINUES PLAYING OVER:

Sally rolls her eyes as she urinates into an official NASA test cup. She OPENS the door and hands it to the physician.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA CONTINUES PLAYING OVER:

A physician is EXAMINING Sally's EYES and EARS. Afterward, she reads off the alphabet across the room.

INT. MRI SCANNER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

"BLACK MAGIC WOMAN" by SANTANA CONTINUES PLAYING OVER:

ON Sally lying on the MRI machine as it SLIDES into the scanner.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. INDOOR TRACK - NASA - MORNING

Sally is JOGGING LAPS with the other (all male) candidates. Two physicians are observing. Sally is out in front... Her face is FLUSHED. She's clearly been jogging for awhile. As she rounds the TURN -- her EYES lock onto the massive GLASS window, where the COLUMBIA ORBITER astronauts are watching John Young their Commander ride the RIG... Sally SLOWS her JOG, to a WALK... The other candidates PASS her as she STOPS and HEADS toward the window, watching...

INT. GEORGE ABBEY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

George and James are standing at his window that overlooks the indoor track.

JAMES C. FLETCHER
What is she doing?

GEORGE ABBEY
She's intrigued...

JAMES C. FLETCHER
She's distracted. Get rid of her.

GEORGE ABBEY
She had the best performance out of
every candidate so far...

Staring at Sally below, skeptically -

JAMES C. FLETCHER
Has she had her psych evaluation?

GEORGE ABBEY
Not yet.

JAMES C. FLETCHER
I want her to have two. Something's
not right with her...

GEORGE ABBEY
Not right?

JAMES C. FLETCHER
She needs to follow orders.

GEORGE ABBEY
They're just warming up...

JAMES C. FLETCHER
Exactly. *She's not. She's too busy*
spying on our astronauts...

Frustrated, George tightens his jaw.

GEORGE ABBEY
She's smart. And... clearly
improvises... why don't you go down
and meet her... evaluate her for
yourself...

James looks over, nonplussed.

INT. INDOOR TRACK - NASA - CONTINUOUS

Sally is WATCHING the COLUMBIA ORBITER Astronaut crew and John Young in the RIG. Astronaut, OWEN (40) NOTICES Sally through the window... He NUDGES his fellow crew members. Sally SMILES. Knowing they're American HEROES.

Owen CROSSES the room and LIFTS his shirt up jokingly gesturing her to do the same. He SHAKES his BARE titties at her. His fellow astronauts LAUGH. Sally BACKS UP, insulted...

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)
Sally...

Sally TURNS. BEHIND THE GLASS: The Columbia crew straightens up. Owen puts his shirt down. John finishes his run on the rig. They help him off.

GEORGE ABBEY (CONT'D)
This is James Fletcher. He's NASA'S administrator. Normally you can find him in Washington, but he's been hands on with this particular project.

Shaking his hand -

SALLY
(to James)
Hello...

James turns Sally's hand over, looking at it.

JAMES C. FLETCHER
You have a very firm hand shake.

SALLY
This is my tennis hand...

JAMES C. FLETCHER
That's right. I was told you're an athlete... Why aren't you running?

Gesturing toward the glass -

SALLY
Is that the crew for the *Columbia*?

JAMES C. FLETCHER
(proudly)
Yes...

Sally turns, looks at the crew, her eyes sharpen. John Young GLANCES over.

JAMES C. FLETCHER (CONT'D)
They're the best astronauts in the world... If you're lucky enough you'll be able to work with them in some capacity.

Sally SIZES them up, looks unimpressed. Owen looks away from her, embarrassed. John Young stares her down. She turns back toward James -

SALLY
I should probably catch up with the other candidates...

Sally jogs off/around the track. James GLARES.

JAMES C. FLETCHER
I want her gone.

GEORGE ABBEY
She still has to complete the evaluation. ...If she passes, it's only fair that she's hired.

JAMES C. FLETCHER
Do you want to chaperone her to make sure she stays on task?
Because I won't.

George GLANCES over at Sally RUNNING on the track. She NOTICES and WAVES. He WAVES back, as she accidentally gives the candidate in front of her a flat tire. James STORMS OFF.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. PSYCH ROOM - NASA - MORNING

ON SALLY as she sits on a big comfy couch. Looking nervous.

MALE ANALYST (O.S.)
Your name is Sally Kristen Ride...
Is that correct?

SALLY
That's correct.

WIDE: WE'RE IN what looks like a cozy living room... WHEN WE PULL BACK FURTHER WE CAN SEE that it's a mock living room. WE'RE actually in the cold Johnson Center medical facility. The analyst is a man. He looks stern as he sits across from Sally in a chair with a pad and pencil.

MALE ANALYST
Your childhood in Encino, California... How would you describe it using one word?

Smiling -

SALLY
Warm.

MALE ANALYST
And your childhood?

SALLY
Using one word?

MALE ANALYST
Yes.

Pondering -

SALLY
Happy.

MALE ANALYST
Your parents?

Contemplating -

SALLY
Kind.

MALE ANALYST
The first love of your life?

Sally swallows. Thinking. LONG BEAT.

MALE ANALYST (CONT'D)
Sally?

SALLY
...Competition.

The analyst jots this down. Sally watches him.

MALE ANALYST
Would you excuse me?

The analyst gets up, sets his pad down and EXITS. Sally watches him leave. She relaxes into the couch, rubbing her face. BEAT. The door OPENS... A woman ENTERS. She takes the male analyst's seat and sits, using his pad and pencil.

FEMALE ANALYST
Now, where were we?

Sally peers at her and then back at the door, completely confused.

FEMALE ANALYST (CONT'D)
Your first love was your
competition... Were you in love
with yourself?

This throws Sally off.

SALLY
I... I don't think so.

Sally glances back at the door. *Where did the man go?*

FEMALE ANALYST
Count backwards by nine for me
please... starting NOW-

Scattered -

SALLY
Uh -
108... 99... 90... 81, 72, 63...
54, 45, 36, 27... 18, 9... 0.

FEMALE ANALYST
Incorrect. ...You started with, *UH*.
Uh, isn't in the alphabet.

Sally leans forward, starting to get frustrated.

FEMALE ANALYST (CONT'D)
Why do you think you're special?

SALLY
I don't.

FEMALE ANALYST
Yes you do. NASA doesn't hire
people that aren't special... You
must think you're special or
wouldn't have applied. Be honest
and tell me about yourself...

SALLY
...I'm smart. I like competition.
If you teach me something I'll
master it and do it better than
you...

The analyst jots this down.

FEMALE ANALYST
Do you think you think like a man?

SALLY

No.

FEMALE ANALYST

So you think like a woman.

SALLY

Yes.

FEMALE ANALYST

Do you *like* women?

Sally's eyes dart down to the ground. Wanting to say, YES.

SALLY

No.

FEMALE ANALYST

Have you ever been attracted to a woman?

Sally forces herself to peer up at the analyst. Unsure.

SALLY

(beat)

No...

FEMALE ANALYST

Would you say you know who you are as an individual?

Sally waivers, then -

SALLY

Yes...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. RESCUE SPHERE - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - AFTERNOON

WE LOOKING THROUGH a GLASS WINDOW at a RESCUE SPHERE (a small yard wide, inflated fabric ball). WE DOLLY INTO the ROOM... and get right on top of the ball.

INT. RESCUE SPHERE - CONTINUOUS

ON SALLY STUFFED INSIDE. She's wearing a helmet, hooked up to oxygen. It's a STRESS TEST. She's staring straight ahead, counting each breath.

INT. RESCUE SPHERE - AN HOUR LATER

SUPER: AN HOUR LATER...

SWEAT has FORMED on Sally's face. She CLOSES her EYES.

INT. RESCUE SPHERE - FIVE HOURS LATER

SUPER: FIVE HOURS LATER...

Sally's eyes are still CLOSED. Her face is FLUSHED covered in SWEAT.

FEMALE ANALYST (V.O.)
*Would you say you know who you are
as an individual?*

Sally's EYES OPEN. Her breathing accelerates.

FEMALE ANALYST (V.O.)
*Would you say you know who you are
as an individual?*

Sally begins to PUSH against the sphere...

FEMALE ANALYST (V.O.)
*Would you say you know who you are
as an individual?*

Sally PUSHES with ALL of MIGHT... and... then... SCREAMS.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. DINNER TABLE - DALE & CAROL RIDE'S HOUSE - EVENING

Dale, Carol and Bear are fixing their plates. There's an EMPTY chair and an empty plate... Dale glances at it, sighs.

