

IN AN
INSTANT

A Zoom Play by Zack Peercy

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Cast

BARBARA - early 30's. Determined. (she/her).

GREG - 50's-60's. Easy Going. (he/him).

DAVID - 40's. Stoic. (he/him).

CAM - Late Teens. Trans. Caring. (she/her).

YOUNG BARBARA (Y.B.) - Teens. Impressionable. (she/her).

DESIGN NOTE: This story takes place on two screens, side-by-side. Barbara's screen is always cold. The second screen is always warm.

STAGING NOTE: If performed "live" on Zoom, please use the Grid view with two screen next to each other, as opposed to the Speaker view that toggles the screens.

STAGING NOTE 2: There are three sound cues essential to this script, two can be found at SoundCloud links below, the third is a beeping. Any other sound cues are up the discretion of the director.

Golden Record: Sounds of Earth: <https://soundcloud.com/nasa/sets/golden-record-sounds-of>

Eisenhower Message from SCORE: <https://soundcloud.com/smithsonianmag/score-audio>

"Forever is a Long, Long Time" by the Heritage Singers

Two screens. Always side-by-side.

Barbara works at one screen. She is in athleisure wear. Her environment is cold. No windows. Machinery. For her, time passes normally. A digital or analog clock represents this.

The second screen, when not black, is always a more comfortable environment. Warm, sunlight. Splashes of color. Time bounds forward on this screen.

Barbara works on a tablet or similar device, taking readings, adjusting projections. Methodical.

BARBARA

Fuel cells holding. Note: anticipated acceleration past Neptune achieved. Looks like I might shave a little time off... Engines are stable... Moving right along.

As of this recording, still no adverse effects to long term hyperspeed travel. My concept of Time has remained consistent and concurrent with Earth's. I've only been gone a few months. I've been away longer before.

...

Still thinking about her. Or, rather, I keep trying to think about her. All of my other memories are fine, but there's a growing spot when I try to think about what she said to me... Maybe I'm just focusing too much on it.

A beeping, signaling an incoming transmission.

BARBARA

Activate.

GREG

Hey, sweetie!

BARBARA

Hey, Dad. A little early for our weekly call.

GREG

Oh, is it? Sorry, did I interrupt?

BARBARA

No, no. The ship runs itself, this log is more like journaling than anything else.

GREG

Well it's good to journal. I wish I journaled. You know, Nan journalled a lot.

BARBARA

What?

GREG

Mhm, she was always journaling. She had story ideas and, you know, poems and whatnot.

BARBARA

I didn't know that.

GREG

You didn't? Well, you two mostly talked about Space, I guess.

BARBARA

Yeah.

GREG

But I wish I journaled like her. Good habit. I get these ideas, these million dollar ideas, but I can't remember them.

BARBARA

That's the Some-Timer's, right dad?

GREG

I tell David I got the Some-Timer's. Yeah, yeah. You're a bit delayed, sweetie.

BARBARA

You're coming through clear on my end.

GREG

Oh, okay. This damn signal. Hey! Before I forget, I gotta tell you: I found your rabbit.

BARBARA

You did?

GREG

I did! I've been walking every day and it was, maybe it was Saturday?, on Saturday we crossed paths. Those scratches on his back and everything, I said, "That's Barbara's rabbit!"

BARBARA

Well, he's not Mine, but yeah.

GREG

I know, but you know. I found him. He's real gentle, kid. Hopped right into my arms. I cleaned him up best I could. Wait til you see him.

BARBARA

Yeah.

GREG

Barbara. Was I interrupting something?

BARBARA

No. Sorry. I think I'm just distracted.

GREG

Aliens?

BARBARA

Psh, I wish. I'm just... thinking about Nan again.

GREG

She was so proud of you for following in her footsteps.

BARBARA

I know, Dad.

GREG

She always said: you would do the best things and the best thing I ever did was make you.

BARBARA

And then David came along.

GREG

Him too. He's doing good, his grades are really improving. You want me to...?

BARBARA

That's okay.

GREG

You're still upset?

BARBARA

I'm not upset. When he's ready to apologize, he can call me.

GREG

Barbara, it's the past. He just knew he was going to miss you. We all miss you. I was thinking when you get back, we could all go to Spinelli's to celebrate. Get the ice cream.

