

# Giant Leap

by

Callum McKay

07925 275978  
callum.mckay95@outlook.com

1 FADE IN: 1

2 EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT 2

The moon shines bright on the empty freeway. It's late, only the odd truck passes under a sign for Houston. Suddenly, out of the darkness, a convoy of cars and vans hurtle towards the city.

A few vehicles are even jockeying for position. A van pulls out to block a car trying to overtake.

3 INT. CAR - NIGHT 3

The Driver blasts his horn and flashes his lights. His passenger, JACK, 30s, slaps the dash in frustration.

JACK  
Dammit, Carl!

CARL, 30s, keeps his eyes on the road.

CARL  
I don't wanna hear it, Jack.

JACK  
We gonna get there first, or what?

CARL  
We'll get there when we get there.

JACK  
So Cronkite's boys are gonna beat us to this one, too?

CARL  
Cut the crap. You just want to get your picture signed.

JACK  
Yeah, so what?

CARL  
I ain't getting myself killed for a story, Jack!

As the vehicles turn off the highway, they're forced to abandon their mini race. Carl follows the car ahead of him.

4 EXT. LUNAR RECEIVING LABORATORY - NIGHT 4

As vehicles arrive, scores of men jump out and race to be the first to the cordon erected outside a set of double doors.

Jack and Carl shoulder barge and wrestle their way to the front. Jack has a camera hung around his neck. Frantically, he busies himself with rubbing the lens.

CARL  
It's plenty clean.

Jack puts down his camera, and instead rummages in his pocket. For a moment he panics, as if he's lost something. Other pocket, he sighs with relief and pulls out a folded piece of paper.

JACK  
Can you get this one?

CARL  
Fine.

Jack hands over the camera.

JACK  
Try and get me in the shot.

CARL  
How are we going to sell that? Just get your autographs and let me worry about the damn shot.

Jack unfolds his paper and examines it with an excited grin.

JACK  
Reckon I can get all three?

For the first time we see it. It's a cutting from LIFE Magazine. A glossy, double page image of Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Buzz Aldrin posing in their NASA space suits. Each of them looking every bit an All American hero.

5 INT. LUNAR RECEIVING LABORATORY (LRL) - NIGHT 5

A bedside clock ticks, it is seconds away from three o'clock in the morning.

HOUSTON (V.O.)  
T-minus fifteen, guidance system is internal...

A hand rests on a switch, poised, waiting for the call.

HOUSTON (V.O.)  
Twelve, eleven, ten, nine, ignition sequence starts...

A dial is twisted round, a spurt of flame ignites.

HOUSTON (V.O.)  
Six, five, four...

Lying back with his eyes closed is NEIL ARMSTRONG, 39, neat, short hair. He's peaceful, still. He's asleep.

LRL EMPLOYEE  
Three, two, one...

The bedside clock is held right next to Neil's face. It goes off, and immediately the switch is flicked.

6 INT. LRL - NEIL ARMSTRONG'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

6

A brilliant, blinding white light illuminates the sleeping quarters. Neil jerks awake, shocked into consciousness by the incessant, deafening ringing pounding in his skull.

He sits bolt upright to see he's not alone. In fact, he's surrounded by the Lunar Receiving Laboratory staff laughing at him. The Employee holding the clock is doubled over in hysterics.

LRL EMPLOYEE

Wakey, wakey, Neil. Today's the day!

Slowly, Neil's eyes adjust to the light. He sits silently for a moment.

LRL EMPLOYEE

The guys are grabbing breakfast. Sooner you're done sooner we can get you over to the doc and then out of here.

Neil climbs out from under the sheets and cuts through the party to grab a NASA branded robe hanging on the back of the door. Having been ignored, the party's laughter subsides.

LRL EMPLOYEE

Might beat the press if you hurry.

Neil still says nothing, but proceeds to neatly make his bed. The moment's passed, everyone's very self-conscious.

LRL EMPLOYEE

(awkward)

Anyway, we'll leave you to it.

NEIL

Thank you.

The staff filter from the room. The LRL Employee places the clock back on the bedside table.

LRL EMPLOYEE

It was Buzz's idea, Neil. Seemed funny at the time.

NEIL

It was.

The LRL Employee departs. As soon as he's gone, Neil adjusts the clock's place on the table.

7 INT. LRL - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

7

The spurt of flame continues to burn. It turns out it is a burner for a tray of breakfast.

A hand turns down the dial and the flame extinguishes. It is the hand of BUZZ ALDRIN, 39. He piles his plate with steak and eggs, a cocky smirk on his face.

He settles into a seat and begins to devour his breakfast as the staff emerge into the dining room.

BUZZ

Fellas! How'd it go? Did you get him?

The party just mutter. Last to emerge is the LRL Employee who just shrugs.

A smart man sits opposite Buzz with a modest breakfast of muesli. MICHAEL COLLINS, 39, gives him a stare that smacks of...

MICHAEL

I told you.

BUZZ

Dammit, Mike. It's just a bit of fun on our last day.

MICHAEL

Don't tell me you've been waiting all quarantine for that.

BUZZ

Not exactly.

NEIL (O.S.)

More like ever since we lifted off of Tranquility Base?

Buzz looks round to see Neil in the doorway.

BUZZ

Come on Neil, you can take a joke, right?

NEIL

Sure. Maybe not at oh-three-hundred next time.

Buzz breaks into a bombastic laugh as Neil gives a small chuckle. Obviously no hard feelings with this crew.

8 INT. LRL - MEDICAL CENTER - NIGHT

8

Neil sits on a bed, his shirt off, being prodded in various places by DR BILL CARPENTIER, 34, a thin, rat-faced Canadian. Buzz and Mike wait their turn.

BUZZ

Can't you hurry it up, Bill? I did tell Joan I'd be home today.

BILL

Sure you won't miss me giving you a pat down when you're back with your wife, Buzz?

Buzz laughs.

BILL

Well I'll see you again before you know it.

MICHAEL

Not me, no need for a flight surgeon when you're not planning on flying again.

BILL

Really, Mike?

MICHAEL

Afraid so.

BILL

Well. Aside from that my point still stands, or at least will do if the President gets his way.

NEIL

What do you mean, Bill?

BILL

It's just talk at the moment. I'm sure Deke will fill you in.

Bill pats Neil on the shoulder firmly.

BILL

You're all done, Neil. Clear to rejoin society. Who's next?

9 INT. LRL - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

9

The three astronauts assemble with a small bag each. The LRL Employee approaches them to shake their hands.

LRL EMPLOYEE

So long, fellas. Oh, and you know this little plan to be out early to beat the press?

MICHAEL

(grinning)

Let me guess.

LRL EMPLOYEE

It's been an honour, gentlemen.

They gather up their bags as the LRL Employee steps up to the doors and pushes them open.

10 EXT. LUNAR RECEIVING LABORATORY - NIGHT

10

Cameras flash and reporters scramble for a word from the nation's heroes. One by one, they step into the breach. Michael first, then Buzz, and finally Neil.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)

After eighteen days in quarantine following their eight days in space, the most momentous eight days in human history, we get our first proper look at the Apollo 11 crew.

The astronauts smile and wave as they make their way towards three white NASA vehicles. When Michael steps out the crowd breaks into a respectful round of applause.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)

Command module pilot, Michael Collins.

The applause continues for Buzz as he emerges. He acknowledges the crowd with more of a swagger than the reserved Michael.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)

Lunar module pilot, Colonel Buzz Aldrin.

Buzz and Michael reach their cars. There's a slight delay before Neil emerges. When he does, the crowd breaks into a much larger, more emphatic chorus of cheers and applause. More photos are snapped, more demands for his attention.

BROADCASTER (V.O.)

And finally, the first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong.

Neil awkwardly waves. Buzz watches on, his smile fading slightly at the warmer reception Neil receives. Neil makes to walk on, but is cajoled into speaking before a tactically placed microphone. He pauses, struggling to find the words.

Buzz turns away, unimpressed.

BUZZ

(to driver)

Take me home.

He climbs in to his vehicle and takes off.

11 EXT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - NIGHT

11

The NASA car pulls up outside a large suburban house. Buzz climbs out with his bag. As the car pulls away and Buzz makes to walk towards his home, a BOY on his paper round cycles past, dropping newspapers on driveways.

As he passes Buzz he gives a friendly nod, then does a double take, and screeches to a halt.

BUZZ

Mornin'.

Stunned, the boy doesn't reply.

BUZZ

You okay there, son?

The boy pulls out a paper and thrusts it under Buzz's nose.

BOY

Is this you?

He points to the front page, unsurprisingly it's dominated by a picture of Neil, Buzz and Michael.

BUZZ

Sure is.

BOY

Wow, I can't believe... I mean --

BUZZ

Here, you got a pen or pencil?

The boy rummages in his newspaper bag. He pulls out a clipboard and takes off the pencil attached to it.

Buzz takes the pencil and signs the picture on the newspaper.

BUZZ

There. Now you can tell your classmates you met a man who's walked on the moon.

BOY

Wow, thanks. Thanks very much. You have a good day, Mr Armstrong.

Buzz stalls, did he hear the kid right? As the Boy cycles off with a final, cheery wave, Buzz's mood shifts. Grabbing his bag, he stomps up the drive in a huff.

12 INT. COLLINS HOME (HOUSTON) - NIGHT

12

Michael quietly opens the door and tiptoes inside, being very wary not to make too much noise.

He switches on a lamp to get his bearings. As he sets his bag down, there is the sound of sniffing, muffled growling, and of paws.

An alsatian appears from the adjoining kitchen. As soon as it recognises its master, it bounds up to Michael.



MICHAEL  
 (whispering)  
 Hello, girl. You miss me?

Michael hugs the excited creature, and attempts to contain it.

MICHAEL  
 Sshh, sshh, you'll wake mama.

The main hall light switches on. Michael freezes, and looks to the top of the stairs at his loving wife, PATRICIA, 39, standing, hand on hip, but wearing a bright smile.

PATRICIA  
 I wasn't asleep.

She descends the stairs.

PATRICIA  
 I've been losing enough sleep  
 waiting for you, what's one more  
 night?

She skips the last few steps and throws herself into Michael's arms. They share a loving embrace.

MICHAEL  
 Sshh, you'll wake the kids.

They giggle, like a pair of fresh young things having just shared their first kiss.

13 INT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - NEIL'S STUDY - DAWN 13

Neil sifts through a pile of letters on his desk. In between bills, there are invitations and requests for various appearances. He files the bills, he tears up the requests.

A pair of headlights shine into the study. Neil looks out and sees a van pulling up outside his house. Slowly, he closes the blinds, but leaves them open enough to peek out. One by one, more vehicles arrive.

Neil retreats from the window and attempts to focus on the letters. One in particular does the trick of distracting him. It's a smart envelope, Neil's name written in calligraphy on the front.

He opens it, the heading reads: From the Office of the President of the United States of America. There's the sound of footsteps from the hall. Neil doesn't react.

JANET (O.S.)  
 You could have said you were back.

Neil looks up. Standing at the door in a dressing gown, arms folded, unimpressed, is JANET, 35.

She looks out the window and sees the swarm of media assembling outside.

JANET

I should have guessed when that lot woke me up.

Neil continues to ignore the gathering.

JANET

You're going to talk to them once you've got some sleep.

NEIL

I need to go through --

JANET

No, it can wait. Go on.

Neil sees her eyes tearing up with annoyance, not sadness, and takes the hint. He neatly stacks the letters, and exits past her. Janet takes a final look out at the growing mass of press before turning her back and exiting.

14 INT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - LIVING ROOM - DAY

14

A similar number of cars, vans and press have gathered outside Buzz's home, blocking the view from the living room. But no one is paying any attention. It's a party.

Buzz sits, sipping a beer, with family and friends around him. His children, ANDREW, 11, JAMES, 14 and JANICE, 12, are watching the television.

Buzz's wife, JOAN, 39, hurries in with a tray of snacks.

JOAN

Here we go. Kids, go wash your hands.

As people help themselves, there's a knock at the door.

BUZZ

I got it.

Buzz opens the door to a 73 year old version of himself, EDWIN ALDRIN SR.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

I gotta run the gauntlet just to get to the front door!

BUZZ

Come in, dad.

15 EXT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - GARDEN - DAY

15

Buzz and his father step out, clutching a beer each. Buzz shuts the back door so they're alone.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
How long has it been like that?

BUZZ  
Since I got back.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
Good.

BUZZ  
Joan wants me to get rid of them.  
She didn't like them being here for  
the launch and she sure as hell  
doesn't want them here now.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
Doesn't matter about her.

BUZZ  
That's a little --

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
It's all for you, son. You gotta  
seize the spotlight.

BUZZ  
I'm hardly Johnny Carson, dad.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
I'm not saying you have to be. But  
it's in your interest to make the  
most of it. You think Neil's going  
to be able to hack it? 'Cos I sure  
don't think so. Did you hear him on  
the moon?

BUZZ  
What do you think, dad?

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
"One small step for man, one giant  
leap for mankind." No one's gonna  
convince me he didn't mess up. If  
NASA --

BUZZ  
Not this again.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
I'm just saying.

BUZZ  
It's done, dad. Let it go. I have.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

If NASA had done what you told me,  
and followed their own rules, you'd  
have been first, and you wouldn't  
have got the line wrong. I know  
you, you'd have practiced that line  
so much you could have said it  
backwards if they asked you.

BUZZ

I don't get what this has to do  
with --

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

My point is this is history, and  
someone's got to be its heroic  
face. If Neil can't handle the  
spotlight, who else can take over?

Buzz sees his father's knowing look. He chugs his beer.

BUZZ

I'll think about it.

Joan leans out from the back door.

JOAN

Buzz, can you tell these vultures  
to take a walk? I don't want them  
on my lawn for one more second.

Buzz looks to his father, then back to Joan.

BUZZ

They're just doing their job. No  
harm in that.

Frustrated, Joan storms back inside. Buzz turns to his  
father, seeking approval, which comes in the form of a  
reassuring nod.

16 EXT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - DAY

16

The front door opens and the journalists congregate  
excitedly. Unexpectedly, it's Janet who steps out, a scowl  
on her face, nostrils flared, on the warpath.

REPORTER

Mrs Armstrong! How about --

JANET

No. Now here's the deal, you're  
going to get off my lawn right now.  
You want an interview? Talk to  
NASA. If you have a problem with  
it, you can bring it up with my  
husband.

REPORTER

Can you get Neil to come out?

JANET

Now hang on, I don't mean --

REPORTER #2

Come on, Jan.

JANET

Don't you dare.

Photographers start snapping pictures. Janet beats a retreat, but makes her feelings known, slamming the door on the mob as hard as she can.

17 INT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - NEIL'S STUDY - DAY

17

Neil's still at his desk, poring over documents. Janet storms in.

JANET

Are you just going to sit there?

NEIL

They'll get tired sooner or later.

JANET

No, they won't, Neil. How do you not get it? They won't leave until they've had a piece of you. Can you at least give them that if it will get them off our driveway?

NEIL

There are protocols for talking to the media.

JANET

I don't care, and neither do they, so just do something.

From the living room, the phone rings. Saved by the bell, Neil exits to answer it. Janet gathers herself.

NEIL (O.S.)

Hello?... Morning, Deke... You know, just trying to get back to normal... Okay, I'll be there.

Having calmed down, Janet snoops around Neil's desk. She spots the letter from the President's office, and can't help but read it.

18 EXT. MANNED SPACECRAFT CENTER - DAY

18

A '69 Chevrolet Corvette Stingray enters the imposing complex. The enormous buildings, the NASA logo at the entrance, this is Space City.

19 INT. SIMULATOR ROOM - DAY

19

Neil, Buzz and Michael observe the Command Module Simulator from the technicians' console as they conduct a simulation.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)  
(over radio)  
S-IV B is stable, coming up on  
docking.

The technicians fiddle with buttons on the console.

DEKE (O.S.)  
How're they doing?

The greying flat top of DEKE SLAYTON, 45, Director of Flight Operations, enters and stands with the astronauts behind the technicians. Arms folded, surveying the situation.

MICHAEL  
They're looking good, Deke.

BUZZ  
Can't hold a candle to us though.

DEKE  
'Course not, Buzz. Well they've got  
plenty of time. Got to get Apollo  
12 there and back first. Then --

BUZZ  
Lucky thirteen.

DEKE  
Exactly. Should be a hell of a  
ride.

NEIL  
What did you want to see us about,  
Deke?

20 INT. DEKE'S OFFICE - DAY

20

Neil, Buzz and Michael sit opposite Deke at his desk. Behind him stands a model of the Saturn V rocket, a photo of him in his B-25 from the war, and directly behind him, a picture of him and the other Mercury 7 astronauts.

DEKE  
I take it you all got a letter from  
Washington?

MICHAEL  
Sure did. New York, Chicago, Los  
Angeles in a day. It's a bit much,  
Deke.

DEKE

In case it hasn't hit you fellas yet, there can only ever be one first moon landing.

BUZZ

Helluva thing.

NEIL

We all knew our jobs, and it went all right.

DEKE

Exactly, and as you can imagine, the President wants everyone to know it. Can't ask questions if you're busy cheering.

MICHAEL

Questions?

DEKE

You know, 'Nam, the budget, student protests.

NEIL

What's that got to do with --

DEKE

Why do we need a space program anymore? To answer all those questions, Nixon wants to celebrate your success.

NEIL

Our success.

DEKE

Appreciate your modesty, Neil, but best to face facts, the president needs a distraction, and that's you.

NEIL

It doesn't have to be. This took all of us.

