

Hidden Figures

Screenplay by
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(Based on the book "Hidden Figures" by Margot Shetterly)

Based on a true story.

In darkness, the voice of a little girl. Counting.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)
14, 15, 16...prime. 18, prime.

EXT. TREE LINED PATH - DAY

A pair of little feet navigates down a gravel path. Kicking a pine cone.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
20, 21, 22, prime, 24, 25, 26...

Pulling up, we reveal: KATHERINE COLEMAN (8,) a peculiar, quiet, mouse of a child, wearing glasses bigger than her bookish face. Counting to herself.

A VOICE (her Mother's) in the distance hollers out:

JOYLETTE COLEMAN (O.S.)
Katherine! Come on now!

Katherine looks up. Sees a car stopped at the end of the path. She runs off. Counting all the way.

Titles over: White Sulphur Springs, Virginia - 1926

EXT. WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS GRAMMAR SCHOOL - DAY

A "colored" grammar school. Small, spirited. Katherine's now between her parents (dad: JOSHUA and JOYLETTE,) holding their hands as they enter.

INT. WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS GRAMMAR SCHOOL - DAY - CONT.

A long hallway lined with windows. Sitting on a bench, outside a Principal's office, Katherine sketches (in a small notebook) the window panes, highlighting all the geometric shapes she discovers within:

KATHERINE (@8 YEARS OLD)
Isosceles, scalene, obtuse, equilateral,
rhombus...

On the windows opposite her: the tetris-like patterns of her mind's eye come alive.

KATHERINE (@8 YEARS OLD) (CONT'D)
Trapezoid, tetrahedron, octahedron,
dodecahedron...

And on she goes.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Katherine's parents sit across from the school's principal, MR. MARION SMITHSON and Katherine's teacher, MS. SUMNER.

MARION SMITHSON

West Virginia Collegiate Institute is the best school for Negroes in the state.

MS. SUMNER

It's the only school, past the eighth grade, anywhere close to here.

JOSHUA COLEMAN

Katherine's in the sixth grade.

MS. SUMNER

They want to take her early.

MARION SMITHSON

They're offering a full scholarship. All you have to do is get there.

Joshua and Joylette are overwhelmed. They grasp each other's hands.

MS. SUMNER

Joshua, Joylette...we took up a collection amongst the teachers and such, a few parents.

Ms. Sumner hands Joylette an envelope.

MS. SUMNER (CONT'D)

It's not a whole lot, but it'll surely help get you settled in.

Joylette accepts the envelope.

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

That's beyond kind, Ms. Sumner.

MS. SUMNER

In all my years of teaching, I've never seen a mind like the one your daughter has. You have to go. You have to see what she becomes.

Joylette starts to tear. The kindness of people. Joshua puts his arm around his wife.

EXT. ROAD - INSTITUTE, VIRGINIA - DAY

The Coleman family car, hauling a trailer with all their belongings, drives past a pasture dotted with COWS. A road sign reads: Welcome to Institute, Virginia.

INT. COLEMAN FAMILY CAR - DRIVING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Katherine's crowded in the back seat with her siblings (CHARLES, MARGARET and HORACE.) She stares out the window, studying the cows whizzing by, the patterns on their hides forming shapes in her mind. She studies the shapes, only now she's...

INT. WEST VIRGINIA COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE - ANOTHER DAY

...staring out another window in a new classroom. A fancy classroom in a prestigious academy. The class is full of OLDER STUDENTS dressed in the best they have.

Unbeknownst to Katherine, her new teacher, PROFESSOR GRAVES, is standing right in front of her.

PROFESSOR GRAVES

Ms. Coleman.

Katherine whips back to reality. Embarrassed.

PROFESSOR GRAVES (CONT'D)

You find something out there more interesting than quadratic equations?

KATHERINE (@8 YEARS OLD)

Yes, sir. I mean no, sir.

Professor Graves holds out a piece of chalk.

PROFESSOR GRAVES

Why don't you figure out the equation on the board?

Katherine looks at the chalkboard. The equation looks Greek: symbols, signs, parentheticals.

Professor Graves pushes the chalk closer.

PROFESSOR GRAVES (CONT'D)

Go on.

Katherine takes the chalk. Stands. Walks sheepishly to the front of the class. Every eye on her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She stands in front of the blackboard, the equation. Studies it for the longest time. Inspecting every number, sign, symbol. Wheels churning.

Then she starts to write. Slow and meticulous at first. Then fast. Faster. With passion and fury.

The Students crane their heads.

Professor Graves rubs his temple.

And Katherine writes on, chalk dust dropping like snow from her chalk stick. On and on and on...until she's at the very bottom, far side of the board. She circles the answer. Stands and faces the class. The equation behind her dwarfing her in stature. She clears her throat...

KATHERINE (@8 YEARS OLD)

If the product of two terms is zero, then common sense says at least one of the two terms has to be zero to start with. So, if you move all the terms over to one side, you can put the quadratics into a form that can be factored, allowing that side of the equation to equal zero. Once you've done that, it's pretty straight forward from there...

You can hear a pin drop. There's nothing to say. Katherine shuffles. Adjusts her glasses.

KATHERINE (@8 YEARS OLD) (CONT'D)

...sir.

Katherine walks back to her desk. We push in on the equation. The numbers. The endless, endless numbers. The title fades up:

Hidden Figures

EXT. ROAD - DAY

We float down towards a lone stretch of road in the middle of nowhere. Infinity in all directions.

A 1955 Chevy Impala sits on the shoulder, the hood up.

THE CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

KATHERINE GOBLE (now 38) sits in the passenger seat, staring out the window. Up into space.

Titles over: Hampton, Virginia, 1961

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A holler crashes the silence:

DOROTHY (O.S.)
Try and turn it over!

Outside, a pair of legs poke out from under the car.

DOROTHY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Katherine?!

DOROTHY VAUGHAN (40s) slides out from under the car. No-nonsense, brilliant, tough, mechanically gifted.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Mary!?

At the back of the car, sitting on the trunk, we find MARY JACKSON (30ish) putting on lipstick. Mary's a spirited beauty, free-tongued, unbridled.

MARY
Katherine!? Quit staring off into space!
Turn the damn car over!

Mary bangs on the rear window. Katherine snaps out of her trance.

KATHERINE
I got it. I'm not deaf.

MARY
I wonder some times.

Katherine slides over to the driver's seat. Pumps the gas. Stamps the pedal to the floor.

KATHERINE
Here it goes.

She turns the key in the ignition. Click, click, click. The engine whines, the car doesn't start.

DOROTHY
That's the starter. It's definitely the starter.

MARY
That starter's startin' to make us late.
We're all gonna be unemployed driving
this hunk of junk to work everyday.

DOROTHY
You're welcome to walk the 16 miles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATHERINE

Or sit on the back of the bus.

MARY

Won't do neither. I'll hitchhike.

Mary models her hitchhiking thumb, pose.

Just then, far in the distance, Mary sees a POLICE CAR coming over the hill...

MARY (CONT'D)

Girls.

Dorothy and Katherine look. See the car coming up fast.

DOROTHY

No crime in a broken down car.

MARY

No crime being Negro either.

Katherine gets out of the car. Dorothy stands up.

KATHERINE

Button it up, Mary. No one wants to go to jail behind your mouth.

MARY

I'll do my best, sugar.

The police car stops behind them. And the gruffest WHITE COP steps out. Walks toward them. Silent. Then...

WHITE COP

Not a great place for the three of ya'll to be havin' car trouble.

Mary can't help herself.

MARY

We didn't pick the place, Officer. It picked us.

The White Cop steps into Mary. Not interested in talk back.

WHITE COP

You bein' disrespectful?

Mary shakes her head.

MARY

No, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WHITE COP

You have identification on ya?

Katherine jumps in.

KATHERINE

We sure do. We're just on our way to work. At Langley.

Katherine pulls out her NASA ID badge. Holds it up for him to see.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

NASA, sir.

Dorothy specifies, holds up her NASA badge.

DOROTHY

We do a great deal of the calculating getting our rockets into space.

He turns his attention back to Mary.

WHITE COP

All three of ya?

Mary pulls out her NASA badge.

MARY

Yes, Officer.

Hmm. He takes Mary's badge. Studies it. Inspects the back. It's official.

WHITE COP

NASA. That's somethin'. Had no idea they hired-

He stops himself from saying "coloreds." Or worse.

DOROTHY

There are quite a few women working in the Space Program, sir.

She saves him the embarrassment. He looks toward the sky. Paranoid.

WHITE COP

Damn Russians are watching us right now. Sputniks.

His wheels turn. Shifting gears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

WHITE COP (CONT'D)

You girls ever meet those Astronauts?
The Mercury 7?

Mary lies through her teeth:

MARY

Absolutely.

WHITE COP

Alan Shepard? John Glenn?

KATHERINE

We work with those gentlemen all the
time.

The White Cop gets patriotic.

WHITE COP

Those boys are the best we got. That's
for sure. We have-ta get a man up there
before the Commies do. Whole damn
country's counting on 'em.

DOROTHY

That's for certain.

MARY

Hard to be of service broken down on the
side of the road though.

The White Cop springs into action.

WHITE COP

That's right. That's right. You need a
tow or somethin'?

Dorothy motions to Katherine to toss the screwdriver to her.
She does.

DOROTHY

No, thank you, Officer. I think I got
it, right here. Just have to bypass the
starter...

Dorothy ducks under the hood. Crosses the screwdriver across
the battery poles. SPARK! The engine starts.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

That'a girl. We're all set.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

WHITE COP

Hell. Least I can do is give ya an escort. Imagine ya'll are running late.

KATHERINE

Oh, we wouldn't want to trouble you.

Mary butts in.

MARY

That would be wonderful, Officer.

Damn Mary.

EXT. ROAD - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The police car screams down the road at a million miles an hour. Dorothy's car lunges right on its tail.

INT. DOROTHY'S CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Mary's driving like a mad-woman. Loving every minute of it. Dorothy's in the passenger seat, white knuckling the dashboard. And Katherine's in the back, holding onto the ceiling. Praying.

DOROTHY

Slow down, Mary! You're too close!

MARY

He said to follow him.

DOROTHY

Doesn't mean you hit him in the ass!

KATHERINE

Dear Lord...please...I don't even know where to begin!

MARY

I'll tell you where to begin: three "colored" women are chasing a white police officer down the highway in Hampton, Virginia, 1961. Ladies, that there is a God ordained miracle!

Mary screams! Dorothy bursts out laughing. Finally... Katherine. Mary hits the gas. The car lunges forward.

EXT. NASA - LANGLEY RESEARCH CENTER - DAY - LATER

The sprawling campus of NASA: hangars, wind tunnels, research buildings, surrounded by tall, barbed wire fences and SECURITY.

The police car slows, pulls to the shoulder, as Dorothy's car speeds past. The White Cop waves them on.

And our camera floats up to...

EXT. SPACE - DAY

From the vast blackness of space...looking down on Planet Earth. Quiet. Picturesque. Peaceful.

Then: a rumbling sound creeps up. And the camera pans to find...a massive ROCKET burning up through the earth's atmosphere. Atop the rocket, a capsule shakes, rattles, grinds. The noise is deafening.

We then hear a RUSSIAN VOICE, military-esque. The VOICE then translates into TURKISH...matter of fact. And finally: The CRACKLING VOICE of a radio communication in English. Not happy at all. Tense.

CRACKLING VOICE (ON RADIO)
Approximate speed: 17,400 mph. Ascend
angle: 42.46. Closing.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Oval Office. President Kennedy is handed a briefing doc. He's worried. The VOICE OF AN AIDE:

PRESIDENT'S AIDE (O.S.)
Latest intelligence on the Soviet booster
rocket still in relay, Mr. President.

