

On the Moon
or
One Sixth of the Earth's Gravity

A PLAY

BY

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Translated from the Bulgarian by Angela Rodel

CHARACTERS

JULIA – an astronaut
STEPHAN – an astronaut
FEMALE INSTRUCTOR
SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT
SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT

FLIGHT COMMANDER
FEMALE DOCTOR

VOICE OF JULIA'S CHILD

Time: the present

ACT I

Scene One

A lecture hall at a training center. A large window. Morning. Part of a small space colony is visible through the window: a rocket launch pad, a tower and a satellite dish. Inside the room, there are three rows of desks and a blackboard. A bulletin board with pictures of the planets. Maps of flight trajectories. The instructor is standing by the blackboard, dressed in an Air Force uniform but without a hat. Julia is sitting in the second row wearing the same uniform as the instructor. The second male astronaut and the second female astronaut are sitting behind her, also in the same uniforms.

JULIA: Then I put the buns in a well-greased pan and bake them in a preheated oven.

THE INSTRUCTOR: You sprinkle sesame seeds on top, right?

JULIA: Sesame or poppy seeds, it's up to you.

THE INSTRUCTOR: I like sesame.

JULIA: Believe it or not, Megan, the friend who gave me the recipe, always takes a pound of flour along when someone invites her over. She knows they're inviting her because of these buns. They always make her whip up a batch when she visits.

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT (dreamily): Mmmm, I could almost smell them while you were explaining.

JULIA: Well, space food isn't so bad, either.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: I've noticed that people on Earth think it's a real treat to eat space food. They all get such a kick out of it.

THE INSTRUCTOR: That's true.

JULIA: I personally will be thinking about those buns when I'm up there. Their bakery-fresh scent. After all, didn't you teach us to think about earthly things when we're up there? We're supposed to think about pleasant little things, so we don't lose our connection with home.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Yes, in principle it's good to think about something earth-related when you're up there. But to be quite frank, my dear, you're not going to have time to think (she chuckles).

JULIA: When I see the Earth from above, right? (pause) From the Moon!

THE INSTRUCTOR: Just imagine.

JULIA: The Earth from above!

THE INSTRUCTOR: Your thoughts stop. You see the planet's azure glow. The aquarium you've just crawled out of. And all around it – the infinite cosmos. When you feel the extraterrestrial firmament beneath... (Stephan enters, dressed in civilian clothes) ... the extraterrestrial firmament beneath your feet.

STEPHAN: Sorry.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Sit down, sit down.

(Stephan sits down next to Julia)

STEPHAN (out of breath): I should've checked my horoscope in the paper this morning – it's been one of those days. I almost got into a fight with some guy just now.

JULIA: Whoa!

STEPHAN: They were going to kick Bucky.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Your attention, please, major.

STEPHAN: You know how there have been a lot of dogbite incidents recently? That must mean people...

THE INSTRUCTOR: Uh, yes.

STEPHAN: Still, it's good that I got here more or less on time. I wonder which house the moon is in today.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Which house?

STEPHAN: From astrology. You know how there are houses that...

JULIA: Enough with the zodiac already!

STEPHAN: Hey now, all monarchs and presidents... Everyone in power everywhere in the world has a full-time astrologer on their payroll. They pretend not to believe it, but don't be fooled. After all, everything, even their dogs, are being affected by something. Planets, constellations, vibrations. (He chuckles and pats Julia on the back.) I'm just pulling your leg. (He looks at the instructor) I'm kidding, of course.

THE INSTRUCTOR (*authoritatively*): Very well. I suggest that we begin (a long pause as she walks around the three rows of seats). There are only a few more practice sessions left before you lift off. This is one of our last meetings (pause). I know I say this every time, but it is my duty to continually remind you: you will be the first people on the moon since 1972 (pause). Julia (pause), perhaps you will be the first woman to set foot on the moon (pause). This mission bears an exceptionally weighty burden. Because you have been given the honor to continue that one small step for man... the first man on the moon, which was in fact a giant leap for all of mankind (pause). Several probes have been sent to the moon to search for water. For months, they stayed in lunar orbit, scanning everything. And they discovered ice (pause). Now you must lay the foundations of a base on the Moon. Of the first launchpad where flights will take off. Due to the moon's weaker gravity, we know that it will be much cheaper for future cosmic colonists' spaceships to blast off from the moon (pause). Millions, perhaps even billions, of people from all over the planet would do anything to be in your place. To be the ones to land on the moon! This is a great honor! All of us here on the team hope that you will prove worthy of this honor (pause). And don't forget, although you are astronauts, you are above all actors. You have to be convincing! You have to speak with authority! Say the exact words that will touch every single heart on Earth – and say them in exactly the right way! You must move people. Keep in mind that the inhabitants of planet Earth will identify with you. They will imitate you. So you must be up to the task! Don't forget that we've entrusted you with enormous capabilities. Enormous

(pause) power. Enormous power! (echo) Power, power, power.