BUZZ

Relax, Neil. Just gotta smile for the cameras, right?

DEKE

You'll get a full brief before you're wheels up. State Department will see to that.

Deke stands, clearly indicating the conversation's over. Buzz and Michael file out. Neil makes to follow.

DEKE

Neil?

Neil turns back. Buzz hovers at the door.

DEKE

Just give us a minute, Buzz.

Reluctantly, Buzz closes the door behind him.

DEKE

Neil, I get it. This is a unique situation. But it's got to be done.

NEIL

I guess. At least it's only one day.

Deke hesitates.

NEIL

What?

DEKE

Honestly, think of this as a dress rehearsal.

NEIL

For what?

DEKE

For what they've really got in mind.

21 INT. LOS ANGELES ROOM - CENTRAL PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT

21

Lavishly adorned tables accommodate important guests of this exclusive, and grand, black tie event. VIPs of all sorts try to position themselves to rub shoulders with the astronauts.

Michael calmly engages in conversation with a few dignitaries.

VIP #1

I was at church on Sunday, and our pastor said, "not since Adam has any human known such solitude". Must have been mighty lonely up there, while Neil and Buzz were doing their thing?

MICHAEL

Sure, I was alone, but that's different from being lonely. Tell the truth I liked orbiting the moon, out of radio contact. Was like being in a little church, just for me.



VIP #1  
No way I could do it!

MICHAEL  
I reckon you'd surprise yourself,  
Senator. But then I couldn't do  
what you do.

VIP #1  
Never say never, Mike. There's a  
life beyond Apollo, if you're  
interested.

Neil, meanwhile, is being dragged from person to person by Janet. He smiles an awkward smile with everyone he meets. A VIP shakes his hand vigorously.

VIP #2  
Honour to meet you.

NEIL  
(blindsided)  
Th... Thank you.

VIP #2  
Please, I gotta know what it was  
like.

The VIP stares at Neil, expectant and enchanted.

NEIL  
Well, uh... The lunar surface was  
fine grain with lots of rocks in  
it.

VIP #2  
(dissatisfied)  
Huh.

JANET  
Neil, we ought to take our seats.  
(to VIP #2)  
Pleasure to meet you.

Janet steers Neil away towards the top table at the head of the room. In a corner, Joan hovers beside Buzz, who's turned away from the party, head down, buried in a speech.

JOAN  
You've been --

BUZZ  
Sshh. Let me concentrate.

JOAN  
Buzz, you've been reciting it since  
we left New York. Just relax,  
you'll be fine.

Seeing others take their seats, Joan tugs at Buzz's arm. He brushes her off.

BUZZ

I'm coming, I'm coming.

He pockets the speech, takes a deep breath, draws himself to full height, chest out, shoulders back, determined to look confident as he takes his seat.

The room gives a warm round of applause as the man in the middle of the table rises. It's President RICHARD NIXON, 56.

PRESIDENT NIXON

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it says here, "remarks by the President." Don't worry, I know that all of us here, even after a long day, would like to hear briefly from each of our heroes.

Neil glances around. To his relief, Michael stands first.

MICHAEL

Mr President, here stands one proud American...

The room is listening intently to Michael, all except Neil and Buzz. Neil just stares at his plate. Under the table he clutches his hands together to try and stop his nervous shaking. Janet places a reassuring hand on his knee.

Buzz, meanwhile, is muttering his speech under his breath. There's a ripple of laughter from the room as Michael cracks a joke. It flies straight over Buzz's head.

PRESIDENT NIXON (O.S.)

Now, Colonel Aldrin.

Buzz stands tall, determined. As subtly as he can, he flattens his script on the table.

BUZZ

Thank you, Mr President.

Buzz looks up at his audience, and all thoughts of charisma desert him.

Now it's Neil's turn to start muttering.

NEIL

(to himself)

Through you, we touched the moon.  
Through you, we touched the moon.

JANET

(whispers to Neil)

Sshh.

Neil falls silent, but continues reciting to himself.

BUZZ

There are footprints on the moon.  
Those footprints belong to each and  
every one of you...

Buzz is fixated on his script, not daring to take his eyes off the page as he recites its contents.

Neil takes a sip of water, then another, and another. His nerves drying out his mouth after every sip, it seems.

BUZZ

These footprints are a symbol of  
the true human spirit. Thank you,  
Mr President.

Neil doesn't join the applause for Buzz. The applause is respectful, Buzz smiles with relief, though can't help but notice the room's hardly in awe of what he's said. His smile fades as he sits.

Neil's heart is pounding in his ears.

PRESIDENT NIXON (O.S.)

And now, the first man to set foot  
on the moon, Neil Armstrong.

The room breaks into a much louder and longer applause for Neil, there's even a few whistles. Buzz claps a few times then sits, arms folded, expectant, like Neil's auditioning for Broadway.

Neil slowly rises. He stares at his speech, then the crowd, and all the distinguished pairs of eyes staring at him. The applause dies and gives way to silence, then an awkward silence. Neil tries to speak, but there's nothing.

22 INT. LOS ANGELES ROOM - CENTRAL PLAZA HOTEL - NIGHT (LATER) 22

The astronauts pose with President Nixon, each holding their Presidential Medal of Freedom. Photographers get their snap, then the room slowly returns to its conversations. Buzz and Michael step away, Nixon holds Neil back.

PRESIDENT NIXON

I never liked giving speeches  
either, it's just part of the job.

NEIL

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT NIXON

I'm sure you'll have got the hang  
of it by the time you get back.

Nixon pats a bewildered Neil on the back and goes off to join the party.

23 EXT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - DAY

23

The back garden. Neil's boys RICKY, 12, and, MARK, 6, are splashing in their pool. Neil perches on the edge of a sun lounger, in the shadow of Janet standing over him.

JANET

Call your mother, see if she doesn't mind having the boys for three months.

NEIL

It's not three months.

JANET

September to November, Neil. I call that --

NEIL

It's late September.

JANET

I don't care. You just get back and now we're off round the world, just like that.

Neil hangs his head. Janet, sensing his despondency, changes tack.

JANET

I guess we should have seen this coming.

Neil doesn't respond.

JANET

And I have always wanted to see Europe.

NEIL

I was thinking, I might talk to Deke.

JANET

What?

NEIL

See about --

JANET

No.

NEIL

I've got to get back to work sooner or later.

JANET

Jesus, you're so naive!

Her raised voice gets her kids' attention. She realises she's caused a scene.

JANET  
Ricky, Mark, that's enough now. Go inside, get dry before dinner.

The boys climb out the pool and disappear inside.

JANET  
Neil, I get you're nervous about this, so am I. But goddamn it before we go you have got to get your head out the clouds.

Neil stares at her, surprised by this outburst. She kneels down to his level, and takes his hand.

JANET  
This is the job now. Even if you asked Deke, he'd say the same.

NEIL  
But --

Janet presses her finger to his lips, silencing him. She leans in and softly kisses him, stroking his face.

JANET  
This is the job. Better get ready.

24 INT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - LIVING ROOM - DAY 24

Buzz sits on the sofa tying his shoelaces.

BUZZ  
(calling)  
Joan! You ready?

Janice comes running in from the hallway.

JANICE  
Daddy, there's a car parked out front.

BUZZ  
Sweetheart, that's just some photographers. They're doing no harm.

Joan strides in, unimpressed, as she slings a handbag over her shoulder.

JOAN  
And you promised me you'd arranged for them to leave us alone until this tour started.

BUZZ

Just ignore them. They'll go away.

JANICE

That's what you think.

The doorbell rings. Janice runs off before Buzz can respond.

25 INT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - HALLWAY - DAY

25

Buzz opens the door to be confronted by a sharp looking Italian man.

ITALIAN REPORTER

(in broken English)

Colonel Aldrin.

BUZZ

Yes?

ITALIAN REPORTER

My friends, want to talk, inside?

Buzz sees the other men, cameras around their necks, climb out and waiting, expectant.

ITALIAN REPORTER

Readers want to know --

BUZZ

Look buddy, I'd love to, but you caught me at a bad time.

Joan barges past Buzz, scowling at the reporter as she goes.

BUZZ

Anyway, I thought I told you to leave us alone until next week?

ITALIAN REPORTER

(shrugs)

I don't know.

Buzz watches Joan climb into the car, slamming the door shut. The other Italians snap photos, but keep their distance.

BUZZ

Look, I gotta be somewhere. Some other time.

He shuts the door behind him and pushes past the Italian, climbs into the car and takes off.

26 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

26

Buzz's sleek and stylish Chevrolet Corvette cruises along, easily the most sporty and flashy car on the road.

27 INT. BUZZ'S CORVETTE - DAY 27

Buzz and Joan sit in silence. Buzz drives casually, one hand on the wheel. He glances in the rear view mirror, and something gets his attention for a moment, but quickly he turns his focus back to the road.

28 EXT. HIGHWAY EXIT - DAY 28

Buzz takes the exit for downtown Houston.

29 INT. BUZZ'S CORVETTE - DAY 29

He glances in the mirror again, and again is concerned by what he sees.

30 EXT. JUNCTION - DAY 30

The Corvette waits at a set of lights. When they go green, Buzz indicates right, but then cuts across a lane and goes left instead.

31 INT. BUZZ'S CORVETTE - DAY 31

Joan is thrown about in her seat. She slaps Buzz's arm.

JOAN  
What the hell are you doing?

BUZZ  
Wait...

Buzz makes another erratic course change.

JOAN  
Do you drive the LM like that?

BUZZ  
Shut up for a sec.

JOAN  
Buzz! What --

BUZZ  
Sshh!

He looks in the mirror again. This time, Joan looks back. Now she understands:

The Italians' car has pulled in behind them, following.

JOAN  
Do something, Buzz.

Buzz pauses for a moment, thinking. Then suddenly, he drops the Chevy down a gear and mashes the throttle. Joan grips the handle tightly as they take off.

- 32 EXT. ROAD - DAY 32
- The Corvette weaves between traffic, and the Italians' battered Buick follows where it can.
- 33 INT. BUZZ'S CORVETTE - DAY 33
- Buzz yanks the wheel hard, veering right at a junction, trying to shake them off. He checks in his mirror. They're always there.
- Through the windshield, Buzz sees a plane flying low, on approach.
- BUZZ  
I've got an idea.
- He brakes sharply, performs a U-turn and takes off in the opposite direction. The Italians follow.
- 34 EXT. ROAD - DAY 34
- The Corvette speeds past slower vehicles, then suddenly darts across to the slow lane and brakes hard, diving right at a junction, passing a sign reading: ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE.
- 35 EXT. ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE GUARD HUT - DAY 35
- The Chevrolet pulls up at the barriers. A GUARD steps out from the hut and spots Buzz. He salutes him.
- GUARD  
Colonel Aldrin, sir.
- BUZZ  
Private, you think you can give us a hand?
- GUARD  
Sir?
- 36 EXT. ROAD - DAY 36
- The Buick slowly drives along, the Italians searching around for Buzz's Chevrolet.
- 37 EXT. ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE GUARD HUT - DAY 37
- They pull up at the barrier, this time the Guard is standing in front of them, hand out commandingly. He sidles up to the window.
- GUARD  
Can I help you, gentlemen?
- Gabbling over one another, the Italians' pleas don't get through.



GUARD

I think you better turn yourselves  
around and go on back they way you  
came.

They continue to jabber, until they glance at the Guard  
tightening his grip on his M16.

38 EXT. ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE - DAY

38

Peeking out from beside a hangar, Buzz gleefully watches the  
Italians turn away from the gate. He laughs and bangs the  
steering wheel as he sets off, pulling onto a runway.

Buzz looks in the rearview mirror to see the Italians  
driving away. As soon as they're out of sight, he floors it.  
He whoops, while Joan sits stiff, expressionless.

BUZZ

Always wanted to do that!

She doesn't react. Buzz slows to a sensible speed.

BUZZ

Come on, told you I'd lose them.

JOAN

Sure. I'm just wondering how you'll  
do it next time.

Joan shifts in her seat to look out the window.

39 EXT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - DAY

39

Neil dozes in a sun lounger. Shoes off, sunglasses on,  
relaxed. His peace is disturbed by a mysterious scratching  
sound. He peers over his feet at his garden fence. There's  
nothing there.

The scratching continues, this time Neil ignores it. Until  
there's a clatter. He looks up again, still nothing.

NEIL

Jan? You hear that? Sounds like the  
neighbours' cat again.

The clattering turns to banging, definitely not some cat.  
Neil stands and wanders towards the fence. As he gets close,  
he's startled to see a hand appear at the top.

Another hand appears, and another. Suddenly, three Japanese  
photographers pop up, struggling to scale the fence.

NEIL

You okay there?

Busted. The photographers are dumbstruck being face to face  
with the first man on the moon.

NOTE: The photographers don't speak a word of English.

JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHER  
(in Japanese)  
Neil Armstrong? It's an honour.

NEIL  
Uh, sorry guys. I don't... I can't understand you.

Hanging from one hand, the photographer positions his camera and snaps a shot. The flash blinding Neil.

NEIL  
Now hold on, you know you can't --

Another flash cuts him off.

NEIL  
Gentlemen --

JANET (O.S.)  
Hey! Hey, you!

Neil turns to see Janet storming towards him. The photographers dare to snap one more photo then drop away behind the fence. Janet marches right up to the panels.

JANET  
I told you before! Show your face round here again, I dare you!

She turns to Neil, who meekly stands before her.

JANET  
They've been around since you walked on the moon. Just waiting to get you alone.

She gives him a gentle pat and goes back inside. Neil takes a moment, staggered at what's just happened. He returns to his deckchair and tries to relax.

For a beat or two he lies still, but it's no use. He stands, snatches his sunglasses off his face and trudges inside.

40 EXT. COLLINS HOME (HOUSTON) - DAY

40

Michael plays fetch with his alsatian as Neil watches on, sipping a beer.

MICHAEL  
I thought I'd had it bad, but I guess not. Perk of not landing on the moon, eh?

NEIL  
Did you hear about Buzz?

MICHAEL

I did, as if to emphasise my point.

The alsatian demands Michael's attention, and Michael's only too happy to oblige.

NEIL

You think they'll leave you alone everywhere? I hear they love you in Timbuktu.

MICHAEL

Good thing we're not going there, then.

They share a laugh, but a reserved one. They are quiet men, after all.

NEIL

What if this is just the start, Mike? What if it's like this everywhere?

MICHAEL

Don't think there's any ifs about it. You heard Deke, there can only be one first moon landing.

NEIL

Maybe we should let Buzz do all the talking.

Neil laughs at the idea, but Michael doesn't join in.

MICHAEL

And there can only be one first man.

NEIL

I don't think I can do this, Mike.

MICHAEL

You'll figure it out. Just think of it as the next stage of the mission.

NEIL

Who'd have thought landing on the Moon would be the easy part?

41 EXT. ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE - NIGHT

41

The moon shines on an American flag, gently fluttering above the runway. Waiting on the tarmac is Air Force Two and various military and government personnel.

Three white NASA vehicles pull up beneath the flagpole. Michael and Patricia step out of the first. Buzz and Joan emerge from the second. No one gets out the third.

Michael is in his NASA overalls, while Buzz is in a suit. The four of them gather at the foot of the steps.

BUZZ

Gee, Mike, you our pilot again?

MICHAEL

Very funny, Buzz.

BUZZ

I guess Neil did the same thing, that's why he won't get out here.

Buzz looks across the tarmac at Neil and Janet, sat in their car, Janet animatedly saying something to Neil. Eventually, the doors open and they make their way towards the plane.

BUZZ

Trouble in paradise?

JOAN

Buzz!

An AIRMAN approaches them, a camera in his hands.

AIRMAN

Smile, gentlemen. And ladies.

The astronauts and their wives pose for the Airman. A quick flash, and they make their way up into the aircraft.

AIRMAN

Good luck, fellas! Go get 'em, Mr Armstrong!

Neil's grateful his back is to the Airman, to hide his fear.

42 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - SEATING AREA - NIGHT

42

The party queue for their seats along with all the tour staff.

BUZZ

Seriously, Mike. Why did you think you needed your flight suit?

MICHAEL

I didn't know. It's all a voyage of discovery, Buzz. I guess I just goofed on this one.

WADE (O.S.)

Make that the last time. Good impressions don't come through goof ups.

Behind the astronauts is WADE, 40s, neat hair, even neater suit.

WADE

Good morning, gentlemen. I'm Wade, US State Department and your Events Director. I'll give you all a proper brief when we're airborne, but I'll just say quickly I mean what I said. No one's done a tour like this, not NASA, not the Russians, not even the Beatles.

As Wade lectures, Bill appears behind him.

BILL

One giant leap for us all, then?

Wade's not impressed at being cut off.

WADE

Diplomacy is key, so good impressions are everything.

(to Michael)

You will need to change before we get to Mexico City.

Wade squeezes past them and disappears behind a partition, separating the astronauts from the staff. Bill gives a small grin.

BILL

He seems like fun. You planning on hopping in the cockpit, Mike?

BUZZ

That's what I said.

MICHAEL

All right, point taken.

Michael settles into a seat. Neil sits across the aisle from him. He leans over.

NEIL

You know, I was planning on doing the same, thought I should represent NASA, but Jan talked me out of it.

MICHAEL

Didn't even cross my mind that I shouldn't.

NEIL

At least no press were around.

MICHAEL

This time.

A stewardess invites them to take their seats. The couples all sit together.

Neil settles by a window, and gazes out at the ground crew stepping back as the plane starts to move. Janet leans over to join him watching them as the ground crew waves them off.

JANET

You should wave back, get some practice in.