DALE RIDE
Did she come down at all today?

CAROL RIDE
She did once, this morning...

BEAR RIDE
Should I go get her?

Dale shakes his head, sets his plate down, wipes his mouth. He grabs the empty plate and begins to fix it with food.

EXT. ROOF - MOMENTS LATER

Sally is sitting on the roof staring up at the stars, she looks tired.

DALE RIDE
Am I invited?

Sally TURNS. Her father is holding a plate of food and a blanket. He walks over sits beside her.

DALE RIDE (CONT'D)
I figured you'd be hungry...

SALLY
I'm not. But, thanks dad.

Peering up at the sky -

DALE RIDE
What are we looking at tonight?

Sally shrugs.

DALE RIDE (CONT'D)
Sometimes not looking at anything in particular can be a good thing... I think people can get so focused on one aspect of something that they forget the bigger picture.

Sally takes a deep breath.

DALE RIDE (CONT'D)
...Whatever happened at NASA doesn't make you who you are.

Sally looks down and over at her father. Dale puts his arm around her.

DALE RIDE (CONT'D)
In all my years of teaching political science there's one thing I can definitively say about life... *It chooses us, not the other way around.*

SALLY
(beat)
What if life wants to change you?

DALE RIDE

That's evolution. We all have to
change one way or another in order
to survive...

Sally leans against her father and peers back up at the stars.

**"GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" by ELTON JOHN BEGINS TO PLAY OVER
AND INTO:**

INT. GYM - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MORNING

**"GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" by ELTON JOHN CONTINUES PLAYING
OVER:**

ON JAMES FLETCHER peering up at something with his arms crossed. WIDE: James is standing in front of the newly constructed WOMEN'S LOCKER ROOM. James watches a man hammer in the WOMEN ONLY SIGN. James is HOLDING his briefcase tightly. Chris Kraft is standing beside him.

CHRIS KRAFT
I'll walk you out...

James nods, puts his hand on Chris's shoulder.

INT. GEORGE ABBEY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

**"GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" by ELTON JOHN CONTINUES PLAYING
OVER:**

George is going through a pile of candidate evaluations... He adjusts his glasses. ON final assessment list of evaluations RANKED BY SCORE: SALLY'S NAME IS #1.

INT. BOARD ROOM - NASA - MOMENTS LATER

**"GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" by ELTON JOHN CONTINUES PLAYING
OVER:**

George is talking to the rest of the selection board. WE SEE CAROLYN HUNTOON (40's brunette, MEMBER OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE) for the first time. George gestures the number 6. Through the glass as James and Chris walk by... James stops, SEES Sally's name at the top of the list on the projection illuminating on the wall. George NOTICES...

EXT. BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

"GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD" by ELTON JOHN FADES OUT...

EXITING, to James -

GEORGE ABBEY

Where are you going? You both you
should sit in for this...

JAMES C. FLETCHER

I've resigned, George. I knew it
was selection day so, I figured I'd
call you once I'm back in
Washington...

GEORGE ABBEY

That's it? You're just done...
Just like that?

CHRIS KRAFT

James needs a break, George. I
think he's earned that. Dr.
Lovelace is stepping in as
Administrator...

James is peering at the projection through the glass, coming
from the board room. Noticing, turning, pointing -

GEORGE ABBEY

Sally came in first. We can't deny
her...

Defeatedly -

JAMES C. FLETCHER

...I know.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - SALLY'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

ON THE telephone sitting next to Sally's nightstand beside
her clock. It's 5 A.M. The PHONE BEGINS TO RING...

WIDE: Sally isn't home. The bed is neatly made and EMPTY. The
PHONE continues to RING...

EXT. OPEN FIELD - ENCINO, CA - MOMENTS LATER

Sally (in pajamas) is sitting in an orange tree, WATCHING the
sun come up over the mountains. It's peacefully quiet.

CAROL RIDE (O.S.)
...SAAALLY!

Sally TURNS. Carol is in a ROBE RUNNING down their dirt road toward her... Sally hops down from the tree, concerned.

SALLY
Mom!?

Out of breath -

CAROL RIDE
It's NASA...

INT. KITCHEN - DALE & CAROL RIDE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Sally RUSHES INSIDE... Carol is on her heels out of BREATH. Dale ENTERS the kitchen.

DALE RIDE
What's wrong?

Pointing at the phone -

CAROL RIDE
Shhhhh! *It's NASA...*

Grabbing the phone -

SALLY
Hello?

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)
Sally?

SALLY
Yes...

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)
That job you applied for at Nasa...
Do you still want it?

Sally LEANS against the wall to keep her legs from buckling... Carol is clinging onto her glass of water, Dale is FROZEN.

SALLY
I thought you'd never ask...

Dale and Carol EMBRACE knowing their daughter's life will never be the same.

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)

Good. ...We need you to report immediately to Washington. We're holding a press conference to introduce the AsCans...

SALLY

AsCans?

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)

Astronaut candidates... Just because you're chosen doesn't instantly make you an astronaut... We'll prep you to be ready for any questions the press may throw at you...

Deflating -

SALLY

What kind of questions?

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)

Anything, everything... What you eat for breakfast, what's your favorite color... who are you dating... that kinda stuff... You'll be fine...

SALLY

Right... Thanks.

Sally HANGS UP. Concerned.

CAROL RIDE

I thought it was good news...

SALLY

They want to hold a press conference...

Putting his arm around her -

DALE RIDE

That's great! It's not like you have anything to hide...

OFF SALLY.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - NASA HEADQUARTERS - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

TIGHT ON THE NASA LOGO. WE HEAR a MICROPHONE SCREECH and then tapped -

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)
Testing...
(clearing his throat)
We're good.

WIDE: GEORGE ABBEY (HEAD OF SELECTION BOARD and HEAD OF FLIGHT OPERATIONS), CHRIS KRAFT (DIRECTOR at JOHNSON SPACE CENTER) and CAROLYN HUNTOON (40's brunette, MEMBER OF THE SELECTION COMMITTEE) and the new ADMINISTRATOR DR. ALAN LOVELACE (40's) are SITTING on a PANEL underneath a MASSIVE NASA LOGO. A SEA of MEDIA from ALL OVER the GLOBE has gathered before them... most of which look unenthusiastic/indifferent.

Whispering to the rest of the panel -

DR. LOVELACE
Should I even say anything?

Looking out at the unimpressed, press -

GEORGE ABBEY
I don't think you'll need to...

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DOWN THE HALLWAY - SAME TIME

TIGHT ON LARGE PHOTOS OF: BUZZ ALDRIN, JOHN GLENN, GUS GRISSOM, ALAN SHEPARD, SCOTT CARPENTER, DEKE SLAYTON... LEGENDS hanging on the wall... WE CONTINUE TO PAN ACROSS STOPPING ON...

SALLY as she moves through the crowded room with the 34 other AsCans (astronaut candidates). She's sweating. She notices everyone is in mildly formal attire, the men are in bell bottomed suits...

Sally spots the five other women chosen... They're in skirts and blouses. Sally is in jeans, converse and a tee shirt. They all glance over at her... Sally wipes her face, and walks toward... RHEA SEDDON (40, blonde), ANNA L. FISHER (30's, brunette), JUDITH RESNIK (30's, brunette), SHANNON LUCID (40's, doughy faced) and KATHERINE SULLIVAN (30's)... Rhea has clearly designated herself as pack leader...

RHEA

(to the group, southern accent)
Well, she certainly looks
comfortable...

Approaching, lighthearted, but nervous -

SALLY

It's good to see some of my kind
here... I wasn't sure there would
be any... I'm Sally-

RHEA

And what *kind* is that?

SALLY

Women...

Looking Sally over -

RHEA

*I'm Rhea. I'm a surgeon... and
that's Anna, she's a chemist... and
Judith...*

JUDITH

I'm an electrical engineer.

SHANNON

*I work in biochemistry... I'm
Shannon.*

KATHRYN

Kathryn... I'm a geologist.

Sally has the least credentials out of the bunch.

RHEA

What do you do, Sally?

Brushing her wild hair from her face, shrugging -

SALLY

I play tennis mostly...

The group looks confused. Sally straightens up -

SALLY (CONT'D)

*I'm working on my doctorate in
astrophysics at Stanford...*

Unimpressed -

RHEA

Oh...

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - CONTINUOUS

The press is chattering away. George taps the microphone and begins...

GEORGE ABBEY

Shall we get started?

The room starts to quiet down. One reporter shouts jokingly -

L.A. TIMES

Why are we here!?

The room laughs. George smirks.