DARKNESS

MISSION COMMANDER (his voice is heard in the total darkness): Fire up the main engine! (The sound of rockets firing up, rumbling like boulders tumbling down a cliff) All engines are go! (Slow countdown) 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0! Blast off for the rocket Uranus and the lunar module Hawk. (Sound of a rocket launching.)

(Pause.) Thirty minutes have passed since takeoff.

Stephan and Julia's voices can be heard over the radio transmitters, along with the characteristic static:

STEPHAN (voice): Mercury 18 has separated.

JULIA (voice): We are now in the open cosmos.

STEPHAN (voice): It's a four-day trip to the moon.

JULIA (voice): A four-day trip.

MISSION COMMANDER: Not by camel, however, my dear astronauts. My dearest Julia and Stephan.

STEPHAN (voice): No, we're going by Hawk.

JULIA (voice): The lunar module Hawk, carried by the Mercury 18 shuttle.

Yipeeeeeeeeeeee!

(The sound of a spaceship zooming past.)

STEPHAN (voice): How much further is it to the moon?

JULIA (voice): We've gone almost 350,000 km. Only 30,000 more and we reach the moon. We'll be landing shortly.

STEPHAN (voice): We can see countless craters through the porthole.

MISSION COMMANDER (voice): Prepare for landing!

JULIA (voice): Roger! Preparing for landing!

(The sound of landing [moon-landing].)

STEPHAN (voice): Cut the engines!

MISSION COMMANDER (voice): Hawk, we see you down below.

JULIA (voice): Oceanus Procellarum base to Mission Command: The *Hawk* has landed!

Scene Two

The gray surface of the moon. At the back of the stage the planet Earth can be seen rising above the lunar horizon against the black backdrop of outer space. To the left – the lunar module. To the right stands a stool. A bottle of champagne is sitting on the stool

Stephan carefully goes down the steps of the lunar module. He is dressed in a tank top, shorts and flip-flops, without a spacesuit or any of the usual space gear. He doesn't go all the way down, but instead jumps from somewhere in the middle of the steps. He does a few gymnastic exercises: some jumping jacks, five or six squats, some stretches, toe-touches, and push-ups.

STEPHAN: Woohoo, it's awesome here on the moon! Come on out, girl! What are you waiting for? Come out and join the party! (Julia timidly peeks out of the module. She is also in sportswear, a sweat suit or the like.) It's an amazing feeling to work out on a non-earthly surface. Come on, come on. Don't worry. It's great. Just be careful on your way down the steps. (Julia comes down the steps and looks around.) Look at it! Just look at it! (He points at the earth).

JULIA: It's magnificent. It really is. God, it really is magnificent.

STEPHAN (He bends down and scoops up some dirt [sand] from the stage. He crumbles it between his thumb and index finger, raises his hand in front of his face and let the dirt sift through his fingers): This isn't earth. It's moon.

JULIA: Soil from the moon.

STEPHAN: The moon!

(Pause.)

JULIA: Our dream has come true!

STEPHAN: Our dream of landing on the moon! (pause) Know what just popped into my head?

JULIA: No, what?

STEPHAN: When I was little I was pretty into mysticism. I would spend all my vacations in a little mountain village in Bulgaria. With my grandma and grandpa. And there I'd do the following exercise: at New Year's, for example, after stuffing myself at the holiday table, I'd go out into the yard. Into the cold winter night ...

JULIA: With air that stings your cheeks.

STEPHAN: Yeah. Into the cold winter night, like I said, and while taking a steaming pee in the snow, I'd stare at the moon. It was ironed on the night like a rock star on some teenager's black T-shirt.

JULIA: Heh heh. Just listen to you (mimicking him): "It was ironed on the night like a rock star on some teenager's black T-shirt." Pretty highfalutin comparison.