INT. US CENTRAL COMMAND - CONTINUOUS

A room packed with US MILITARY BRASS. JIM WEBB, NASA ADMINISTRATOR, a hard, powerful man, is front and center. All eyes are on the radar screen plotting the rocket's trajectory.

CRACKLING VOICE (ON RADIO)
Disengage booster rocket. We are go.

SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The booster rocket falls back to Earth, as the dislodged capsule floats at us, into the black of space.

INT. NASA TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - HAMPTON, VA - CONT.

Al Harrison stands in a control room packed with ENGINEERS. He leans forward, owl-eyed on the massive screens tracking the rocket. And then:

CRACKLING VOICE (ON RADIO)
Orbital entry is...go.

SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The capsule twists on axis, revealing...the blood-red hammer and sickle of the Soviet Union. This is Korabl-Sputnik-4. The Russian Military Communication crackles in:

RUSSIAN MILITARY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
(in Russian, with English subtitles)
All systems safe. Confirmed. Orbital
entry is established.

THE OVAL OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

President Kennedy rubs his eyes.

US CENTRAL COMMAND - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Dire mood. Jim Webb picks up a ringing phone.

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

Harrison, distraught, walks out of the room.

A SCREENING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A black and white film reel plays. It's a Russian Press Conference.

A RUSSIAN SCIENTIST is holding a small, wiry dog in a cosmonaut vest. This is ZVEZDOCHKA, the world's first space traveler: a Jack Russell Terrier mix. He barks.

RUSSIAN SCIENTIST
(in Russian, subtitled in English)
Zvezdochka is ready to go again.
(motions to his side)
So is our comrade, Ivan.

Next to the Scientist: a mannequin with a placard, IVAN IVANOVICH, is propped up in a chair, dressed as a cosmonaut. The Russian press laughs.

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CONTINUED:

RUSSIAN SCIENTIST (CONT'D)

Now it is time. Mother Russia will be first to put a human in space.

The hoarse voice of Jim Webb breaks in:

JIM WEBB (O.S.)

A goddamn dog! And a goddamn mannequin!

Webb steps up out of his seat, the news reel plays across his back. The screening room is packed with MILITARY BRASS and NASA ENGINEERS. Including: Al Harrison, Lead Engineer, PAUL STAFFORD, Associate Engineer, SAM TURNER, and Harrison's Secretary, RUTH.

JIM WEBB (CONT'D)

And then a 1.6 megaton RDS-37 thermonuclear warhead drops down in the middle of Des Moines.

Harrison stands, holds up his hand. The news reel abruptly stops. Lights come up. It's funeral wake quiet. Until, Paul Stafford speaks out of turn.

PAUL STAFFORD

Well, that's a pretty big jump, sir.

Bad move. Webb turns to Stafford.

JIM WEBB

Who the hell is he?

Harrison defends his man.

AL HARRISON

Paul Stafford...our Lead Engineer, Mr. Webb. I think what he meant to say is that speculation, at least on our side of the equation, can be dangerous.

Webb wags a finger at Stafford.

JIM WEBB

You know what's dangerous...inaction. Inaction and indecision. The Russians have a spy satellite lapping the planet. Taking pictures of God knows what. The President is demanding an immediate response. No more delays. Alan Shepard, John Glenn, your uncle Bob. Doesn't matter, just get us up there, Harrison. We can't justify a space program that doesn't put anything in space.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Webb walks out. A mass exodus.

EXT. HALLS OF NASA (IBM COMPUTER HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS

Footsteps echo off the marble floor, as Harrison walks with Paul Stafford, Sam Turner, Ruth, and the rest of the TEAM.

AL HARRISON
(to Stafford)
How did that feel in there, Paul? Do you think you enlightened the Administrator?

Stafford has no response.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
He didn't look enlightened to me.

Harrison stops. He cleans his glasses. Addresses SAM.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
He look enlightened to you, Sam?

SAM TURNER
Not particularly.

Paul nods. Harrison walks away. The Team keeps up.

AL HARRISON
And just so you know, he's not wrong about what he said in there. You know that, right? Because now that they can get up there, a bomb will follow. That's what happens to all our good ideas.

Harrison stops again. Stands in front of a window staring at something we can't see. He's quiet for the longest time.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Where's the machine?

RUTH
Any day now, Mr. Harrison.

AL HARRISON
Any day now. What's it called? The initials...the letters

RUTH
IBM.

PAUL STAFFORD
International business machine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harrison jots a note in a mini notebook.

AL HARRISON

Space is business. I need a mathematician.

RUTH

I'll put in another request, sir.

AL HARRISON

Another request. Jesus Christ. We don't have a single person, in this entire building, that can handle Analytic Geometry?

RUTH

That's what I've been told.

AL HARRISON

Well, tell me something else, Ruth. Like we're going to find such a person, before the Russians plant a flag on the damn moon.

He walks off again. Mumbling. The Team hustles after him.

We stay at the window Harrison was staring into. It's a stark white clean room. Bright...and empty.

EXT. THE WEST COMPUTING GROUP - BUILDING - LATER

Nondescript brick. A sign reads: West Computing Group. TWO PROFESSIONAL BLACK WOMEN lead us in.

INT. WEST HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

This is the other side of the tracks at NASA. No white marble here. Concrete floor, no frills. We push toward a door labeled: "West Computers," as the two Black Women enter.

INT. THE WEST COMPUTING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The West Computing Room is a dumpy rectangle of long tables and mismatched chairs below a "Colored Computers" sign. Dorothy stands in front of TWO DOZEN BLACK COMPUTERS, women of all shapes and sizes, assigning the day's work. Katherine and Mary stand in back.

DOROTHY

Eleanor you're with Bernie today in Data Reduction, Building 202.

Ugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELEANOR
Date Reduction?!

DOROTHY
You're welcome to join the charmers in
Magnetoplasmodynamics.

Eleanor hops up.

ELEANOR
No thank you, ma'am. Data Reduction's
just fine.

Dorothy holds out paperwork. Eleanor takes it. Heads to the door.

DOROTHY
Mary.

Mary raises her hand like a school girl.

MARY
Present.

DOROTHY
The Mercury 7 prototype has arrived for
testing. Mr. Zielinski's requesting
you...for permanent assignment.

Mary can't contain herself. This is big news.

MARY
Are you serious?

DOROTHY
Get moving.

Mary literally jumps to the front of the room. Takes her paperwork.

MARY
Thank you. Thank you! Thank you, Jesus!

DOROTHY
(privately)
Keep it inside, hon. The other girls...

Mary tempers her boisterousness. Buttons it up.

MARY
Sorry, Dor.

Mary winks at her. Dorothy shakes her head.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Just then, in walks: VIVIAN MITCHELL, Supervisor of Female Computers, flanked by her ASSISTANT. Armfuls of worksheets and graph pads. The Group snaps to attention.

DOROTHY
Mrs. Mitchell.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
We're on double time this mornin', girls.
I need these calculations before lunch.

Vivian's Assistant dumps the workload on the table. Thud.
Vivian hands Dorothy an assignment sheet.

VIVIAN MITCHELL (CONT'D)
The Space Task Group needs a computer ASAP. Someone with a handle on Analytic Geometry. Much to my chagrin, we can't fill the position outta the East Group.

DOROTHY
Permanent or temp?

VIVIAN MITCHELL
Everything's temporary, Dorothy. You have someone?

Dorothy doesn't hesitate:

DOROTHY
Yes, ma'am. Katherine's the gal for that.

Vivian looks the room over. Katherine raises her hand, squirms: the Space Task Group is the 'be all.'

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
She can handle any numbers you put in front of her.

Vivian sizes Katherine up.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
I'll check her credentials.

And with that, Vivian swoops off. Assistant behind her.

VIVIAN MITCHELL (CONT'D)
Didn't think of comin' all the way down here.

They exit.

THE WEST HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian and her Assistant walk away from the Computing Room.
Dorothy comes out, catches up.

DOROTHY
Mrs. Mitchell...if I could-

Vivian stops. Turns back.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
My application for supervisor, ma'am.
Was wondering if they're still
considering me for that position.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
Yes. Well, the official word is: no.
They're not assignin' a permanent
supervisor to the Colored Group.

Dorothy is sunk.

DOROTHY
I see. May I ask why?

VIVIAN MITCHELL
I don't know "why." I didn't ask "why."

DOROTHY
We need a Supervisor, ma'am. Haven't had
one since Ms. Jansen got sick. Been
almost a year.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
Things are workin' just fine as is,
Dorothy.

DOROTHY
I do the work of a Supervisor. I'm in
charge of the Group, like a Supervisor.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
That's NASA, for ya. Fast with rocket
ships. Slow with advancement.
(changes the subject)
Get those trajectories calcs worked out.
We need 'em for the Redstone test.

Vivian walks off. Dorothy simmers inside.

EXT. WIND TUNNEL - NASA COMPOUND - DAY

The sun bounces off the massive, silver spheres that house the wind tunnels. Mary, arms loaded with reports and worksheets, walks briskly underneath the turbines.

INT. HALLWAY TO THE WIND TUNNEL - DAY

Mary scoots down the hallway leading to the tunnel. She stops at the edge: for the first time she sees the Mercury 7 prototype capsule suspended in mid-air. Her eyes twinkle at the sight.

THE WIND TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Mary ambles under the Mercury 7 capsule. She inspects every single bolt, every shingle. This is why she's here. This is why she works at NASA.

A PA announcement jars her back to reality:

PA ANNOUNCER

Mach 2 tunnel test, T-minus one minute.

Red lights flash, a siren spins. Mary hustles off, through the tunnel. As fans start to whir. Wind builds.

She's almost at the end, when she missteps off the path. One of her high heels gets caught in the grating.

THE WIND TUNNEL CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chief Wind Tunnel Engineer: KARL ZIELINSKI, 50s, Polish Jew, stares down from the glass control booth. He sees Mary struggling with the shoe.

THE WIND TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

The wind picks up. Mary's in a state. Fighting with the shoe. A voice over the PA shocks her:

ZIELINSKI (OVER THE PA)

No shoe is worth your life.

Mary looks up at the control booth. Sees Zielinski staring down at her.

PA ANNOUNCER

Mach 2 tunnel test, T-minus ten, nine, eight...

Mary pulls her foot out of the shoe and runs one-shoed, hobbling toward the exit.

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CONTINUED:

MARY (CONT'D)

Coupled with rising temperatures on re-entry, the contacts soften. We could consider another fastener other than bolts.

Zielinski nods approval. Inspects another section of the capsule.

ZIELINSKI

There's another opening in the Engineer Training Program.

She's heard this before. Deflects.

MARY

Flat head rivets could reduce wind drag.

He turns to her. Serious.

ZIELINSKI

Mary...a person with an engineer's mind should be an engineer. You can't be a Computer the rest of your life. That would be a tragic waste of your ability.

MARY

Mr. Zielinski, I'm a Negro woman. I'm not going to entertain the impossible.

ZIELINSKI

And I'm a polish Jew whose parents died in a Nazi prison camp. Now I'm standing beneath a space ship that's going to carry an astronaut to the stars. I think we can say, we're living the impossible. Let me ask...if you were a white male, would you wish to be an engineer?

Mary doesn't need to think.

MARY

I wouldn't have to. I'd already be one

INT. NASA HALLWAY - LATER

Vivian Mitchell leads Katherine down an endless white hallway. Briefing her:

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Skirts must be worn past the knee. Sweaters are preferred to blouses. No jewelry. A simple pearl necklace is the exception.

(MORE)

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CONTINUED:

RUTH
(points, far off)
Take the desk in the corner. I'll get
you work in a bit.

She finally notices Katherine is...black. Pauses. Katherine
smiles. Ruth considers her. Her strength. Her calm.