BARBARA

When I get back, I'll probably have to do a press tour.

GREG

Right.

BARBARA

And a lot of people would recognize me at Spinelli's... might get mobbed.

GREG

I don't know about all that. Maybe, yeah.

BARBARA

You don't think people will recognize me?

GREG

Just, y'know, everyone's got their own stuff. I don't know if they'd notice--

BARBARA

Dad, do you guys even realize the work I'm doing out here?

GREG

Of course we do.

BARBARA

I'm out farther than any craft has ever been. I just passed Neptune, Dad. That's farther than Nan got.

GREG

That's incredible. And I'm proud of you. And David is too.

BARBARA

Great, because it's a really big deal.

GREG

It is. It is. You're doing great things out there, kid. It's just... You left so quick. And you had that great job at the university.

BARBARA

Dad, Greysboro is just a community college. It was temporary while I applied for this. This was the goal. I told you it would be sudden... But I'm here. I'm right here. We talk every week.

GREG

When I can reach you.

BARBARA

There was one solar flair. Dad, it's like I'm still there.

GREG

I... I don't want to fight. I'm just happy to talk now. I miss you, kid.

BARBARA

I miss you too, Dad.

GREG

Do you, uh, need me to send you anything? A care package or anything?

BARBARA

Psh. No, Dad. I'm all set. Got more than enough paste to last me.

GREG

Good, good. Okay. Well... David's gonna be back from basketball in a minute or two, want to say hi?

BARBARA

I should probably get back to it. But let him know he can call any time to apologize.

GREG

A whole family of hard-heads, as Nana would say. Well, I'll let you get back to it.

BARBARA

Dad.

GREG

Yeah?

BARBARA

When Nan went on that last outing, her last outing. Do you remember what she said in her last transmission?

GREG

Well, the second-to-last one was just a check in around Christmas. But you were the only one on the other end of that last transmission. Don't you remember?

BARBARA

I know it was just me, I remember I was the only one home. But I don't remember what she said to me. I used to, but now it's all foggy.

GREG

You're getting that Some-Timer's, kid.

BARBARA

Psh.

GREG

I'm sure it'll come to you. You got plenty of time to think out there. Journal.

BARBARA

Right. Okay, Dad.

GREG

Okay, kid. See you next week?

BARBARA

Of course. Same time.

GREG

You got it. Don't be late.

BARBARA

Love you, Dad.

GREG

Love you too, kid.

The screen goes black.

Barbara makes some notes, checks readings.

BARBARA

Dad seems good.

Still harping on me. I wish he could understand that I'm doing this for him, I'm out here for him.

For Nan. For everyone. Just trying to make them proud. To prove that I'm capable of doing this.

I mean, I had to leave the nest. I had to fly. Shoot for the stars.

As if I'd make it into the history books teaching at Greysboro.

...

Glad he found that rabbit...

A beeping, signaling an incoming transmission.

BARBARA

God, we just...

Activate.

David appears on the second screen. He is no longer a "little" brother; bearded, weathered.

BARBARA

Hey, Dad, did you... Oh. David?

DAVID

Hey Barb.

BARBARA

Jeez, I didn't even recognize you. Puberty hit you like a truck. Since when can you grow a beard?

DAVID

Uh huh. Listen, I know it's been awhile, but...

BARBARA

I know. Dad just tried to guilt trip me. I'm sure he's been working you too, right? I'm still pretty sore, but I'm willing to talk it out if you apologize for what you said, okay?

DAVID

What?

BARBARA

I've thought about it a lot, David. Don't get me wrong, I see where you're coming from, but you were mean. You made it seem like I was abandoning you guys, and right before I left too. That hurt. That still hurts. Can't you see that?

DAVID

Dad's dead, Barbara.

BARBARA

No he isn't. I just spoke to him.

DAVID

He died this morning.

BARBARA

What are you talking about? I told you I just spoke to him. Literally a minute ago.

DAVID

We haven't heard from you in years, Barb. It's been almost thirty years.

BARBARA

....

What?

Barbara starts frantically looking through her readings.

DAVID

We couldn't connect most of the time. When we could, you didn't answer. Or that's what we thought. Dad thought he said something wrong. That you were mad at him.

BARBARA

You were on your way home from basketball.