GEORGE ABBEY

I understand all of your curiosity around this conference... and I'm here to tell you that what I'm about to share today is going to change the way you all perceive NASA and what it means to be a part of something bigger...

NEW YORK TIMES

Okay... so why are we here?

The room laughs again. George glances over at Chris Kraft.

CHRIS KRAFT

We're announcing our next flight into space...

Lots of CHATTER from the room.

WASHINGTON POST

The Columbia mission?

GEORGE ABBEY

It's successor... The CHALLENGER.

THE PRESS BEGINS SPEAKING OVER EACH OTHER.

NEW YORK TIMES

Shouldn't NASA focus on one mission at a time?

GEORGE ABBEY

We're fairly comfortable with the
Columbia's progress and it's
crew...

L.A. TIMES

How is the CHALLENGER going to be
any different?

George smiles and glances at Carolyn.

CAROLYN HUNTOON

The crew will be different. For the
first time in history we've chosen
thirty five Astronaut candidates...
the largest NASA class to date.

(beat)

Four of which are minority men and
six are *WOMEN*...

The room BURSTS into a FRENZY. PHOTOGRAPHERS begin to SNAP
RAPID PHOTOS. This is HEADLINE material.

THE TELEGRAPH

(British accent)

So you're telling us that *women*
will be going into space?

GEORGE ABBEY

It's a high possibility, yes...

L.A. TIMES

Would they be flying to assist the
male astronauts? ...Making coffee,
folding clothes?

GEORGE ABBEY

No. They'll be equals.

NEW YORK TIMES

Don't you find it... well,
inappropriate? What will the wives
of our astronauts think?

Speaking up -

GEORGE ABBEY

Hopefully they'll think and feel
that they finally live in a country
of equality...

INT. DOWN THE HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Sally is standing in the corner with the other female AsCans. They're not really talking to her. They're talking amongst each other about which male AsCans are attractive. Staring across the room at STEVEN HAWLEY (20's, lanky, handsome, dirty blonde). He's the only guy in jeans and a tee shirt.

RHEA

God, if I were ten years younger
and single...

ANNA

I hope those reporters don't ask
anything too personal...

Sally sets her glass of water down -

SALLY

Excuse me...

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ANGLE ON Sally SPLASHING her face with water. She looks up in the mirror, stressed. She rubs her temples and exhales. The door OPENS...

STEVE

Ooops, sorry...

Sally glances over -

SALLY

It's fine. I'm leaving...

STEVE

They didn't put a gender sign on
the door...

The towel dispenser is empty. Sally wipes her hands on her jeans, her face still wet -

SALLY

That's because usually there's only
men here...

Steve smiles.

STEVE

I'll come back.

SALLY

I'm done...

STEVE
I think we're going on pretty
soon... *I'm Steve.*

Shaking hands -

SALLY
Sally. I'm not staying...

STEVE
Sorry, I thought you were an
AsCan...

SALLY
I am. Or was...

STEVE
Hey... don't let the first day get
in your head... We're all nervous.
We can't expect to feel normal
right now...

SALLY
I've never felt normal...

STEVE
Here...

Steve pulls out a napkin from his pocket, hands it to her -

STEVE (CONT'D)
I'll stay if you stay.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - CONTINUOUS

AS LIGHTBULBS FLASH -

NEW YORK TIMES
And how will NASA handle the
sleeping arrangements in space? Or
menstruation for that matter?

GEORGE ABBEY
The male astronauts never slept in
the same bed quarters and I don't
expect the women to...

The media CHUCKLES.

L.A. TIMES
When do we get to meet them?

George glances over at his colleagues.

INT. DOWN THE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

ON SALLY, her hair damp from splashing water in her face. A NASA official ENTERS...

NASA OFFICIAL

Alright AsCans... I need everyone
to line up... and grab your name
tag...

Sally GLANCES around for the nearest EXIT. She begins to work
against the crowd moving away from the line. She BUMPS into -

STEVE

Hey... Wait whoa, wait... are you
really leaving?

SALLY

Yeah...

STEVE

What are you so afraid of?

Sally can't answer.

STEVE (CONT'D)

All of that stuff out there... it
has nothing to do with you... They
just want a story... Give them one.

OFF SALLY.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - MOMENTS LATER

LIGHTBULBS FLASH.

GEORGE ABBEY (O.S.)

I want you to all welcome NASA'S
class of 1978...

Sally is walking out behind Steve as the group of 35 are
seated in a long panel on the stage. The MEDIA CLAPS. Sally
looks for an open seat... no one wants to sit directly in the
middle... it's the only open seat left. Sally closes her eyes
and reluctantly sits.

The MEDIA quiets down. Standing on the stage with a
microphone like a proud father is George. Pointing to a
reporter -

GEORGE ABBEY (CONT'D)

We can start in the back...

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Hi... This question is for the female candidates. Do any of you feel pressure to make it in the very coemptive atmosphere that the Johnson Center creates?

Rhea SMILES, leans forward, playing up her alpha attitude for the press -

RHEA

I can only speak for myself... I don't feel any pressure. I think if I'm measured on brains and not brawn, I'll be fine.

MEDIA LAUGHS.

L.A. TIMES

What about you, *Sally*? Feel pressure?

Sally BLINKS. Swallows. GRABS the mic, it SCREECHES. She clears her throat as she gathers courage.

SALLY

Yeah, I... I do.

(beat)

...I think that's what makes us human. If we didn't feel pressure when we're about to take on something bigger than ourselves, then when would we? It's what unites humanity...

THE MEDIA EATS THIS UP. LIGHTBULBS FLASH. George and Carolyn SMILE. Rhea looks annoyed. THE PRESS CHATTERS over each other to ask Sally more questions...

NEW YORK TIMES

What do you hope to gain from all of this?

With a nervous death grip on the microphone -

SALLY

Are we here to gain something?

NEW YORK TIMES

As a woman...

SALLY

Well... I've beaten every man that I've ever been put up against, in science and sports so... maybe you're asking the wrong woman.

Steve smirks. THE MEDIA GOES WILD AGAIN, shouting more questions at Sally -

CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Are you afraid that working in a man's occupation will make you homosexual?

Sally stares at the Chicago Tribune reporter. She's caught very off guard, looks uncomfortable. Like a deer in headlights.

Noticing -

GEORGE ABBEY

Okay, lets move on to some of the other candidates...

Leaning over, whispering -

STEVE

(to Sally)

I'm glad you stayed...

Sally forces a smile.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. COLUMBIA ORBITER - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - MORNING

ON MASSIVE PROPULSION EXHAUST PIPES that BLEED INTO 3 very intricate engines... they're DRIPPING FLUID.

WIDE: THE COLUMBIA ORBITER SHUTTLE is PARKED IN the MASSIVE assembly building. It's connected to various HUGE WIRES and CORDS.

INT. COLUMBIA'S NITROGEN PURGED AFT ENGINE COMPARTMENT - SAME TIME

TIGHT ON AN ENGINEER WEARING A MOUNTED HELMET EQUIPPED WITH A FLASHLIGHT... HE SWEATING PROFUSELY in the dark space. The compartment is TIGHT. He's wiring something together. WE HEAR COUGHING...

WIDE: Three engineers are working tirelessly in the cramped compartment, surrounded by cords and wires. Engineer 2 continues to cough.

Wiping his face -

ENGINEER 1
Goddamn it's hot...

ENGINEER 3
Sooner we finish the better, launch
is just around the corner...

Engineer 2 can't stop COUGHING.

ENGINEER 1
(to engineer 2)
You alright?

Engineer 2 nods. Engineer 3 clears his throat... he's trying not to cough, but can't help it... he starts COUGHING. Drenched in sweat, engineer 1 wipes his face -

ENGINEER 1 (CONT'D)
Let's get it together, come on...

EXT. COLUMBIA ORBITER - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER - AFTERNOON

The second SHIFT of engineers ENTER the assembly facility... They NOTICE ALL of the previous engineers stuff (lunch, watch, hat etc) is still there. They glance at each other.

INT. COLUMBIA'S NITROGEN PURGED AFT ENGINE COMPARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The NEW shift of engineers crawl into the SPACE... They shine a FLASHLIGHT around the wires and FIND the 3 previous engineers DEAD from asphyxiation.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GEORGE ABBEY'S OFFICE - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MORNING

ON GEORGE. He's not blinking. WIDE: He's staring at the white wall across the room, deep in thought. After a LONG BEAT. He EXHALES and covers his face. His secretary ENTERS.

GEORGE ABBEY
Is John Young here yet?