RUTH (CONT'D)
Mr. Harrison won't warm up to you, don't
expect it. Do your work, keep your head
down.

KATHERINE
Thank you.

Katherine lingers.

RUTH
Go on. Get settled.

Katherine walks to her station, way at the back of the room,
against the wall. Puts her personals on the desk. Sits.
She looks at the Engineer toiling aside her, it's Paul
Stafford. He looks at Katherine. Doesn't smile. Just
studies her.

Harrison (with Zielinski) steps out of his office, eating a
sandwich. He barks:

AL HARRISON
Stafford, why are we still losing
shingles off our heat shield?

Stafford damn near jumps.

STAFFORD
We're working with a prototype of the
capsule, Al. It's one third the size-

AL HARRISON
I get that.

He turns to Zielinski. Dead serious.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Well, do we need to turn our million
dollar fan down, Karl?

ZIELINSKI
No, Al. I don't think-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AL HARRISON
Of course not. That was a joke.

Back to Stafford.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Paul. If the heat shield comes off, what
do you think happens to our astronaut?

Stafford nods his head.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
So we're going to come up with a solve,
right?

STAFFORD
Yes, sir. We're working on it.

Harrison moves on.

AL HARRISON
Ruth. What's the status on my Computer?

RUTH
She's right in front of you, Mr.
Harrison.

Ruth motions to Katherine. Harrison gives her a once over.
Not what he expected either.

AL HARRISON
Does she know how to handle Analytic
Geometry?

RUTH
Absolutely. And she speaks.

KATHERINE
I do, sir.

AL HARRISON
Which one?

KATHERINE
Both, sir. Geometry and speaking.

Harrison waves a finger at Ruth.

AL HARRISON
Then give her the-

THE RESTROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine plops down on the toilet. She reaches down to her feet, puts the paperwork on her lap...and keeps working. Calculating numbers.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine runs back toward the East Campus. As fast as her legs will take her.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - MOMENTS LATER

Harrison, one ear glued to a phone, plunges out of his office, looks for Katherine. Not there. He hollers at Ruth.

AL HARRISON
Where's that girl with those numbers?

RUTH
On a...break.

AL HARRISON
(to himself)
We take breaks now.

Harrison returns to his phone call.

Katherine bursts through the main door. Ruth intercepts her:

RUTH
My God, where have you been? Are you finished yet?

KATHERINE
I was- Almost. He said: the end of the day?

RUTH
The end of the day around here was yesterday.

Ruth thrusts a double stack of worksheets at Katherine. Thrice the size of the first. Harrison's voice booms from above.

AL HARRISON
I want those done first.

Katherine startles. Harrison's outside his office, still on the phone. Then...he disappears again. Katherine inspects the stack. Shell shocked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Without looking.

AL HARRISON
And Stafford's heat shield calcs?

KATHERINE
It's hard to be sure, sir.

That's not what he needed to hear. He swivels to her.

AL HARRISON
Do you know what we're doing here?

KATHERINE
We're trying to put a man in space, sir.

AL HARRISON
That's right. So you can throw that in
the trash.

KATHERINE
Excuse me?

Harrison gets up, moves around his desk.

AL HARRISON
I said you can throw it away.

He gently takes it out of Katherine's confused hands.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Here.

Harrison drops her report on top of a trash can overflowing
with dozens of similar reports and worksheets. It's a
graveyard of obsolete work.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
It's not an insult to your work.

Harrison goes back to the board. Obsessed with the numbers,
the logistics.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
It's just obsolete. That's how fast
things are moving. If I said I was
sorry, I'd be saying it all day.

Katherine's immobile. Floored.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

What I'm asking you..what I'm asking everyone one in that room, all my geniuses, is to look beyond the numbers. To look around them. Through them. For answers to questions we don't even know to ask. Math that doesn't yet exist.

He studies the math.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Because without it, we're not going anywhere. We're staying on the ground. We're not flying into space...we're not circling the earth. And we're certainly not touching the moon. And in my mind...I'm already there.

Katherine has no words.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Are you?

KATHERINE

Yes, sir

AL HARRISON

Good. Because I don't need another smart girl with a calculator.

Harrison stops abruptly, takes off his glasses. Cleans them. Katherine is lost. Finally:

KATHERINE

Can I go, sir?

Harrison remembers she's in the room. Turns back:

AL HARRISON

Oh. Yes. Yes. Go home.

He turns back to the board. Mumbles to himself.

KATHERINE

Good night, sir.

Katherine walks to the door. Harrison starts calculating on the board. Too engrossed to say good night.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine walks down the lonely white hallway. She shakes her fists in frustration.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - NIGHT

Katherine pushes out a door, into the parking lot. She's relieved to see: Dorothy and Mary leaning on the back of Dorothy's car. Katherine smiles in relief.

DOROTHY

We've been waiting for hours. Next time
you catch a bus.

Dorothy steps into the car, starts it up. Mary holds a door open for Katherine.

MARY

(re: Dorothy)
She's in a mood.

Katherine and Mary hop in the car.

INT. DOROTHY'S CAR - LATER

Dorothy drives. Katherine's in back. Mary's shotgun, with her feet on the dash. The car is their sanctuary.

DOROTHY

I haven't been late one day in ten years.
Haven't been out sick. Haven't
complained. My work's on time. It's
done right. It's done well.

MARY

It's not fair, that's a fact.

DOROTHY

What's not fair is having the
responsibility of a Supervisor, but not
the title or the money. Watching you all
get moved on. Now don't get me wrong,
any upward movement is movement for us
all. It just isn't movement for me.

KATHERINE

Truth be told, Dorothy, I don't know if I
can keep up in that room. I'll be back
with the Computers in a week, or out of a
job entirely.

DOROTHY

Oh, please. You're better with the
numbers than anyone in there and you know
it. Make that pencil move as fast as
your mind does, you'll be fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dorothy swats Mary's feet off her dashboard.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

And you. Have some respect. Get your damn feet off my dash board. This isn't your living room.

Mary sits up straight. Katherine sinks back in her seat. It's quiet. For a long time. Then:

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

I sound like a supervisor, don't I?

Dorothy smiles wryly. Mary and Katherine breathe.

MARY

A mean, ole salty one.

KATHERINE

Riddled with authority. No question.

DOROTHY

You don't mess with, Mrs. Vaughan.

Dorothy turns the music up.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Katherine's tiny, single-family brick house is modest but well-appointed. She drags up the walkway, waves goodbye to Dorothy and Mary pulling off the curb.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine steps inside. The only light shines from the kitchen, where her mother, JOYLETTE, is doing dishes.

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

My word, Katherine. I was fixing to call the National Guard.

Katherine kisses her mom.

KATHERINE

Sorry, Momma. New assignment. The Space Task Group.

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

That sounds important. It's a promotion?

KATHERINE

It's important and overwhelming...maybe a slight promotion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joylette smiles at her daughter. Always the encourager.

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

You want the job, right?

KATHERINE

I think so. It's a challenge.

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

Nothing you can't do, Katherine.

Katherine lights up. Joylette's happy to see a spark in her daughter's eye.

KATHERINE

Are they sleeping already?

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

They're pretending to. They want their Momma.

Katherine smiles.

INT. KID'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine peeks into the tiny bedroom. One unoccupied double bed. And one twin bed where her daughter JOYLETTE (10) is pushing back against CONSTANCE (8), and KATHY (6), who are trying with all their might to shove Joylette from the bed. Katherine steps in, stops the madness.

KATHERINE

What are you doing!?

CONSTANCE

It's not fair Joylette always gets to sleep by herself 'cause she's the oldest.

JOYLETTE (10)

It is too fair!

KATHY

Nuh unh!

Katherine nods calmly, sits on the double bed. Pats it.

KATHERINE

Constance, Kathy, come sit.

Constance and Kathy sit on either side of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I understand you want to be grown. And you want your own space. So I'm willing to change the rules--

JOYLETTE (10)

Momma!

Katherine shoots her a look. Joylette quiets.

KATHERINE

Whoever sleeps in that bed in, Joylette's place, will also dry the dishes, take out the trash, and do all the rest of Joylette's chores.

Constance and Kathy would rather die!

KATHY

That's okay. Never mind.

CONSTANCE

She's not so terrible to share with.

As Constance and Kathy get into bed, Katherine winks at Joylette. Joylette smiles.

KATHERINE

Now don't let me come home, find you like this again. You should have been asleep. A long time ago.

JOYLETTE (10)

We just wanted to say "good night."

KATHY

You've been gone for 300 hours.

Katherine steps to Kathy's side of the bed.

KATHERINE

I work full time now. You all know that. I have to be the mommy and the daddy.

Just the mention of "daddy"...instant quiet. Long faces. Katherine sits on the edge of Constance and Kathy's bed.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I miss your father as much as anyone.

KATHY

He's with his angels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATHERINE

That's right. He's with all his angels.

CONSTANCE

And he's watching over us.

KATHERINE

Every minute.

She tucks Kathy in.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So, we're going to be strong. We're done crying about it. We have to all do our part now. Which means you have to go to bed like big girls. On your own. Understand?

ALL THREE SIBLINGS

Yes, Momma.

Katherine moves over to Constance. Tucks her in.

CONSTANCE

Are the Russians fixing to attack us?

KATHERINE

Where'd you hear that?

CONSTANCE

My teacher. She said they're putting spies and nuclear bombs up in space.

Joylette (10) cuts in.

JOYLETTE (10)

We had to stay under our desks this morning. All scrunched up.

KATHERINE

That's just a drill. A precaution. Truth is, we don't know what they're doing up there.

Katherine moves to Joylette (10), tucks her in.

CONSTANCE

Are you going up to space too, Momma?

KATHERINE

No, baby. But I'm going to help those brave men do it. The best I can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Kathy pulls out a picture she drew of Katherine in space.
Hands it to her.

KATHY

You could fly to space too if you wanted
to, Momma. You could be an astronaut.

Katherine's touched. She smiles at her babies. Kisses them.

KATHERINE

Thank you, baby. Now this time...really
go to bed.

She turns off the lamp.

EXT. MCCLEAN BAPTIST CHURCH - ANOTHER DAY

Picturesque, white church for an all black congregation.

THE CHURCH SERVICE - CONTINUOUS

Sunday morning. Everyone's on their feet. The room is
packed with FAMILIES. Amongst them: Katherine, Joylette
(Mom) and the kids; Mary, her husband LEVI and their kids
(LEVI, JR.(5) and CAROLYN MARIE (4)); and Dorothy and her
husband, HOWARD and their kids (ANN (16), KATHRYN (14),
LEONARD (9) and KENNETH (7)).

The charismatic, PASTOR AYERS, afire, preaches from the hip.

PASTOR AYRES

Praise God that change is coming. From
the Southern Christian Leadership
Conference, to the good Reverend Dr.
King, to the students sitting in at lunch
counters in North Carolina.

Amens all around.

PASTOR AYRES (CONT'D)

His faith in us has no limit! The good
Lord has our very own women workin' on
rocket ships!

All eyes turn to our women. Here they stand proud, here
they're revered.

PASTOR AYRES (CONT'D)

And we have National Guardsman defending
our freedom!

On the front row, a tall drink of water, NATIONAL GUARD
COLONEL JIM JOHNSON, bows his head in recognition.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PASTOR AYRES (CONT'D)
Give a shout of praise for: Colonel Jim Johnson. Returning home by the grace of God, to set up a National Guard unit right here in Hampton!

Cheers and claps.

PASTOR AYRES (CONT'D)
Can I get a "Hallelujah" in here?!

Refrains.

BEHIND THE CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

An after service banquet: PARISHIONERS everywhere enjoying an outdoor pot-luck.

Mary and her husband, Levi are serving their Kids. A hushed argument:

LEVI JACKSON
Now you want to be an engineer? A female engineer. We're Negro, baby. Ain't no such thing. Understand it.