STEPHAN: Well, highfalutin or no, that's how it was (pause). So I'd be staring at the moon.

JULIA: While peeing in the snow.

STEPHAN: I don't see why you always have to fixate on those sorts of things.

JULIA: I'm just kidding. And?

STEPHAN: And I would imagine that I was on the moon. And that I was looking down

from there. I got that exercise from one issue of Psychic newspaper.

JULIA: Whereas you're always going on about stuff like Psychic newspaper, astrology, aliens and the like ...

STEPHAN: What makes you say that? It was actually a very practical exercise. The point was to stretch a mental thread from the moon – where you imagine that you are – to the place where you really are. In that way you learn to see yourself from the outside.

JULIA: From above.

STEPHAN: From everywhere.

JULIA: From everywhere?

STEPHAN: Is that bad?

JULIA: No.

STEPHAN: I would stand there entranced by the moon until the tinkling of cowbells from the barn snapped me out of it.

JULIA: Whoa!

STEPHAN: But that was a long time ago. Now I really am on the moon. So now, you see, I'm going to imagine that I'm on earth. And that I'm looking at myself from there (he points at the earth), just like perhaps at this very moment some child spending his vacation at his grandma and grandpa's village is looking at the moon.

JULIA: If there are any villages left, that is.

STEPHAN: Well, yeah. The earth is becoming urbanized.

JULIA: And the moon!

STEPHAN: And the moon will become urbanized.

JULIA: And the moon will become urbanized. Don't worry.

STEPHAN: I'm not worried. It's a satellite of the earth. However, there's something else I'd like to say (pause). We're in a triple spin!

JULIA: Meaning?

STEPHAN: You and me are in a triple spin. Right now on the moon. First around the lunar axis, second around the earth, right? (He makes a counterclockwise circular motion with his right hand).

JULIA: Whoa!

STEPHAN: And (he raises his index finger pedantically) third, we're spinning around the sun along with the earth (he makes a counterclockwise circular motion with both hands).

JULIA: Around that teensy-weensy yellow star, waaaaay over there (pointing), known as the sun.

STEPHAN: If we were on earth, we'd only be spinning two times. (He does two cartwheels.)

JULIA (sarcastically): But since we're on the moon, were spinning three times, right? That's some pretty major spinning, dude.

STEPHAN: Spinning – the core of life. No! Hang on a second! Doesn't the sun itself spin around the center of the Milky Way? How could I have forgotten? (He smacks himself on the forehead). Yes indeedy. A single galactic year lasts 250 million earth years. Oof (pause). To tell you the truth, I don't have any idea how many times we're spinning, either.

JULIA: Spinning – the core of life, man. Now there's a slogan for you.

STEPHAN: Spinning like tops..

JULIA: Like paddles. At a bakery.

STEPHAN: Those are called baker's peels.

JULIA: Whatever.

STEPHAN: Isn't this great?

JULIA: But take Jupiter with its 16 moons. A whole separate system. Just imagine the spinning that goes on there, it'll blow your mind.

STEPHAN: True that. They've either got a lot of moons (pause) or none at all – like the planet Venus, for example.

JULIA: But it is Venus, after all! She doesn't need them.

STEPHAN: Because she's the goddess of love?

JULIA: Because she's complete unto herself, that's why Venus doesn't have a moon.

STEPHAN: Whereas we have one satellite with a capital "M" (pause). It pisses me off, though.

JULIA: That we only have one satellite?

STEPHAN: No. It pisses me off that missions to the moon were suspended in 1972. There should've been a whole lunar city waiting here to greet us...

JULIA: A whole Lunar Rome, like in the song.

STEPHAN: A Lunar Rome?

JULIA: How many times do I have to sing you that little ditty?

STEPHAN: Oh, yeah, the Lunar Rome. Fine. There would've been a whole Lunar Rome waiting here to greet us if we hadn't suspended the missions to the moon (pause). Then the two of us wouldn't have to start from square one now. Why hasn't a single human being set foot on the moon since 1972? Why?

JULIA: Because they've been driving a car all over the moon.

STEPHAN: Because they've been driving a car all over the moon.

JULIA: The lunar rover. There are three rovers on the moon at the moment, left over from previous missions.

STEPHAN: Right. A blitz of missions and then suddenly... Bam! Nothing. Why?