SECRETARY
I don't think so, sir... Want me to
double check?

George SHAKES his head. She EXITS as Chris Kraft ENTERS.

CHRIS KRAFT
I'm sorry George...

GEORGE ABBEY
I'm not the one that needs
apologizing to...

CHRIS KRAFT
Do you know what happened?

Stressed -

GEORGE ABBEY
There were leaks in the main engine
and the thermal protection
system...

CHRIS KRAFT
What about the launch date?

GEORGE ABBEY
Non existent. Not until it's fixed.

CHRIS KRAFT
Have you told John yet?

GEORGE ABBEY
No.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GYMNASIUM - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

WIDE: The AsCans are LINED up in a row. Sally is at the end, closest to the GLASS RIG ROOM. A somber George is standing before them, alongside Carolyn and Chris.

CHRIS KRAFT
Today is your first day of
training. We're going to split you
off into groups...

George NOTICES Astronaut John Young ENTER the RIG ROOM through the glass. Sally glances over. Rhea and the others notices John.

RHEA
(low voice)
I heard they call him,
Moonwalker...

SHANNON
Why's that?

Sally listens in -

RHEA
He was the last man to walk on the
moon...

JUDITH
The rig is the hardest machine at
Nasa...

Sally peers at the RIG as George CROSSES over to the GIMBAL
RIG ROOM and ENTERS.

THROUGH THE GLASS: John looks relaxed at first... Sally and
the other AsCans can't help but WATCH. The glass room is
right beside them. George begins to speak to John... John's
demeanor SHIFTS... He looks very ANGRY and UPSET, POINTING
and SHOUTING. George looks like he trying to calm him down.
Chris and Carolyn NOTICE.

CAROLYN HUNTOON (O.S.)
*Sally, Rhea, Shannon, Anna, Judith
and Kathryn... If you can come with
me...*

John kicks the chair in the RIG ROOM across the floor and
STORMS OUT. George remains in the room. He picks the chair up
from the ground.

CAROLYN HUNTOON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ladies...

Sally snaps out of her gaze as the women FOLLOW Carolyn out
of the GYM.

INT. NEUTRAL BUOYANCY LABORATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sally, Rhea, Shannon, Anna, Judith and Kathryn ENTER behind
Carolyn INTO a large facility with a 12 meter (40-foot) deep
tank. Coming to a HALT in front of the large water tank -

JUDITH
(whispering to the other women)
Should we ask what happened?

RHEA
(whispering)
...No-

SALLY
(to Carolyn)
What happened back there?

Carolyn gathers her thoughts.

CAROLYN HUNTOON
...Three men died working on the *Columbia*. So now, the mission has been postponed. It's a hard thing to hear sometimes and even harder when lives are on the line...

Sally takes this in with the other women.

CAROLYN HUNTOON (CONT'D)
I started at NASA ten years ago. I would've given anything to be in the position you ladies are in... My job here in the beginning was to study how the human body adapts to space flight. ...The problem was, NASA didn't want a *woman* to interact with the astronauts... so I'd have my male assistant take samples and bring them back to me.

(trying not to get
emotional)

You six have an opportunity to change the way we think as a society... It's very important that you look at each other not as competitors, but as sisters...

Rhea glances at Sally remorsefully. Chris Kraft and George ENTER...

CHRIS KRAFT
(to Carolyn)
Did you go over the basics yet?

Straightening up -

CAROLYN HUNTOON
Not yet.

Getting right to business -

CHRIS KRAFT

Ladies, below the water is a replica of the objects and interiors and exteriors of a shuttle that one day you may be on... This simulates the conditions close to the weightlessness of space. We're going to suit you up and you'll have twenty minutes to work as a team to repair a telescope... We'll give you ten minutes to look over the instructions...

SHANNON

(low voice)

Oh, no...

SALLY

What?

SHANNON

(low voice)

I can't swim.

Sally's eyes sharpen on the water.

INT. NEUTRAL BUOYANCY LABORATORY - MOMENTS LATER

"HEY SISTER" by SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO PLAYS OVER:

SALLY and the other women are being FITTED INTO BIG WHITE SPACE SUITS. The last piece is the HELMET... Sally SLIDES her on... The group is signalled to HEAD to the PLATFORM... The women gather on it. The platform LOWERS DOWN INTO THE TANK.

THE MUSIC STOPS.

BUOYANCY TANK:

Sally can only HEAR the sound of her breath and her heartbeat. The BOTTOM IS LIT UP. Her eyes DART around. The others look LOST. The PLATFORM COMES to HALT at the BOTTOM. Sally FORCES herself to SWIM off of it in the heavy suit. The group FOLLOWS her. Shannon BEGINS to FREAK OUT, UNABLE to MOVE. Sally NOTICES, she GRABS her ARM and GOADS her across... Sally GRABS the PLASTIC LINED instructions: Looks at the design. The women huddle around. Rhea heads toward the satellite... EVERYTHING FEELS LIKE IT'S IN SLOW MOTION. Rhea BEGINS wiring the main antenna. Sally KNOWS she's doing it wrong... She shakes her head and POINTS to the opposite end...

Shannon PANICS, she BACKS UP into something, knocking it over... Sally GLANCES at the time they have 10 minutes left. She heads to Shannon and hands her one of the tools to screw in the bottom of the satellite... Sally FORCES Shannon back over and directs her on how to use the tool. Sally turns and begins re-wiring with the others...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. NEUTRAL BUOYANCY LABORATORY - MOMENTS LATER

THE PLATFORM RISES with the group on it, looking disappointed. Sally and the others are weighed down and waterlogged by the suit... Sally crawls on all fours, YANKING her helmet OFF CATCHING her breath. Shannon is CRYING. Sally helps Shannon with her helmet. Sally forces herself to sit up, she looks angry. George and Carolyn NOTICE.

CAROLYN HUNTOON
Why are you upset?

SALLY
We ran out of time.

GEORGE ABBEY
The point of today's training was to see how well you'd work as a group... it was never about fixing the satellite.

CAROLYN HUNTOON
(to Sally)
You're the only one that passed.

Rhea and the others looks surprised.

GEORGE ABBEY
Rule number one at NASA.. Not everything is what it seems.

OFF SALLY.

EXT. SATURN LANE/GEMINI AVENUE - EVENING

ON the OUTSKIRTS of JOHNSON SPACE CENTER... two winding streets known as SATURN LANE and GEMINI AVENUE that consist of PERFECTLY manicured lawns with perfectly positioned single family houses with white picket fences, can be found. This is where all of the astronauts, engineers, technicians and managers are accommodated. Every LEGEND (astronaut) who ever work for NASA has lived on these two streets.

EXT. SALLY'S HOUSE - SATURN LANE - EVENING

Sally is sitting outside in her backyard. She's tossing a tennis ball against the fence... A CAR with loud exhaust PULLS IN ACROSS the street... Sally gets up, peeks over: John Young gets out of his Corvette. His wife and two kids run out of the house. He WARMLY greets them. He the polar opposite of the person he was this morning.

STEVE (O.S.)
So you're a spy, huh?

Sally looses her footing, slips down from the fence. Steve Hawley is her next door neighbor.

SALLY
Looks like you are too...

Steve shrugs. Leans over his fence, holding a beer -

STEVE
This entire week's been an out of body experience... It's like life started over... I'm not in Kansas anymore.

SALLY
Who were you in your *past* life?

STEVE
I graduated top of my class at the University of Kansas...

SALLY
Oh, you're literally from Kansas...

Steve nods, swigs his beer.

STEVE
A have two degrees in physics and astronomy... *but here...* it's like I'm starting from the bottom all over again. It's a psychological game.

(beat)
If I didn't know who I was I'd feel really lost right now...

Sally glances up at the MOON. Tense. *Does she know herself yet?* She picks up her tennis ball.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You leaving? I know I talk too much...

Heading across the lawn -

SALLY
I have an early morning...

Steve swigs his beer, watches her head inside.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - EARLY MORNING

ANGLE ON Sally's orientation map of NASA and a manual on the GIMBAL RIG. She GLANCES UP at the RIG ROOM through the glass...

INT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sally ENTERS. She peers around the room, her eyes move up looking at the RIG, extended in the AIR. She walks closer to it...

JOHN YOUNG (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Sally TURNS. John is standing in the corner.

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
This machine isn't for AsCans...
Especially not women.

Sally looks down at her map and booklet -

SALLY
It doesn't say anywhere that
rookies can't use the RIG.

John grabs her book and tosses it into the trash across the room.

JOHN YOUNG
Yeah, well... some things around
here don't need to be written down.