MARY
It's not like that there, Levi.

LEVI JACKSON
The only real chance we're gonna have is when we fight back. You can't "apply" for freedom. Freedom is never granted to the oppressed. It's got to be demanded. Taken.

MARY
Levi, please. Stop quoting your slogans at me. I've heard them all. There's more than one way to achieve something.

Levi, Jr. interrupts:

LEVI JR.
I don't want any greens.

LEVI JACKSON
I tell you about interruptin'?

Mary steps in, replaces the greens with mac and cheese.

MARY
Try this, baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY
That he is. Tall. Strong. Commanding.

MARY
Probably like that day...and night.

KATHERINE
Mary, it's Sunday. Have some shame.

MARY
I will not.

They laugh. Jim Johnson smiles over at Katherine.

DOROTHY
I think he's smiling over here.

MARY
(to Katherine)
At you.

Katherine looks. Yep.

KATHERINE
I'm not smiling back.

Dorothy and Mary look at Katherine.

DOROTHY
Yes, you are.

MARY
You're all teeth right now.

KATHERINE
I am not.

She is. Katherine turns away.

DOROTHY
He's coming this way.

KATHERINE
Why's he doing that?

DOROTHY
Mary's waving him over.

Sure enough, Mary's waving him over.

KATHERINE
Ladies, I don't know if I'm-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The entire NASA STAFF is lined up in the parking lot. A receiving line. At the end of this very long line of WHITE MALE NASA EMPLOYEES...we find WHITE FEMALE NASA EMPLOYEES. And after that...our "Colored Computers."

Dorothy's first, proudly next to Katherine and Mary. She bios the Astronauts for Katherine and Mary.

DOROTHY
Alan Shepard. US Navy pilot. He could be the first man in space.

Alan Shepard waves at the Crowd.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
That's Scott Carpenter and Walter Schirra. Also Navy pilots.

Shots of the Mercury 7 intercut.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
All under 5'11", 180 lbs. IQs over 130.

MARY
Handsome must be a requirement too.

KATHERINE
How can you possibly be ogling these white men?

MARY
It's equal rights. I have the right to see fine in every color.

Harrison leads the Astronauts down the receiving line. John Glenn shakes hands.

DOROTHY
That's John Glenn. The only Marine Corps pilot.

A dashing John Glenn shakes a NASA ENGINEER's hand.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
And those three there are Airforce: Gus Grissom, Gordon Cooper and Deke Slayton.

The Mercury Team lands in front of Vivian Mitchell and the East Computers. Handshakes. Ruth ends the procession.

RUTH
Gentlemen, if we may...much to see around here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Mercury Team follows Ruth. John Glenn catches Dorothy staring at him from the end of the line. He stops.

JOHN GLENN

Heck, haven't shaken all the hands yet.

RUTH

We have a fairly tight itinerary,
Colonel.

AL HARRISON

(lets her know it's okay)
Ruth-

Too late, John Glenn's already gone. Heading to the end of the line. The Mercury Team follows.

DOROTHY

Sweet mother of mercy. They're coming
this way.

KATHERINE

Look straight ahead.

MARY

Shoot, look right at 'em.

Mary stares at the Astronauts as they approach. Vivian sees them headed to Mary, Katherine and Dorothy's way. Hmm.

John Glenn stops in front of Dorothy.

JOHN GLENN

Ladies. Didn't wanna run off without
saying hello. They seem to be in a big
rush around here.

Dorothy looks him in the eyes.

DOROTHY

The Russians certainly aren't slowing
down any.

He smiles. Jokes:

JOHN GLENN

They can't make a damn 'frigerator, how
the heck they beat us into space?

Dorothy laughs. John Glenn offers his hand. They shake. He moves on to Katherine. Holds out his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vivian sees Dorothy, summons her over.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Our runner can pick up your work,
Dorothy. You need to be workin', not
walkin'.

Dorothy puts worksheets in a box next to Vivian's desk.

DOROTHY

It's break time, ma'am. No trouble at
all.

Vivian points to a massive pile of worksheets within several
boxes.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Since you made the trip...you can take
that batch over there.

DOROTHY

Sure thing, Mrs. Mitchell.

Dorothy stands there, a beat too long.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

You need somethin' else?

DOROTHY

I was wondering if you knew what they're
building in the Tech Wing.

Vivian considers whether to answer. Then:

VIVIAN MITCHELL

It's called an IBM. A mainframe machine.
Apparently, it can do our calculations in
a fraction-a the time.

A knowing moment for both of them.

DOROTHY

Guess that's good for NASA.

Vivian nods. Dorothy lingers. Vivian points off...

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Hurry on, now. Best if you do it in one
trip.

Vivian returns to her work. Dorothy heads to the boxes.

THE SPACE TASK GROUP OFFICE - LATER

Katherine's still at the chalkboard staring at that Redstone Rocket Chart. Cross-checking her worksheets.

She picks up a piece of chalk, starts chalking calculations. Analytic Geometry. Then a graph...the Redstone's trajectory.

The chalk line stops suddenly. Just short of a line labeled, "Orbit." She draws an X on the spot, then writes: "Redstone Fail." Then she draws another trajectory line that pushes past the "Orbit" line...and labels it, "Atlas."

She steps back, looks at her work. Her leg starts tapping. She puts the chalk down.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Katherine pushes out through the steel doors and runs for the West Computing Building.

THE SPACE TASK GROUP OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Stafford is standing in front of the blackboard, staring at Katherine's work. He references a worksheet in his hand. He'll be damned.

Sam Turner comes up behind him. Studies the board. Stafford hands him the worksheet. He compares. Hmm.

And then, like moths drawn to light, one ENGINEER after another is pulled to the math. Surrounding Stafford and the blackboard. Chatter builds.

Then, a voice from above:

AL HARRISON (O.S.)
Whose work is that?

Harrison stands outside his glass bubble. No one answers.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
I said, whose work is that?!

EXT. COLORED RESTROOM - DAY

Katherine comes out of the bathroom. Scurries down the hall.

PAUL STAFFORD (O.S.)
How did you know the Redstone couldn't support orbital flight?

INT. AL HARRISON'S OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Stafford's pacing in front of a seated Katherine. Sam and Ruth are behind him, along with a UNIFORMED US MILITARY OFFICER.

PAUL STAFFORD
It's classified information.

SAM TURNER
It's top secret.

Across from them is a distressed Katherine.

KATHERINE
It's not a mystery why the Redstone tests keep failing. It's fine for sub-orbital flight, but it can't handle the weight of the capsule and push it into space. The numbers don't lie.

Pan over to: Al Harrison. He's been standing quietly off to the side, studying the redacted report.

AL HARRISON
And you figured that out with this? Half the data is redacted.

KATHERINE
What's there tells the story if you read between the lines. The distance from launch to orbit is known. The Redstone mass is known. The Mercury Capsule weight is known. And the speeds are there in the data.

Impressive.

AL HARRISON
You did the math.

KATHERINE
Yes, sir. I looked beyond.

AL HARRISON
Then how did you know about the Atlas rocket? That's not math. That data's not here. Like he said, it's classified.

Harrison waves the report at her. Katherine pauses.

KATHERINE
I held it up to the light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Really. Harrison holds the report up to the light. Squints at the redaction. Sees: "Atlas."

AL HARRISON
Yep. There it is.

He shakes his head in disbelief.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
What's your name?

KATHERINE
Katherine Goble.

AL HARRISON
Are you a spy, Katherine?

KATHERINE
Am I what?

AL HARRISON
Are you a Russian spy?

KATHERINE
No sir, I'm not Russian.

Harrison looks to Ruth.

RUTH
She's not Russian, sir.

AL HARRISON
All right then, we have nothing to lose here. Let's get her everything she needs to work on Shepard's trajectories. Without redaction. Are we clear on that?

Nods and agreement. Stafford objects:

PAUL STAFFORD
Are we sure about this?

AL HARRISON
What's the issue, Paul? You heard her...she's not a spy.

PAUL STAFFORD
I just don't think it's a good idea.

AL HARRISON
You know what I think is a good idea?

Harrison tosses the redacted documents in the trash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Darker ink. Ruth, think you could pass that along?

He walks out. Ruth smiles at Katherine.

INT. COLORED CAFETERIA - HALLWAY - LATER

A BLACK COMPUTER pushes through a door labeled: "Colored Cafeteria."

INT. COLORED CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Hardly an adequate dining space. Cold steel tables, wobbly wooden chairs and a small rectangular window, whereby brown-bagged lunches are distributed to BLACK EMPLOYEES.

Dorothy, Katherine and Mary are at the window, grabbing lunch. Mary's admiring Katherine's new lanyard credentials.

MARY

You can probably get to the moon and back with these.

KATHERINE

Just not the bathroom.

MARY

Least they're not blind to what you do.

DOROTHY

It's not going to matter soon. This IBM's going to put us all out of work.

They walk to a table. Sit. Eat.

KATHERINE

What can we do about it?

DOROTHY

Only one thing to do: learn all we can. Make ourselves valuable. Somewhere down the line a human being's going to have to hit the buttons.

Through the door, in steps Vivian Mitchell. File folder in hand.

KATHERINE

Oh, mercy.

MARY

Well, she must be lost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dorothy waltzes back in. Holds up a Mason jar of homemade whiskey mash.

DOROTHY

Not one more peep about work.

DOROTHY'S KITCHEN - LATER

Music on the radio. The gals are tipsy. Mary's dancing around the room. Laughing. Dorothy and Katherine are trying to make a cake and icing. It's a mess.

DOROTHY

Don't give her any more.

KATHERINE

I can't. She drank it all.

MARY

I'm fine. I'm as fine as I've ever been.

DOROTHY

You're as drunk as you've ever been.

A song comes on the radio, "Twisting The Night Away" by Sam Cooke.

MARY

Damn. It's my wedding song. Katherine, come dance with me.

KATHERINE

What? No.

MARY

Come on. Dance with me.

DOROTHY

Go on, Katherine. Go dance.

Katherine obliges. Mary instructs. Dorothy joins.

MARY

We have to teach you how to get a man!

Katherine hollers.

KATHERINE

Teach me what!

Dorothy and Mary wrap their arms around her. They laugh. And dance. Friends through it all.

EXT. HAMPTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

A Civil Rights protest in progress. DOZENS OF BLACK MEN AND WOMEN holding desegregation signs march outside the Courthouse, chanting. A LINE OF WHITE POLICE OFFICERS block the sidewalk.

Levi Jackson's smack in the middle of the fray. A POLICE DOG rares up, knocking Levi to the ground. He bounces up, full of fire.

Turning the corner, Dorothy and her two youngest: Leonard (9) and Kenneth (6), walk down the opposite sidewalk.

KENNETH

What's happening over there?

DOROTHY

Don't pay attention to all that. We're not part of that trouble.

Dorothy looks across the way, sees Levi in the thick of it. She pulls her boys up the steps of:

EXT. HAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

They climb the stone stairs of the "Colored Entrance."

INT. HAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY - LATER

Dorothy's in the middle of an aisle of reference books. Searching titles. The boys are at her feet, fussing.

DOROTHY

(taps Leonard on the head)
I told you no fussing around.

Dorothy hands them a book.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Read together. Be quiet.

They do as told. Dorothy keeps searching the racks. She finds what she's looking for, a book titled: *Fortran, The New Language of Computers*.

She pulls it off the shelf. A WHITE LIBRARIAN in the next aisle stares back at her.

WHITE LIBRARIAN

We don't want any trouble in here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY
I'm not here for any trouble.

WHITE LIBRARIAN
What are you here for?

DOROTHY
A book.

WHITE LIBRARIAN
You have books in the colored section.