Neil looks to Janet, is she joking? He waits for her to tilt her head back and shut her eyes before tentatively giving a quick wave.

As the aircraft turns on to the runway, Neil sees the Moon hanging in the night sky. He gazes despondently up at it as the engines roar and they hurtle down the runway.

43 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - STATEROOM - DAWN

43

Everyone in the tour party: astronauts, wives, staff, are all crammed in around Wade. All listening intently, just in case his intense, hawk-eyed stare catches anyone's attention wandering.

WADE

27 cities, 24 countries, most of them in less than 24 hours. People, I don't think I need to remind you how important it is we get this right. But given its importance, I will...

Bill leans over to Buzz so only he can hear.

BILL

Here's a tip, if Wade offers you speech advice, run!

Both Buzz and Bill giggle like naughty schoolboys.

WADE

Something you want to share, Dr Carpentier?

The room turns to look at Bill.

BILL

No, Wade, please, go right on ahead.

Wade holds his gaze on Bill for a moment before continuing.

WADE

As I was saying, we expect plenty of requests from the media. We will accommodate where we can, but all prearranged engagements take priority. I think a lot of that will depend on the schedule.

(MORE)

WADE (cont'd)  
 (to a Tour Staff member)  
 How are you getting on with that?

TOUR STAFF  
 Should have the first few days  
 ready by the time we land, sir.

BUZZ  
 Hang on. Are you saying we're going  
 to all these places, and we don't  
 even have an itinerary?

WADE  
 We're working on it, Buzz. There  
 are lots of elements to --

BUZZ  
 You've had weeks to prepare.

WADE  
 It may sound like a long time, but  
 believe me, for something this big  
 --

BUZZ  
 Exactly. Yet you thought you'd  
 leave it to the last minute.

MICHAEL  
 Buzz, it's fine.

BUZZ  
 It's not. It's not how we do  
 things.

Buzz pushes through the throng of staff and disappears. Wade  
 gathers himself.

WADE  
 Anyway, I should also mention...

44 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - SEATING AREA - DAWN

44

Joan marches down the aisle, stopping when she's standing  
 over Buzz, who doesn't acknowledge her. He just sits,  
 stroking his chin, deep in thought.

JOAN  
 What was that?

BUZZ  
 To land on the Moon we had  
 everything planned out to the  
 minute. But these bozos can't even  
 plan how to get round the world.

JOAN

And that's a good reason to act like a baby who's had his candy taken away?

BUZZ

You know how I like things done.

Joan kneels beside him, trying a softer approach.

JOAN

You don't need to have a plan, you just need to go where they tell you, say the right thing when you get there, and keep smiling for everything in between.

45 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - STATEROOM - DAWN

45

Everyone is filtering away, except for Neil, who stands still, watching Wade pack up his briefcase.

WADE

Something wrong, Neil? Or would you prefer Mr Armstrong?

NEIL

Just wanted to apologise for Buzz. And it's Neil, please. Not sure I could stand three months of Mr Armstrong.

WADE

Boy, did you catch the wrong flight.

Wade clips his briefcase shut, only now registering the panic on Neil's face.

WADE

I'm joking, of course.

NEIL

No, you're not.

WADE

(shrugs)

Formality is part of diplomacy, Neil. That's all. Same as speeches and handshakes.

NEIL

You make it sound so simple.

WADE

It is. Why else do you think politicians can manage it?



NEIL  
I'm no politician.

WADE  
Good. Means you can focus on being  
the first man on the moon.

Wade approaches Neil, his hawk-eyed stare's returned.

WADE  
Because it doesn't matter if it's  
one person or one hundred, Neil.  
Just give them what they want.

He pats Neil on the back.

46 EXT. MEXICO CITY AIRPORT - RUNWAY - DAY 46

Puffs of smoke emit from the tyres with a screech as Air  
Force Two touches down and taxis towards the terminal.

47 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - SEATING AREA - DAY 47

As the aircraft slows, all those sat on the left side look  
out the windows in amazement.

PATRICIA  
Golly.

BUZZ  
Sweet Mary, mother of Jesus.

Neil, sat on the right side, fixates on the 'seatbelt  
fastened' sign, as good a distraction as any.

48 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - FRONT DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY 48

The astronauts assemble at the door, Neil in front, Buzz and  
Michael behind. All three are still and silent, in their own  
worlds, like athletes gearing up for the 100 meters.

Behind them, Wade, Bill and other personnel bustle and fuss,  
one of them hands Wade a document.

TOUR STAFF  
Today's itinerary, sir.

Buzz shuts his eyes, pretending he can't hear.

WADE  
About time, thanks.  
(to the astronauts)  
Don't worry about the schedule for  
now, gentlemen. Just smile, wave,  
shake hands.

BILL  
Give 'em a helluva show.

None of them respond as a Steward unlocks the cabin door and pulls. Neil's immediately blinded by a brilliant bright light, and deafened by the roar of a vast crowd. Boldly, he steps out.

49 EXT. MEXICO CITY - STREET - DAY 49

A million streamers flutter down from tower blocks that line the street, landing on the thousands, literally thousands, of Mexican citizens all lining the road, desperate to catch a glimpse of their heroes.

Children sit on their parent's shoulders, men cheer, women wave Mexican flags. Everyone's excitement reaches a frenzy as a motorcade travels down the street. In the middle, Neil, Buzz and Michael smile and wave from a convertible.

50 CONVERTIBLE 50

The astronauts take in their surroundings, overwhelmed by the reception, but for now enjoying the adulation.

BUZZ

I think they like us.

MICHAEL

Sure looks that way.

BUZZ

Maybe I could get used to this.

As they drive, Buzz catches a few cries of "Neil! Neil" from amongst the crowd. In retaliation, he stands to wave, letting go of the car, practically surfing so as to be more visible. The crowd love it.

MICHAEL

Watch it, Buzz!

BUZZ

Relax.

Michael leans over to Neil, who's slightly awestruck by the crowd, and so quietly gets on with the job of waving.

MICHAEL

Reckon he'll be like this everywhere?

Neil doesn't respond. Michael gives him a nudge.

MICHAEL

Neil?

NEIL

I don't know.

They sit back for a respite, leaving Buzz to wave alone.

MICHAEL

Quite a sight, isn't it? Hard to fathom.

NEIL

You'd think I'd be familiar with the unfathomable by now.

MICHAEL

It's only the first stop, Neil. Don't worry about --

From the front passenger seat, Wade looks back through the rearview mirror.

WADE

Your arms tired or something, gentlemen? Right now poor old Buzz is doing all the work.

BUZZ

Wouldn't be the first time, Wade.

The car jerks to a halt, causing Buzz to lose his balance. He wobbles but stays on his feet to see the crowds breaking out and surrounding the vehicles. Swarms of frenzied people fight to get close, offering gifts and outstretched hands.

Wade turns back to the astronauts.

WADE

Come on, gentlemen, give them what they want.

The astronauts automatically start shaking as many hands as they can, and each accepts a sombrero. When Neil puts his on, the crowd gives a big cheer. Neil doesn't know where to look next, who to greet, what to say.

Inspired by the astronauts' engagement, the crowd gets bolder, offering gifts and forcing themselves closer, anxious to see, touch, hug, whatever. They want them.

MICHAEL

Shouldn't we keep moving?

WADE

You do your job, Mike, I'll do mine. That's why we're here.

As Neil shakes hands with one man, overcome with excitement, the man almost pulls Neil from the vehicle.

MICHAEL

Neil!

Michael goes to grab Neil's blazer, holding him back long enough for a startled Neil to break away from the man's grip. Security hurriedly forces the crowd back.

Neil collapses into his seat, Michael beside him, Buzz oblivious.

WADE  
 (to driver)  
 Goddammit get us moving. We've got  
 a reception to get to.

MICHAEL  
 You okay?

Shaken, Neil gives a small nod.

51 INT. PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

51

A packed room. Cameras flash in the eyes of the astronauts sitting at a table on a stage.

Neil's sweating, still flustered from before. He sits between Buzz and Michael before a congregation of journalists, a microphone his only barrier, and right now it's amplifying his choking noises to the entire room.

NEIL  
 I'm sorry, can you repeat the  
 question?

JOURNALIST  
 I said, many people have speculated  
 on the meaning of this first  
 landing on another body in space.  
 Would you give us your estimate on  
 what is the meaning of this to all  
 of us?

Neil continues to scrabble for an answer.

BUZZ  
 (boldly intercutting)  
 We demonstrated the potential to  
 carry out this mission. I think  
 this means many problems can be  
 solved in the same way, by  
 committing to solving them in a  
 long term fashion.

Mutters and shuffling from the room suggest this is far from the inspirational answer everyone was hoping for. Buzz glares at the room.

JOURNALIST  
 Neil?

NEIL  
 I just see it as a beginning. The  
 entire program, it's a beginning of  
 a new age.

The Journalist, like everyone else, scribbles notes, anything to occupy themselves. Was that it? Neil shifts uneasily in his seat. No one's comfortable in here.

WADE

Anybody else?

A second journalist stands.

JOURNALIST #2

Question for Mr Armstrong.

Buzz leans back from his microphone.

BUZZ

You want us to leave you to it?

Neil doesn't dignify this with a response.

JOURNALIST #2

Some people have criticised the space program as a misplaced item on a list of national priorities. Would you care to comment?

Neil hesitates, searching for an answer. Beside him, Buzz is also computing a response.

NEIL

We undertook this mission because, like everyone involved, we believed it would succeed.

BUZZ

And from what we saw on our way here, I think most people have us pretty high up on their list of priorities.

JOURNALIST #2

Anything else you want to add?

Neil very deliberately sits back, leaning away from the mic.

BUZZ

Yeah, you can't put a price on history.

JOURNALIST #2

Actually, you can.

(consults his notes)

\$355 million, and that was just the cost of your mission.

BUZZ

It got us there and home again, so I can't think of a better way to spend it.

JOURNALIST #2

I got a son in Saigon who'd probably have something to say about that.

BUZZ

I'm sure he'd appreciate a moon rock for him and his buddies.

The room stirs, whatever the right thing was for Buzz to say, that wasn't it. Buzz's eyes dart around the room as the journalists mutter to one another. On stage, Neil and Michael sit still, trying to keep a low profile.

WADE

Thank you everyone for coming.

Wade hurriedly herds the astronauts from the stage.

52 INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

52

The astronauts emerge from the conference room, tailed by a furious Wade.

WADE

What was that?

BUZZ

He asked a question, so --

WADE

No. You don't talk about Vietnam, you don't talk about anything that's not been cleared by me and you absolutely don't give your opinions. Was I not clear before?

BUZZ

What do you mean, before?

WADE

On the plane?

BUZZ

You never said --

WADE

Oh, no, that's right. You'd gone off to have a hissy fit. Whereas if you'd stayed, you'd have realised I'm actually trying to help you. And this goes for all three of you.

Wade eyeballs all three of them.

WADE

From now on, Neil will take the lead.

(MORE)

WADE (cont'd)

You will stick to the agreed topics, and you will not deviate. Are we clear?

Buzz glowers at Wade.

BUZZ

Crystal.

WADE

Good. Now, we've got a reception with the ambassador tonight and you all need to change. Get back to the hotel, pronto.

The astronauts shuffle past him down the corridor. Neil is last, as he passes, Wade pulls his arm back.

WADE

You know this is still your mission to command, Neil? Buzz is as much your responsibility as mine. I'd appreciate it if you remember that.

Wade strides off, leaving Neil alone.

53 INT. US EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - NIGHT 53

Guests arrive, all in tuxedos and expensive dresses, and make their way into the reception.

54 GALA ROOM 54

Wade directs Neil and Janet from table to table, introducing Neil to various dignitaries. Neil shakes hands and smiles, but Buzz and Michael can see the panic in his eyes from across the room where they stand, watching from a corner.

BUZZ

Like a deer in the headlights.

MICHAEL

I'd count yourself lucky, Buzz. I do.

BUZZ

Sure, you do. Because you can. Who wants to talk to the guy who didn't land on the moon?

Buzz realises what he's said, and hangs his head apologetically.

BUZZ

Sorry.

Michael takes it with graceful stoicism.

MICHAEL

You know, Buzz, most people would give anything to walk just one pace behind the footsteps of history. But if that really isn't enough, it doesn't help to try and force the attention of those following along behind you.

Michael strolls away to mingle. Buzz is left to stew and gulp down his champagne.

55 INT. NEIL'S HOTEL ROOM - MEXICO CITY - NIGHT

55

Neil emerges from the en suite bathroom in a pair of neatly pressed pyjamas. There's a knock at the door.

NEIL

Who is it?

BELL BOY (O.S.)

(Spanish/English accent)

Room service.

Suspicious, Neil slowly approaches the door.

NEIL

I didn't order anything.

BELL BOY (O.S.)

For Mr Armstrong?

Puzzled, Neil opens the door. He's confronted with a fresh faced Mexican lad, a camera hanging round his neck. He snaps a picture of Neil, the flash blinding him.

BELL BOY

Gracias, señor.

He scurries away. Neil quickly shuts the door. He presses himself up against it, leaning his head back, shutting his eyes, ruing his naivety.

56 INT. GALA ROOM - NIGHT

56

The last few stragglers of the night, including Janet, Joan and Patricia, are clustered in their small groups. Buzz sits alone at the bar, slamming shots of tequila.

He's joined at the bar by ROBERT MCBRIDE, 51, US Ambassador to Mexico.

ROBERT MCBRIDE

Mind if I join you?

BUZZ

It's your party, ambassador.



ROBERT MCBRIDE

I'm just the host. It's your night,  
Colonel Aldrin. Helluva thing you  
boys have done.

BUZZ

And yet before we're even halfway  
round the world, we'd have spent  
more time celebrating it than we  
did doing it.

ROBERT MCBRIDE

(not listening)

Say, I was wondering. Would you  
mind...?

He reaches into his inside pocket and unfurls a picture of  
an astronaut on the Moon. The iconic picture. The picture of  
Buzz.

He hands it over, along with a pen. Buzz goes to sign it,  
but then notices another signature already on it.

BUZZ

You know that's me? Don't you?

ROBERT MCBRIDE

What?

BUZZ

This. This is me.

ROBERT MCBRIDE

Oh. I didn't --

BUZZ

So why is Neil's signature on here?

ROBERT MCBRIDE

Well, you know...

BUZZ

But this is me.

ROBERT MCBRIDE

I don't know what to say, Mr  
Aldrin. I guess I just wanted a  
memento of our American heroes.

BUZZ

So you're gonna get Mike's too?

ROBERT MCBRIDE

Who?

Buzz swivels on the bar stool and abandons the clueless  
ambassador.

57 INT. US EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - NIGHT

57

As Buzz emerges from the gala room, he passes Wade angrily yelling down the phone.

WADE

(into phone)

No, you listen to me. The astronauts are on a tight schedule, I cannot authorise Neil to just drop in on some charity dinner.

Buzz quickens his pace.

58 INT. NEIL'S HOTEL ROOM - MEXICO CITY - NIGHT

58

Neil stands at the window, looking out over the cityscape. Behind him, the door opens and Janet stumbles in. Drunk, but not wasted.

JANET

Who knew that Pat was such a chatterbox after a few tequilas!

She sees Neil standing silently at the window, and as if at the flick of a switch, gathers herself up and resumes her role as the supportive wife.

JANET

Neil?

NEIL

You know we only had twenty seconds of fuel left when we touched down at Tranquility Base?

JANET

Yeah?

NEIL

I knew we would make it. It's what I'd trained for.

JANET

So...

NEIL

I haven't trained for this, Jan. Not at all.

She moves up behind him, wrapping her arms around him and gently resting her head on his back.

JANET

No better training than learning on the job, right?

NEIL

I guess that's the difference  
between someone who's gone to the  
moon, and someone who can't.

59 EXT. AIRPORT - RIO DE JANEIRO - DAY

59

Crowds as large as those in Mexico wave as the astronauts climb the steps to Air Force Two. Brazilian flags fly all around.

The astronauts stand at the top of the steps and turn to face the crowd. From the threshold of the aircraft, Wade watches on.

WADE

That's it. Wave goodbye to Rio. I  
know it's been a busy week but big  
smiles.

The astronauts oblige, though their enthusiasm's waning.

WADE

All right, that's enough. Come on,  
got a schedule to keep.

60 EXT. RUNWAY - RIO DE JANEIRO - DAY

60

Air Force Two hurtles down the runway and lifts off.

61 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - SEATING AREA - DAY

61

Everyone's seated, though now no longer sitting according to partners, it's a more informal arrangement now.

BILL

So long, South America.

Across the aisle from Bill, Joan unbuckles her seatbelt.

BILL

Call of nature?

JOAN

Call of a mother to her kids who  
she hasn't spoken to for a week.

BILL

Fair enough. Whatever you do don't  
dial the number that launches the  
missiles. We want to land in  
Madrid, not the 14th Century.

Joan exits up the aisle. Bill leans round his seat to look at a weary Buzz sat behind him.

BILL

You not gonna join her?

BUZZ

She'll be talking to them for hours yet. Not gonna stand around waiting my turn. She'll come get me.

For the first time, Bill clocks Buzz's irritable demeanour.

BILL

You all right there, Buzz?

BUZZ

(blunt)

Fine. Just tired.

BILL

Nothing a bit of jet lag can't fix, eh?

Buzz huffs, obviously not in the mood. Sheepishly, Bill turns back round.

62 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - DAY

62

Buzz wanders in behind Joan, who's animatedly talking down the phone.

JOAN

(into phone)

That's right, we're crossing the ocean now. When we land we'll be in Spain and --

She realises Buzz is behind her.

