

Launch

By

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Two kids embark on a magical interplanetary trip.

Kyle Wong 2017

2017 Kyle Wong

EXT. A FRONT LAWN, EVENING

A pair of hands belonging to JENNA (13) place a small rocket on the ground. She whispers eagerly to herself, mimicking the radio traffic during a real rocket launch.

JENNA

Chzzt... this is Jenna to mission control, over. I'm strapped in. Engines are primed. Let's do this. Over.

(in a lower voice)

Chrrzzzt... mission control, this is mission control to Jenna, over, you are clear and ready to launch, over.

She excitedly gets down on her knees and ignites the bottom of the rocket.

JENNA

(as mission control)

Hold on, Jenna! There's a flock of birds above you! Over! You're going to crash into them! Abort the launch! Abort!

(as Jenna)

The engines are already going off! There's no time! We have to go through with this!

(as mission control)

Are you sure about this?!

She gets up and shoots a dramatic look off in the distance.

JENNA

(as Jenna, dramatically)

History isn't made by being sure, mission control, over. Chrrzzzzzt. Fwoom.

The rocket flares up and shoots into the air. Mesmerized, she looks as it flies off. And then she closes her eyes.

We cut to a POV from some nearby bushes. The rocket crashes in front of the bushes. A few boys hiding in the bushes snicker and creep off, saying to each other "Told ya so" and "What a waste" and laughing. Though, one boy, JAKE (13), stays. He exits from the bushes. Awkward beat.

JENNA

Hey, Jake.

Jake starts walking towards Jenna, picking up the rocket.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

H-heya, Jenna. Whatcha doing?

He hands the rocket to Jenna and helps her up. She starts prepping for another launch.

JENNA

Another failed experiment. Number 24, to be exact.

JAKE

Look, uh, about just now, we- we were just passing by and just were kinda curious, you know, about...

JENNA

Jake, you don't need to lie. I don't care.

Beat. Jenna, to assure Jake:

JENNA

I'm telling the truth, Jake! No grudges. Honest. Now come on, help me clean this up for another launch.

Jake starts going around gathering materials.

JAKE

Just out of curiosity, Jenna... and I'm being, uh, honest here... you know that the rocket's just going to crash down again, right?

JENNA

Yeah.

Jake dumps the materials next to Jenna and sits next to her. Jenna sets the rocket on the ground and starts propping it up.

JAKE

You know everyone's talking, right? That science project?

JENNA

The one where I launched that rocket? So, like, all of them?

JAKE

Yeah. And you literally just stood there, like you did just now, and

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JAKE (cont'd)
watched as it flew up... and came
crashing down on Mr. Donovan's
head.

Jenna giggles.

JENNA
That was funny, right?

JAKE
Yeah. But you didn't even know it
came down until Donovan went up to
you and started yelling at you. You
had your eyes closed. And you did
the second time you pulled that
trick. And you did the exact same
thing just now. Why, Jenna? What do
you see?

JENNA
You want to launch this one?

JAKE
What?

JENNA
It's all set. You want to launch
this one?

JAKE
Uh, no thanks. I'm not planning on
going home in ashes.

JENNA
If you want to understand you have
to launch the rocket.

JAKE
Look, I'm just fine watching it go
up.

Jenna places matches in Jake's hand.

JENNA
Do you want your question answered?

Jake, hesitatingly, takes a match out.

JAKE
S-sure. Uh, how do I do this?

Jenna guides him through the motions.

JENNA

You gotta just light this part down here on the bottom of the rocket. Light the match first, then put one hand on the rocket to steady it. And close your eyes. You want to roleplay?

JAKE

What?

JENNA

Like, act as if you're the captain of the ship. It helps you get into the mood. Makes it easier.

(as mission control)

Chrrzzt. Mission control to Jake, over.

JAKE

Um... okay, hi, it's Jake?

JENNA

(as Jenna)

Come on, man, get into it!

(as mission control)

Chrrzzzt, mission control to Jake, over.

JAKE

Uh, hey, cz, mission control, it's captain Jake here. I'm, uh, in the spaceship. It's small.