SALLY
I want to try it.

JOHN YOUNG
You're not a pilot.

SALLY
Mission Specialists still have to
do flight school...

JOHN YOUNG
What are you trying to prove?

SALLY
It's the hardest machine, right?

John SHRUGS. *He knows it is.* Carolyn KNOCKS on the GLASS, motions Sally to come on with the rest of the group.

JOHN YOUNG
Looks like mommy found you...

Sally STARES John down, yanks her booklet from the garbage. John WATCHES her storm out.

INT. NEUTRAL BUOYANCY LABORATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Sally, Rhea, Shannon, Anna, Judith and Kathryn are getting into their space suits.

RHEA
(jokingly)
Didn't expect you to be the flirty type...

SALLY
I wasn't flirting.

SHANNON
Who cares. He's cute...

Focused on getting the heavy space suit on right -

SALLY
I wasn't flirting.

JUDITH
They're all cute... I wonder what their wives think of us?

Sally want's no part of the conversation. She grabs her helmet and heads to the platform and SLIDES her helmet on. She can only HEAR her breathing now. She looks down into the water at her reflection as the rest head over. Carolyn motions for the platform to LOWER DOWN INTO...

INT. WATER TANK - NEUTRAL BUOYANCY LABORATORY - MOMENTS LATER

Rhea SWIMS OFF FIRST and GRABS the instructions, she READS and then... FLOATS them over to Sally... Sally PEERS UP at a large machine jutting from the bottom of the tank almost all the way to the top...

Sally POINTS to the antenna on the instructions and then points to the actual antenna on top of the large device... Sally points to Shannon closest to the tools... Shannon nods and grabs them... Sally motions for everyone to start scaling the machine... Halfway up Shannon LOSES her footing and SLIPS... her helmet hits the side panel HARD... Sally GLANCES back... and RELEASES her GRIP, FLOATING down to Shannon... Shannon is KNOCKED OUT COLD. Sally wraps her arm around her and BEGINS to SWIM to the surface...

EXT. WATER TANK - MOMENTS LATER

Shannon is helped out of the water, Sally right behind her. Sally PULLS her helmet off to catch her breath. Carolyn, George and Chris surround Shannon as she slowly comes to.

CAROLYN HUNTOON
What happened?

SALLY
She slipped...

Sally starts putting her helmet back on...

GEORGE ABBEY
Hey, you don't need to go back down today...

SALLY
I know.
(smiling)
I want to...

Sally TURNS and JUMPS IN FEET FIRST. Chris and Carolyn look impressed. George is dumfounded.

CAROLYN HUNTOON
How many of the men went back?

GEORGE ABBEY
None.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE - HOUSTON, TEXAS - DAY

WE PAN ACROSS a magazine rack... Sally and the AsCans are gracing the cover of PEOPLE, NEWSWEEK, THE L.A. TIMES. WE CONTINUE TO PAN and come to a HALT ON Sally shopping... She reaches for a box of cereal and winces, sore from training, she rubs her neck.

SHOPPER
Oh my god... *Sally Ride*?

Sally looks surprised. The shopper's daughter (9) rushes over to her -

LITTLE GIRL
Can I have your autograph?

SALLY
You really want *my* autograph?

SHOPPER
I can't thank you enough for what you're doing...

Sally glances around in disbelief.

SALLY
I haven't done anything yet...

SHOPPER
Yes you have...
(to daughter)
Honey, tell Sally what you want to be when you grow up...

LITTLE GIRL
An astronaut just like you!

She bends down, eye level with the girl, realizing that she's making an impact -

SALLY
And you know what? ...You will be.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - SALLY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Sally is washing lettuce in the sink. A small television is on playing the original *Star Trek series*. She glances up through the kitchen window as... John Young PULLS INTO THE DRIVEWAY across the street. He HOPS out of his car, finishes his cigarette and heads inside.

OFF SALLY.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

The GYM is EMPTY... INTO FRAME: Sally ENTERS the GYM... walks across to the WINDOW, PEERS IN the at RIG room... it's EMPTY. SHE OPENS the door...

SECURITY
Excuse me... Miss-

Sally turns, she holds up her NASA I.D.

SECURITY (CONT'D)
Have a good night.

INT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sally ENTERS. She BRUSHES her hair from her face and PULLS the manual for the RIG from her back pocket. She slides UP a stool and PEERS up at the MIGHTY MACHINE.

SALLY
Alright *Gimbal*... How do you work?

She OPENS the manual... glances up again... She glances over at the test engineer controls... then heads over to them. She presses a series of buttons as she glances down at her book. The RIG SLOWLY GLIDES DOWN to the floor.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Well that's a start...

She presses another series of codes and the RIG LIFTS and begins to ROTATE... Sally slowly smiles.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. HALL - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - NEXT MORNING

Steve is pushing past fellow NASA employees trying to catch up to someone... He STOPS. THINKS. And then continues... until he catches up to... Sally, who is heading to medical safety class. She's holding the RIG manual, still reading up on it.

STEVE
Hey-

Sally TURNS.

SALLY
Hey.

Nervous -

STEVE

I normally wouldn't be this straight forward... I mean, or... I guess... I'd put more thought into it-

SALLY

Steve. Just say it. We're neighbors.

STEVE

Would you... would want to have dinner with me sometime?

Unprepared -

SALLY

...Oh, okay, sure.

STEVE

You don't want to...

Sally closes her book.

SALLY

I just-

STEVE

No pressure. It's not a date... I just figured since we're neighbors and all...

Sally brushes her hair from her face. She sees how much Steve wants company. Stuffing the RIG manual in her back pocket -

SALLY

...I think it would be fun.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. RESTUARANT - HOUSTON TEXAS - EVENING

Steve PULLS out a chair for Sally. Both are dressed upscale 1978/79 casual. Glancing around -

SALLY

I haven't really been out yet...

STEVE
I know the feeling...
(nervous)
You look really nice.

Smiling -

SALLY
You do too...

The waiter arrives, hands them menus.

WAITER
Good evening. Is this your first
time here?

SALLY
We just moved here...

WAITER
Well, welcome to *APOLLO*... home to
the best astronaut themed food in
Houston...

Sally SMIRKS. Steve mirrors her expression. The waiter
doesn't get it.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Would you like to hear our
specials? ...For starters we have,
John Glenn squash soup and we also
have-

SALLY
I think we're good...

Steve BURSTS into laughter.

Offended -

WAITER
Take your time.

He walks off.

SALLY
(to Steve, jokingly)
I hope I make it to the menu one
day...

BEAT. Steve looks over at Sally as if he can see INTO her.

STEVE

That day when we met... Why did you
want to leave so bad?

BEAT.

SALLY

...I was afraid of the what the
press may ask.

STEVE

What would have been so bad?

She folds her arms protectively.

SALLY

I'm... I guess I'm not... I guess
sometimes... I don't feel like
everyone else...

STEVE

That's why we're *here*. We're not
normal. ...It's a gift. Not a
curse.

Sally looks down.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Is it something else?

Grabbing the menu, forcing a smile -

SALLY

I'm just hungry I think...

Steve can tell there's something else on her mind but doesn't
push it.

STEVE

Flight school starts tomorrow.

SALLY

Who are you hoping to partner up
with?

STEVE

Out of the pilots? God, I don't
know. They all scare me... I heard
John Young is the worst though...
as long as I don't get him, I'm
happy. ...You?

SALLY

He's the worst pilot?

STEVE
He's the best. He'll make you feel
and look like the worst...

Sally's focuses on the menu... on it, *the John Young fried duck.*

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. TARMAC - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MORNING

ON JOHN YOUNG chewing GUM as the STRONG WINDS BLOW his hair around. WIDE: George is standing in front of a microphone. Chris Kraft and Carolyn to his left and right. Along with 8 astronaut PILOTS the old guard in NASA's blue G-suits. BEHIND THEM are eight T-38 SUPER SONIC JETS.

REVERSE ANGLE: The 34 AsCans (also in blue NASA G-suits) looking TERRIFIED. Sally is the only one that looks unafraid among the group.

GEORGE ABBEY
Today is your first flight at NASA.
And although it may not be to the
moon, it's still an experience that
will shape your future here moving
forward... You'll be partnering
with one of our talented astronauts
beside me who will introduce to
your first twin jet flight...

One of the AsCans is so nervous that he breaks from the line and RUSHES OFF to puke in the grass. John Young shakes his head, spits his gum out. Sally focuses on the jets just beyond the pilots...