JOAN

Dad's here if you want... Oh?... Well if he insists...

She turns round and waves the receiver at Buzz.

JOAN

Your father wants a word.

He takes the receiver from her. She gives him some privacy.

BUZZ

Hi, dad.

63 INT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - LIVING ROOM - DAY

63

Edwin Aldrin Sr stands at the window, keeping an eye on the children playing out front. He holds the phone in one hand, and today's newspaper in the other.

The paper is held open on an article about the astronauts' South America tour. Neil's front and centre, Buzz is barely visible behind him.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
You call this seizing the  
spotlight?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

BUZZ  
What?

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
Five cities and all I'm reading so  
far is Neil this and Armstrong  
that.

BUZZ  
What can I say, dad? I gave it a  
shot.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
You mean your little stunt in  
Mexico?

BUZZ  
I didn't mean it like that. It just  
sorta... You know.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
I do.

BUZZ  
Right. And I got chewed out by this  
State Department suit for it.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
It's their job to make you look  
good. But only if you play their  
game by their rules.

BUZZ  
I'm a pilot, dad. Not a PR lackey.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
Which is why you've got to work  
even harder.

BUZZ  
(sighs)  
I'll try.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
All right then.

BUZZ  
Talk to you later.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR  
Hey, before you go, do me a favour  
will you?

BUZZ

What?

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

Remember my buddy Gene?

BUZZ

Sure.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

He had a flying accident a while back, only just outta hospital so he missed you before you left.

BUZZ

So...

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

So I was wondering if you could write him, let him know what it was like, you know? How it felt to be up there.

BUZZ

Why don't I just tell him when I get back?

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

Please, son. He's asking for a favour.

BUZZ

I'll think about it.

Without waiting for a reply. Buzz hangs up. A Steward knocks and enters.

STEWARD

We're starting our descent, sir. Please take a seat for landing.

64 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - FRONT DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

64

The astronauts and their wives gather at the door, the support staff assemble behind. A few are coughing and sneezing. Neil gives a large yawn.

MICHAEL

Nothing like jet lag to keep you spry, eh Neil?

JANET

Just smile and wave.

Janet shuffles in front of Buzz to fix Neil's tie. Buzz uses the opportunity to confront Joan.

BUZZ

Why did you tell dad I was here?

JOAN

What?

BUZZ

You couldn't have made some excuse?

JOAN

And say what? It's a plane, where else are you going to be?

BUZZ

Next time come up with something.

Buzz braces up, trying to save face. Joan slumps, mortified. Everyone wallows in their embarrassment. The awkward silence seems like an eternity.

NEIL

Was that necessary?

BUZZ

It's my business, Neil. Not everything on this tour is about you.

The Steward opens the door and Buzz forces a beaming smile as he steps out to the cheers of the crowd.

65 EXT. MONUMENT TO COLUMBUS - MADRID - DAY

65

The sun beats down on the tour party. The astronauts and their wives sit and politely listen to a Spanish Dignitary. Sweating and uncomfortable, Neil loosens his tie and collar.

Discreetly, Janet leans over.

JANET

Do that back up.

Neil obliges. He tries to focus on the Dignitary, but the oppressive heat and travel fatigue are taking their toll.

SPANISH DIGNITARY

(in Spanish)

Under the shadow of Christopher Columbus, Spain welcomes mankind's newest pioneer, Neil Armstrong.

Just as the Dignitary calls his name, Neil cannot hold it back any longer. He lets out a weary yawn before standing to take the podium, and rubs his tired eyes when he gets there. There's a flurry of camera flashes.

Neil gathers himself and looks out to the audience. He gives a weak smile, which quickly vanishes. In amongst the crowd, he sees a seething Wade, arms folded, glowering at him.

66 INT. NEIL'S HOTEL ROOM - MADRID - NIGHT

66

Neil sits on the bed. Wade stands over him, Janet watching from the side, looking down on Neil like the parents of a boy who's been caught shoplifting.

Wade's voice is gruff and croaky.

WADE

I thought you'd agreed to help me,  
Neil. How am I gonna spin this?

NEIL

I'm sorry, Wade. I didn't think --

WADE

Well in future maybe you should.  
While you're doing that, I'm gonna  
see if I can convince the Spanish  
press not to run those pictures  
before I lose any more of my voice.

Wade turns on his heel and strides out. But he pauses at the door and turns back with a simpering smile on his face.

WADE

Get some sleep, you got Paris in  
the morning.

He gently shuts the door behind him. Janet moves towards the bed to take his place over Neil.

JANET

Don't worry, Wade will stop them  
running those pictures.

NEIL

I'm sure the world will keep  
turning if he doesn't.

JANET

Jesus Christ, how do you not get  
it?

NEIL

People will see a tired man  
yawning. What do they expect when  
we've been on a plane for twelve  
hours?

JANET

They will see a picture of their  
minister welcoming you into their  
country, and you barely able to  
keep your eyes open. Can you really  
not see how that looks?

Now Neil's heard it out loud, he realises she has a point. He slumps, running his hands over his head. Janet sighs.



JANET

I know you're trying.

NEIL

But it's not enough to smile and wave anymore, is it?

Janet sits beside him, and takes his hand.

JANET

Remember when you were up there on Gemini 8? Spinning out of control? I thought I was going to lose you, but the press could never know that. So I fed them the same old line, I was proud, happy and thrilled. But they could never see the tears in my eyes, or where my makeup had run, because they expect us to be perfect, not a single blemish that might steal focus.

NEIL

I don't think one yawn steals --

JANET

Yes. It does. And so does not having your tie done up right.

NEIL

It was 80 degrees, Jan, after being cooped up in that plane?

JANET

It doesn't matter. You're still the first man on the moon. Nothing can sully that.

NEIL

First man or not, I'm still just a man. A man can make mistakes.

JANET

You can't. Fame is a tightrope, and you can't afford to fall off. There's too much at stake.

NEIL

Like a few photographs?

JANET

Like the space program, NASA's reputation, maybe even international relations. They're your responsibility, and you cannot risk them by giving anyone the excuse of thinking you're a common man.

NEIL

If I'm not the common man, what was  
the point of me being first?

67 INT. BUZZ'S HOTEL ROOM - MADRID - NIGHT

67

Buzz lies in bed, wide awake. Joan sleeps peacefully beside him. Slowly, quietly, he slides out from under the duvet and wanders across the room to the writing desk in the corner.

Taking a sheet of paper, he writes at the top, 'Dear Gene', then pauses.

NEIL (V.O.)

(over Apollo radio)

There, you got it.

BUZZ (V.O.)

(over Apollo radio)

Beautiful, beautiful.

NEIL (V.O.)

Ain't that something? Magnificent  
sight down here.

BUZZ (V.O.)

Magnificent desolation.

He tries to write, but cannot find the words. Frustrated, he clenches his fists, gripping the pen tightly, as if threatening it to write something. But it's no good.

He chucks the pen down, and tears the page in half before burying his head in his hands.

68 INT. NEIL'S HOTEL ROOM - MADRID - DAY

68

Neil stands before a full length mirror, fiddling with his tie, making sure it's neat and perfect. Janet watches on, giggling. When he's finished, Neil presents himself.

NEIL

Well?

She walks up and inspects him. She leaves his tie alone, but flattens a stubborn tuft of hair and smooths out his parting.

JANET

Getting there. Ready?

Neil nods, and braces up as Janet opens the hotel door. Neil steps out and climbs into the open top car with a surly Buzz, and a politely smiling Michael. Wade again sits in the front passenger seat.

WADE

Onward.

## MONTAGE - THE EUROPEAN TOUR

The montage follows the car, Notting Hill seasons-style, through Europe.

The car takes off, and pulls into a convoy, passing by lines of crowds, the Spanish sun shining and the monument to Columbus once again in the background.

Neil, Michael and Buzz continue to oblige the crowds, who now bear French flags and banners. The car rounds the Arc de Triomphe, and in the background the Eifel Tower stands proud.

Driving down the Champs Elysees, the Paris cityscape then gives way to the tulip fields lining the highways of the Netherlands. The crowds are still out in force. The astronauts' enthusiasm is waning.

The crowds still greet them as they return to built up areas. The car passes the Manneken Pis in Brussels.

By now, the astronauts have had enough. Buzz is sat, sullen and motionless. Michael sits, occasionally waving and nodding. Only Neil remains standing. He waves, but barely smiles.

Finally, the car pulls up in front of a tall slab of reinforced concrete. The gothic Belgian architecture has given way to the imposing sight of the Berlin Wall.

69 EXT. BERLIN WALL - DAY

69

The weary astronauts climb out the car and climb to the top of a wooden platform. They take a moment to survey the sight. On one side, waving, cheering crowds. On the other, nothing but guard towers, soldiers and barricades.

MICHAEL

Would you look at that.

NEIL

Quite something.

MICHAEL

That's what I call desolation, if not magnificent. Right, Buzz?

Buzz doesn't respond, but just gloomily surveys the scene.

WADE

Indeed. Helluva thing. Not a word from any of you.

MICHAEL

But Wade surely we have to say --

WADE

Not a word.

70 PLATFORM

70

The astronauts congregate around a microphone. Neil stands in the centre, delivering his speech. Behind him, Buzz and Michael stand solemnly.

Despite his tiredness, there is more confidence to Neil's public speaking this time.

NEIL

It was our pleasure to have participated in one great adventure. We all, here, and the people listening in today had the opportunity to share that adventure over its developing and unfolding in the past months and years.

As Neil gives his speech, something in the crowd catches Buzz's eye.

A man pushing his way through the crowd. He moves awkwardly, restricted by what he's carrying. Whatever it is it looks cumbersome. Buzz tracks him as he moves closer.

Once he's in the prime position, he reveals what he's holding. He lifts aloft a placard, clear for all to see. It reads "SCIENCE = PROPAGANDA". Buzz can't take his eyes off this Conspiracist. Before he knows it, they're staring at each other.

71 EXT. MOTORCADE - BERLIN WALL - DAY

71

The party makes its way towards the waiting fleet of vehicles. The crowds line their path as always.

Michael and Neil load into the car. Buzz, meanwhile, walks alone, hunched over. Instead of waving, he gives curt nods to the excited crowd.

WADE

(shouting)

Come on, Buzz! While we're young!

Buzz neither acknowledges him, or quickens his pace. He just trudges towards the car. Suddenly, a man, the Man, breaks free from the crowd and confronts Buzz, who's completely blindsided.

CONSPIRACIST

(in German-English)

You did not land on the Moon! Buzz Aldrin, fraud! Fraud! Swear it. Swear --

Before he can carry on, police have jumped on him, while security create a perimeter around the shaken Buzz, and hurry him into the vehicle.

## CONSPIRACIST

Lies! Lies! Swear it, Mr Aldrin!  
 (in German)  
 Get off me!

As the motorcade takes off, Buzz can't look away from the scene.

72 INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - WEST BERLIN - NIGHT

72

Everyone in the tour party is gathered, enjoying drinks and a meal. Everyone except Buzz.

Neil shares a drink with Michael and Wade.

## WADE

Good job today, fellas. A well delivered speech too, Neil.

## MICHAEL

You'd hope so, you've given it twelve times.

Neil allows himself a small laugh. As he does, he automatically checks his tie.

## WADE

And good job ignoring that asshole.

## NEIL

Who?

## MICHAEL

You didn't see him?

## NEIL

I just wanted to get through the speech. Tunnel vision, you know? So what was it?

## WADE

Doesn't matter. It's not important.

## MICHAEL

I don't know, Wade. Someone does something like that, maybe we should --

## WADE

Mike, I'm getting real tired of this. I'm telling you, forget it.

Michael makes to retort, but a sudden coughing fit from Neil blocks him.

## WADE

That better not be anything serious.

NEIL

I'm fine.

WADE

Good. Don't want to lose you and Buzz before the Queen of England.

MICHAEL

What's wrong with Buzz?

WADE

Joan just said he's staying in his room tonight.

Behind them, a Hotel Staff Member approaches the bar. Wade clocks the barman hand over a bottle of whiskey.

73 INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - WEST BERLIN - NIGHT 73

The Hotel Staff Member carries the bottle up to a closed door. He knocks. After a brief pause, a dishevelled Buzz opens the door, takes the bottle and tips the man, then shuts the door in his face.

74 INT. BUZZ'S HOTEL ROOM - WEST BERLIN - NIGHT 74

Buzz sinks to the floor, leaning against the wall under the window. He unscrews the bottle and goes to pour a glass. He hesitates, and instead takes a swig.

He screws up his face, fighting his emotions. But he can't fight any more. He breaks down sobbing, weeping like a widower.

75 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - FRONT DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY 75

The tour party shuffles down the aircraft. Behind the astronauts, a couple of members are laden with gifts: flowers, plaques, framed photos.

TOUR PARTY MEMBER

We're going to need to find somewhere else to put all this, Wade.

WADE

Just add it to the pile. Let's go, tea with the Queen isn't something I want to be late to.

Wade and the staff continue on. The astronauts and their wives make their way towards the seats.

NEIL

How're you doing, Buzz? We missed you last night.

Buzz doesn't look back to Neil. He just stands, stony-faced, waiting for Joan to get settled.

Neil lets out another heavy cough. These aren't the noises of a well man.

BUZZ

Doesn't sound good.

NEIL

It's nothing. I'm fine.

BUZZ

So am I, Neil. So am I.

76 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - GALLEY - DAY

76

The floor isn't visible for gifts, flowers, tokens of goodwill. Michael leans in to examine an impressive statue of a stag.

WADE (O.S.)

You thinking of taking that one home?

MICHAEL

From the Norwegian defence minister. Have to see what the other two fellas want for it. We might have to toss a coin.

WADE

It's worth more than that. At least a couple of bits of moon rock, as you know.

MICHAEL

Maybe we should have given some to that guy with the banner.

WADE

Drop it, Mike. It's getting boring.

MICHAEL

I don't get it, Wade. If someone's speaking out, why don't we?

WADE

Because.

MICHAEL

That's it?

WADE

That's it.

MICHAEL

No. I can't accept that.

WADE

I don't care what you can or can't accept. That's just how it is.

MICHAEL

But why? I mean, look at all this stuff. We have a platform, Wade. Why don't we use it for once? Instead of dodging the difficult subjects, let's hit them head on. People are asking, why not answer?

WADE

Just think for a minute. You're a rock merchant, trading your little moon samples for medals, ancient orders, even some moose statue you could pick up at Macy's. Everyone goes home happy. Now imagine while you were making the trade someone said something you didn't like, so you throw your stone at him. What happens next? No one wants to be our friend, because we know you. And we all need friends. Got it?

MICHAEL

I get it. I just don't agree with it.

WADE

That's opinion, and I've no use for those. Not yours, not some conspiracy asshole's, not even my own. There's no room for consciences here. And if I have to say it again, I'm sure I could persuade the State Department that we only need the men who actually landed on the Moon to finish this tour.

MICHAEL

Maybe it's for the best.

WADE

Exactly.

MICHAEL

Can't imagine how the Norwegian Defence Minister would feel about you slandering his gift like that.

Wade braces up, trying to look powerful, like a child threatening to run away from home. Michael merely turns back to the pile of gifts. Wade turns on his heel and strides away.

77 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - STATEROOM 2 - DAY

77

Wade marches along. Suddenly, he's grabbed by the scruff of his neck by Buzz and bundled into the adjoining lavatory.



Buzz shuts the door behind them and presses Wade up against the faucet.

WADE

Jesus Christ, Buzz!

BUZZ

Where was security? Where were the police? Where in your precious schedule did it say, "run in with crazy person"?

WADE

Buzz! Buzz, please!

BUZZ

That's why we planned everything, to the minute, so there are no unexpected surprises. I can walk on the moon but thanks to you I can't even walk to the car.

WADE

Look, I'm sorry! All right?

BUZZ

I walked on the moon. I did that.

Something's wrong. There's a tremor in Buzz's voice. He quivers, loosening his grip on Wade.

WADE

I know you did, Buzz. I know.

Buzz releases him, and stumbles back, sinking down on to the toilet seat. Wade doesn't dare move.

BUZZ

Do you have any idea how it feels to train, to give your life to a project, to see it through, only for some guy to call you a fraud?

WADE

No.

BUZZ

No. So imagine how it feels when you know they're right?

WADE

What?

BUZZ

You got me pretending I was some hero. And he saw right through me.

WADE

You are a hero, Buzz. Look at what you've done.

BUZZ

I've followed Neil around. You said yourself, he takes the lead. One first man, one hero.

There's a momentary pause, Wade doesn't know if he should say something.

BUZZ

What am I going to do now?

WADE

Still got cities to visit, Buzz. That'll keep you busy.

BUZZ

Yeah, right. Dance monkey, dance.

Buzz stands and reaches for the door.

WADE

Where are you going?

BUZZ

Might as well make sure I haven't forgotten my speech.

Disconsolate, Buzz exits. Wade doesn't dare follow him.

79 EXT. TARMAC - HEATHROW AIRPORT - DAY

79

Policemen in their traditional bobby's helmets stand guard at the foot of the aircraft steps. It's clear we're in Britain. One copper sneaks a look round at the sound of footsteps on the metal stairs.

Buzz descends alone. He puts on a brave face for the crowd. Reaching the bottom, he realises no one's followed him. Press immediately clamour for his attention.

REPORTER

Mr Aldrin! Looking forward to seeing the sights?

REPORTER #2

You thought what you'll say to the Queen, Colonel?

REPORTER #3

Buzz! Few words about walking on the moon?