DOROTHY
It doesn't have what I'm looking for.

WHITE LIBRARIAN
That's just the way it is.

EXT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

A SECURITY GUARD escorts Dorothy and her boys, not so gently, out of the library. The Guard grabs the kids' shoulders, moving them along.

DOROTHY
Get your hands off my boys. Don't touch them.

She pulls her boys away from the Guard. Gathers her dignity. Turns back. Grits a smile.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
You have a blessed day.

INT. CITY BUS - LATER

We push past SEVERAL WHITE PASSENGERS to the back of the bus...where we find Dorothy between her boys.

DOROTHY
Separate and equal are two different things. Just cause it's the way, doesn't make it right. You understand?

THE BOYS
Yes, Momma.

DOROTHY
You act right, you are right. That's for certain. Understand?

THE BOYS
Yes, Momma.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She smiles at her little men. Settles in. Then...pulls the Fortran Computer book out of her purse.

LEONARD

You took that book, Momma?

DOROTHY

Son, I pay taxes. And taxes pay for everything in that library. You can't steal what you already paid for.

She opens the book and starts reading to them:

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Fortran is a new and exciting language used by programmers to communicate with computers...

Titles over: April 12, 1961

INT. DOROTHY'S HOUSE - DAY

A birthday party: Leonard Vaughan's turning 9. The place is packed with FAMILY, FRIENDS and CHILDREN.

Little Leonard stands, eyes closed (making a wish) in front of a sprinkled cake. He opens his eyes. Blows. Misses a few. Blows again, way too close.

DOROTHY

Cake's already got sprinkles, baby. Doesn't need a shower.

Dorothy gives him a small hug. Everyone LAUGHS and CLAPS. Dorothy starts cutting cake. Katherine and Mary help serve.

At the entry: Howard opens the door for Colonel Jim Johnson. Holding a bouquet of flowers. Katherine's been set up.

MARY

Look at that. What a surprise.

KATHERINE

I'll say.

DOROTHY

Howard must have invited him.

KATHERINE

Mmm. Hmmm.

Colonel Jim stares through the crowd...over at Katherine. Locks on her. Smiles.

THE PARTY - NIGHT - LATER

A swing song plays on the radio. The living-room floor is swaying with Guests swing dancing. Dorothy and Howard. Mary and Levi.

Off to the side we find Katherine. Alone. Until Colonel Johnson walks up.

JIM JOHNSON
I believe I owe you an apology.

KATHERINE
Was that it?

Jim smiles.

JIM JOHNSON
Can I make it while we dance?

Katherine looks up at him. He sure is handsome.

DANCING - LATER

Katherine and Jim dance. He's real good. She's real stiff.

JIM JOHNSON
I'm afraid I simply misspoke, Mrs. Goble.
I've been away for a long time. I
imagine, I'm just out of practice.

KATHERINE
Mm-hmm.

JIM JOHNSON
And I was hoping you would allow me to
start over?

KATHERINE
Mm-hmm.

JIM JOHNSON
The thing is...I have an interest in
getting to know you better.

KATHERINE
Mm-hmm.

He smiles at her.

JIM JOHNSON
You are one tough customer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATHERINE

You haven't said "you're sorry" yet.

She's a whole lot more than he can handle.

JIM JOHNSON

Right. Of course. I'm sorry, Mrs. Goble.

KATHERINE

For what, Mr. Johnson?

JIM JOHNSON

Underestimating you. Or any woman like you. Though I can't imagine there's many.

KATHERINE

There you go. That's good practice, right there.

They dance on. Staring at each other.

The music cuts off abruptly. An ANNOUNCER cuts in:

RADIO ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO)

We interrupt Hampton's Big Band Hour with breaking news. Russian cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, has become the first man in space.

The mood drops. Dancing stops. You can hear a pin drop.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO) (CONT'D)

Gagarin completed one full orbit around the planet in one hundred and eight minutes.

INT. NASA SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Stale air, tension, dead quiet. A news reel plays footage of Yuri Gagarin's capsule in orbit.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (ON RADIO)

This is a crushing blow to America in the race for space.

Yuri Gagarin waves to a crowd of RUSSIAN WELL-WISHERS.

The news reel stops playing abruptly. Lights rise. Harrison's standing in the wings, leaning against a wall. Stafford, Sam and Ruth are seated amongst Team Members.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Mercury 7 are in attendance, sitting in back. They're devastated. No one talks. No one moves. It's like someone died.

Finally, John Glenn speaks up:

JOHN GLENN

Well. They beat the pants off us. Now let's go on, learn how to fly to space.

He walks out. The other Astronauts follow.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - DAY - LATER

Harrison steps into the Space Task Group. The entire Team is sitting at their desks, standing at stations. Frozen in quiet. Harrison walks to the front of the room. Takes off his glasses.

AL HARRISON

I want to thank everyone for staying. I know it's late and after what we just saw, I think everyone's probably anxious to go home. But before we do, I just have to ask... how can it be that we're in second place in a two man race? Anybody? Paul?

Stafford doesn't have the answer. Shakes his head.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Then I think Glenn said it pretty well. They're just outworking us. And the reason I have to think that is because I refuse to believe that the Russians are smarter than us, or because they have more technology. Or that they care more. But I don't know? Is that possible? Is it possible that it actually means more to them?

Harrison walks to the middle of the room.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

We're in the fight of our lives, people. I just saw seven faces that don't think we can get there. This isn't some epic joyride that we're all on together. So, as of right now, going forward, there's only two things you need to know: one, staying late will be a fact of life.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

And two: your paychecks will not reflect the extra time it takes to catch up and pass those bastards. For those of you that can't work that way, I understand and thank you for what you've done. For everyone else, you can call your wives and tell them how it's gonna be. I'll start with mine.

Harrison walks off. Up to his office.

INT. AL HARRISON'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Harrison picks up the phone, dials. Waits. He walks to his window, looks out.

Every single member of the Space Task Group is on the phone. Quietly talking to their wives, husbands, children.

Paul Stafford. Ruth. Sam Turner. And finally...Katherine Johnson. No one is leaving.

MONTAGE - THE PUSH TO SHEPARD'S LAUNCH

INT. NASA HANGAR - DAY

Astronaut training. A full scale model of the Mercury 7 capsule is suspended in the air. Spinning in all directions. Alan Shepard's inside. Harrison watches from the ground.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Katherine's buried in work. Literally. She's fighting a cold. Stafford dumps a new load of data on her desk.

STAFFORD

End of the day.

He's off. Katherine grabs a tissue, blows her nose.

THE TECH HALLWAY - ANOTHER NIGHT

Dorothy stands at the end of the hallway leading to the IBM room, clutching her purse. Through the window, she sees Harrison alone, standing in front of the IBM. Cleaning his glasses. Tortured by this hunk of metal.

Finally...he walks out. Clicks off the lights. Heads down the hallway.

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

It'll run eventually. We have to know how to program it once it does. Unless you'd rather be out of a job?

"Nos" all around. The Girls re-focus.

INT. IBM COMPUTER ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

Dorothy opens the Power Control on the IBM. She inspects the machine's innards. Cross-referencing with schematics from the IBM Manual. Labeling parts out loud:

DOROTHY

Control console. Card reader. Card punch. Central Processor. Mother board...always a mother around somewhere.

INT. WIND TUNNEL - ANOTHER DAY

Mary finds Zielinski on a ladder, inspecting the Mercury 7 Capsule.

MARY

Mr. Z.

He looks down at her. She holds up her Court Petition.

MARY (CONT'D)

I have a court date....

Zielinski smiles.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

Katherine, sick as a dog, opens the door to find: Jim Johnson holding a paper bag.

JIM JOHNSON

Heard you were fighting the flu.

He holds up the bag.

JIM JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Thought maybe you could use some soup? Hot meal for the girls.

This is a good man. Katherine can't deny it.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER

Katherine, Jim and the Girls are sitting at the table. Plates of food in front of them. The Girls are sizing up every fiber of this new man in their house.

Heads bow for grace. Jim offers Katherine his hand. She takes it.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - ANOTHER DAY

Rain pelts the campus.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - CONTINUOUS

Harrison barrels out of his office. Juggling worksheets. Beyond stressed.

AL HARRISON
Ruth, get the Cape on the line.
Shepard's trajectories need to be
updated.

He looks over to Katherine's desk.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Where is she?!

Ruth shrugs. Harrison, frustrated, walks off.

INT. COLORED RESTROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Katherine's washing her hands. She grabs a stack of worksheets and rushes out.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

Pouring rain. Katherine runs across campus, back to the East Building.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine's soaked like a wet rat. She walks back to her desk. Stafford's staring at her. Ruth's staring at her. The whole damn place seems to be staring at her.

AL HARRISON (O.S.)
Where the hell have you been? Everywhere
I look you're not where I need you to be.
And it's not my imagination.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Katherine turns, Harrison's on the floor. Katherine freezes.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Where the hell do you go everyday?

KATHERINE
(quietly)
The bathroom, sir.

AL HARRISON
The bathroom! The damn bathroom!

KATHERINE
Yes, sir. The bathroom.

AL HARRISON
For 40 minutes a day!? What do you do in there!? We are T-minus zero here. I put a lot of faith in you.

Katherine can barely speak. She whispers:

KATHERINE
There's no bathroom for me here.

AL HARRISON
There's no bathroom? What do you mean there's no bathroom for you here?

Katherine can't take it anymore. Her voice rises.

KATHERINE
There's no bathroom here. There are no COLORED bathrooms in this building or ANY building outside the West Campus. Which is half a mile away! Did you know that? I have to walk to Timbuktu just to relieve myself! And I can't take one of the handy bikes. Picture that, with my uniform: skirt below the knees and my heels. And don't get me started about the "simple pearl necklace" I can't afford. Lord knows you don't pay "the coloreds enough for that. And I work like a dog day and night, living on coffee from a coffee pot half of you don't want me to touch! So excuse me if I have to go to the restroom a few times a day!

You can hear a pin drop. Katherine takes her purse, personals and walks off. Leaving everyone's jaws on the ground.

EXT. COLORED RESTROOM HALLWAY - LATER

BANG! BANG! BANG! The sound of hammering, tearing.

A SECURITY GUARD runs down the hallway and arrives upon a scene: a crowd of TECHS and ENGINEERS block the corridor. He pushes through the crowd to the front...where...Ruth holds up her hand, stops him. There in front of the group: an inflamed Al Harrison, wielding a crow bar, is bashing the "Colored Restroom" sign on the wall.

AL HARRISON
Damn thing!

On the other side of the corridor...the entire West Computing Group, including Dorothy and Mary watch in wonder. Katherine makes her way through, landing between them.

Harrison flails away at the sign. Bang! Bang!

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
For Christ's sake!

Harrison keeps at it. Rip. Bang. The sign's holding on, with all it's might. Imagine that. He takes a final successful WHACK! And the sign crashes to the floor.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
There you have it! No more colored restrooms. No more white restrooms. Just plain old toilets.

Harrison looks over. He sees Katherine.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
Go wherever you damn well please. Preferably closer to your desk.

Harrison snatches up the sign.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
At NASA we all...pee the same color!

He stumbles off. Straight through the Crowd. Shock and pride and justice for all those watching. Katherine nods approval.

Titles over: May 5, 1961

EXT. ROAD - LATER

Jim and Katherine drive down a picturesque road in a convertible.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - LATER

The convertible's parked on the side of the road. Katherine and Jim are sitting on a blanket in front of the car. A roadside picnic. Jim pours Katherine a Chianti.

JIM JOHNSON

I think it's high time that I kissed you, Mrs. Goble.

KATHERINE

Oh. And why's that?

JIM JOHNSON

Figure you're attracted to me the same as I to you.

KATHERINE

Is that right?