EXT. TARMAC - MOMENTS LATER

Sally is getting fitted with a parachute. The pilot hands her a helmet -

PILOT
Scared?

Sally SHAKES her head. John Young is two rows over with a nervous rookie. He SEES Sally and her pilot... HEADS OVER:

JOHN YOUNG
(to pilot)
Let me switch with you...

The pilot pats the jet and glances over at Sally who looks shocked -

PILOT
She's all yours Moonwalker...

JOHN YOUNG
Thanks.
(to Sally)
You still want to ride the rig?

SALLY
Ye-

JOHN YOUNG
Don't answer until after the
flight...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. T-38 COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER

ON SALLY wearing on helmet and an oxygen mask with a built in microphone.

FROM TOWER: *"Clear for takeoff Moonwalker... Be safe up there."*

JOHN YOUNG
This shouldn't hurt too much...

Sally GLARES at the back of John's head, refusing to be intimidated. John PULLS BACK ON the controls and THEY TAKE OFF... FAST.... JUTTING INTO THE SKY... Sally GLANCES DOWN as JOHNSON SPACE CENTER as it RAPIDLY gets smaller and smaller.

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
Why'd you apply?

SALLY
Why did you?

JOHN YOUNG
I didn't have to. They wanted me.
...NASA is something that you have
to earn. I earned my place right
here in this cockpit...

Sally ROLLS her eyes. John ABRUPTLY TAKES the T-38 HIGHER... Sally is taken off guard. He MAKES A HARD LEFT and GOES INTO A BARREL ROLL. Sally CLOSES HER EYES. TRYING NOT TO GET SICK. It FEELS LIKE FOREVER. John YELLS in EXHILARATION.

HE STRAIGHTENS OUT...

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
That RIG doesn't feel much
different than this...

SALLY
Except that I'd be in control...

John laughs.

JOHN YOUNG
...You're never in control. First
thing I learned in space... The
elements on and around our world...
*Gravity... The sun... The
atmosphere...* It all wants to keep
you in your place... but once
you're beyond it... you see
everything through different
eyes...

JOHN PULLS UP and the T-38 LIFTS HIGHER... He JERKS it BACK
and does a 360 LOOP. Sally's HEAD FLIES FORWARD. SHE BLINKS,
BREATHING HEAVILY. Laughing -

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
You always breath that loud?

Sally DOESN'T ANSWER. JOHN MAKES A HARD RIGHT and GOES INTO A
SERIES OFF ROLLS. Sally BRACES herself trying to straddle her
arms on each side to the roof. John STRAIGHTENS OUT.

Catching her breath -

SALLY
...You're scared.

JOHN YOUNG
What?

SALLY
You're scared that someone like me
could take your place...

John SHAKES his head.

JOHN YOUNG
I've seen a lot scarier things than
you, honey... Including the RIG.

SALLY
Why would the RIG be scary if you
know how to fly?

JOHN YOUNG

The RIG brings all of your demons out onto the surface. You have to trust yourself enough in it - to make the right move...

Sally GLANCES OUT of the window as Johnson Space center comes into view...

EXT. TARMAC - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

WE WATCH the T-38 LAND and come to a HALT. John SLIDES the hatch OPEN and HOPS OUT, leaving Sally behind. Sally YANKS her helmet off and pulls the oxygen down. Two crew members HELP her OUT. APPLAUDING ENSUES. She GLANCES UP... all of the AsCans are cheering her on for making it out alive. Steve RUSHES OVER -

STEVE

How was he?

Watching John walk away, intrigued -

SALLY

He's an astronaut...

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - LATE NIGHT

TIGHT ON a CONTROL PANEL AS A SERIES OF BUTTONS ARE PRESSED. WIDE: Sally is at the helm. The RIG is SLOWLY ROTATING in a LOOP... She TYPES in a series of commands and the RIG LOWERS. She takes a DEEP BREATH, EXHALES. She looks down, FEEDS the panel a command and puts a timer on it... 20 SECONDS... A BEEP for each SECOND.

Sally crosses the room and takes a SEAT in the RIG. She puts the helmet ON. BUCKLES UP and actually looks SCARED. The BEEPS STOP. Sally's EYES WIDEN. She swallows and PRESSES the The OUTER AXIS ON. ...THE MACHINE BEGINS... Sally PRESSES the nitrogen jet controller and the OTHER THREE AXIS (that she controls) begin to SPIN... it STARTS SLOW... the momentum BUILDS... THE SPINNING BECOMES FASTER. Her BODY BEING JOLTED AROUND VIOLENTLY as SHE MOVES the hand controls around... trying to find a RHYTHM... THE MOTIONS get FASTER... SHE'S NOT IN CONTROL... HER HEAD HITS the CAGE. BOTH of her hands uncontrollably leave the controls... She tries to TURN the 2nd AXIS in the opposite direction to slow it down... in a PANIC, almost hyperventilating... The RIG BEEPS and BEGINS to SLOW DOWN and comes to an abrupt STOP.

Sally YANKS her helmet off... and THROWS it... UPSET. She touches her head... She's BLEEDING.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - SALLY'S HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

TIGHT ON a HUGE GOOSE EGG forming on Sally's scalp... She GROANS...

WIDE: Steve is hovering over Sally as she bends her head over the sink. She hands him a tube of Neosporin as he examines her. He applies it to her lump.

STEVE
I think you'll live...

Standing up straight -

SALLY
I'm sorry I called so late... I just didn't know who else I could-

Flattered -

STEVE
I'm glad you did. ...Was that from the T-38?

Sally shakes her head with a smile.

SALLY
...I rode the Gimbal Rig.

Steve is stunned.

STEVE
Tonight? ...But rookies can't-

SALLY
Rookies don't know how...

Steve smiles in disbelief, looking at Sally as if she'd just stolen a million dollars. His mind is spinning -

STEVE
Whoa... wait, wait... Did you succeed?

Sally shakes her head, disappointed. Steve takes her by the shoulders, looks deeply into her eyes, thunderstruck -

STEVE (CONT'D)
You're the most interesting woman
I've ever met...

Sally stares back at Steve. BEAT. *He understands her.*
Respects her. She leans in and pecks him on the mouth. Then pulls away, embarrassed.

SALLY
I should probably get some sleep...

Steve is at a loss for words. He nods.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - DAY

ALL OF NASA. THE MILITARY ELITE. POLITICIANS. AND THE MEDIA. ARE IN FULL FORM for the catered event. A WELCOME BAND is PLAYING various songs on the manicured lawn.

THE TWINS: COLUMBIA ORBITER (finished) and THE CHALLENGER (unfinished) ARE PULLING UP to JOHNSON SPACE CENTER. Everyone in attendance BEGINS to APPLAUD, impressed by the sheer might and brilliance of the shuttles.

THE SHUTTLES come to a HALT in between the AsCans who are lined up on one side (Sally and Steve next to each other) and the veterans on the opposite side. Sally LOOKS across the field at John as the rest of the rookies take in the shuttles... John is looking up at the Columbia, knowing it's the end of the road. The COLUMBIA will carry the last of the old guard into space. Sally looks up the CHALLENGER, the orbiter that will usher in NASA'S future...

John puts his sunglasses back on and walks off of the field. Sally notices. Sally heads off behind him, Steve grabs her arm -

STEVE
Don't you want to stay for this?

SALLY
I'll be right back...

EXT. BEHIND BUILDING D - MOMENTS LATER

A ROW of GOLF CARTS are parked behind the building. John gets in one and drives off... Sally EMERGES from around the corner of the building. She waits for John to get almost out of sight before hopping in a cart to follow him.

EXT. CATTLE RANGE - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

John parks and EXITS the cart. He walks over the wooden cattle fence and climbs up, sitting on top, looking at the 50 cows and one bull. He lights a cigarette. Sally PULLS UP, surprised to see John looking at COWS. He turns, see her, doesn't react, turns back around. Sally walks over and climbs up the fence and takes a seat beside him.

JOHN YOUNG

...This is the last piece of this place that hasn't changed.

Sally takes her sunglasses off, peers out at the cattle.

SALLY

I didn't know it existed.

John smirks. He butts out his cigarette.

JOHN YOUNG

It's the last trust exercise an astronaut takes before space...

He HOPS down into the pin. Sally glances over at the BULL in the corner as John walks toward it... She sits up, unsure if she should stop him.

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)

Why did you follow me?

Hanging on to the fence -

SALLY

There's something in you that I see in myself...

John listens. No snarky remarks this time.

SALLY (CONT'D)

I feel like you're constantly searching for something...