Buzz looks helplessly back up the stairs for reinforcements, but none appear. He stutters, scrambling for an answer, blinded by camera flashes.

80 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - FRONT DOOR ENTRANCE - DAY

80

Neil is trying to fix Michael's tie, much to Michael, and Wade's annoyance. Behind them, a concerned Bill watches on.

MICHAEL

All right, all right! Jesus Christ,  
Neil, I got it.

NEIL

Sorry, just thought...

Neil breaks into a severe coughing fit before he can finish.

WADE

Can we get moving now, please?

Michael adjusts his own tie before stepping out. Neil recovers from his coughing and follows close behind. Wade makes to exit, but Bill pulls him back.

BILL

I checked him over this morning.  
It's definitely laryngitis.

WADE

He'll be fine.

BILL

Wade, he can barely talk.

WADE

I don't hear him complaining.

BILL

You don't hear him, period.

WADE

He's fit enough to care about  
appearance, that tells me he's fit  
enough to do his job.

Bill stops himself from continuing this futile argument.

WADE

Shall we? Her Majesty awaits.

81 INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY

81

Neil's bent double over the sink, coughing violently. A LONDONER emerges from a cubicle.

LONDONER

You all right, mate?

NEIL

I will be.

LONDONER

'Ere, you're that bloke, ain't ya?  
That geezer what walked on the  
moon?

NEIL

Yes sir.

LONDONER

'Choo you doin' 'ere?

NEIL

I'm supposed to be meeting the  
Queen.

LONDONER

Yeah? 'Ere, don't suppose you fancy  
coming down the Blind Beggar for a  
pint after?

Neil's lost for words.

JANET (O.S.)

Neil? Come on, Wade's about to blow  
a gasket.

Janet strides in, much to the Londoner's surprise. He gives  
a whistle.

LONDONER

Wotcha darlin'. Come looking for  
the blokes 'ave ya?

Janet squares up to the Londoner, looking up at him with a  
relaxed confidence.

JANET

You know who he is?

She jerks her head in Neil's direction, who's still hunched  
over the sink, dry heaving. The Londoner nods.

JANET

Then you should know the best  
security personnel of the United  
States are waiting outside right  
now. Say that again and they'll be  
on your tea-drinking ass faster  
than you can say Mary Poppins.

The Londoner shifts uneasily on the spot before shoving his  
hands in his pockets and exiting.

LONDONER

Bleedin' yanks.

Satisfied, Janet turns back to Neil, who's slowly  
recovering.

JANET

Come on. You can't be late.

NEIL

I don't think I should go.

JANET

You're going, Neil. That's final.

Neil's voice has gone. Every utterance is painful now.

NEIL

Jan, please --

JANET

Listen to me. This is the Queen we're talking about. Even you are unlikely to get this chance again. So I don't care if we have to embalm you, you are going.

They face each other, sharing a moment, before Neil finally concedes. He turns to the mirror to gather himself.

JANET

Let me help you.

She moves in to sort out his tie and straighten his blazer. Neil waves her away.

NEIL

(croaks)

I got it.

82 EXT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - DAY 82

Crowds line the Mall all the way to the palace gates, where they're held back by police and Guardsmen to allow the motorcade to enter.

83 INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - GRAND ENTRANCE - DAY 83

The astronauts and the rest of the tour party stare in awe at the grandeur. Even Buzz raises a smile. They are led by two Footmen through the palace.

84 GRAND STAIRCASE 84

The party continues to take in the splendour as they climb. At the top, they are greeted by the EQUERRY.

EQUERRY

Gentlemen, welcome. When you meet the Queen you will bow your head. Ladies, you'll curtsy. Address her as 'Your Majesty' first, after that it's 'Ma'am', as in jam. Do not turn your back to her or the Duke.

(MORE)

EQUERRY (cont'd)

However, if you do find these protocols beyond you, you'll find Her Majesty has a good sense of humour. All other members of the family are addressed as 'Your Royal Highness', then 'Sir' or 'Ma'am' accordingly. I'm sure you can tell who is who.

WADE

You don't have to worry about us, chief.

This outburst is the last thing anyone expected, especially Wade, who seems shocked by his own forwardness. The Equerry is not phased.

EQUERRY

If you'll wait one moment.

He disappears behind a set of double doors, leaving the astronauts to smirk and chuckle quietly at Wade's expense. Wade braces up, trying to save face. He confronts Neil.

WADE

If you need to cough. Do it now.

MICHAEL

We know the score, Wade.

WADE

Just trying to make a good impression, Michael.

With that, Wade starts shunting the astronauts into order, herding Neil to the front and Michael to the back.

MICHAEL

Funny, you didn't care this much for all the other Kings and Queens.

The Footmen open the set of double doors ahead of them.

EQUERRY (O.S.)

Presenting the Apollo 11 astronauts.

85 EAST GALLERY

85

Neil, practically propped up by Janet, leads the party towards a line of royalty. Nearest the door: QUEEN ELIZABETH II, PRINCE PHILIP, PRINCE EDWARD, PRINCE ANDREW, PRINCESS ANNE and PRINCESS MARGARET.

From one royal to the next, the party moves down, shaking hands and bowing. When Neil's confronted with the boy prince Edward, he's hesitant offering his hand and bowing, but then does so, just in case.

The tour party rubs shoulders with royalty. Neil, Buzz and Michael entertain the Queen, while Janet and Joan talk with Prince Philip. Patricia makes conversation with Princess Margaret. In a corner, Wade and Bill watch on.

WADE

Any time you want to apologise,  
Bill, I'm listening.

BILL

For what?

WADE

For trying to tell me how to do my  
job.

BILL

When did I --

WADE

Don't act like you don't know.

BILL

I gave you the diagnosis, Wade.  
That's all. But if you want to get  
into it, in my opinion all three  
could do with a rest.

WADE

And they'll get one. Just not yet.

BILL

You can't treat them like this,  
Wade.

WADE

Like what? I'm working on behalf of  
the President of the United States,  
as are you, as are they, as is  
everyone on this goddamn tour.

BILL

They're not puppets for you to --

Beside them, the Equerry, unimpressed, clears his throat,  
bringing them both to silence.

EQUERRY

Gentlemen, I would politely remind  
you of where you are.

WADE

You're right, sir. My sincere  
apologies.

The Equerry eyeballs them sternly for a moment before moving  
on. Bill waits until he's out of earshot.

BILL

What's more important to you? Image  
or wellbeing?

Wade doesn't respond, instead, he checks his watch.

WADE

Wheels up in five minutes.

He strides off, chest up, shoulders back, flaunting his position over Bill. But Bill's not watching, his focus is on Neil struggling to suppress a cough.

87 THE GRAND STAIRCASE

87

Wade, Bill and a mix of tour and palace staff lead the party down the stairs. Prince Philip and Michael walk together. The wives, Neil, Buzz and the Queen bring up the rear.

PRINCE PHILIP

From one pilot to another, may I commend such a feat of bravery and skill.

MICHAEL

Thank you, sir.

PRINCE PHILIP

Then of course, there was you, all alone up there.

MICHAEL

I wasn't always alone, sir.

PRINCE PHILIP

Something of a sideshow, really.

MICHAEL

I suppose. I was just doing my --

PRINCE PHILIP

I know the feeling all too well. In fact, where is...

Michael ponders the Prince's statement as Philip turns back, searching through the gaggle of people.

PRINCE PHILIP

She's always bringing up the bloody rear.

As Michael snaps back to see who he means, the Queen, Prince Philip bounds off down the stairs ahead of him.

Realising he's caught between two royals, Michael panics. He starts walking down sideways, almost crabbing, so as to avoid having his back to either royal. Patricia, Joan and Janet can't help but smirk.



Neil is less than amused.

88 GRAND ENTRANCE

88

The astronauts exchange a final farewell handshake with the Queen and Prince Philip. Neil is last to shake hands with the Queen.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Good luck for the remainder of your tour.

NEIL

(croaks)

Thanks. I'm sure we...

He can't help himself, Neil coughs fully in the Queen's face. Heads turn, Michael's surprised, Wade's mortified, is Buzz a little bit happy? Either way, no one's more embarrassed than Neil.

NEIL

Oh. Ma'am I'm so...

Mid apology, he coughs on her again. Sportingly, the Queen smiles and holds her hands up in mock surrender. Wade tries to intervene, but the Equerry blocks him.

Neil bows meekly, retreating backwards out of the entrance door. He screws his face shut, ruing his actions. But all too quickly breaks into another coughing fit. He barely has time to catch his breath before he's herded into the car.

89 INT. CAR - DAY

89

Neil stares morosely out at the cheery faces of Londoners passing by his window.

MICHAEL

Cheer up, Neil. One embarrassed head of state out of thirteen isn't bad.

NEIL

I guess you couldn't help it.

MICHAEL

What have I got to do with it?

NEIL

Coming down the stairs, doing precisely what we were told not to.

MICHAEL

Uh Neil, the Prince walked off without me. What was I supposed to do?

NEIL

At least there were no cameras on you this time.

MICHAEL

This time?

NEIL

You in your flight suit, on day one. I guess you started as you mean to go on.

MICHAEL

Woah, Neil, what's with the Spanish Inquisition?

NEIL

I'm just saying you should be more prof--

MICHAEL

Don't say what I think you're about to say.

NEIL

Why not?

MICHAEL

Because I don't think of you as a hypocrite.

BUZZ

Shut up, both of you. It doesn't matter.

NEIL

(coughs)

It does to me.

BUZZ

Then I guess it's your problem.

NEIL

You're right, it is.

BUZZ

Then deal with it. You're the only one they come to see, anyway.

WADE (O.S.)

Enough!

Wade turns round from the front passenger seat, like a father threatening to turn this car around and go home.

WADE

Shut up, all three of you.  
I know you're tired, I know you're  
not well, I know you'd rather be  
home. I also know none of those  
things can be sorted right now. So  
just sit there, don't talk, and let  
the people outside think that none  
of those things matter. Got it?

NEIL

Suits me. I have a headache.

They each turn to their nearest window to smile and wave as  
they pull up outside a famous black door.

90 EXT. 10 DOWNING STREET - DAY

90

The British Prime Minister, HAROLD WILSON, 53, beams as he  
poses on the steps in front of the door with the astronauts.  
All three put on a smile, but it's just a charade.

HAROLD WILSON

Must be pretty tired of the cameras  
by now.

NEIL

Absolutely not, Prime Minister.

HAROLD WILSON

Oh excellent, because we've  
organised a little something for  
you, I hope you don't mind.

BUZZ

Try and stop us.

91 INT. PILLARED STATE DRAWING ROOM - DAY

91

The astronauts are surrounded by school children, every one  
of them starstruck. They move among the children, shaking  
hands and answering questions.

BUZZ

Do you have a question, young man?

SCHOOL BOY

How were you picked to go to the  
moon?

BUZZ

It was my turn.  
(to another child)  
What about you?

SCHOOL GIRL

Who decided who would go first?

Buzz delays his answer, like something's on his mind.

BUZZ

Can you guys keep a secret?

The children all nod. Buzz crouches down to talk closer to them.

BUZZ

I should have gone first, not Neil. Normally when you go into space, it's not the commander who goes first. But for some reason, NASA changed their mind.

SCHOOL BOY

Why?

BUZZ

I'm still trying to figure that out myself, son.

He pats the boy on the shoulder and stands back up, only to see Neil standing behind the children, staring straight at him, straight into his soul. They linger on each other for a moment.

HAROLD WILSON

Mr Armstrong, have you met young William here?

Harold Wilson directs Neil towards a boy with cerebral palsy, and his friend who holds his crutches so William can shake Neil's hand.

NEIL

How do you do, William?

William smiles ecstatically, but doesn't speak.

HAROLD WILSON

William's a keen astronomer. Perhaps he'll follow in your footsteps some day.

NEIL

You fancy doing my job?

William nods enthusiastically, and everyone chuckles at Neil's seemingly warm quip. As they do, Neil's tired smile drops slightly. He isn't joking.

92 EXT. 10 DOWNING STREET - NIGHT

92

The tour party exits, the smiles are still on their faces as the crowds are still watching. Bidding goodbye to Harold Wilson, the astronauts return to their waiting car.

93 CAR

93

As soon as they're in, the smiles vanish, their bodies slump and their heads roll back, exhausted. Wade climbs in to his usual seat.

MICHAEL

Are we done yet?

WADE

Nearly. One more appointment, then you've got a break.

BUZZ

Who with?

WADE

The Pope.

Neil goes back to staring out the window as the motorcade departs. It takes all his will power to wave.

94 EXT. AMERICAN EMBASSY - ROME - DAY

94

Poolside. Finally some time to relax. Neil dozes on a sun lounger, a copy of the New York Times lies open on top of him.

The front page features a photo of Bill, stood at a podium, with the headline, 'Astronaut illness is not lunar infection'.

Wade stands over the sleeping Neil, fixated on the headline. Bill appears behind him, clutching an Italian newspaper.

BILL

The Italians don't seem too interested, they got their snap of the fellas with his Holiness.

He hands the paper to Wade, then notices what he's looking at.

BILL

Any time you're ready to say thanks.

WADE

I think Buzz was looking for you.

Wade tucks the paper under his arm and marches off. Bill gives a little snort of indignation.

95 INT. CORRIDOR - AMERICAN EMBASSY - DAY

95

Bill casually walks down the hall, greeting a passing cleaner. He approaches one of the doors and goes to knock, but pauses...

JOAN (O.S.)

I can't keep smiling and pretending everything's all right. Not if you won't tell me what's wrong.

Bill leans in to listen.

JOAN (O.S.)

Are you not even talking to me now? Buzz? Buzz, for God's sake will you just put the bottle down for one...

There is the sound of a struggle, followed by a smash.

BUZZ (O.S.)

Son of a bitch! You happy now?

JOAN (O.S.)

No, I am not, and I won't be until I know what's going on with you!

Bill decides to beat a retreat, he hastily walks back the way he came. He reaches a set of double doors dividing the corridor from the stairwell.

96 STAIRWELL LANDING

96

As he makes it through, the room door opens behind him, and Joan bursts out into the corridor.

BUZZ (O.S.)

Just get out!

There's a slam. Bill watches on in shock as Joan, distraught and in floods of tears, takes off up the corridor.

Bill holds for a moment. Just in case Buzz emerges.

97 CORRIDOR

97

Bill slowly walks up to Buzz's door. Again he goes to knock, and again thinks twice. He pauses for a moment, then gives three casual raps on the door.

BILL

Buzz? Wade said you wanted a word.

He waits. No response.

98 INT. BUZZ'S HOTEL ROOM - ROME - DAY

98

Buzz lies on the floor, staring at the ceiling. A whiskey bottle in one hand, a copy of the newspaper in the other, tears trickling down his cheek.

BILL (O.S.)

Buzz? You in there?

Buzz doesn't move, as if any sound would give him away. He waits until he hears the sound of footsteps, and the distant creek of the stairwell door indicate Bill's departure.

He takes a large swig from the bottle and closes his eyes. For the first time, we see the picture on the newspaper. Neil, Buzz and Michael meet the Pope.

BEGIN FLASHBACK.

99 INT. PAPAL LIBRARY - VATICAN - DAY 99

A flash goes off as a camera snaps the same moment of the astronauts meeting POPE PAUL VI. The four of them pose for more photographs. Behind the cameras, two Newspapermen watch on.

100 INT. CHAMBER - VATICAN - DAY 100

A large, ornate room. The astronauts sit at a table, facing a congregation of cardinals, bishops, and other Vatican personnel. Reporters and photographers line the walls. The two Newspapermen stand nearest to Buzz.

Standing on the table is three white statues of a woman astride a horse. One for each of them.

CARDINAL

(Italian English)

It is with great pleasure we  
welcome the Apollo astronauts here.  
They would like to say a few words.

Neil makes to take the lead, but Buzz leans forward and clears his throat. As if making the point to Neil that he still has a voice, both figuratively and literally.

As he does, one of the Newspapermen leans to his buddy.

NEWSPAPERMAN

Here we go again with the ol'  
tearjerker routine.

Buzz hears them. He turns to look at their disdainful faces. He freezes up before the mic.

END FLASHBACK.

101 INT. BUZZ'S HOTEL ROOM - ROME - NIGHT 101

Buzz is still on the floor, his eyes shut, the dregs of the whiskey bottle spill over his shirt.

A shadow passes across his face. Joan steps over him, dressed in a sparkling evening dress. She bends down to pry the bottle out of his hand. As she leaves she drops the bottle in the bin with a loud clang. Buzz doesn't stir.

102 INT. MICHAEL'S HOTEL ROOM - ROME - NIGHT

102

Michael inspects himself in the mirror, straightening his bow tie and flattening his hair. Patricia sits on the bed behind him, watching. Like Joan she's similarly dressed to the nines.

PATRICIA

So you're damned if you do, damned if you don't?

MICHAEL

Pretty much. Thanks to Wade, all those gifts, like those statues yesterday, to me they're now just a reminder of the muzzle he's put over me. But then by going along with it, I've as good as silenced myself.

PATRICIA

You're just doing your job. And a fine job you're doing too. Nobody expects anything else.

MICHAEL

Why not? The Earth didn't stop turning while I was gone, nor has it stopped now I'm back. If I went in peace for all mankind, why shouldn't I say something about the war, the problems, the hypocrisy?

Patricia doesn't reply right away. Michael eyes her reflection in the mirror, she has a curious smile on her face.

MICHAEL

What?

PATRICIA

Nothing. Just nice hearing you get so passionate about something other than space flight.

Michael moves closer, leans down and affectionately kisses her.