JULIA: They ate up a lot of funding.

STEPHAN: Humph! (sarcastically) They ate up a lot of funding.

(Pause.)

JULIA: So do you think that's Europe there? (She points toward planet Earth at the rear of the stage.) It's so veiled in clouds that I can't make anything out. I wonder what they're doing right now.

STEPHAN (shrugs): What do you expect them to be doing?!

JULIA: And they can get along fine without us.

STEPHAN: Isn't that the truth?

JULIA: I doubt they can get along without us.

STEPHAN: Why couldn't they?

JULIA: Nope, they most definitely cannot get along without us. Everyone's eyes are glued on the moon. Just imagine what it'll be like when we go back. All the newspapers and websites will write about us.

STEPHAN: They're already writing about us.

JULIA: We'll be on every television station on earth... I mean, we already are.

STEPHAN: And on Venus.

JULIA (laughing): Especially on Venus.

STEPHAN (waiting): Yoo-hoo! Hello! We're here! On the moon! On the moon! That's right!

JULIA: We'll be the biggest heroes on the planet.

STEPHAN (stretching out his arms as if rocking a baby): They'll name their children after us.

JULIA: We'll have tons and tons of fans.

STEPHAN: We'll get invited to all the parties.

JULIA: We'll be constantly in the spotlight.

STEPHAN: In all the earthy spotlights!

JULIA: Here the sun...

STEPHAN: ... is our only spotlight. Is that what you were going to say?

JULIA: Yes.

STEPHAN: Bullshit.

JULIA: No, really... That's what I was going to say. Honest. I mean, it makes sense, doesn't it? What other projector is there around here besides the sun, huh?

STEPHAN: It'll fry us like mice if it hits our skin. We'll be sizzling away, all right. Our blood will boil right off... All our bodily fluids will be fizzing like champagne.

JULIA: Sadist. (laughing)

STEPHAN (hollering towards the curtains): These spotlights are pretty bright. We're sweating. (he wipes the sweat from his brow). Man, are we cooking under these lights or what?

JULIA: It is pretty stuffy.

THE INSTRUCTOR (voice): That's enough.

The instructor appears on stage from out behind the righthand curtain.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Very well done. There were lyrical moments – the thing about the cowbells from the village barn – as well as humorous ones, for example the cartwheels and the spinning. Even the improvisations at the end worked well, especially that bit about the sun frying you like mice if it hits your skin. There was only one thing I didn't like! (pause). I didn't like how Stephan got bent out of shape about the fact that no human has set foot on the moon since 1972. Stephan, there's no need to mention that. Nobody needs to hear those kinds of details (pause). We need to be positive. To preserve the bon ton. It's very important to preserve the bon ton.

STEPHAN: Well, it's not like we would say: "Hey, look! Look! Aliens!" We're not going to freak people out.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Thank goodness for that. That's the last thing we need.

STEPHAN: By the way, is it true that the Apollo 8 crew saw aliens?

THE INSTRUCTOR (astonished): No!

STEPHAN: That's what I heard. After running into trouble with some UFO that almost knocked them off course and flung them deep into outer space, Apollo 8 told the Command

Center: “Please be informed, there is a Santa Claus.” And “Santa Claus,” as you know, is astronaut slang for “aliens.” Also Armstrong, after he landed on the moon, was heard exclaiming by earthbound ham-radio fans: “Who are they? Who? There are other spaceships here. They’ve lined up around the edge of the crater!”

JULIA: I even read that Apollo 8 didn’t just photograph any old being in space, but the Lord God himself!

STEPHAN: They only caught him in one shot. As light washing over the dark side of the moon.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Nonsense! Total nonsense! That is absolutely untrue! Stephan, I know that you get carried away with conspiracy theories. And here it is my duty to reiterate that up there you need to watch what you say. After all, everyone on earth will be watching you. Don’t forget! The most important thing is preserving the bon ton. So that means no conspiracies involving aliens or alien infrastructure on the moon! I don’t want to hear any more such foolishness from the two of you. There’s even crazier theories than that out there (pause). For example, that people haven’t landed on the moon at all until now! That is pure blasphemy! Keep that in mind! We say it every time, yet every time I’m obligated to repeat: You will be the first astronauts on the moon since 1972 (pause). Now then. Do I make myself clear? (The instructor takes the bottle off the stool.) I, for my part, need to practice opening the champagne one more time.