John bends down, grabs a handful of dirt, he peers up at Sally. *It's the truth.* There's a respect for one another. They *challenge* each other.

JOHN YOUNG

I hope you find it...

Sally absorbs his words. John stands, and heads toward the BULL with his arms OPEN, TRUSTING that he won't HURT HIM. The BULL GRINDS his hoof into ground, kicking up dirt... John KEEPS walking toward him... The BULL MOVES CLOSER...

John closes his eyes... The BULL SMELLS HIM OVER... THEN, WALKS AWAY. Sally EXHALES. John SMIRKS, heads back and SCALES the fence.

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
I have to get to the fireworks...

Sally watches him get into the golf cart, he salutes her sarcastically, lights another cigarette and PEELS OFF.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. BACKYARD - SALLY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sally and Steve are PEERING UP at the STARS. They're on a blanket surrounded by take out cartons. Steve takes her hand, opens her palm and runs his finger along the lines -

SALLY
You going to read it?

STEVE
I can't imagine you ever wanting to play tennis...

SALLY
It was in a different lifetime...

Steve rolls over, staring at her, trying to figure her out.

STEVE
Who are you?

Does she even know?

SALLY
I-
(beat)
I've loved before...

STEVE
We all have.

SALLY
I ...I've loved *women* before.

Steve sits up. Sally EXHALES in what feels like the first time in her life. She's said it out loud.

STEVE
You're gay?

SALLY

Am I?

STEVE

Is this a trick question?

Tears of the truth begin to form in her eyes. She's finally allowing herself to be vulnerable and open.

SALLY

I don't know. ...I don't. ...I've never defined who I was by who I loved. Here... I felt like I had to hide... but I only learned that I've been hiding from myself I think my whole life...

Steve's eyes are watery. He wipes her face and grabs her hand, PULLS her in, EMBRACING her. Sally closes her eyes. HUGS him TIGHTER.

STEVE

Just be you.

SALLY

And who's that?

STEVE

Sally Ride.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. PANEL - PRESS CONFERENCE - NASA - MORNING

LIGHTBULBS FLASH as the MEDIA SNAPS PICTURES of AMERICA'S HEROES: BREWSTER H. SHAW (30's), OWEN K. GARRIOT (40's), ROBERT A. PARKER (40's), URF MERBOLD (30's), BRYAN LICHTENBERG (40's) and their COMMANDER, JOHN YOUNG.

On the stage, holding a mic -

GEORGE ABBEY

Let's start in the back...

TIME MAGAZINE

John, is this your last flight?

JOHN YOUNG

I'm- I'm not sure. When I found out that these shuttles could launch like a rocket and land like a plane, I suddenly felt younger...

The MEDIA LAUGHS.

NEW YORK TIMES
This question is for all of you, do
you feel like NASA is changing for
the better?

All of the astronauts glance at each other.

JOHN YOUNG
Everything changes. Like anything,
like this mission, the fact that
we're going up in a shuttle that
can be re-used is unheard of and
yet... Here we are...

PHOTOGRAPHERS SNAP MORE PHOTOS.

L.A. TIMES
(to John)
So then you have hope for the
future of NASA...

JOHN YOUNG
...Yes.

L.A. TIMES
Do you feel that any of the women
in the new class have any real
chance at making it into space?

JOHN YOUNG
I can't speak for the women. And I
know they wouldn't want me to...

L.A. TIMES
Is that a no, then?

John doesn't react. He stands up and puts his sunglasses back on. Leaning over, talking into the mic -

JOHN YOUNG
Thank you all for coming out...

MEDIA ERUPTS ASKING MORE QUESTIONS ON THE FEMALE CANDIDATES.
John EXITS.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

ON SALLY SITTING IN THE RIG... IT'S BEEPING (counting) DOWN. Her breaths become short as the BEEPS STOP and the RIG BEGINS to SPIN... the ROTATIONS BUILD... THE PITCH TILTS BACK, and the 3rd AXIS SPINS QUICKER... She HAS MORE CONTROL this TIME... SHE'S RELAXING INTO the CHAOS of SPEED... USING her body instead of her mind to REACT.

INT. GEORGE ABBEY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

ANGLE ON COLUMBIA'S MISSION/FLIGHT PAPER WORK... WE PULL BACK ON George MULLING over every detail. He RUBS his eyes and looks at the clock above his door. He gathers all of the documents and puts them away.

INT. STATISTICAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

An engineer ENTERS... he forgot his wallet, he GRABS it then STOPS, LOOKS UP THROUGH the GLASS at SALLY RIDING on the RIG. He PANICS and PICKS UP the PHONE.

INT. GEORGE ABBEY'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

GEORGE grabs his briefcase and hat, he heads to the door... turns off the light about to leave... WHEN... the PHONE RINGS... He SIGHS. Considers not getting before FLICKING the light back ON and answering -

GEORGE ABBEY
...Yes?

George's face washes over with concern.

EXT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

George STORMS toward the GIMBAL RIG ROOM door with two security guards... He GLANCES IN... HE REALIZES it's SALLY. She's MASTERED the RIG.

GEORGE ABBEY
(flustered)
Open the door...

INT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - CONTINUOUS

George ENTERS and RUSHES to the controls, he STOPS the MACHINE... the SPINNING SLOWS...

Sally SEES George STARING at her, impatiently. Sally UNBUCKLES herself and removes her helmet.

GEORGE ABBEY
(pissed)
Are you crazy?

SALLY
I-

GEORGE ABBEY
Don't answer that. ...This room is
for astronauts only... If one thing
had gone wrong-

SALLY
I know, I would've been hurt...

GEORGE ABBEY
Or worse. We don't take risks like
that.

Sally swallows.

SALLY
...I'm sorry.

In disbelief -

GEORGE ABBEY
I have always been an advocate of
yours, Sally. You know that... but
after this... I need-
I need to consider your future here
at NASA.

SALLY
My future? I just mastered a
machine it take years to learn...

GEORGE ABBEY
You can't make the rules up as you
go... We need dependable
astronauts. Not labilities.

There's nothing she can say. She nods.

GEORGE ABBEY (CONT'D)
Go home...

SALLY
Until when?

Hurts to say -

GEORGE ABBEY
Until you can make other
arrangements.

EXT. GIMBAL RIG ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THROUGH THE GLASS WE WATCH GEORGE'S WORDS HIT SALLY LIKE A TON OF BRICKS. She EXITS... AND WE FOLLOW her to the hallway... She STOPS. TO PROCESS. STUNNED. George EXITS. NOTICES Sally standing in the hall. He looks remorseful but forces himself to continue walking.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. PRE LAUNCH MEETING - BOARD ROOM - NASA - LATE MORNING
ON JOHN and the COLUMBIA CREW. They're being prepped for the mission. WIDE: George looks as though he hasn't slept all night. Chris Kraft looks over, concerned. John is reclined back in his chair, it's not his first rodeo.

CAROLYN HUNTOON
John, have you thought about who you'd like to have at CapCom?

John leans forward, he fiddles with a small toy model of the shuttle, thinking.

JOHN YOUNG
Sally.

CHRIS KRAFT
Sally Ride?

JOHN YOUNG
She's sharp. ...She'd be a welcome voice to hear in the capsule.

George sits up, glances at Chris, then clears his throat -

GEORGE ABBEY
Sally's not available.

JOHN YOUNG
Sure she is.

CHRIS KRAFT
She's not coming back to NASA.

JOHN YOUNG
She's what?

GEORGE ABBEY
We had to relieve her...

JOHN YOUNG
Un-relieve her.

George and Chris look concerned. Carolyn looks happy.

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
What happened?

GEORGE ABBEY
We caught her on the RIG.

Compelled, John sits forward staring George down...

JOHN YOUNG
Did she pass it?

GEORGE ABBEY
...She- She had mastered it, yes.

JOHN YOUNG
Good god. A rookie passes the
hardest machine at NASA and you let
her go? What's wrong you guys?

George, Chris and the other men look dejected.

JOHN YOUNG (CONT'D)
Bring Sally back. Or you can find
another Commander...

DAVID BOWIE'S, "LIFE ON MARS" BEGINS TO PLAY OVER:

INT. LIVING ROOM - SALLY'S HOUSE - EVENING

DAVID BOWIE'S, "LIFE ON MARS" CONTINUES TO PLAY OVER:

A puffy eyed Sally is PACKING UP. Steve is helping. She GLANCES up through the window... TWO BLACK LINCOLN TOWNE CARS PULL UP. She glances at Steve and THEN, STANDS UP... HEADS to the door OPENING IT... George is reluctantly standing before her. John gets out of the car, removing his glasses, he looks at Sally reassuringly.