MICHAEL

I don't deserve you. Wonderful you, always there through all the training, the briefings, the...

PATRICIA

Going solo to the dark side of the moon?

MICHAEL

I wasn't solo. You were there too.



They share a tender moment.

MICHAEL

But maybe you're right. Maybe this is my next step.

PATRICIA

One thing though.

MICHAEL

What?

PATRICIA

Make peace with Wade. Don't let us finish this tour with that storm cloud over us.

103 INT. NIGHTCLUB - ROME - NIGHT

103

A lavish club, like something out of "La Dolce Vita". Everyone's dressed in their finest tuxedos and dresses. This is the last chance to blow off some steam.

Neil and Wade watch from the side of the dancefloor as members of the tour party dance along to a lively Italian band. Neil in particular is enjoying the sight of Janet dancing like nobody's watching.

NEIL

You've out done yourself on this one, Wade.

WADE

I thought we should celebrate the halfway point in style.

NEIL

Looks like Jan's thankful you did.

Janet spins and jumps with gay abandon. As the band strikes up a new song, she bounds over to them.

JANET

Come on, it's your turn.

NEIL

I don't think so.

JANET

Come on, what're you afraid of? There's no cameras here.

NEIL

No. I think I'll go back to the room.

JANET

You're not tired already, are you?

NEIL

We're wheels up at six, and I want to practice my speech before --

JANET

Practice? You know it! Enough talking and come dance with me.

NEIL

I made some changes. Thought it would be refreshing. If that's ok?

He looks to Wade for approval.

WADE

We'll read it on the plane. It's a long flight, plenty of time to make changes.

JANET

See? So you can worry about that tomorrow and dance with me tonight.

Neil backs away, much to Janet's disappointment.

NEIL

Even so, I'd like to go over it. Goodnight.

He turns and disappears among the throng of guests.

WADE

It's probably for the best.

Janet shoots daggers at him. Then spots something over Wade's shoulder.

JANET

Looks like I'm not alone tonight after all.

Wade spins round to see what Janet's seeing: Joan, propped up at the bar, disconsolately draining her wine glass.

104 INT. BILL'S HOTEL ROOM - ROME - NIGHT

104

Bill is busy stripping off for the night. He hums a tune as he kicks off his shoes and pulls his tie off his collar. A firm knock on the door disrupts his groove.

He opens the door to find a wretched-looking Buzz standing before him.

BILL

Buzz? What the --

BUZZ

Remember I wanted to talk to you?

Bill nods.

BUZZ

Can I come in?

Bill stands aside for Buzz to traipse inside. Bill checks the hallway is clear before closing the door.

105 INT. NEIL'S HOTEL ROOM - ROME - NIGHT

105

Neil paces around the room, a piece of paper in his hand. He endeavours to stand tall and proud, but refrains from speaking loudly, too self-conscious to vocalise fully.

NEIL

(to himself)

The Saturn gave us one magnificent ride. It was the javelin, thrown by the hundreds of people...

He breaks off, frustrated with himself.

NEIL

It was the javelin, thrown by the hundreds of thousands of people working to get up... Get us there.

He paces around a bit more, then consults the page.

NEIL

(reading)

I wasn't chosen to be first. I was just chosen to command that flight.

(to himself)

He'll never keep that in.

Neil drops the page on the bed, then resumes his pacing.

NEIL

The Saturn gave us one magnificent ride... Dammit.

There's a knock at the door.

NEIL

Who is it?

HOTEL STAFF (O.S.)

(Italian English)

Room service.

Neil pauses.

NEIL

I didn't order anything.

HOTEL STAFF (O.S.)

Room service for Mr Armstrong.

NEIL

I'm sorry, whatever it is, there's been a mistake.

HOTEL STAFF (O.S.)

Sir, if you could --

NEIL

Young man, I'm trying to work in here. Whatever it is, I don't want it. Thank you.

Silence. Neil creeps to the door and listens. There's the sound of footsteps. Tentatively, he opens the door.

106 CORRIDOR

106

He pokes his head out just in time to see a Hotel Staff member round the corner. Their hands empty. Neil leans against the doorframe and breathes a sigh of relief.

Further up the corridor, another door opens. To Neil's surprise, Buzz emerges. Neil spies Buzz is clutching a small bottle of pills.

NEIL

Buzz?

Buzz looks up at Neil, who sees his bleary eyes and tear stained face. Buzz stares at him for a moment, then shuffles into his own room, closing the door behind him. Neil holds his gaze on Buzz's door, a concerned look on his face.

107 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - LOUNGE - DAY

107

Neil, Buzz, Bill and a couple of other tour party staff sit round the table playing poker. Buzz piles up his winnings as Bill deals out the next hand.

NEIL

You're on a real hot streak today.

Buzz merely grunts as he chucks a few chips in to raise. Bill and Neil call, the two staffers fold.

NEIL

First time since Bogota.

BUZZ

Guess I'm just lucky.

On the flop, it's two hearts and a diamond. Bill calls, Buzz raises.

NEIL

I guess those pills did the trick.

Buzz and Neil lock eyes.

BUZZ

What?

NEIL

Last night. I saw --

BILL

Neil...

Neil sees Bill subtly shaking his head.

BILL

You gonna call or what?

Neil calls Buzz. Bill folds and deals the turn. It's a spade. This time, Buzz checks.

BUZZ

Sleeping tablets.

Neil also checks.

NEIL

(incredulous)

That's what I thought.

At the river, the final card is another heart. Buzz examines his cards, deep in thought.

NEIL

But I figured, if there was anything you needed help with --

BUZZ

Like what?

NEIL

Like why you've been so quiet recently.

BUZZ

I'm fine. Just tired.

Without breaking his gaze at Neil, Buzz raises again.

BUZZ

Fifty bucks.

Neil double checks his cards.

NEIL

That's a little too rich for my blood.

Neil passes his cards back to Bill as Buzz again collects his winnings, again without any sense of delight registering on his face. Bill takes his cards and turns them over. He had nothing. Neil pulls a wry smile.

NEIL  
You were bluffing.

BILL  
I figured you for a flush.

BUZZ  
I guess that's one thing I've  
gotten good at thanks to this tour.

Buzz's remark gets Neil's attention, who drops all sense of gamesmanship.

NEIL  
Buzz. Are you sure you're --

BUZZ  
Deal me out. Gotta piss.

Buzz stands and hurriedly makes his way down the aircraft.

108 GALLEY

108

Buzz checks no one can see him before he reaches into his inside pocket and pulls out the small jar of pills. Unscrewing the lid, he hurriedly ingests a couple before concealing it just as fast.

Having swallowed them, he breathes easier, resting his head on an overhead compartment and screwing his eyes shut.

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
Buzz?

His eyes snap open to see Michael standing in front of him.

MICHAEL  
Have you --

BUZZ  
Don't ask me if everything's all right, Mike. Getting real sick of giving everyone the same answer.

Michael holds his hands up defensively.

MICHAEL  
It's okay, relax. I was just asking if you'd seen Wade anywhere?

BUZZ  
It's a plane, Mike, there's only so many places he can be.

Stung by Buzz's cutting reply, Michael departs. Buzz stalks on to the lavatory. It's engaged, he bangs on the door.

WADE (O.S.)  
Someone's in here.

109 STAFF AREA

109

In the centre of the plane, Michael casts a glance up and down the aisle, but sees Wade nowhere. Michael resolves to wait. He settles into a chair tucked under a desk in the corner. On the desk is a stack of documents and a briefcase.

Michael peruses the documents. The top page is an itinerary for Ankara, the next sheet is a list of cities. All the locations visited have a red tick beside them. The twelve cities from Ankara to Washington have nothing.

Michael flicks through a few more pages until he comes across a peculiar document. A document that doesn't seem to relate to any of the others. It's headed, 'IN EVENT OF MOON DISASTER'.

NIXON (V.O.)

Fate has ordained that the men who  
went to the moon to explore in  
peace will stay on the moon to rest  
in peace.

110 INT. LUNAR MODULE - NIGHT

110

Neil and Buzz climb back into the module after their historic spacewalk. As Buzz manoeuvres inside, his cumbersome life support pack on his back knocks a circuit breaker on the control panel.

NIXON (V.O.)

These brave men, Neil Armstrong and  
Edwin Aldrin, know that there is no  
hope for their recovery.

Buzz flips the Engine Arm switch. There's nothing.

111 INT. COMMAND MODULE - NIGHT

111

High above them in lunar orbit, Michael floats in the command module, waiting for his colleagues' return. There is a crackle over his radio. He listens attentively.

NIXON (V.O.)

These two men are laying down their  
lives in mankind's most noble goal:  
the search for truth and  
understanding.

Michael's dumbstruck. Whatever he's been told over the radio, it's devastating news.

112 INT. LUNAR MODULE - NIGHT

112

Neil and Buzz anxiously try everything, pressing buttons on their instrument panels, flipping gauges, everything. Nothing's working. As they try, a pen floats past Buzz.

NIXON (V.O.)

In their exploration, they stirred the people of the world to feel as one; in their sacrifice, they bind more tightly the brotherhood of man.

113 INT. COMMAND MODULE - NIGHT

113

Michael, fighting his emotions, programs course corrections into the module's computer. The engine fires, and speeds away from the Moon. Michael takes a sorrowful glance out of the window.

NIXON (V.O.)

In ancient days, men looked at the stars and saw their heroes in the constellations. In modern times, we do much the same, but our heroes are epic men of flesh and blood.

114 INT. LUNAR MODULE - NIGHT

114

Neil gives a grim exhale, accepting his fate. Buzz hangs his head. They look at each other, and grab each other's hand, before gazing out of the window at the desolate landscape of the Moon, as Earth peeks over the horizon.

NIXON (V.O.)

For every human being who looks up at the moon in the nights to come will know that there is some corner of another world that is forever mankind.

WADE (V.O.)

What are you doing?

115 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - STAFF AREA - DAY

115

Almost teary eyed, Michael snaps back when he realises Wade is standing over him.

WADE

Why are you going through my stuff?

Collecting himself, Michael stands, right in Wade's face. For the first time, we see him angry.

MICHAEL

I was waiting for you. To make peace.

He registers Wade's bewildered expression.

MICHAEL

Pat seemed to think we had some bridges in need of rebuilding.

(MORE)



MICHAEL (cont'd)

So I was waiting here, and saw the papers on the desk. And I found this.

He hands over the press release. Wade's eyes widen.

WADE

What on Earth is --

MICHAEL

That's what I was wondering.

WADE

It's nothing, Mike. Anyway, it's not important anymore.

MICHAEL

Doesn't look like nothing. Looks like something else I'm not allowed to talk about.

WADE

Look, Mike, I'm sorry you saw it. It wasn't supposed to be in with all this stuff. I guess it got mixed up, all the last minute preparations, y'know?

Wade looks pleadingly at Michael, who doesn't respond, but just fiercely stares Wade down.

WADE

It was a contingency. That's all. Surely you understand this was always a possibility?

MICHAEL

Of course I did. What I can't forgive is the idea that had events transpired like this, and I came back alone, you'd have me out here anyway. The sole survivor tour. And I can't help but conclude you would have me dodge the issue of leaving Neil and Buzz behind in the same way you have me dodge every other issue.

WADE

Mike, listen --

MICHAEL

But I guess it all worked out. They did come back, you've got your willing mouthpiece, and to my relief I've all the proof I need that I've made the right decision. In a way, I oughta thank you.

Michael firmly grips Wade's hand, shakes it vigorously, and walks off, his head held high.

116 EXT. N'DJILI AIRPORT - KINSHASA - DAY

116

The rousing drumbeats of Congolese tribesmen accompany a troupe of dancers as they perform for the tour party on the tarmac beneath Air Force Two.

The astronauts watch on politely, though their discomfort from the oppressive African sun is clear for all to see. Except for Neil, who's determined not to be distracted, even as sweat drips into his eye.

JANET

You don't have to pretend. You are allowed to be uncomfortable.

NEIL

I'm fine.

As the routine finishes, and the crowd breaks into applause, Janet rummages in her bag, pulling out a handkerchief.

JANET

Here...

As she looks up, she sees Neil's already pulled one out of his inside pocket and is wiping his brow.

NEIL

I can manage.

As Wade starts shunting the party towards the waiting motorcade, Janet stuffs the handkerchief away, as if annoyed at Neil's growing ability to handle public appearances without her.

117 CAR

117

The astronauts climb into their open top car. Buzz and Michael take a seat, but Neil remains standing to wave at the crowd a bit longer.

BUZZ

C'mon, let's go already. I'm sweating my ass off.

Neil looks disapprovingly at Buzz but doesn't stop waving. Suddenly the shouts of the crowd snap his attention back as he sees a man break free of the cordon and rush towards the car, his arms open wide with a beaming smile.

As he gets closer, the man holds out his hand, and Neil extends his as if to shake it. He is not ready for the whirling baton that appears behind the man, wielded by a police officer, who strikes him down with a crunching blow.

Neil's smile turns to shock as the motorcade pulls away to the sound of protests from the crowd, and the sight of several police officers beating the man who's curled up on the ground, as others menacingly brandish their weapons.

118 EXT. ROAD TO KINSHASA - DAY 118

Compared to the imposing infrastructure and towering buildings of Europe, the motorcade now progresses through the vast expanse of developing Africa. Yet the onlookers lining the road seems just as never-ending.

All three astronauts sit, stone-faced, barely registering the crowd as they pass by.

119 INT. MARQUEE - KINSHASA - NIGHT 119

A giant open tent, ornately furnished, is erected on a large compound, illuminated by large floodlights.

The astronauts sit together on a dais, their wives and dignitaries either side. They are all still grey-faced and expressionless as they watch another display of traditional tribal dancing.

Wade sneaks in behind them and crouches down, whispering quietly.

WADE

If any of you three fancy doing your job and raising a smile, now would be a good time.

NEIL

Sorry, Wade.

MICHAEL

I'm not.

WADE

What's that, Mike?

MICHAEL

I take it we're to pretend we didn't see those police beatings?

WADE

No. But I guarantee the topic won't come up again.

NEIL

If I'm honest, Wade, on this occasion, I don't feel right not saying something.

WADE

I see. Sounds like you three need a reminder of where we are.

BUZZ

Don't talk to me like I'm a child,  
Wade.

WADE

President Mobutu is our friend. He  
keeps the commies at bay and  
welcomes us to his country. Yes,  
what you saw today was unfortunate,  
but I think we can all agree it's  
not sufficient reason to rock the  
boat.

He purposefully stares at Michael, who turns back to watch  
the show.

WADE

All right then. Buzz?

BUZZ

(shrugs)

No different to what we saw on the  
Berlin Wall except these guys are  
allies.

WADE

Exactly. Let's keep it that way.

Wade slopes off. After a few beats, Neil follows him.

120 EXT. MARQUEE - KINSHASA - NIGHT

120

Neil catches up to Wade, pulling on his arm to get his  
attention.

NEIL

Wade, wait. There's something else.

WADE

Go on.

NEIL

That man today, he was beaten for  
trying to get close to me. And he's  
just who I saw. How many others  
have hurt themselves on this tour?  
I can't keep being responsible for  
that sort of thing.

WADE

You know, my sister tried to get in  
to Elvis' comeback special. She  
came home with a black eye and said  
she got as far as round the block  
from the front door. But she said  
she'd do it again because she got  
to see him getting out of his car.  
Do you know what the moral of the  
story is?

NEIL

No.

WADE

These people love you. And there's nothing you can do about that except giving them what they want. You can't concern yourself with their problems because they don't concern themselves with yours, when all they want is the chance to say they saw you in the flesh.

NEIL

But --

WADE

No. No. Go and enjoy the show.

Despondent, Neil turns back, with an 'encouraging' shove from Wade.

121 INT. MARQUEE - KINSHASA - NIGHT

121

The tribal dancers, Congolese dignitaries and the tour party all applaud as the astronauts are presented with leopard-pattern hats.

From the dais, Neil is guided towards Janet, and the pair are herded from the platform into the space where the dancers had previously occupied. Behind them, the same fate awaits Joan, Buzz, Patricia and Michael.

Neil grows tense as he notices the gathering start to form a circle around them.

NEIL

What's going on?

The band strikes up a tune. Neil tenses up, and his eyes widen in panic. Janet smirks.

JANET

Neil, come on.

NEIL

I can't.

JANET

Imagine it's our wedding day.

NEIL

I couldn't dance then, either.

JANET

Oh, here...

She takes his hand. As she steps forward, so does Neil, treading on her foot. He hops back, hoping no one noticed.

JANET

How about I take the lead for once.

Slowly, Janet leads them through a simple sequence. Neil takes every step as gingerly as his first step on the moon, clinging to Janet for dear life, his face registering no emotion.

Michael and Patricia twirl past, dancing a gentle waltz. They're far more relaxed than Neil and Janet.

PATRICIA

This is my favourite part of the trip so far, even with all the cameras.

MICHAEL

Don't worry, you know they're not looking at us.

Patricia glances around and sees the awkward faces and movements of Neil and Janet, and the gloomy frowns of Buzz and Joan.

PATRICIA

Y'know for once, I think they might be.

Michael sweeps Patricia into a series of elegant spins which receive a round of applause.

Buzz and Joan are more walking than dancing around the floor. Buzz is totally expressionless, but does allow himself a glimpse of Michael and Patricia's moves.

BUZZ

They look good together.

JOAN

Oh, so you're talking to me again?

BUZZ

You really want to --

He stops himself when he spots a cameraman moving in. They dance around waiting for him to move on.