JIM JOHNSON

Yes. Or you would have told me to get going a long time ago.

Jim leans in and kisses Katherine. She doesn't flinch. Jim leans back.

KATHERINE

Haven't kissed a man in a long time. Almost forgot how.

Jim leans in again. They kiss again.

DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everyone (our Gals, Levi, Howard, Jim, all the Kids) is gathered in front of the TV to watch...

TV REPORTER (LIVE FEED)

We're just moments away from Alan Shepard's maiden flight as the first American in space.

Food is passed around. People sit on the carpet. It's the biggest show on Earth.

INT. FREEDOM 7 CAPSULE - DAY

Shepard's sitting in the tight 'can' he's named: "Freedom 7." America's first space capsule. Even through the glass of his helmet, you can feel the sweat, the tension.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALAN SHEPARD

Any day now, Capcom. Fix your little
problem and light this candle!

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

NASA command is wall to wall with ENGINEERS, TECHS, SUPPORT.

The room laughs at Shepard's anxiety, a little release of the
taut energy of the moment.

Fellow Mercury 7 Astronaut, Gordon Cooper, is Shepard's
Capcom (Capsule Communicator.)

GORDON COOPER (V.O.)

Roger that, Freedom 7. Standby.

Gordon looks over at Harrison.

AL HARRISON

Move to final countdown sequence.

DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM

Dorothy, Katherine and Mary are locked on the screen. Even
the Children are quiet. Rapt.

TV REPORTER (LIVE FEED)

And we're at T-minus 10, 9...

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

Gordon counts down.

GORDON COOPER

8, 7, 6...

THE FREEDOM 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

Shepard braces himself.

GORDON COOPER (IN ALAN'S EAR)

5, 4, 3...

DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They countdown along with the Reporter:

DOROTHY'S HOUSE FULL

2, 1, 0.

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

Pins and needles. Gordon:

GORDON COOPER (INTO MICROPHONE)
You're go for launch.

CAPE CANAVERAL - FLORIDA - CONTINUOUS

In the background...the rocket roars up off the launchpad,
fire spewing from its base.

TV REPORTER (LIVE FEED)
And we have liftoff!

THE FREEDOM 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

Alan Shepard is shaking with the blast. Crushed into his
seat by the extreme G.

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

The Command Team watches the rocket shoot up into the sky.

DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine pushes the rocket with her words:

KATHERINE
Get up there. Go on.

THE FREEDOM 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

Alan Shepard breaks through the atmosphere.

ALAN SHEPARD
This is okay.

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

The Command Team finally breathes. Shepard's voice:

ALAN SHEPARD (OVER INTERCOM)
Yaw is OK. Switching to manual roll.

The celebration begins.

DOROTHY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Cheering and celebrating. The Kids run around. Mary kisses
Levi. Howard puts his arm around Dorothy. Jim smiles at
Katherine. Congratulations all around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

President JFK's, Rice University, "Space Race" speech, plays under:

JFK (V.O.)
For the eyes of the world now look into
space, to the moon and to the planets
beyond and we have vowed...

EXT. STREETS OF HAMPTON - ANOTHER DAY

A parade in progress. The Mercury 7 are sitting in the back of two convertibles. Alan Shepard waves to the crowd, now a national hero. WOMEN throw roses. MEN stand and salute. A Marching Band plays, *Stars and Stripes Forever*.

JFK (V.O.)
...that we shall not see it governed by a
hostile flag of conquest, but by a banner
of freedom and peace.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

The White House lawn. President JFK presents Alan Shepard with the NASA Distinguished Service Award. The Mercury 7 are on stage for the ceremony.

JFK (V.O.)
We set sail on this new sea because there
is new knowledge to be gained and new
rights to be won...

Alan Shepard shakes hands with JFK.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

The entire Space Task Group is gathered in front of Harrison and Paul Stafford. JFK's speech plays under:

JFK (V.O.)
...and they must be won and used for the
progress of all people.

Stafford hoists the morning paper. JFK on the front page.

PAUL STAFFORD
I imagine we should all thank President
Kennedy for continued job security.

Laughs.

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)
Gus Grissom's up next. Another
suborbital flight with a Redstone.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

Our last shot before we strap Glenn to the Atlas and pray we can get him back down.

AL HARRISON

Yes, and I imagine he'd like us to have the math figured out beforehand. Good work, gentlemen. Go have dinner with your kids. Then let's get back to work.

Applause. The Group disperses. Harrison takes the paper from Stafford. Walks off.

INT. IBM COMPUTER ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Dorothy's in a familiar position: deep within the IBM. She's running a diagnostic.

She moves to the control panel. JFK plays under:

JFK (V.O.)

Yet the vows of this Nation can only be fulfilled if we in this Nation are first, and, therefore, we intend to be first.

She types a command. Hits enter. Throws the switch. The IBM whirs to life. Lights. Noise. Drives spinning.

She runs to the card feeder. Stuffs a stack of programming cards in. The machine sucks them right up.

DOROTHY

That'a girl.

A VOICE catches Dorothy off guard:

BILL CALHOUN (O.S.)

What the hell are you doing!?

Now standing in the doorway: Bill Calhoun and a FEW MAINFRAME TECHS have returned from lunch.

BILL CALHOUN (CONT'D)

You can't be in here. Who are you?

DOROTHY

I'm with the West Computing Group. Dorothy Vaughan, sir.

Bill steps up to her. Dorothy presents her NASA ID. A Tech rushes to the IBM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BILL CALHOUN

This is a very delicate piece of equipment.

DOROTHY

I'm sorry, sir. Just trying to be helpful.

The Tech calls out:

TECHNICIAN

Bill, we've got numbers.

BILL CALHOUN

What kind of numbers?

The Tech holds up a worksheet pouring out of the IBM.

TECHNICIAN

Look.

Bill moves to the machine, sees for himself. Turns back to Dorothy. Who just smiles.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Levi's standing in front of the TV watching the news. As the Kids clean the dishes off the table.

Walter Cronkite reports on the KKK fire bombing of the Freedom Riders' bus (May 14, 1961.) Images of the charred bus. Battered RIDERS. The extreme violence.

WALTER CRONKITE

The mob of Klansman threw fire bombs at the bus, as it stopped in Anniston, AL. Fire and smoke trapped many of the Riders inside the vehicle.

Mary comes home from work. No one greets her. Odd. She walks behind Levi. Sees:

WALTER CRONKITE (CONT'D)

The local police stood by as the choking riders fled the flaming bus.

She moves to turn the TV off.

MARY

The kids don't need to-

Levi stops her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEVI JACKSON

They need to see this. Everyone needs to see this.

Mary pauses. The kids join her side. Watching in horror.

Finally, Levi walks away. Grabs his coat.

LEVI JACKSON (CONT'D)

Sit-ins will only get you so far.

EXT. HAMPTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

FOLKS litter the front of the Courthouse steps.

INT. HAMPTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A packed courtroom. NERVOUS DEFENDANTS, LAWYERS. Way in the back corner, past the sea of White Folks: Mary sits in "Colored Seating," tapping her foot. Finally, A COURT CLERK calls her name:

A COURT CLERK

Mary Jackson. Petition to attend courses at Hampton High School.

Mary hops up. Approaches the rail. A WHITE-HAIRED SOUTHERN JUDGE looks up from the case notes. Stops in his tracks when he sees Mary is...black.

MARY

Good morning, your honor.

THE JUDGE

Hampton High School is a white school, Mrs. Jackson.

MARY

Yes, your Honor. I'm aware of that.

The Judge flips through the case notes.

THE JUDGE

Virginia is still a segregated state. Regardless of what the Federal Government says or the Supreme Court says. Our law is the law.

He reaches for his rejection stamp. Mary blurts out:

MARY

Your Honor, if I may, I believe there are special circumstances to be considered.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE JUDGE

What would warrant a colored woman
attendin' a white school?

MARY

May I approach the bench, sir?

The Judge considers, waves the BAILIFF to let her through.

Mary walks through the rail gate, stands in front of him.

MARY (CONT'D)

Your Honor, you of all people should
understand the importance of being first.

THE JUDGE

How's that, Mrs. Jackson?

MARY

You were the first in your family to
serve in the Armed Forces. US Navy. The
first to attend University. George
Mason. And you are the first State Judge
to be re-commissioned by three
consecutive Governors.

THE JUDGE

You've done some research.

MARY

Yes, sir.

THE JUDGE

What's the point here?

MARY

The point is, your Honor...

Mary leans in.

MARY (CONT'D)

No Negro woman in the State of Virginia
has ever attended an all white school.
It's unheard of.

THE JUDGE

Yes. It's unheard of.

MARY

And before Alan Shepard sat on top of a
rocket, no American had ever touched
space.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY (CONT'D)

He will forever be remembered as the Navy man from New Hampshire who was the first to touch the stars.

The smallest opening in the Judge's countenance.

MARY (CONT'D)

And I, sir, plan on being an engineer at NASA. But I can't do that without taking those classes at that all-white high school. And I can't change the color of my skin. So...I have no choice but to be the first. Which I can't do without you.

Mary looks around the courtroom.

MARY (CONT'D)

Your Honor, of all the cases you'll hear today, which one will matter in a hundred years? Which one will make you the "first?"

Mary stops talking. The Judge is jarred. He looks around. Considering his legacy. Considering her passion. Then quietly:

THE JUDGE

Only the night classes.

Mary closes her eyes.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Mary steps out of the courthouse. Containing herself...until she can't hold it in any longer. She screams. She screams with everything she's got. Happy and free and full.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Katherine's at her desk, typing a report.

INSERT TYPING: "Gus Grissom, Launch and Landing Projections, by: Paul Stafford."

She hesitates. Then adds: "and Katherine Goble." She pulls the cover page out of the typewriter and sets it on top of the full report.

Harrison, Stafford, Sam and a few ENGINEERS come out of Harrison's bubble. Passing Ruth:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL HARRISON
Ruth, send the tracking station
coordinates to the briefing room.

Ruth takes a note. Katherine hops up.

INT. HALLWAY - SPACE TASK GROUP - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine catches up to Harrison and Stafford.

KATHERINE
Mr. Stafford, Gus Grissom's launch and
landing coordinates.

She hands Stafford the report.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
I'd like to get a jump on John Glenn's
trajectory.

Stafford slows down. What!?

PAUL STAFFORD
Do you have any idea what you're asking?

Katherine won't be deterred. She digs in.

KATHERINE
An orbital launch with an Atlas Rocket is
going to take time.

Harrison slows down, turns back.

AL HARRISON
Is there a problem?

KATHERINE
Mr. Harrison...I was wondering....

AL HARRISON
I've been wondering my whole life. Spit
it out.

KATHERINE
Well, sir, I'd like to get a jump on John
Glenn's trajectory.

AL HARRISON
This isn't about plugging in numbers,
this is about inventing the math. I
think we talked about that. It doesn't
exist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATHERINE

I can do it, sir.

PAUL STAFFORD

Do you know how exacting these calculations have to be?

KATHERINE

Yes. It's like shooting a sawed-off shotgun from a thousand feet and getting that one beebie through a hole so tiny, you can't even see it.

Stafford is not impressed.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm an excellent shot, sir.

Harrison studies her. She doesn't flinch. He takes the report from Stafford. Checks Katherine's math.

AL HARRISON

How do Grissom's numbers look good. Paul?

PAUL STAFFORD

They appear spot on.

Harrison nods his decision.

AL HARRISON

Give Glenn's orbit a go. But you run it all through Stafford. You understand?

KATHERINE

Yes, sir. Thank you.

Harrison hands the report back to Stafford. Walks off. Stafford looks at the report, the cover page. Miffed.

PAUL STAFFORD

Computers don't author reports.

Stafford rips the cover page off and hands it to Katherine. Catches up to Harrison.