DAVID

Yeah. That was the last time.

BARBARA

David... please, if this is a joke. This isn't funny, okay?

DAVID

I'm not laughing.

BARBARA

God, you... you don't "look" older, you...

DAVID

I am older. I have a family now. A daughter.

BARBARA

This can't be happening. This can't...

DAVID

You look the same.

BARBARA

It wasn't supposed to go like this.

DAVID

Uh-huh.

BARBARA

I can't... I can't... Thirty years? I...

Barbara starts hyperventilating. A panic attack.

DAVID

Barb? Hey, Barb. Look at me. Breathe. Remember this? Listen to this.
Everywhere are happy, happy people
Listening to the bells and how they chime...
Come on, how does it go?

BARBARA

Heaven... Heaven's golden day will last forever...

DAVID

Breathe.

Barbara starts to breathe normally again.

BARBARA

Thank you. I haven't heard that song in...
Oh, David, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. This wasn't the plan at all.

DAVID

Yeah. Sure.

BARBARA

What, you think I wanted this? You think I planned this?

DAVID

I don't think you stopped long enough to consider it.

BARBARA

This isn't... something's wrong, this shouldn't have happened! David, I... I don't know what this is.

DAVID

Exactly. You just dove in. First ticket out of here without a second thought to who this might affect.

BARBARA

My heart is racing. I can't... Why are you attacking me? I lost thirty years!

DAVID

Well I lived them. And Dad did too. Without you.
Can't believe you decided to pick up.

BARBARA

David. Please. You have to understand, I wouldn't ignore you. I wouldn't ignore Dad. That's not who I am. Please, you have to know that.

DAVID

Barb... you have been out of my life longer than you've been in it. I don't know you anymore. I just called to tell you about Dad. This was the last time I was going to try.

BARBARA

No, I'm here. I'm here now. Maybe I can, maybe I can fix this. Maybe if I, I can call Control. They've gotta have answers.

DAVID

Dad wasn't able to get a hold of anyone, but sure give it a try. I'll see you in another thirty.

BARBARA

No, don't hang up. David, please. I don't know when... Just stay on while you can. If you're on the line, our times match. Just. Stay. Please.

DAVID

Control's gone silent. They haven't even been in the news since you left. No one really knows what happened.

BARBARA

But people still talk about me, right? Like the mission, I mean. They know I'm out here?

DAVID

There was a special on TV a few years back. They wanted to interview me and dad, but it wasn't a good time.

BARBARA

All of my readouts are normal. I can't really imagine anything's happened differently here. Has anything changed on Earth?

DAVID

Uh... yeah?

BARBARA

No, I know... Obviously. I didn't mean... The Earth hasn't gotten any closer to the sun or anything, right?

DAVID

No.

BARBARA

I know things have changed, David. I know that. I was going to ask...

DAVID

Uh-huh.

BARBARA

I'm going to do a full diagnostic scan of the ship. It might be the drives too, but... We'll start with the scan. It's going to take a minute.

DAVID

Okay.

BARBARA

While we wait, you could... tell me. About everything.

DAVID

Barb...

BARBARA

Please.

Please.

DAVID

Hm... Graduated high school, with honors. Went to Greysboro. Met Ashley. We bought a house and settled down over in Somerville. I work construction, Ashley's at a dealership. We had a daughter, Kitt.

BARBARA

Kitt?

DAVID

Yeah, Kitt. If you met her, she's... she's a Kitt, for sure.

BARBARA

Okay. Wow. Kitt. And Somerville, that's a nice area. I'm proud of you, David. How did you meet Ashley.

DAVID

At Greysboro, I said.

BARBARA

No, no. What's the story? Were you guys in the same classes, did you see her across campus and get struck by Cupid's arrow? What happened?

DAVID

She, uh, yeah. She was in some of my classes. We were lab partners. That's where we got to know each other. It wasn't some grand romantic thing, we just sort of clicked. She's real special. She's so good at being a mom and she kicks my ass at basketball. Funny too, she's really funny. Dad loved her.

BARBARA

And... Dad?

DAVID

About five years ago is when Dad had to move in with us. He wasn't, uh, the doctors said it wasn't a good idea for him to live on his own. So, we took him in.

BARBARA

What does... What did he have?