JOAN

No, I don't want to do this now, but for once you can't lock yourself away.

Buzz can't bear to look at her, such is his frustration.

JOAN

I just want to know what's changed.

BUZZ

If you can't figure that out for yourself after all this time on the road, then I don't know what to tell you.

The song ends, and everyone breaks into applause. Buzz uses the moment to try and break free, but Joan holds him back.

JOAN

You can't keep shutting me out. Shut the world out if you really think that'll help, but not me.

Buzz responds by twisting himself free of her grip and hurrying off the dancefloor. Joan swallows her tears, determined to look strong for the cameras.

122 EXT. MARQUEE - KINSHASA - NIGHT

122

Neil emerges from a toilet cubicle. The moment he steps out, he's pounced upon by a PHOTOGRAPHER.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Mr Armstrong?

Neil sees the camera swinging from his neck.

NEIL

Look, sir, can't a man visit a restroom in peace?

PHOTOGRAPHER

I've followed your whole tour, and this is the first chance I've had to catch you alone.

NEIL

(sighs)

All right then.

Neil stands before the photographer. Straight posture, neutral expression, wanting this over. Bizarrely, the photographer doesn't reach for his camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER

No. I mean, I wanted to catch you alone to discuss a proposition with you.

NEIL

Proposition?

PHOTOGRAPHER

I seen what you been up to on this trip. What that slave driver from the State Department's doing with you. I mean what you doing here?

(MORE)

PHOTOGRAPHER (cont'd)  
Dancing like you're on amateur  
night at the Apollo.

NEIL  
Well, I suppose I just --

PHOTOGRAPHER  
You just do what you're told. But  
what if I told you you don't need  
to do that no more?

NEIL  
I...

PHOTOGRAPHER  
I'm offering you the chance to be  
your own man, not some puppet for  
Nixon to parade around. A one time  
investment, a couple of appearances  
when you choose, and your troubles  
are over.

NEIL  
What makes you think I have  
troubles?

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Maybe not now. But what you gonna  
do when the first man lands on  
Mars? Only a matter of time, right?  
And it's not like NASA's paying you  
what I can offer.

Neil goes quiet, pondering. As he does, the photographer  
pulls a document out of his pocket and holds it out.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
What d'ya say?

NEIL  
I don't know.

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Just think of it as one small step.

Neil slowly reaches out his hand to take the document.

MICHAEL (O.S.)  
Neil? What's going on here?

PHOTOGRAPHER  
Mr Collins! It must be my lucky  
night. Fancy joining Mr Armstrong  
in making the best decision of your  
life?

MICHAEL  
Sure. If I could just...



Michael takes the document from Neil, 'inspects' it, then tears it in half.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Hey! What're you --

Michael jabs a finger at him authoritatively, silencing him.

MICHAEL

I suggest you be on your way.

PHOTOGRAPHER

If you think I'm going anywhere after --

MICHAEL

Fine, then we'll wait here. And when our security wonders where we've gone, you can explain to them what you were trying to pull.

Recognising defeat, the photographer slopes away into the darkness. Michael turns to Neil, unimpressed.

MICHAEL

Just when it looked like you were getting the hang of this.

NEIL

I don't understand.

MICHAEL

How many hucksters do you think would jump at the chance to use you to make a quick buck? He was just right place, right time.

NEIL

But how did you --

MICHAEL

A couple of the Mercury and Gemini guys got caught up in the same thing. Can't let that happen to you.

NEIL

Thanks.

MICHAEL

Crews still got to watch each other's backs. You're just lucky that champagne went straight through me.

Neil chuckles as Michael dashes off into the toilet. Just as quickly his laughter evaporates, and he pulls a stern face. He clenches his fists and screws his eyes shut.

NEIL  
 (to himself)  
 Jackass.

He composes himself, braces up, and marches back towards the marquee.

123 INT. MARQUEE - KINSHASA - NIGHT

123

Buzz sits slumped in his chair up on the dais, draining his glass and immediately reaching for another. He forlornly watches the party on the dancefloor.

He spies a beautiful Congolese woman dancing with an imposing, muscular man. Nevertheless, he's transfixed by her every move as she gracefully spins around the dancefloor.

He's disturbed by a tap on the shoulder.

CONGOLESE REPORTER  
 Pardon me, Mr Aldrin?

Buzz looks round and sees a CONGOLESE REPORTER, standing eagerly over him, notepad and pen at the ready. Disgusted, Buzz turns his attention back to the dancefloor.

CONGOLESE REPORTER  
 I was wondering if I could ask you some questions.

BUZZ  
 That's what press conferences are for, son.

CONGOLESE REPORTER  
 Yes, yes, of course. But I wanted to ask about the moon landing --

BUZZ  
 No kidding.

CONGOLESE REPORTER  
 I mean your opinion on --

BUZZ  
 I got nothing new to say. If you need a quote, read yesterday's paper.

CONGOLESE REPORTER  
 But, Mr Aldrin, our readers, they --

Buzz snaps.

BUZZ  
 They what? Huh? What do they really want? You want a story? How's this?

Buzz springs up, jumps off the dais and strides towards the Congolese beauty. Behind the startled reporters, Neil appears back in the marquee, just in time to see Buzz reach the woman and her partner.

BUZZ

'Scuse me, son...

He cuts in on the heavy, knocking him out of the way. Before the man can retaliate, Buzz has taken the Congolese woman, JEANNE, in his arms and spins them away from him.

JEANNE

What are --

BUZZ

Sorry ma'am, but apparently tomorrow's front page is looking a little empty, so...

As Buzz dances, he casts a look back to the reporters who just stand, gawping at what they're watching. Unlike Neil, who watches on with a concerned face. But Wade, who's joined Neil on the dais, is positively fuming.

BUZZ

Looks like my boss isn't too happy about this. Bit like your boyfriend --

JEANNE

Security.

BUZZ

Security, eh? Well I'd better have you back in one piece then.

Buzz dances even faster and more energetically than before. The fascinated crowd closes round to watch in amazement. Camera flashes are everywhere.

JEANNE

If you weren't who you are, he'd have hit you by now.

BUZZ

Is that right? So what makes you so special that me being special too is the only reason we're still dancing?

124 EXT. GARDEN - KINSHASA - NIGHT

124

A serene, tranquil spot out the back of a villa complex, glowing in night lamps and the lights illuminating the swimming pool.

Buzz sits, hunched over on a bench in the darkness, enveloped in the shadows of Neil and Wade.

They stand over him, Neil disappointed, Wade furious.

WADE

Jesus Christ, what do I have to do to get you to listen to me? How many times do I have to tell you? This is a good will tour. You're supposed to be diplomatic.

BUZZ

I thought I was.

WADE

By hijacking Jeanne Mokomo? Actually scratch that, by hijacking Miss Zaire!

BUZZ

She didn't seem to mind.

WADE

Enough of your smart mouth. Do you have any idea how this looks?

Buzz shrugs with a relaxed indifference.

WADE

Not only have you given the press at home a field day for dancing with an African, but you as good as humiliated our hosts.

At this, Buzz stands to square up to Wade.

BUZZ

How? For giving them what they want?

WADE

Because as much as you don't want to accept it, there's still such a thing as protocol!

They lock eyes, as if daring each other to back down. Eventually, Buzz sidles past Wade and wanders onto the lawn. Wade turns to Neil.

WADE

You're supposed to be helping me. I told you, you're still mission commander here, so goddammit act like one.

He jerks his head in Buzz's direction then takes off. Neil braces himself, then heads down towards Buzz, who's just gazing up at the night sky.

NEIL

Buzz?

BUZZ

We never just look anymore, do we?

NEIL

Buzz, please...

BUZZ

Not since Tranquility Base.

Neil looks up at the twinkling stars, hanging in the infinite blackness. And in the corner of his vision, the moon, shining down on them.

NEIL

It's beautiful.

BUZZ

Sure is, so make it quick.

NEIL

Excuse me?

BUZZ

You're about to ruin it with whatever lecture you've got lined up, so get it over with.

Buzz turns round to face Neil. He stands, hands in pockets, expectant, like he's judging Neil, rather than fearing his wrath. Neil straightens his suit and stands tall, determined to match Buzz's stature.

NEIL

Buzz, you messed up. And you know it, because it's not the first time on this tour you've let the team down.

BUZZ

Oh, it's a team game, is it? I thought we were just cheerleaders for the star quarterback.

Buzz glares at Neil to emphasise his point.

NEIL

You know I tell the press every chance I get that this took all of us. Thousands of us.

BUZZ

But you're the one they want to see.

NEIL

That doesn't excuse your actions, Buzz.

Buzz scoffs at the fact Neil doesn't deny his status.

BUZZ

I danced with a black woman, so what? At least I didn't cough on the Queen of England, or turn up in my flight suit. We've all made mistakes.

NEIL

Yes, but you keep making them.

BUZZ

How am I supposed to know --

NEIL

To know when to stop drinking? To know how much you upset Joan every time you lock yourself in your room? To know that you've been told as many times as me and Mike about following protocol.

At this, Buzz can't help but give a sarcastic chuckle.

BUZZ

There it is.

NEIL

There... What is?

BUZZ

Wade's really got to you. Ever since Mexico City --

NEIL

Mexico City was your mistake.

BUZZ

I was covering your ass because you couldn't get a word out. And since then you've been hiding behind protocol and image and playing the part. You think we haven't seen you, always playing with your tie, or pacing around the plane at all hours going over the same speech fifty times.

NEIL

It's my job. It's your job.

BUZZ

Goddammit, it's not! I'm a pilot, Neil. Just a pilot. Same as you. We did something great. But look at us now. You lose your mind over me dancing with some woman, but not over the problem of what the hell does dancing have to do with going to the moon?

NEIL

I guess diplo --

BUZZ

Don't say diplomacy. That's Wade's job, not ours.

NEIL

Everyone has their way of celebrating what we did.

BUZZ

And the more the world wants to celebrate it, the emptier it becomes. There's only so many times I can give the wrong answer to people asking 'what was it like?' Eventually they'll lose interest, and then what? I'll have nothing. Nothing but magnificent desolation.

At this, Buzz's facade starts to crumble.

BUZZ

Wonder if I'd have this problem if things had gone... Differently.

NEIL

No. We're not doing this again, Buzz.

BUZZ

Admit it, you'd be relieved if Deke had followed 'protocol', and selected me to be the first one out. None of the attention, none of the pressure, none of the expectation. I'd have my father off my back, no gaping void, no doubts of what to do next.

NEIL

Deke's decision was his. He had his reasons. For better or worse you and I have to live with that. If I can square that with myself, why can't you?

BUZZ

Because who cares about who comes second?

Silence, as the two reflect on Buzz's outburst.

BUZZ

But I guess after these last few months I should be relieved. Can't imagine the idea of being an actor the rest of my life.

With that, Buzz shuffles past Neil back towards the villa. But as he approaches the door, he pauses, and turns back.

BUZZ

One more thing, don't tell me my wife's upset. My marriage is my business.

He goes inside, shuts the door and switches off the garden lights, plunging Neil into darkness, save for the glow of the moon above.

125 INT. AIR FORCE TWO - NIGHT 125

Everybody is exhausted, up and down the plane, people are either sleeping, resting, or working on auto-pilot. The long hours of flying and ceremony have truly taken their toll.

126 COMMUNICATIONS ROOM 126

Joan sits at the desk, the phone pressed to her ear.

JOAN

(into phone)

I've missed you too, sweetie, but we're nearly home... Your father? Hold on, he's... He can't come to the phone right now... He's... Working.

There's the sound of someone approaching. Joan looks round, hopeful, but it's Michael, who's startled to see her and backs away apologetically.

JOAN

I've got to go honey, mom and dad'll see you in a couple of days, ok?... Love you too.

She hangs up.

MICHAEL

Sorry. I thought everyone was asleep.

JOAN

I should be. Just have to take care of a couple of things first.

She exits. Michael takes her seat and picks up the phone.

MICHAEL

(into phone)

Hello? Can you connect me to Deke Slayton? NASA Director of Flight Operations...



127 STATE ROOM 1 127

Joan emerges from the communications room and stomps towards Buzz, who's curled up, fast asleep across three chairs, wrapped in a banner with the Pacific Air Forces patch, the US flag, and the caption 'Guam welcomes Apollo Moon Men'.

Joan gives Buzz a firm nudge.

JOAN

Wake up.

Buzz stirs.

BUZZ

What the --

JOAN

Come with me. Now.

Still wrapped in the banner, Buzz hauls himself up and follows Joan down the plane.

128 STATE ROOM 2 128

They pass the mountain of gifts, now piled high, almost completely filling the room. A couple of tour staffers are busy logging each gift.

129 LOUNGE 129

Most of the occupants of all the seats are fast asleep. Janet is slumped forwards. Bill has several traditional Indian wreaths of flowers hanging around his neck, almost like a makeshift travel pillow.

Joan moves quickly but quietly, so as not to wake anyone. Buzz isn't bothered.

130 STAFF AREA 130

Moving on, Joan and Buzz pass two tour staffers at a typewriter on the desk in the corner. One sitting, one standing over her shoulder, dictating from a document.

TOUR PARTY MEMBER

Bangkok, overwhelmingly positive.  
Dacca, the same. Tehran --

TOUR PARTY MEMBER #2

Too hot to take notes.

The colleagues share a chuckle.

131 SEATING AREA 131

Like the rest of the plane, every seat is occupied with people sleeping and a couple who are reading, but everyone is too tired to care about Joan and Buzz storming past them.

132 GALLEY

132

The very back of the plane. Wade leans over a document, armed with a red pen. It's his list of stops. Every city is ticked, except for three. Wade ticks off Seoul and Tokyo. The last stop is Washington D.C., which Wade circles.

As he pockets his pen, Joan and Buzz appear before him.

WADE

You two should be resting.

JOAN

Could you give us a minute?

Wade shuffles past them and moves away, he looks back to see Joan pull back the curtain.

133 STATE ROOM 2/LOUNGE

133

Neil emerges from the adjoining lavatory. He mutters under his breath as he makes his way back to his seat next to Janet.

NEIL

(to himself)

Mr President, we went to the Moon on behalf of all the people of the world. It has been our good fortune to meet many of them on this tour.

He consults a document on the table in front of him. He's word for word correct. As he makes to go again, he spots Janet looking at him.

NEIL

Did I wake you?

JANET

Did you get it right?

NEIL

I did.

JANET

Then put it away and go to sleep.

NEIL

In a bit.

JANET

I mean it.

NEIL

It's for the President, Jan. I want to finish this tour strongly.

JANET

Not much chance of that if you fall asleep at the podium.

Janet giggles at the prospect. Neil unsurprisingly doesn't, and turns his focus back to the document.

JANET

Come on, Neil. It's just a joke.

NEIL

I know. But I need to concentrate. By the time we land I want --

BUZZ (O.S.)

You can't do that! You'll ruin us. Is that what you want? I can't hear you!

JOAN (O.S.)

Face it, Buzz, this is about you, not us! I'm warning you, either learn to stay at home, or move out!

Buzz and Joan's angry exclamations jerk the whole plane awake. In every compartment, heads swivel back towards the galley. Neil leans round to see Buzz sweep the curtain aside and storm away from a tearful Joan.

As Buzz approaches, he picks up a newspaper from his seat. He passes Neil and drops it on his lap.

BUZZ

Whenever you want to apologise.

He marches off to the lavatory and shuts the door with a slam. Neil examines the paper. The front page is of Buzz dancing with Jeanne Mokomo, both with beaming smiles, the headline heralding their visit as a triumph.

134 INT. MARINE ONE HELICOPTER - DAY

134

The turbulence and the rhythmic chugging of the rotors are not enough to disturb the astronauts and their wives from sitting, zombie like, to the point of dozing off. Only Wade can manage that.

WADE

So, this is it. Now, as always there's a few things to remember. Usual rules apply, do not discuss sensitive issues, and expect student demonstrations. Never turn your back on the President. Never be seen with the Vice President...

(chuckles)

It is unsafe to walk the streets after dark.

(MORE)

WADE (cont'd)

Finally the water is drinkable, but  
it's not the most popular beverage  
to the natives.

Wade chuckles again, but he's alone in his titters, as his  
obvious attempt at humour goes down like a lead balloon.

135 EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

135

Everyone, from President Nixon to the smallest child,  
gathers on the South Lawn with excited eagerness to get a  
glimpse of the party as the helicopter touches down.

The astronauts emerge to rapturous applause and cheers.  
Soldiers salute as they pass by, making their way towards  
President Nixon and First Lady PAT NIXON standing on a  
platform, surrounded by several decorated military  
personnel.

As they step up onto the platform, Nixon shakes their hands.  
Neil, who's first, receives a particularly vigorous welcome.

NIXON

I knew you could do it.

Neil takes his place, a small smile on his face, but it  
fades when he catches Buzz's eye, who pulls a knowing  
grimace.

136 INT. STATE DINING ROOM - THE WHITE HOUSE - DUSK

136

Neil sits beside Pat Nixon and Janet, Buzz is sandwiched  
between a USAF GENERAL and Joan, and Michael is sat with  
Patricia and a SENATOR.

Conversations are bandied round the table.

MICHAEL

If you're serious, Senator, I sure  
would appreciate it.

SENATOR

Sure I'm serious. Tell ya what,  
first thing tomorrow I'll make some  
calls.

USAF GENERAL

We could use someone of your  
experience at the academy.

BUZZ

Appreciate the offer, general, but  
--

USAF GENERAL

No rush. You just think about it.

PAT NIXON

I expect you're looking forward to a break?

JANET

Just looking forward to seeing the children again.