STEPHAN: That won’t be a problem.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Perhaps not. But every detail, every tiny movement has to be rehearsed hundreds of times over. To the point of full mechanization. Just imagine if after the excitement of landing you flub the champagne. What would we do then?

(The lighting gradually dims to full darkness.)

DARKNESS

STEPHAN (voice): Could you imagine me being on the moon in a tanktop?

JULIA (voice): Could you imagine yourself?

STEPHAN (voice): Of course, you can’t wear tanktops on the moon.

JULIA (half-whispered): The sun would fry your ass!

Suddenly pumping techno music (tribal house) with rhythmic flutes comes blaring out of the darkness. It lasts about a minute, gradually fading away. Before it dies out entirely, the Mission Commander joins in.

MISSION COMMANDER (his voice is heard in the total darkness): All engines are go! (sound of rocket engines) 3, 2, 1, 0! Blast off!

JULIA (voice): We’re in outer space.

STEPHAN (voice): We’re nearing the Van Allen Belt. We’re getting close to the Van Allen zone, do you read me?

MISSION COMMANDER: There’s no reason to worry!

STEPHAN: I hope not!

(Sound of a rocket.)

JULIA (voice): We're in lunar orbit.

MISSION COMMANDER (voice): Prepare for landing!

JULIA (voice): Roger! Preparing for landing!

Sound of a moon landing.

Scene Three

The same set – the gray surface of the moon – only now without the stool and champagne. Otherwise, at the rear of the stage the earthrise over the lunar horizon is visible against the black backdrop of space. The lunar module is in the same place.

Stephan once again descends first, but this time in a spacesuit (and all the astronaut gear necessary for surviving in the brutal lunar conditions).

STEPHAN: Yeeehaaaw, the moon! (He raises a red flag with a picture of the Earth in the center of it. Julia climbs out of the module and looks around.)

JULIA: Look at it! Just look at it! (She points at planet Earth at the back of the stage.)

STEPHAN: That was my line. I was supposed to say: "Look at it! Just look at it!"

JULIA: It's no biggie, just say: "It's magnificent. Really. God, it really is magnificent."

STEPHAN (angrily): That was my line. My line!

JULIA: C'mon, just say it.

STEPHAN: OK, fine, whatever. We're already on the moon.

They walk around.

JULIA: It really is magnificent!

STEPHAN: I wonder if we're trespassing on private property now?

JULIA: What do you mean "private property"?!

STEPHAN: Haven't some shysters been selling plots on the moon?

JULIA: Big deal.

STEPHAN: I read it somewhere. You could even buy a star, but...

JULIA: Do you think that's Europe there? (pointing)

STEPHAN: That's the Balkans.

JULIA: Well, yeah, same difference. And there's Bulgaria. The poor little planet is so veiled

in clouds that I can't make anything out. I wonder what they're doing now?

STEPHAN: My son is taking the dog out for a walk.

JULIA: I think he's taken your brain along with them. How can you be so out of it?! Your son is watching us on television. My daughter is, too. (She waves.) High, darling! (in a baby voice) Can you see Mama, sweetie pie? (pause) Everyone's eyes are fixed on us. We are their hope. We are their optimism. Mankind's territory has been expanded. Yes! Mankind's territory has most definitely been expanded. Its sphere of influence. Its diameter! Just imagine what it'll be like when we return!

STEPHAN: Just imagine what it'll be like when we return.

JULIA: We might be the biggest heroes on the planet.

STEPHAN: People might name their children after us.

JULIA: We might have a lot of fans.

STEPHAN: We might get invited to a lot of celebrations.

JULIA: We might be constantly in the spotlight.

STEPHAN: Here, the sun is the only spotlight. But we've already said that. It'll fry us like mice if it touches our skin. We'll be sizzling away.

JULIA: Sadist. (She laughs.)

(Pause.)

STEPHAN: It'll be a little hard to work out on the moon in a spacesuit, but... But if you want we can play golf. Like the commander of Apollo 14 in 1971, I've brought along my golf clubs. So what do you say? Should we hit some balls around? Thanks to the weak gravitation, they'll fly more than 300 meters. No kidding!

Stephan goes over to the module, climbs the steps and disappears inside. During that time Julia wanders around admiring the moon. Stephan comes back out of the module. As soon as his head pops out of the doorway, he stretches out his right hand, which is holding a red decorative apple. In his left hand he is carrying a golf club. He goes over to Julia.