David lets out a big sigh.

BARBARA

What? What's wrong?

DAVID

Just... he died in his sleep, he was peaceful. But his memory started to go in the last few years.

BARBARA

Alzheimer's?

DAVID

Don't laugh.

Barbara clearly wants to laugh

BARBARA

I wasn't going to.

DAVID

He did. Every time he was lucid enough, I'd tell him and he'd laugh. He'd crack up.

BARBARA

Dad.... we talked about that. All the "Million Dollar Ideas" he forgot.

DAVID

He'd always tell me, "I had an idea that was as revolutionary as the toothbrush"

BARBARA

The toothbrush! "But it wasn't a toothbrush, it was just that revolutionary."

DAVID

Yeah, Dad, I know... He always asked about you.

BARBARA

He did?

DAVID

Every day. Every day. He found a rabbit, said it was yours. He named it after you even though the rabbit was a boy. That helped him through a few years, but...

BARBARA

...

Scan's done. No signs of malfunction. Of course.

I'm gonna fix this, David. There has to be something, some error. I'm going to get a hold of Control and fix this.

DAVID

If I'm being honest... it was really nice to hear from you. I miss you a lot, Barb.

BARBARA

I know, I miss you too! I miss you so much. I missed... everything.

DAVID

Just come home, okay? Don't miss a minute more. Just come home.

BARBARA

I will. I'm going to get a hold of Control, get this fixed, and finish the mission. I'll be back as soon as I can.

DAVID

Wait, what?

BARBARA

As soon as I can.

DAVID

You're still going to finish the trip?

BARBARA

Well, yeah. I'm already out here. Once this is fixed, I'll still be home by next year.

DAVID

Barb, just come home.

BARBARA

It isn't that simple.

DAVID

It is that simple, I'm telling you. Just turn around and come home. You've missed thirty years.

BARBARA

I'm so close, Dave. I'm already farther than Nan got. I can finish this, I can get back as quick as possible.

DAVID

...

Okay. Sure. Do what you have to.

BARBARA

I'm doing this for all of us, you know.

DAVID

Then how come we're all down here and you're all the way out there?

BARBARA

Because I was the one brave enough to try for something beyond Somerville.

DAVID

Yeah.

You know, maybe I do know who you are after all. Maybe I always did. Don't count on me remembering you when you get back.

The second screen goes dark.

BARBARA

David? David! Ugh! Dammit!

Barbara takes a minute to collect herself

BARBARA

No, stop. Go. There's no time!

Barbara looks through her readouts, stats.

BARBARA

Everything looks normal. Maybe it was that velocity bump around Neptune..? But that doesn't make any sense...

Dad...

Contact Control.

...

Contact Control.

...

Begin Transmission with Control.

...

Authorization B2418 Begin Transmission with Control 0017.

...

Of course. Why would it work? Contact David.

The second screen lights up. A young woman in her 20's is on the other end of the screen.

BARBARA

Hello?

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh!

...Is it really you?

BARBARA

I'm, uh, Barbara.

YOUNG WOMAN

Barbara! Yes. Wow, this is crazy.

BARBARA

Listen, I... I just called. Your dad told me, about grandpa.

YOUNG WOMAN

Grandpa? He died like a year ago.

BARBARA

A year... okay, not bad all things considered.

YOUNG WOMAN

You called a year ago? Mom didn't tell me. She said she never met you.

BARBARA

Yeah, no that's true. I spoke with your dad.

YOUNG WOMAN

That's weirder.

BARBARA

Why is that weirder?

YOUNG WOMAN

Because dad's not even related to you. You definitely don't know him.

BARBARA

Is that what he's saying? He's renounced me or something? Whatever he tells you, he's still my brother.

YOUNG WOMAN

My dad's not your brother. You only had one brother: Grandpa.

BARBARA

Excuse me?

YOUNG WOMAN

Grandpa David. He was your brother.

BARBARA

You're not Kitt.

YOUNG WOMAN

My mom is Kitt. I'm Cam.

BARBARA

Hi Cam.

CAM

Hi... great-aunt Barbara... my sisters don't believe you're real.

BARBARA

I'm real. I'm... I'm just a little lost.

CAM

Are you coming back?

BARBARA

...

I will be.

CAM

That's cool.