Titles over: July 21, 1961 - Gus Grissom splashdown

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

Ocean waves crest over the Liberty Bell 7 capsule, bobbing up and down in the middle of the sea. A NEWSCASTER narrates:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

We're hearing that the Liberty Bell 7 has experienced some sort of malfunction and the capsule is now taking on water. There is no sign of Gus Grissom.

A Navy recovery chopper hovers into frame.

DOROTHY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy, Katherine and Mary are breathless in front of the TV, watching the report.

KATHERINE

The hatch cover must have blown early.

Levi, Howard, Jim Johnson and all the Kids gather around. Time stops.

INT. NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

Harrison, Stafford and the whole Space Task Group are watching radar. Listening to a live report. No one talks, no one moves.

Finally...Gus Grissom comes up from the depths, rising high on a wave.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

Wait. That's him...in the waves. Gus Grissom is out of the capsule and floating in the middle of the ocean.

DOROTHY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A collective breath. The ladies talk to the TV.

MARY

He blends right in.

Grissom fights to stay afloat. His silver suit camouflaging him in the waves.

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

The live feed: the helicopter has attached its winch to Liberty Bell 7 and is pulling it out of the water.

Stafford talks to the monitors.

PAUL STAFFORD

Don't lose the damn capsule.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harrison is on the phone. Incensed.

AL HARRISON

So, he's swimming. He's floating.
Goddamnit, I don't really care. Do we
have a visual? Okay. Then where's the
other chopper?!

DOROTHY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The live TV broadcast: Splash! The helicopter drops the
capsule. Too heavy, too much water. Gasps.

NEWSCASTER (V.O.)

The helicopter cable has been cut. The
Liberty Bell 7 capsule is lost.

Grissom bobs up and down, reaching for help.

DOROTHY

Get the man.

Another chopper drops a cable. Grissom comes up for air.
Grasps onto the line.

A collective sigh of relief.

NASA TRACKING CONTROL - HAMPTON, VA - CONTINUOUS

The live feed: Grissom is hoisted up into the chopper. Safe.
The tip of the Liberty Bell 7 capsule sinks below the black.
Harrison sits. Devastated.

INT. SENATE HEARING ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Senate Hearing in progress. Harrison sits in front of a
panel of SENATORS. SENATOR PATRICK grills Al Harrison.

SENATOR PATRICK

Mr. Harrison, American Taxpayer money
sank in the ocean along with your
capsule. What makes you think you can
bring John Glenn home safely?

Harrison adjusts himself. Takes a moment. Then:

AL HARRISON

Well, let me say first that discovery is
never for the sake of discovery but for
the sake of human survival, gentlemen,
and it will always come with risk.
Whoever gets there first, will make the
rules.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

That's been true of every civilization.
And so I think the bigger question for
this body to consider is: who do you want
calling the shots in space?

The Senators are silent. Harrison swings for the fences:

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

We have to know what's out there,
Senator. If only to ensure our own
survival. We have to touch the stars.
And only a man can do that. We'll get
John Glenn home safely because we have
to, because he has to tell us what he
saw.

He stops talking, the Senate Panel weighing his words.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - ANOTHER DAY

The NASA Campus is still.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Paul Stafford's sitting on his desk. The Space Task Group
stands all around him. He's holding a miniature of the
Mercury Capsule.

PAUL STAFFORD

The Redstone Rocket: went straight up.
The capsule didn't have enough speed to
go into orbit. It came back down.

He waves the Capsule up, then back down.

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

Essentially it's a triangle: Earth,
suborbit, Earth. The math was known.
It took Shepard, it took Grissom. It
cannot take Glenn.

Stafford demonstrates with the Capsule. Stopping it in mid
air.

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

The Atlas Rocket can push us into orbit.
It goes up. Delivers the capsule into an
elliptical orbit. Earth's gravity keeps
pulling it, but it's going so fast that
it keeps missing the Earth - that's how
it stays in orbit.

He arcs the model in an ellipse, around and around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

Getting it back down...that's the math we don't know.

Katherine raises her hand. A question. Stafford acquiesces.

KATHERINE

So...the capsule will spin around the Earth forever, because there's nothing to slow it down?

PAUL STAFFORD

Yes. Slowing it down at precisely the right time, by precisely the right amount is the task.

She raises her hand again. Demonstrates with her pencil.

KATHERINE

So...it has to move from an elliptical orbit to a parabolic orbit?

PAUL STAFFORD

Yes. That's the Go/ No Go.

He pulls the model closer. Tightens the orbit.

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

This point is a pin head. We bring him in too soon...

Sam interjects:

SAM TURNER

He burns up on reentry.

Stafford completes.

PAUL STAFFORD

Too late...and he's pushed out of Earth's gravity.

Katherine raises her hand...doesn't wait.

KATHERINE

Any changes in mass, weight, speed, time, distance, friction...or a puff of wind...would alter the Go/No Go. And we would have to start calculating all over. Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL STAFFORD

Yes. We have to be able to choose this re-entry point. The Go/No Go has to be exact.

Stafford motions to Sam, who hands out data briefs.

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

These are the latest Redstone numbers and current capsule data. Obviously, we know the launch spot.

Engineers scan the data.

Harrison and Jim Webb step out of Harrison's office

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

The Pentagon Briefing should illuminate where the Navy needs the recovery zone. We work backwards from there. The rest is on us.

Stafford heads off in Harrison and Jim Webb's direction. Katherine catches up to him.

KATHERINE

Mr. Stafford.

Stafford slows.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Sir. I if can attended these briefings, I would be more useful to the project.

STAFFORD

Pentagon briefings are closed door.

KATHERINE

Yes. But you know without the latest information, we can't keep up. I need the changes as they occur. As you said, it's a pin head.

STAFFORD

That's the job, Katherine. You asked for the assignment. Calculate with what you have. Or we'll find someone who can.

Stafford walks off. Katherine's frustrated.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - NIGHT

Katherine's at the chalk board. Working the math.
Determined. Exhausted.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP HALLWAY - ANOTHER DAY

Harrison, Stafford, Sam and Team are walking to the Pentagon briefing. Katherine catches up to them, report in hand:

KATHERINE

Launch parameters for Friendship 7, sir.

PAUL STAFFORD

It's all moot. We're altering the window on the capsule.

KATHERINE

When did that happen?

PAUL STAFFORD

6 minutes ago. The mass is changing.
Start over.

Katherine's irked, all her hard work...pointless.

KATHERINE

Sir. If I could attend these briefings...I'd be able to stay current-

PAUL STAFFORD

We've been through this, Katherine. It's not possible. There's no protocol for women attending.

KATHERINE

There's no protocol for a man circling the Earth either, sir.

Stafford hands her report back to her.

PAUL STAFFORD

That's just the way it is.

He walks off. Katherine keeps her head high. Harrison clocks it all.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Katherine's high on the ladder at the chalkboard. One leg dangling as she computes. Chalk dust flies.

Harrison's in his office on the phone, looking out at her.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER NIGHT

Katherine's at her desk typing a report.

INSERT - The cover page. Typing: "Friendship 7 (John Glenn,) Launch Projections," By Paul Stafford. Again, she adds: "and Katherine Goble."

She pulls the sheet out and slaps it on top of the rest of her report.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP HALLWAY - ANOTHER DAY (FORMERLY 161)

A familiar site: Harrison, Stafford, Sam and Team are walking to the daily briefing. Katherine intercepts:

KATHERINE
(to Stafford)
Colonel Glenn's launch coordinates
accounting for the window change, sir.

She hands her report to Stafford. Stafford sees her name on the cover.

PAUL STAFFORD
I've told you this: Computers don't
author reports. Fix it.

He shoves the report back at her. She won't take it.

KATHERINE
Those are my calculations. My name
should be on it.

He pulls the cover page off. Katherine reaches for the report now. A tug-of-war.

PAUL STAFFORD
That is not the way it works.

Harrison turns back. He's watched this long enough.

AL HARRISON
Paul. What's happening here?

Katherine let's go of the report. Addresses the bigger issue:

KATHERINE
Mr. Harrison, I'd like to attend today's
briefing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL HARRISON

Why's that?

KATHERINE

Well, sir, the data changes so fast. The capsule changes. The weight and the landing zones are all changing daily. I do my work, you attend these briefings and I have to start all over. Colonel Glenn launches in a few weeks. And we don't have the math figured out yet.

Harrison weighs it out. He turns to Stafford.

AL HARRISON

Why can't she attend?

PAUL STAFFORD

She doesn't have clearance, Al.

Harrison nods.

KATHERINE

I cannot do my work effectively without having all of the data and all of the information as soon as it's available. I need to be in that room, hearing what you hear.

PAUL STAFFORD

Pentagon Briefings are not for civilians. It requires the highest clearance.

KATHERINE

I feel like I'm the best person to present my calculations, Mr. Harrison.

AL HARRISON

You're not going to let this go. Are you?

KATHERINE

No, sir.

Harrison nods again. Takes off his glasses. Stafford shifts.

PAUL STAFFORD

And she's a woman. There's no protocol for a woman attending.

AL HARRISON

Okay, I get that part, Paul. But within these walls, who makes the rules?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

KATHERINE

You, sir. You're the boss.

Katherine looks at Stafford.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

You just have to act like one.

Harrison looks at Katherine. She's got serious guts.

AL HARRISON

You keep quiet.

Stafford, frustrated, pushes past them and into the room.

KATHERINE

Thank you, sir.

INT. NASA BRIEFING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER (FORMERLY 162)

A tornado of high level testosterone: Jim Webb, MILITARY BRASS, John Glenn and the Mercury 7. Harrison, Stafford and Sam enter...Katherine in tow. A record scratch. Until:

AL HARRISON

This is Katherine Goble with our Trajectory and Launch Window Division. Her work is pertinent to today's proceedings.

No one questions Harrison. She takes a seat at the end of the table. A little mouse in this room. Harrison dives right in, dropping reports on the table. They're passed out.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

We have a confirmed launch window for Friendship 7. Let's discuss a landing zone.

JIM WEBB

The Navy needs a singular landing zone.

All eyes shift to the Navy Officer.

NAVY OFFICER

20 miles square is what we can service for retrieval. Outside of that, we risk the capsule's recovery.

PAUL STAFFORD

We'd like 3 possible recovery areas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NAVY OFFICER

We can't cover half the damn ocean.

Harrison steps in.

AL HARRISON

Our capsule's being altered daily. And we're orbiting the Earth at...what's the speed now?

Harrison looks at Stafford. Who starts frantically flipping through the report. Katherine saves him:

KATHERINE

17,544 miles per hour.

All eyes shift to Katherine. Harrison looks at Katherine.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

At the time the rocket delivers the capsule into low space orbit.

Silence. This woman spoke. This black woman. Then:

JOHN GLENN

That's one hell of a speeding ticket.

Laughs. John Glenn's lightened the mood. Webb stares curiously at Katherine.

JIM WEBB

So we have the capsule's speed, launch window and for argument's sake, let's say the landing zone is The Bahamas...should be enough to figure the Go/No Go.

PAUL STAFFORD

In theory, sir.

JIM WEBB

We're flinging a man around the globe at 17,000 miles per hour...we need to be past theory at this point.

AL HARRISON

We'll be able to calculate a Go/No Go with that information.

JIM WEBB

When is that going to happen?

Harrison considers his words. Then he looks over at Katherine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AL HARRISON

Katherine.

Katherine is frozen. He's serious. Harrison holds out a piece of chalk:

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Have a go at it?

Katherine takes the chalk. Rises. Slowly walks to the board. All eyes on her. She stands with her back to the room. A mess they can't see. She takes a deep breath. And puts her chalk to the board.

And...the numbers churn out. She narrates:

KATHERINE

The Go point for re-entry is 2,990 miles from where we want Colonel Glenn to land.