JULIA: What's the apple for?

STEPHAN: We're going to play golf with it. The apple will be our golf ball (he reaches out and waves the apple in Julia's face). You and I are in the Garden of Eden.

JULIA: Oh!

STEPHAN: Oh yes! Just imagine that we're not on the moon, but in the Garden of Eden instead. We are the first man and woman here.

JULIA: In the Garden of Eden!

STEPHAN: So now I'm going to whack this apple into next week so that it won't be able to tempt us. (Stephan sets the apple on the ground). Now check this out. Baaaam! (He hits the apple with a golf club, sending it flying behind the curtains.) Goodbye, apple, heh heh! Like I told you, thanks to the weak gravitation it'll fly more than 300 meters. (pause) But despite that, I still prefer playing golf on earth. On the seaside. At some Black Sea resort, yessiree. (Pause.)

JULIA: It really is great here on our moon.

STEPHAN: What's so great about it?

JULIA: Don't you know what kind of moons the other planets have?!

STEPHAN: Sure I do.

JULIA: Most of the moons revolving... around Jupiter and Neptune, for example, belch out all sorts of nasty stuff.

STEPHAN: Geysers. Lava.

JULIA: Whereas here on the earthly, so to speak, uh, earthly moon, we don't even have a single active volcano to liven things up. Talk about silence, dude. This silence is enough to drive you crazy.

STEPHAN: From here, if we fly straight through the cosmos, the next nearest moons are Phobos and Deimos, Mars' moons ...

JULIA: Some people don't even count them as moons.

STEPHAN: Well, how are you supposed to count them, when if you landed on Phobos you'd weigh more or less the same as a shot of vodka?

JULIA: 100 grams?

STEPHAN: For example. A large vodka. Can you imagine?

JULIA: Big-time anorexia.

STEPHAN: Too bad there's no vodka here.

JULIA: Champagne is more fitting to the occasion anyway.

STEPHAN: Well, yes. For events like our landing on the moon (emphasizing "our"), champagne is clearly more fitting.

JULIA: Of course (pause). Know what I'm thinking? We're getting pretty dull with these long-winded astronomical concepts. First the moons of Jupiter, then the moons of Mars! Then Phobos and Deimos! We need to talk about concrete things. Objects.

STEPHAN: Mars will swallow up Phobos in 40 million years.

JULIA: We won't be alive to see it.

STEPHAN: We could be reincarnated. One astrologer calculated that in my previous life I had led a monastic existence. You never know what your next incarnation might be.

JULIA: There you go again with your astrology crap... let's talk about concrete things. Objects.

STEPHAN (shrugging his shoulders in confusion): Such as?

JULIA: For example, when I was a kid I wondered what "galaxy" meant. I thought that the galaxy was our solar system, that is, our sun and the planets revolving around it.

STEPHAN: Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

JULIA: I was so clueless that I couldn't differentiate between the galaxy and the solar system. Good thing I finally saw some lady on "Discovery Channel" explain it graphically. If we imagine, she said, that the sun is as big as a grain of salt, then if we take only the suns...

STEPHAN: You mean the stars.

JULIA: Suns.

STEPHAN: Stars.

JULIA: I like "suns" better. It seems more objective. Anyway, if we imagine that the sun is as big as a grain of salt, then if we take only the suns from our galaxy the Milky Way, we could fill up an Olympic-sized swimming pool. See how simple that explanation is? And it makes

everything clear to you. And when you imagine all 400 billion suns and solar systems in the Milky Way alone...

STEPHAN: There are 100 billion.

JULIA: Others say there are 200 billion. But go ahead and count them, if you're such a nitpicker.

STEPHAN: Fine. I'll go start counting now. I'll need about 30 years just to count up to the first billion.

JULIA: What about the suns from the other billions of galaxies?

STEPHAN: And the planets around them.

JULIA: And the moons around them?

STEPHAN: Sweet Jesus!

JULIA: Since man most likely carries a particle from the center of the universe inside him, maybe that's why he wants to be the center of the universe. But he is anything but the center of the universe.

STEPHAN: Where are we? Why don't you just conduct a Gallup Poll and get it over with?

JULIA: Be serious.

STEPHAN: Oh-ho-ho! The minute you start taking yourself seriously, you're lost!