BARBARA

Yeah... Cam, can I ask you something?

CAM

Of course!

BARBARA

Is your family... my family... are you all proud of me?

CAM

Hmmmm..... I guess so? I mean, this is cool

BARBARA

Yeah.

CAM

And space is cool, I guess. But... I don't know, I guess I don't really know why you're out there. Like, what are you doing?

BARBARA

You don't know?

CAM

I think mom mentioned it once, but I don't remember. She says I have some-timer's. Dad says I don't listen.

BARBARA

She says you have what?

CAM

It's... nevermind. It's nothing. I'd like to know why you're in space. I'll remember this time.

BARBARA

Well... so... I don't know how it is Now, but at the time, space exploration was a big deal. And my Nan, she was top of the game. She managed to travel further than anyone, about halfway between Jupiter and Saturn. But back when she was flying, it was basically a one way trip. Time on the ship didn't line up with time on Earth, so every time she'd call us, she'd be older. She left before we were even born... And she died in space. The ship's auto-pilot brought her body back.

CAM

Are you going to die in space?

BARBARA

I don't plan to.

CAM

Okay. Continue.

BARBARA

So, by the time I was able to fly, they had invented this new way to travel in space. It was a type of hyperspeed travel that stayed synchronized with Earth's timeframe. Days passed for me out here like they did on Earth. The mission was supposed to last a year, and that meant A Year. But... clearly something went wrong there.

CAM

Yeah, it's been a long time.

BARBARA

Yeah. It has.

But, if it had worked, I would have been the first person to reach the edge of our solar system. The first person to return from the edge. I'd have the record. It'd be our whole family's name preserved in history. They'd say "Remember the Tillman flight?"

CAM

My last name's Morrison.

BARBARA

... right. Well, if the name was famous, your mom might have kept it.

CAM

Maybe, yeah.

BARBARA

Pretty cool though, right?

CAM

I guess. Would've been cool to know you too.

BARBARA

...

CAM

Before you go, do you want to see my rabbit?

BARBARA

You have a rabbit?

CAM

Yeah, it used to be one of grandpa's, but I inherited it.

BARBARA

David had rabbits? As in plural?

CAM

Yeah, he always had rabbits. Mom grew up with them her whole life basically. Did you know they can be litter box trained? They're basically cooler cats.

BARBARA

No, I didn't know that. Any of that.

CAM

I think they're great. I'm going to have rabbits my whole life like grandpa did.

BARBARA

You know, I guess I sort of started the rabbit tradition.

CAM

No way!

BARBARA

Way. My dad found a rabbit, my rabbit. I saw it one day, but I... Well, it's a weird story, but he got the rabbit for me while I was in space, so. And then David. And now you. All rabbits.

CAM

Now that is cool. That's history.

BARBARA

It is, isn't it?

CAM

You need to meet my rabbit. I'll go get him. Don't go anywhere.

BARBARA

Sure.

Cam runs off to get the rabbit.

BARBARA

... end transmission.

The second screen goes dark.

BARBARA

Sorry, Cam. I just can't.

...

I feel like a ghost.

...

I should check the drives.

...

I am a ghost.

...

The drives are located on the other side of the ship. It should only take a few minutes. Only...

...

The longer I wait, the longer... Okay.

Barbara gets up without another word and leaves to check the drives.

The second screen lights up, brightly, flashes, then settles on a muted tone.

The sounds of the Arecibo Message from the golden record on NASA's Voyager I can be heard. They are a collection of sounds of Earth. A child crying, a train, a kiss, morse code, the rain, etc. All of the sounds play while Barbara is away.

The sounds end and the screen goes fully dark.

Barbara returns.

BARBARA

No issue with the drives. The ship is functioning exactly how it should.

...

Contact Control.

...

Okay. No clear connection to Control. I could try rebooting the system manually, but that'll add more time on my end. Decades.

I shouldn't have lied to Dad about the solar flair. I should have been honest and just told him I didn't feel like talking that week.

That was back when I thought cutting myself off completely would make the journey easier. That didn't last long. Hearing the little updates from home always grounded me. I think I missed it more than I was willing to admit...

I loved teaching at Greysboro. I loved my students. I even loved grading physics papers.