PAT NIXON

Of course.

NEIL

Might be best to wait until after Canada.

JANET

What?

NEIL

Wade told me. Short visit to Montreal and Ottawa, won't be more than a couple of days.

JANET

I see. Were you planning on telling me?

Before Neil can respond, President Nixon stands, his champagne glass aloft.

PRESIDENT NIXON

It has been my privilege in the White House, and also in other world capitals, to propose toasts to many distinguished people. Emperors, kings, presidents and prime ministers, even a duke. Tonight is the highest privilege I could have, to propose a toast to America's astronauts.

He raises a glass and toasts all three of them.

137 INT. COLLINS HOME (HOUSTON) - DAY

137

Patricia washes up in the kitchen as outside the window, Michael is busy playing with their dog. There's a knock at the door.

138 EXT. COLLINS HOME (HOUSTON) - DAY

138

Michael clings on to one end of a rope toy, the other end locked in the jaws of his faithful alsatian.

PATRICIA (O.S.)

Go through, he's outside.

Michael looks up towards the house to see Deke watching by the back door.

DEKE

I got your message.

139 LIVING ROOM

139

Deke and Michael sit opposite each other. Deke pats Michael's dog, who's inquisitively sniffing this stranger in the house.

DEKE

You sure you won't change your mind?

MICHAEL

I don't need to fly in space again, Deke. And if I'm not flying, there's not much more I feel I can get out of the program. It's time to start a new challenge.

DEKE

And the State Department's the place for you?

MICHAEL

You sound surprised.

DEKE

You're a hell of a pilot, Mike. Just can't say I figured I'd be losing you to the guys who want to cut our funding.

MICHAEL

Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. To me that sounds like a chance to make a difference.

DEKE

And flying to the moon wasn't?

Michael sees the grin on Deke's face. This isn't a challenge, it's friendly banter.

MICHAEL

It's what feels right. Time to remove the muzzle to suit someone else's agenda.

DEKE

You think the State Department don't have their own gag order?

MICHAEL

Perhaps. But it's a new challenge, a chance to deal with more pressing issues.

Deke gives a doubtful shrug.

MICHAEL

Even the best show can go on too long, Deke.

This couldn't be more conclusive. Deke takes the hint. The pair stand and warmly shake hands.

140 INT. SIMULATOR ROOM - DAY

140

Neil stands behind a row of technicians monitoring a control panel. They observe a lunar landing simulation in progress.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

(over radio)

Arm. Descent.

TECHNICIAN

(into radio)

Rog'.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

Rate of descent looks good, altitude looks good.

TECHNICIAN

How's he looking, Neil?

NEIL

We were a little long on our position so could try a steeper descent, might conserve some more fuel than we did doing it that way too.

TECHNICIAN

Okay, let's give it a try.

(into radio)

Intrepid, Houston, you are go for powered descent, we suggest you increase your rate and throttle back.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

Roger, Houston. Is Neil still watching?

The technicians chuckle, as does Neil.

TECHNICIAN

In the prime seat, Intrepid.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

Twelve minutes for Eagle to touchdown, I'll race him.

NEIL

They sound ready. Next week will be a heck of a show.

TECHNICIAN

They sure appreciate your help,  
Neil. Don't feel like you have to  
stay.

NEIL

I'll see them down.

TECHNICIAN

Ain't you got a ribbon to cut  
somewhere?

The technicians laugh, Neil politely joins in.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

(over radio)

Houston, Intrepid.

TECHNICIAN

Go ahead, Intrepid...

141 INT. NASA - DUSK

141

The last light of the sun glows through the window as Neil pours himself a coffee, and rubs his tired eyes. Clutching his cup of joe, he wanders through the myriad of desks and NASA employees, some packing up, others working late.

142 NEIL'S NASA OFFICE

142

Neil settles into his chair. In front of him, a mountain of fan mail. Picking one off the top of the pile, Neil tears it open and begins to read. After a few beats, he clears a space for a piece of paper, and starts writing.

There's a knock on the door as his secretary, GENNIE, 36, pokes her head in.

GENNIE

I thought you'd gone home.

NEIL

Debriefing for Pete and Al's LM simulation went on longer than expected.

GENNIE

They can wait until tomorrow.

NEIL

There'll be more tomorrow.

GENNIE

I know, but it's getting awfully late.

NEIL

I'd rather stay and finish these.



Gennie huffs before snatching the nearest letter to her before Neil can stop her. She tears it open.

GENNIE

(reading)

Dear Mr Armstrong, is there any truth in the rumours that you and your fellow astronauts have seen strange spacecraft?

She flicks it aside and grabs another.

GENNIE

(reading)

Dear sir, how can you sleep at night knowing how much money was spent on you "flying" to the moon when so many people are starving.  
(to Neil)

These are not worth staying for.

Neil's turn. He waves his hand over the pile for a moment before settling on an envelope.

NEIL

(reading)

Dear Neil, my parents let me stay up to watch you walk on the moon, and now I want to be an astronaut just like you. How do I get to go to space? Signed Eli, aged eight.

Neil leans back in his chair, victorious.

GENNIE

All right then, just promise me you won't stay too long.

NEIL

Just until the job's done.

Gennie pulls a disapproving face but says nothing as she exits. Neil takes out a fresh sheet and writes 'Dear Eli'.

143 INT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - NEIL'S STUDY - NIGHT

143

Neil flips on the desk light and places his briefcase gently down on the table. Waiting for him is a speech. He gathers it up, scans the page, then shuts his eyes.

NEIL

(quietly)

It is a great honour to be able to speak to you all today. Education is knowledge, and it's knowledge that truly took us to the moon.

JANET (O.S.)

You must know it by now.

Neil jumps, and snaps his eyes open to see Janet leaning against the door in her dressing gown, arms folded, unimpressed.

NEIL

Just practicing for this speech at the university next week.

JANET

I know. Last three nights I've heard you.

NEIL

I'm sorry. But this is the only time I have to prepare.

JANET

And you'd rather do that than come to bed and be with your wife?

NEIL

If I have to. I mean --

JANET

You're late back from the office too.

NEIL

It's all these letters --

JANET

Every night this week. Good thing your face is in every newspaper else I'd forget what you look like.

Neil hangs his head. He casts an apologetic look at Janet.

JANET

I knew things would be different, but Jesus I'd hoped once the tour was over at least some things would return to normal.

NEIL

I think we have to accept this is normal from now on.

JANET

No. I won't, I can't. Can you?

NEIL

(sighs)

If I'm going to make this work, I have to. For me, landing on the moon was about total dedication and professionalism. The last few months have taught me, you've taught me, that living with it is going to take the same.

JANET

And I'm just supposed to wait? Just  
sit around and wait for the world  
to stop caring about the first man?

Neil stands meekly, they both know the answer.

JANET

Fine. Well you just let me know  
when I can have my husband back.

She turns on her heel and stomps away. Neil holds for a  
moment, staring at the spot she had been.

NEIL

(to himself)

It's a great honour to be able to  
speak to you all today.

144 INT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - LIVING ROOM - DAY

144

Buzz stands before the front door, taking deep breaths as he  
reaches for the handle. Every time he goes to leave, he  
backs out of it and repeats the process.

JAMES (O.S.)

Dad?

Buzz turns round to see his eldest son watching him from the  
steps.

JAMES

What're you --

BUZZ

Nothing. I'm fine.

JAMES

Are you sure? It's just --

BUZZ

What? Never seen your dad leave the  
house before? Go on, scram. Go on!

James hurries downstairs and through into the living room,  
passing Joan who enters to see what the noise is.

JOAN

Don't take it out on the kids.  
Don't you dare do that again.

She stares fiercely at him, and Buzz just stares back.

JOAN

I thought you were going in?

BUZZ

I am.

Buzz wipes his brow, and slowly creeks the front door open. He peeks out to see a car parked out front. He shuts the door.

BUZZ

I'll wait 'til they've gone.

JOAN

Why? You were so good at giving them the slip last time they followed you.

Buzz knows he's been beaten. He braces up, trying to look impressive, opens the door and hurries out.

145 EXT. NASA - DAY

145

Buzz parks up outside a giant building. He looks all around him, making sure he hasn't been followed. The coast looks clear, and he breathes a huge sigh of relief. He checks himself in the rearview mirror before heading inside.

146 INT. DEKE'S OFFICE - DAY

146

Buzz slouches in his chair, staring morosely at Deke's model of the Saturn V.

DEKE

I can't make any guarantees.

BUZZ

But I need guarantees, Deke. Please, all I'm asking is --

DEKE

I know what you're asking, Buzz. Fact is crew rotations mean you're not looking at a flight until at least after Apollo 15, so over a year away. Even then, I can't say if you'd get your own command or not, because I can't say if Apollo will still be operational by then, not if our budget keeps getting called into question.

BUZZ

It's mission commander or nothing, Deke. And I can't have nothing.

DEKE

Then I guess you'll have to find something else for now, which would make everyone happy.

BUZZ

What's that supposed to mean?

DEKE

Word is, and this is from the top,  
you understand, that you're better  
suited to your current role. Your  
public image is helping promote  
NASA better than --

Buzz holds a hand up to silence Deke. He can't bear to look  
at his boss. He strokes his chin, deep in thought.

DEKE

Their words, not mine. Buzz?

BUZZ

I didn't join the astronaut corps  
for this, Deke. Mission commander,  
or nothing.

Deke sits back in his chair, unwavering, unflinching to  
Buzz's fierce gaze. After a few beats, Buzz concedes defeat,  
and slopes from the office.

147 INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NASA - DAY

147

Neil stands before a room of technicians beside a projector  
beaming images of the lunar surface onto a board. The  
technicians listen intently and jot notes as Neil speaks.

NEIL

(confidently)

The ladder was maybe about three  
and a half feet from the surface,  
so we had some concern we might  
have some difficulty re-entering  
the LM. If we can address that --

He's interrupted by a knock at the door, and Gennie pokes  
her head in.

GENNIE

Sorry, sorry to interrupt. I've had  
another message from Mr Hope's  
agent, he says he needs a final  
decision.

NEIL

I meant to tell you this morning,  
of course I'll do it.

GENNIE

Are you sure? Will Jan be okay with  
you being away for Christmas?

NEIL

It's for a good cause.

GENNIE

I'll let him know.

She disappears out the room.

NEIL

Sorry about that, where were we?  
Ah, so as you may be able to see,  
the lunar surface was a fine grain  
with lots of rocks in it.

148 INT. ALDRIN HOME (HOUSTON) - LIVING ROOM - DAY

148

Buzz sprawls out on the sofa, sipping his beer. He's emotionless and unresponsive to his father standing over him, berating him like he's still a schoolboy.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

You blow it. Chance of a lifetime  
and you blow it. All those people  
you met, all the opportunities you  
could have had.

BUZZ

Who cares? None of them are flying  
in space again.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

What you want to fly in space for?  
I told you, you need to use your  
success to forge your future. Not  
sit on your ass drinking beer.

Buzz's reply is to take a big swig from the bottle.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

How can you have screwed this up?  
When Neil's got it all figured out.  
Look at him, then look at you.

BUZZ

He figured out how to tie a tie.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

Because people are looking at him.  
No one's looking at you.

BUZZ

Good.

Buzz stands to confront his father.

BUZZ

I'm tired of being number two.  
No...

He preempts his father's retort, and jabs a finger at Edwin to shush him.

BUZZ

... You can't argue with it. I learned that the hard way, and I'm tired of pretending otherwise. I'm tired of walking a tightrope every time I step outside and someone comes up to me. I won't let one more person make me feel guilty about my greatest achievement, including you. So I'm going to sit here, I'm going to drink my beer, and you're going to get the hell outta my face.

Buzz crashes back on to the sofa.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

You can dress it up how you want, don't make you any less of a quitter.

He takes another swig.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

Yeah, you heard me. Nothing but a quitter, moping around making excuses.

BUZZ

Just like you after mom died.

Edwin grabs Buzz by the scruff of his collar and hauls him to his feet. Buzz fights back, so Edwin throws a punch, which Buzz blocks. They wrestle frantically until Joan rushes in and breaks them apart.

JOAN

Enough! I said that's enough!

BUZZ

Get outta here! Go on! Leave me alone!

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

Sure will, like everyone else!

BUZZ

Alone protects me.

JOAN

Come on now.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

I didn't raise no coward.

JOAN

I know, I know.

EDWIN ALDRIN SR

He must have got some kinda moon disease, messed him up something fierce.

JOAN

All right, all right, I'll handle it. Come on, come with me...

Edwin wipes the spit and blood from his mouth before being herded out the room by Joan. Buzz crashes back onto the sofa and swipes his beer before Joan can take it off him.

BUZZ

I'm talking to you, too.

JOAN

It's my house, Buzz. As long as you're sitting around feeling sorry for yourself, you don't tell me what to do under my own roof, you hear?

149 INT. STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICE - DAY

149

Michael strides in, brimming with confidence, laden with a briefcase in one hand and a shopping bag in the other. He sets the bags down on the desk. Opening the briefcase, he pulls out his presidential medal and a good luck card.

As he arranges them neatly, there's a knock at the door, and a State Department aide, GERRY, late 20s, enters.

GERRY

Good morning, sir.

MICHAEL

Morning, Gerry, correct?

GERRY

That's correct, sir. How are you settling in?

MICHAEL

I'm getting there, just got to find a place for this...

He reaches into the shopping bag and pulls out the impressive statue of the stag.

GERRY

Very nice. Hunting trophy?

MICHAEL

It was a gift, from one politician to another, I suppose.

Michael places it on top of a nearby desk.



GERRY

I know you haven't officially started yet, but I thought you'd like to get up to speed.

He hands over a dossier.

GERRY

This morning's briefings.

Michael peruses the documents inquisitively.

MICHAEL

What's our response?

GERRY

Sir?

MICHAEL

There's no press release in here, has anyone made a statement?

GERRY

That'd be your prerogative, sir.

Michael gives a grin, he's got what he wanted.

MICHAEL

Have you got a pen?

Gerry rummages in his pockets before pulling out a ballpoint. He starts scribbling notes as Michael paces around the room dictating his response.

150 INT. ARMSTRONG HOME (HOUSTON) - BEDROOM - DAY

150

Neil busies himself with packing. He doesn't take his eyes off folding his shirts or stuffing socks into his suitcase, determined to look busy.

MARK (O.S.)

Mom said you're going away again.

Neil looks up to see his youngest son loitering in the doorway.

NEIL

That's right.

MARK

When will you be back?

NEIL

Most likely in a couple of weeks.

MARK

So you're not here for Christmas?

The disappointment in his son's voice is enough for a guilty Neil to pause for a moment.

NEIL

That's right.

MARK

How come you're never home anymore?

Another pause as Neil searches for the right answer.

NEIL

Because... Because since I got back from the moon, I have to meet lots of different people, but because they can't all come here, I have to go to them.

MARK

But why?

Again Neil hesitates, but before he can give an answer, Janet appears behind him.

JANET

Mark, go and help your brother set the table for dinner.

Mark wanders off, leaving Janet and Neil alone. Neil gives her a sigh and a remorseful shoulder shrug. Janet just responds with a reproachful glare.

JANET

Your cab's outside.

She makes to leave.

NEIL

Jan, wait --

JANET

I get it, mission comes first.

She leaves him alone. Neil picks up his toiletries bag and angrily stuffs it into his suitcase. Leaning over it, he huffs and sighs with a tired acceptance.

151 EXT. STAGE - DA NANG - DUSK

151

A makeshift open air amphitheatre. Packed in as tight as they can be are thousands of US and Vietnamese soldiers. All are watching the man onstage, BOB HOPE, sporting a US Army jacket and cap, complete with his trademark golf club.

He holds his hands up to silence the enthusiastic crowd.

BOB HOPE

You're meeting some outstanding men in our time, but the very quiet and soft spoken young man you're about to meet now is a part of a team that provided this world with a thrill they will not soon forget. Ladies and gentlemen, the first man to set foot on the Moon, Neil Armstrong, right here.

The band strikes up Stars and Stripes forever, and there is a thunderous outburst of cheers and applause as Neil steps out onto the stage in US military greens. He waves brightly to the crowd.

A soldier reaches out to shake his hand, which Neil accepts. Cottoning on, most of the front row hold out their hands, others scramble over their buddies to have their hand shaken by the First Man.

Neil hesitates a few times, thinking he's done enough, but proceeds to shake every single soldier's hand.

NEIL

Thank you, guys. I've been around the world a few times, and I've had a lot of nice warm receptions. But I've never had a better one than that, thank you.

The crowd breaks into another round of cheers and applause, and Neil smiles gratefully back at them.

High above them, in the clear evening sky, as the sun sets, the moon has come out, and is shining over Neil as he smiles and waves.

FADE TO BLACK

The action gives way to real footage of Neil appearing onstage with Bob Hope in Vietnam. It's then replaced with real footage of the tour. There is footage of Michael, which becomes a still image of him alone in space.

SUPER: "We astronauts were good, we worked hard, we did our jobs to near perfection, but it was what we had signed on to do... It was not heroism." - Michael Collins, 'Carrying the Fire'.

The still of Michael gives way to footage of Buzz, which becomes a photo of Buzz in the present day.

SUPER: "Heroes have duties. They are public property, however reluctant they might feel." - Buzz Aldrin, 'Return to Earth'.

Finally, we see footage of Neil, before settling on the iconic image of him smiling inside the Lunar Module after his historic moonwalk.

SUPER: "Neil Armstrong was... a reluctant American hero who always believed he was just doing his job." - The Armstrong Family.

FADE OUT

THE END