JULIA: On the contrary. The minute you stop taking yourself seriously, you're lost!

STEPHAN: OK, fine, let's assume we're both right. At the moment, however, I don't give a rip about that. At the moment, my brain is occupied by the thought of what could have happened by now on the moon if they hadn't shut down the program in 1973...

JULIA: Enough of your "what ifs"! What if John Lennon had been wearing a bullet-proof vest...

STEPHAN: No, really! It pisses me off. Now instead of there being a whole lunar city waiting here to greet us, we have to start from scratch.

JULIA: Settle down, there'll be a city on the moon soon enough. And not just one. The moon will also be urbanized. Don't worry.

STEPHAN: I'm not worried. It's a satellite of the earth.

JULIA: You and I will lay the foundations of a whole lunar urbanization program!

STEPHAN: It won't be easy!

JULIA: That's true, earthly gravity has made our bodies the way they are.

STEPHAN: Bodies are no problem. Our bodies are designed according to earth's gravity, but what about our souls?

JULIA: Can't you think of anything lamer to say? "Our souls?!" Retard.

STEPHAN: Hey, I'm just joking.

JULIA: I'm not in the mood for jokes.

STEPHAN: Yes, ma'am.

JULIA: Here on the moon, gravity is only one-sixth as strong as on earth. It's only one-sixth of earth's gravity. So there's no reason to walk. Our bodies, being the way they are, are most useful on earth. On the moon, you're better off jumping around (she starts jumping around like a kangaroo.)

STEPHAN: If we stay on the moon, our descendents will have different bodies.

JULIA: That's exactly the point, now isn't it?

STEPHAN: What is?

JULIA: Haven't you guessed?

STEPHAN (shrugging): Guessed what?

JULIA: That we're staying on the moon.

STEPHAN: S-t-a-y-i-n-g...

JULIA: Here, yes.

STEPHAN (pointing at the surface): On this...

JULIA: On this... Yes! Exactly.

STEPHAN (alarmed): What do you mean?

JULIA: You men have fragile psyches, so that's why no one told you, it was my job to clue you in. Boy, am I glad to get that off my chest.

STEPHAN (almost hysterical): But what you mean? Hang on a second, I ...

JULIA: Yeah, yeah, you! You and I are on a one-way ticket. I have to bear your child. We'll raise our offspring here.

STEPHAN: But... (pause)

JULIA: Relax! I'm kidding.

STEPHAN: So you really are kidding, right?

JULIA: Of course I'm kidding!

STEPHAN: But then why did you say that we have to stay on the moon?

JULIA: Come on, give me a break! Can't a person make a joke around here...

STEPHAN: So it was just a little joke, huh?

JULIA: Uh-huh.

STEPHAN: I thought you weren't in the mood for jokes.

JULIA: Well, all of a sudden my mood changed.

STEPHAN: Ah, you beautiful thing, you!

JULIA (flattered): Hey!

STEPHAN (mockingly): Hey!

JULIA (as a greeting): Hey!

(From the opposite side of the stage the second male astronaut and a second female astronaut appear. They are also wearing spacesuits.)

STEPHAN (as a greeting): Hey! Here come the stand-ins.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: Hi there. How is the training going?

JULIA: Fine, it's fine.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S VOICE (with an electric sound as if from a computer): Okay, okay that's enough.

(The instructor appears on stage, this time from the left.)

THE INSTRUCTOR (to the group of four astronauts): The rehearsals with spacesuits have been far better.

Julia and Stephan leave the stage.

THE INSTRUCTOR (to the second male astronaut and the second female astronaut): So. Shall we go over the basic timeline of human civilization's activity on the moon?

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT: An earthly device landed on the moon for the first time on January 31, 1966. This was the Russian Luna 9 spacecraft. It landed in the Oceanus Procellarum, or "Ocean of Storms."

THE INSTRUCTOR: Which is the reason we have also decided to land there, in the

Oceanus Procellarum.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: On June 2 of the same year, the American Surveyor also landed on the moon.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Name the first people to enter lunar orbit without, however, landing on the moon.

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT: The astronauts from Apollo 8: Frank Borman, James Lovell and William Anders.

THE INSTRUCTOR: The year?

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT: 1968.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: They were also the first to see the dark side of the Moon.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Correct. And let me warn you again – I don't want hear about any aliens supposedly encountered by Apollo 8!