I loved Dad barbecuing too much and tutoring David for his English classes. I miss our movie nights. And the county fair every August. I miss knowing every street name and every local business. The histories of the houses and buildings. The family tree of the neighborhood. Who moved into the Chun's place? That thrift shop used to be the video store...

I was happy on Earth. Why did I leave?

Barbara checks her readings.

She double checks her readings.

BARBARA

Where... am I?

A beeping, signaling an incoming transmission.

BARBARA

...

Activate.

The second screen lights up. It's the nicest view. No one is there. Warm and inviting. Eerie.

BARBARA

Hello?

...

Hello.

The second screen remains still.

BARBARA

Whenever you're ready.

...

Any ideas on what's wrong?

...

What year is it?

...

Are there even years anymore?

...

Can I tell you a secret? I don't think you'll tell anyone. I trust you.

I feel like I saw an Omen on the day I left for this trip.

It's a bit of story, I don't want to waste your time if you're busy...

Alright, well my Nan, her name was Barbara too. Some people called her Babs, a lot of people called her Bunny. It was cute. I used to call her Nana Bunny, from this storybook I'd read with my Dad. But as I got older, I got embarrassed and just switched to Nan. I don't know why I was embarrassed, maybe I thought kids would make fun of me or something.

But she had my name and she did what I do. We always had a connection.

So on the day I'm set to leave, I walk out of the house, my dad's house, my house. And there's this rabbit in the yard. A brown bunny. And it's just chewing on a dandelion, not a care in the world.

But as I get closer to it, I see these marks down it's back. These cuts? Like gashes on it's back.

Like a hawk tried to carry it away, but dropped it. They weren't fresh wounds, but it didn't look good, you know?

I had been dreaming about this mission for most of my life, but in that moment, seeing that bunny, I just wanted to scoop it up and bring it inside. Take care of it. I loved animals, but I never asked for a pet or anything because I was always so focused on space. It was a singular driving force.

So I didn't help the bunny. I got in the car. I followed my dream.

Right?

....

Right?

The second screen goes dark.

Barbara checks the readings again.

BARBARA

Useless.

...

I should have turned back when David told me to.

...

I just wanted to be great...

...

Well...

Barbara takes the clock that's been near her tracking the time and stops it, unplugs it, takes the battery out. Whatever she has to do to stop it.

BARBARA

This is it, isn't it? This is my glory. This is my greatness. This is what I have to show.

Barbara starts singing an acapella version of "Forever is a Long, Long Time".

BARBARA

I can't comprehend forever
Eternity's beyond my human mind
They tell me Heaven is forever
And forever is a long, long time...

The second screen lights up. Greg is there. Warm, smiling, singing.

GREG

The sun will rise to never set again
 Troubles of this world are far behind

BARBARA

Dad? Oh my god, Dad!

GREG

Time is just a thing of a long forgotten past
 Nothing that can bother my mind

BARBARA

Dad! Please! Can you hear me!

A third screen lights up. David is there. Warm, happy, singing.

GREG & DAVID

Everywhere are happy, happy people
 Listening to the bells and how they chime

BARBARA

David! Please someone answer me! Please!

GREG & DAVID

Heavens golden day will last forever
 And forever is a long, long time

BARBARA

I want to come home, I'm sorry! I'm sorry I ever left! It was selfish. Please take me home!

A fourth screen lights up. Cam is there. Warm, happy, singing.

CAM

The gift of God is life eternal
 Seek this gift and you will find
 Peace and joy forever
 And forever is a long, long time

BARBARA

I just want to be home.

GREG & DAVID & CAM

The sun will rise to never set again
 Troubles of this world are far behind
 Time is just a thing of a long forgotten past
 Nothing that can bother my mind
 Everywhere are happy, happy people
 Listening to the bells and how they chime
 Heavens golden day will last forever
 And forever is a long, long time

Barbara joins them, through tears.

EVERYONE

Heavens golden day will last forever
 And forever is a long, long time

Cam and the fourth screen fade away.

GREG & DAVID & BARBARA

Heavens golden day will last forever
 And forever is a long, long time

David and the third screen fade away.

GREG & BARBARA

Heavens golden day will last forever
 And forever is a long, long time

Greg and the second screen fade away.

BARBARA

And forever is a long, long time....
 And forever is a long, long time...
 And forever is...