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - EARLY MORNING

DAVID BOWIE'S, "LIFE ON MARS" CONTINUES TO PLAY OVER:

WE'RE IN a LARGE ROOM FILLED with COMPUTERS that LINE in row with operators at the helm of each one. ALL MEN. Sally ENTERS with George, she's is ESCORTED to a computer and a chair... EVERYONE STARES. George hands her a pair of headphones that are mic'd up... She puts them on...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - COLUMBIA ORBITER - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER

DAVID BOWIE'S, "LIFE ON MARS" CONTINUES TO PLAY OVER:

ON JOHN YOUNG sitting next to Robert Crippen at the helm of the orbiter the Mission Specialists in the seats behind them. He BUCKLES UP as the COUNT DOWN BEGINS... 10, 9, 8... 7, 6... 5... 4, 3, 2... 1...

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

DAVID BOWIE'S, "LIFE ON MARS" CONTINUES TO PLAY OVER:

Sally WATCHES on the MONITORS as the COLUMBIA TAKES OFF. Her hands are empathetically shaking... She folds her arms, watching. IT GOES UP without a HITCH... EVERYONE CLAPS. Sally closes her eyes relieved.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - HOUSTON, TEXAS - VERY EARLY MORNING

SUPER: *MAY 24th, 1983*

ANGLE ON AN ARM... IN BED... IT REACHES OVER... to the other side... IT FEELS AROUND... IT'S EMPTY.

WIDE: Steve sits up in bed. He's wearing a wedding ring. He glances over at the EMPTY spot... SMILES.

EXT. CATTLE RANGE - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Sally is sitting on the FENCE, her legs dangling over as she looks at the cattle as the SUN BEGINS TO RISE. There's a maturity she carries with her now. A knowingness. She brushes the hair from her eyes (she's wearing a wedding ring) and HOPS DOWN into the pen. She RUNS her hand along the cows as she moves in toward the BULL... She SMILES as the BULL BEGINS to kick up mud... She reaches out her hand, palm up, trusting the BULL COMPLETELY... it WALKS OVER to her... She OPENS her arms wide as he smells her.

A cart PULLS UP... Steve hops out. Sally turns, smiles...

STEVE
Ten bucks says he likes you...

Sally raises her eyebrows, CLIMBS OVER the FENCE and HOPS DOWN.

STEVE (CONT'D)
You ready for today?

SALLY
I think I can handle it.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - NASA - AFTERNOON

LIGHTBULBS FLASH as SALLY, ROBERT CRIPPEN, FREDRICK HAUCK, JOHN FABIAN and NORMAN THAGARD SIT before of a SEA OF PRESS. ALL EYES ARE ON THE SOON TO BE FIRST AMERICAN WOMAN TO GO TO SPACE. The press is shouting over each other to talk to Sally...

DALE & CAROL'S HOUSE:

DALE, CAROL and BEAR RIDE are WATCHING Sally on T.V.

UCLA CLASSROOM:

John Tompkins is WATCHING the press conference with his students, proudly.

TENNIS COURT:

Linda is LISTENING to the conference on a radio as she practices.

OFF STAGE -

Steve is in the wings with John Young, watching Sally.

Sally isn't AFRAID to address the press this time.

TIME MAGAZINE
Sally, how do you react to
stressful situations? Do you cry?

SALLY
Why don't you ask Fredrick or
Norman those questions?

MEDIA LAUGHS.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE
Sally...

Not backing down -

SALLY
(to Time magazine)
I want to know... are you going to
ask that same question to the men?

TIME MAGAZINE
I just wanted to get the female
perspective...

SALLY
Think of it this way... We work the
same, only women can use both sides
of their brain simultaneously so we
have a faster reaction time and can
handle problems quicker...

This SHUTS HIM UP.

L.A. TIMES
Are you planning on wearing a bra
in space?

LAUGHS ENSUE. Sally doesn't laugh.

SALLY
Since we'll be in zero gravity I
don't really see the point... do
you?

THE MEDIA EATS THIS UP. George (in the corner) smirks.

DALE & CAROL'S HOUSE:

Sally's parents look PROUD. DALE RIDE: "That's my little
girl!" CAROL RIDE: "Shhhh!"

PANEL:

NEW YORK TIMES
Are you excited to be the first
American women in space?

SALLY
I'm so excited to get the chance
that I'm going to ignore the
ignorant comments made by all of
you this afternoon...

CHATTER AMONG THE PRESS. Sally relaxes into her chair.

WASHINGTON POST

If there's any advice you can give
to girls watching this all over the
world... what would it be...

Sally LEANS FORWARD.

SALLY

I didn't come to NASA to make
history... or become a role
model... but, that's what I ended
up becoming... And let me be the
living proof that, women have the
potential to go just as far or
further than any man has ever
gone... If you can trust in
yourself and know, really know who
you are... That's a power that no
stereotype or statistic can take
away from you... You can do
anything you want. You just have to
believe that you can.

The NEW YORK TIMES begins to CLAP. The CLAPPING is MIRRORED
by ALL of the MEDIA in the room.

DALE & CAROL RIDE'S HOUSE:

Dale, Carol and Bear start CLAPPING in their living room.

TENNIS COURT:

Linda is teary eyed knowing Sally did the right thing.

UCLA CLASSROOM:

John SMILES.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. LAUNCH PAD/CHALLENGER ORBITER - KENNEDY SPACE CENTER -
MORNING

SUPER: APRIL 4, 1983, 10:30 AM

ON THE NAME CHALLENGER WRITTEN ON THE SIDE OF THE SNOW WHITE
SHUTTLE.

WIDE: The CHALLENGER IS STRAPPED to the ROCKET that will
propel it and it's CREW INTO SPACE.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - CHALLENGER - SAME TIME

Sally is sitting in seat 3. She's STRAPPED IN TIGHT behind the Commander and Pilot...

INT. MISSION CONTROL CENTER - JOHNSON SPACE CENTER - SAME TIME

George hands a nervous Steve one of the headsets -

OVER TRANSMISSION:

STEVE

Sally, have fun up there... don't
spoil it for me...

INT. FLIGHT DECK - SAME TIME

Sally SMILES, trying not to look nervous/anxious -

SALLY

I'll try...

OVER TRANSMISSION:

STEVE (O.S.)

See you Friday, baby...

THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS... 10, 9... 8, 7, 6... 5, 4... 3, 2,
1...

THE CHALLENGER BEGINS TO SHAKE, VIOLENTLY. It JOSTLES Sally and her crew members, from side to side. Sally holds onto her straps/belt TIGHTLY.

EXT. LAUNCH PAD/CHALLENGER ORBITER - MOMENTS LATER

THE THREE LAUNCH ENGINES QUICKLY BLAST THE SHUTTLE UP INTO THE CLOUDS... IT CONTINUES TO CLIMB and CLIMBS and an ACCELERATED RATE...

INT. CHALLENGER - MOMENTS LATER

Crew member, Fredrick nudges Sally... he motions toward the window... She GLANCES UP, as the SUN DISAPPEARS BENEATH THEM... THE SHUTTLE BURSTS THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE... IT FEELS LIKE SLOW MOTION... AS THE DAY TURNS INTO SPACE/DARKNESS...

ROBERT CRIPPEN
(over transmission)
Permission to remove restraints...

HOUSTON
(over transmission)
All clear...

Sally SLOWLY UNBUCKLES, she FLOATS UP... a look of AWE washes over her face. She FLOATS OVER to the window and LOOKS AT EARTH... THE REFLECTION of our PLANET on her helmet's VISOR... She touches the window, placing her finger tip on the EARTH, wonderstruck.

HARD CUT TO BLACK

"RIDE CAPTAIN RIDE" by BLUES IMAGE PLAYS OVER:

WE SEE THE REAL SALLY RIDE FOOTAGE OF HER ON THE CHALLENGER.

OVER SCENE:

IN 1984 Sally made her second flight into space on the CHALLENGER and helped create the robotic arm.

After the CHALLENGER CRASH in 1986... Sally was instrumental in finding the cause of the accident.

Sally retired from NASA in 1987. The year she and Steve divorced.

Sally never remarried, but found love in Tam O'Shaughnessy. She would spend the rest of her life with her.

Sally created the non profit group, Change the Equation to improve education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) throughout communities in the United States.

Sally passed away July 23rd, 2012 from Pancreatic cancer.

In 2013, Tam O'Shaughnessy accepted the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Obama on Sally's behalf.

CREDITS.

THE END