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT: The astronauts from Apollo 10 got as close as 14 km to the lunar surface.

THE INSTRUCTOR: The first manned mission to the lunar surface?

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT: Apollo 11.

THE INSTRUCTOR (triumphantly): Apollo 11! (pause) On July 20, 1969! Neil Armstrong (pause), Buzz Aldrin (pause), and Michael Collins (pause) are heroes.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: Five minutes into the next mission, Apollo 12, the television camera broke down thanks to solar radiation, so they weren't able to broadcast from the moon. Damn that Van Allen zone!

Stephan and Julia enter.

STEPHAN: Damn that Van Allen Belt! Damn that radiation belt, my man! 'Atta boy! (He breaks into song):

Oh, the Van Allen belt
Is a deathly raging swell.
Oh, the Van Allen belt
Is a radioactive hell...

THE INSTRUCTOR (interrupting him): Yes, the fact that solar radiation knocked out their television camera is hardly the most important thing. Such comments smack of conspiracy theory nonsense.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: I guess so (pause).

THE INSTRUCTOR: Continuing right along?

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: Apollo 13 barely avoided disaster, in the sense that their oxygen reservoir exploded and they barely made it back alive after doing one loop around the moon. In any case, they didn't land on the moon then.

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT: Apollo 13 may not have landed, but to make up for it the astronauts on the next mission even drove a car on the moon. The Apollo 15 crew explored 27 km of the moon's surface in a moon rover.

SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT: While on the next mission, Apollo 17 astronauts covered 35 km a day in their rover. Not bad. And that's where it all ends.

THE INSTRUCTOR: Yes. Well, that's it, more or less. Years later our probes scanned the

entire lunar surface and discovered ice on the moon. You have been selected for the honor of preparing the groundwork for the first base and the first rocket launchpad on our natural satellite. In summary, over the course of three years a total of six expeditions landed on the moon. Twelve individuals have walked on the lunar surface. The Apollo 17 commander, Eugene Cernan, the last man to set foot on the moon to date, described the feeling one experiences up there as follows: "It's wonderful. One of the greatest moments of my life – just imagine, you're standing on another celestial body. You know that no one before you has ever set foot where you're walking!" (pause) Very soon you, too, will experience that wonderful feeling of standing on another celestial body. (Pause.) But if something should happen... nevertheless, we shouldn't forget how far away from planet Earth her satellite is, that heavenly body called the moon... So if the telebridge... signal breaks down, we'll broadcast the footage we shot last week. We have to be ready for all sorts of surprises. By the way, the mission commander's idea of filming your moon-landing here in advance on earth in a film studio was a very good one indeed. If something happens to go wrong, we just flip on the tape and we're set.

SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT (bewildered): But it won't be real!

THE INSTRUCTOR: The important thing is to not disappoint all those eyes fixed on us. Billions of human eyes! Do you have any idea what that could mean? We cannot just smash the hopes of that many people into smithereens. (Raising her voice.) We cannot! Do I make myself clear?

STEPHAN, JULIA, SECOND FEMALE ASTRONAUT, SECOND MALE ASTRONAUT (in unison): Yes, ma'am!

THE INSTRUCTOR: Well, that's more or less it. Now it's time for the flight.

DARKNESS

MISSION COMMANDER (his voice is heard in the darkness): Fire up the main engine! All engines are go! (The sound of rockets firing up, followed by a slow countdown) 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0! Blast off for the rocket Uranus and the lunar module Hawk. (Sound of a rocket launching.) Thirty minutes have passed since takeoff.

(Stephan and Julia's voices can be heard over the radio transmitters, along with the characteristic static.)

STEPHAN (voice): Mercury 18 has separated.

JULIA (voice): We're now in the open cosmos.

(The sound of a spaceship zooming past.)

STEPHAN (voice): How much further is it to the moon?

JULIA (voice): We've gone almost 350,000 km. Only 30,000 more and we reach the moon. We'll be landing in a bit.

STEPHAN (voice): We can see countless craters through the porthole.

MISSION COMMANDER (voice): Prepare for landing!

JULIA (voice): Roger! Preparing for landing!

(The sound of landing [moon-landing].

STEPHAN (voice): Cut the engines!

MISSION COMMANDER (voice): Hawk, we see you down below.

JULIA (voice): Oceanus Procellarum base to Mission Command: The Hawk has landed!

(...)