Barbara lays down, below the screen's view. Sick and tired and afraid and resigned. She stays there for as long as it takes.

The second screen flickers to life, but remains very dark.

The audio message of President Eisenhower broadcast into space during the SCORE mission plays.

EISENHOWER

This is the President of the United States speaking. Through the marvels of scientific advance, my voice is coming to you from a satellite circling in outer space. My message is a simple one: through this unique means, I convey to you, and to all mankind, America's wish for peace on Earth and goodwill toward men everywhere.

The second screen fades to black.

BARBARA

Okay.

...

Okay... Somehow...

...

I looped.

She checks her readings, checks everything.

BARBARA

Nav's down. Speed's consistent. I'm flying blind. I can't tell if I was knocked off course, or what my current course is... I have no idea what I'm headed towards.

The second screen glows dimly, it's not a great connection. Whoever's there is barely lit.

BARBARA

Hello?

YOUNG BARBARA

Nan? Is that you?

BARBARA

...

Y.B.

Nan, are you there? The connection's a bit spotty. I can barely see you.

Barbara hesitates for only a moment.

BARBARA

I'm sorry about this. But it has to be done.

Y.B.

Nan? What'd you say? Hello?

BARBARA

Yes, sweetie, I'm here. Can you hear me alright?

Y.B.

Yeah, I can! What're your coordinates? Do you need anything? Dad's not home. He had to take David to the emergency room because he fell off the trampoline.

BARBARA

The trampoline... I always told your father that was a bad idea. Don't get any ideas about writing cuss words on his cast. It doesn't go well, trust me.

Y.B.

Dad always says you're a mind reader, Nan.

BARBARA

He's right, I am.

Y.B.

What are your coordinates?

BARBARA

Uh... where did I tell you I was last time?

Y.B.

Passing Mars.

BARBARA

Right. And it's been a few months, so I must be...

Y.B.

Real close to Jupiter, right?

BARBARA

Yes. Exactly. I'm coming up on it now.

Y.B.

I wish I could see it...

BARBARA

...

You know, I was journaling the other day and I came up with a marvelous little poem.

Y.B.

You write poetry? Nan, you never told me that!

BARBARA

You never asked, dear. I have lots of different interests you know. Can't just be focused on space.

Y.B.

Right. I know.

BARBARA

Mhm. What's something that you like that doesn't relate to space?

Y.B.

I like physics?

BARBARA

That's tangential, dear. What else?

Y.B.

Uhm. I. I don't know.

BARBARA

You like animals, don't you?

Y.B.

I guess?

BARBARA

You guess? Come on, Stacey McGuire has that golden retriever and every time it's in the yard, you wish it was yours.

Y.B.

... you really are a mind reader.

BARBARA

Yeah. Yes. I am. You like animals.

Y.B.

I do.

BARBARA

Well maybe you should get a pet or something. You could focus on biology, maybe veterinarian studies or something.

Y.B.

Well, I... I wanted to be like you, Nan.

BARBARA

Like me? You want to spend your life alone? In space? You want to leave behind your dad and David and everyone you ever loved?

Y.B.

no

BARBARA

Is it because you don't love them? You just think about yourself? You want to be alone in a cramped metal tube your whole life?

Y.B.

No!

BARBARA

Well what do you want then?

Y.B.

Nan, you're scaring me.

BARBARA

I'm scaring you? What do you think space is going to do to you? It's a scary place sweetheart. It is lonely and isolating. Space is a devastating place. Don't you realize that?

Y.B.

Yes!

BARBARA

Then why do you want to be out here so badly!

Y.B.

I just want to be Great!

BARBARA

...

Well I don't think you're cut out for it.

There's so much that you can do right where you are. So much good that you can bring to your own little patch of Earth. Stay where you know the names of every street. Keep your feet on the ground. The changes we make aren't tsunamis. They're butterfly wings. Actions that happen in an instant.

You don't have a future out here.

The first screen, Barbara's screen, starts to cut out. Barbara and Y.B. watch as the first screen fades away. Barbara smiles brightly.

Y.B.

Nan? Nan?

Y.B. sits for a moment longer, contemplating the paths ahead. She looks directly at the camera. The second screen cuts to black.

END OF ZOOM PLAY.