(pause)

Over.

JENNA

(as mission control)

Jake, we're all go for launch, ready when you are, over.

Beat.

JENNA

(as Jenna)

Ready when you are, Jake. Come on, light it.

JAKE

Jeez, alright, alright, calm down... uh, igniting engines...

Jake flicks a match and lights the bottom of the rocket. It flares up and he exclaims in shock.

(CONTINUED)

JENNA
(as Jenna)
Close your eyes! Close your eyes!
(as mission control)
Launching in 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5...

Jake clenches his eyes shut.

JENNA
4... 3... 2... 1...

Fwoom. A large, realistic rocket sound. It shakes Jake to the ground.

JAKE
Ohmygosh!

JENNA
Liftoff!

The sounds of a rocket soaring into the air. Various electronic beeps. The shaking of seats.

JENNA
What do you see, Jake?

JAKE
I- everything's happening so fast!
I can't- it's all so loud!

JENNA
Stay calm, captain. Follow me- take
a deep breath in...

Jake gulps air down.

JENNA
...and out. Alright. Are you still
with me, champ?

JAKE
Yeah... yeah, I'm still with you.

JENNA
Now look out of your window.

2 INT. A SPACESHIP (FANTASY), BROAD DAYLIGHT

Jake is suddenly in a crudely-made spaceship interior wearing aluminum foil as a spacesuit. He gasps for air.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

Oh god, what's happening?

Jenna, over the radio, speaks.

JENNA

It's okay, captain, this is normal for first timers. Just keep breathing and you'll be fine. Look out the window for me.

He looks out the spaceship's window, and he sees that he is far above the ground, rushing at an incredibly high speed. He diverts his attention back to the cockpit.

JAKE

Woah, oh my god I'm so high up! I'm so high get me out of here! Mission control! Abort! Abort!

JENNA

Stay focused, captain! Keep on the mission! Stay with me! What do you see?

Jake looks out the window again, and the scenery seems to slow down.

JAKE

I- I uh, see... a lot of trees. A lot of houses. Isn't this our neighborhood?

JENNA

It is our neighborhood, yes, captain. Look over there. Do you see Neebly's house?

Jake spots a large two-story mansion. A boy sits on the second deck, sunbathing.

JAKE

Y-yeah! I see it! Hey, I even see Pat! He's sunbathing!

JENNA

I see him too, Jake. Do you see the lake?

He passes over an ocean. The rocket is going higher and higher.

JAKE

No, uh, no, mission control, I see something even better. I see the entire Pacific! And Spain! Russia! Europe! Asia! We're- we're going over the world now! There's Australia, spinning below us like a little speck of brown in a great blue glimmering sheet.

JENNA

And the Moon?

He passes over the Moon. An old man in a tophat waves to him.

JAKE

Yeah! Old Man in the Moon's up early today! Hey, chap!

OLD MAN IN THE MOON

Hello!

JAKE

Hey!

The excitement is replaced by quiet. A shudder.

JAKE

Exterior thrusters have gone off. We're now running on main engines.

He passes some planets.

JAKE

Mars looks just like a tomato. Heh. And there's Jupiter, the ancient watcher. And Saturn, with her titanic ring. And now... nothing.

A beat.

JENNA

Tell me about the stars.

We go outside the spaceship and circle around.

JAKE

The stars? There's... I never thought there'd be so many of them.

We pan back to see that Jake is floating in space, without the spaceship and without his spacesuit.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

I thought it'd be scary, coming up here. But once I'm out of the atmosphere, I look back and can't help thinking... how small it all is. How small everything is.

He chuckles.

JAKE

You want to know what I see, mission control? I'm looking infinity right in the eye. It's been here all along, and it's beautiful.

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EXT. A FRONT LAWN, EVENING

We pan back down to see that he's standing up in the lawn again. The sounds of crickets fade in. He looks back down at Jenna. beat.

JENNA

Earth to Jake, over.

Jake smiles.

JAKE

Jake to Earth. Mission accomplished. Over.

We pan back up to a black, empty, night sky.

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