She references a coordinate map.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

If we assume that's The Bahamas...

She writes coordinates for The Bahamas.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

At 17,544 miles per hour upon reentry...

Chalk dust flying.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

At a descent angle of 46.56 degrees...

Chalk scrawling.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

That puts the landing zone at...

Scratch, scratch.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

25.0667° North, 77.3333° West.

Scribble, scribble. The board is flush with numbers. She circles the final coordinates. And then the spot on the map estimating the landing zone.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Right here. Give or take 20 square miles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Silence as the room studies the board. Her speed, precision and talent is remarkable. Harrison has witnessed her genius, he knows she's the one.

John Glenn breaks the silence. Smiles at Katherine.

JOHN GLENN
I like her numbers.

And that's it. Katherine is approved.

Webb's not satisfied.

JIM WEBB
That's assuming the capsule hits the re-
entry point exactly. How do we insure
that?

Katherine doesn't have the answer. Harrison steps in.

AL HARRISON
That's the math we don't have yet,
gentlemen. We're working on it.

Harrison walks out. Katherine tags after him.

INT. IBM COMPUTER ROOM - ANOTHER DAY

Harrison stands in front of the massive mainframe. Bill Calhoun and IBM Techs at his side. The IBM hums in the background.

AL HARRISON
What's it gonna take to make this thing
worth the price tag?

BILL CALHOUN
We're just getting up to speed here, Mr.
Harrison. I need more man power.
Programmers. Folks to feed the cards.

AL HARRISON
Then get them, for crying out loud.
You're the IBM man. Pull them out of the
sky if you have to, but let's get ahead
of this thing. Or I'm not paying you
either.

Harrison walks out.

INT. WEST COMPUTING GROUP HALLWAY - DAY - LATER (FORMERLY 148)

Dorothy's reading the assignment sheet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOROTHY

Me?

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Temporarily. Yes. We need the IBM for Glenn's launch. The Lead Engineer says you're good with the cards, programming and such.

DOROTHY

What about the girls here?

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Human computers can't calculate an orbital flight in the time we have. They'll stay put for now.

DOROTHY

What about after "now?"

Vivian shifts. Dorothy knows.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

After the Glenn launch, NASA's dissolving the Computing Groups.

Dorothy thinks it over. She hands the assignment back, draws a line:

DOROTHY

I'm not accepting reassignment.

Vivian tightens up.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Unless...I bring my ladies with me.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Excuse me?

DOROTHY

We're going to need a lot of manpower to program that beast. I can't do it alone. My gals are ready. They can do the work.

Dorothy won't budge. Vivian won't budge.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS (FORMERLY 150)

Dorothy enters the room, holding a NASA Memo.

DOROTHY

Ladies, we've been reassigned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Computers chatter.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Leave your calculators. You won't need
them where we're going.

The Computers hop up. Excited.

THE WEST HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy leads her Group down the hallway.

NASA GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

The Women walk in the sunshine en route to East Campus.

THE IBM COMPUTER ROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They arrive in the Tech Hallway. And finally...at the door
to the IBM Room.

Dorothy straightens herself...and opens the door. And the
all-black West Computing Group steps into the all-white IBM
room.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Harrison's standing at the window watching Katherine toil
away at the chalkboards. She's frustrated. She erases a few
lines of calculations and starts all over.

Stafford drops a report on Harrison's desk.

PAUL STAFFORD

Today's heat shield test data, Al.

Stafford walks off. Stops when:

AL HARRISON

Do you know what your job is, Paul? To
find the genius among those geniuses. To
pull us all up. We all get to the peak
together, or we don't get there at all.

Stafford understands.

PAUL STAFFORD

Yes. Well. Good night, sir.

Stafford walks out.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - NIGHT

Once again...Katherine is among the last "men" working. She's standing in front of the chalkboard, staring at the numbers. Stuck, for the first time in her life.

Stafford stops at his desk. Looks over at Katherine. Stares at her work on the board.

He walks past her, without a word.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE - DUSK

Dusk light bathes Mary's house.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE - ANOTHER NIGHT

Mary's sitting on the bed, putting on her stockings. Levi enters, holding a small box.

MARY

I don't know when I'll be home. The class ends at 9.

Levi just stands there.

MARY (CONT'D)

You have something to say?

He hands her the box.

LEVI JACKSON

Thought you might need these.

Mary opens the box. A set of mechanical pencils.

LEVI JACKSON (CONT'D)

You can refill 'em with any weight lead you want.

Levi sits next to her. Demonstrates how they work.

LEVI JACKSON (CONT'D)

Just pull the eraser off, like this, drop the new lead down through here.

Mary watches him, not the pencil. He takes her hand.

LEVI JACKSON (CONT'D)

You're going to make a fine engineer.

MARY

You think so?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEVI JACKSON

Yes. Nobody dare stand in the way of
Mary Jackson's dreams. Myself included.

MARY

Amen.

Levi kisses her. Mary touches his face.

MARY (CONT'D)

Don't make me mad again.

LEVI JACKSON

Yes, Ma'am.

They kiss again.

EXT. HAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT - LATER

A city bus pulls away, leaving Mary standing in front of
Hampton High School. She stares at the building, takes a
deep breath and walks toward the entrance.

INT. HAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Mary walks down the darkened hallway of this typical High
School. A lone light shines from the one open door at the
end of the hall.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mary steps into the classroom. TWO DOZEN WHITE MALE STUDENTS
look up at once. The PROFESSOR turns from the board.

MARY

Good evening. Is this Quantum Mechanics?

PROFESSOR

Yes.

Mary approaches, hands him a copy of her petition.

MARY

I'm Mary Jackson. I'm enrolled.

The Professor scans the petition. It's official. He's
genuinely confused.

PROFESSOR

Well. The curriculum is not designed for
teaching...a woman.

She's unstoppable:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

Well, I imagine it's the same as teaching a man.

(she smiles at him)

I don't see a colored section. Should I take any seat?

He nods. Mary turns to the class. A few seats left. Few on the back row. Few in the middle. One on the front row.

Mary steps forward, all eyes on her. She considers her choices. Then...she plops down. First row. Dead center. She pulls out her notebook. Let's go.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Al Harrison sits at his desk, tortured. Studying. He turns to his board, the math. The camera pushes past him to the numbers.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Katherine's back at the board in front of a chalked drawing of the capsule's orbits. Stafford's sitting on the desk behind her. Sam and other Team Members wrap around.

KATHERINE

The problem is when the capsule moves from an elliptical orbit to a parabolic orbit. There's no mathematical formula for that. We can calculate launch, landing, but without this conversion...the capsule stays in orbit, we can't bring it home.

Katherine puts her chalk down. Harrison comes up behind them. Studies the board.

AL HARRISON

Maybe we're thinking about this all wrong.

PAUL STAFFORD

How's that?

AL HARRISON

Maybe it's not new math at all.

Katherine lights up. An idea:

KATHERINE

Maybe it's old math. Something that looks at the problem numerically.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And not theoretically. Math is always dependable.

AL HARRISON

For you it is.

Harrison walks away. Katherine stands back and looks at the board. The digits come alive. They bounce off the drawings. All she sees are the numbers now.

KATHERINE

Euler's Method.

PAUL STAFFORD

That's ancient.

KATHERINE

Yes. But it works. It works numerically.

She walks off.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Katherine steps into the West Computing Room. She moves to a bookshelf and starts digging through math textbooks. She finds a book on Euler's Method.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - LATER

The book hits her desk. Pages flip. Euler's Method. Katherine studies the pages. She rushes to the chalk boards. Erases everything. Starts over.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - ANOTHER DAY

Once again, Katherine's at the chalkboard. The entire surface is full of calculations. Katherine, one hand holding the textbook, the other her chalk, finishes the last bit of math on the far right bottom of the board. Almost on her knees.

She circles the Go/No Go. She transfers the number to a diagram of the re-entry point. She did it.

Katherine puts the chalk down. Turns around. The entire Space Task Group is behind her. Staring up at the board.

Paul Stafford walks up to Katherine at the board. Inspects the work. Then:

PAUL STAFFORD

Let's type it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Katherine smiles. Heads off to her desk.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - NIGHT

Katherine finishes typing her report.

INSERT: Friendship 7: Launch, Landing and Go/No Go Analysis.
By: Paul Stafford.

She pulls the cover page out, sets it on top of the rest of her report. And walks the document over to Stafford's desk. He nods a thank you.

Stafford walks up to Harrison's office. Hands him the report and the two men talk. As Katherine puts on her coat, turns off her lamp. And walks out.

INT. RESTROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Dorothy's washing her hands, rinsing her face. It's been a long day.

A toilet flushes behind her...and out walks Vivian. A first for both of them. Sharing a bathroom. Vivian steps up to the sink beside her.

DOROTHY
Mrs. Mitchell.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
Dorothy.

Cold silence. Then...

DOROTHY
You're working late tonight.

VIVIAN MITCHELL
Seems to always happen that way.

DOROTHY
Yes. Seems to.

Vivian needs a paper towel, none left on her side. Dorothy hands her one. More silence. Then...

VIVIAN MITCHELL
I hear the IBM is at full capacity.

DOROTHY
Appears so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIVIAN MITCHELL

You certainly have a knack for it.

DOROTHY

My father taught me a thing or two about mechanics.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

You know, I have a few girls in the East Group who have an interest in knowin' more about it.

DOROTHY

It is the future.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

I may bring 'em by, if it's all the same to you.

DOROTHY

That's not my decision. That would be the supervisor's.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Yes. That's true.

Dorothy finishes up.

DOROTHY

Well. Good night, Mrs. Mitchell.

Dorothy heads out.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

You know, Dorothy...

She stops, turns.

VIVIAN MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Despite what you may think...I have nothin' against ya'll.

Dorothy takes this in. Then:

DOROTHY

I know. I know you probably believe that.

Dorothy smiles at her. And then she walks out. Leaving Vivian to absorb the truth of Dorothy's words.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

Katherine slugs up the walkway to her house. She waves goodbye to Dorothy and Mary pulling away.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine steps in to find, Joylette (Mom,) Joylette (10,) Kathy and Constance sitting at the dinner table wearing their best dresses. The table is set, the room bathed in candlelight.

KATHERINE

Please tell me I didn't miss a birthday.

Jim Johnson steps in from the kitchen, wearing an apron, holding a frying pan.

JIM JOHNSON

Good evening, Mrs. Goble.

KATHERINE

(hmmm.)

Jim.

The girls help Katherine take off her coat, lead her to the table.

CONSTANCE

Madame...your seat.

KATHERINE

Is it my birthday?

The girls giggle. Katherine sits. Constance pushes her seat in. Kathy puts a napkin in her lap. Katherine looks to her Mom.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Are you going to say anything?

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

It's not my place.

Jim sits next to Katherine. It's quiet. Katherine looks them all over. Then:

KATHERINE

Okay, I'm not going to do this all night...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Girls eye motion to something sitting on the table right in front of Katherine. She finally looks down...and sees a small box damn near under her nose. She knows what it is.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Oh, mother of mercy. That's for me.

Everyone nods. Jim takes the box. Then...gets down on one knee. Instant tears come to Katherine's eyes.

KATHY

Are you sad, Momma?

The girls comfort her.

JOYLETTE (10)

It's okay, Momma.

CONSTANCE

He's a good man.

KATHERINE

I know. I know. I just. I can't help it.

More tears.

KATHY

He hasn't even asked you yet.

KATHERINE

He's going to.

She looks at Jim.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Is that what you're going to do?

JIM JOHNSON

If anyone will let me.

CONSTANCE

Go on then. She's already crying.

Jim opens the box: a classic, handmade diamond ring.

JIM JOHNSON

This was my mother's ring. She and my father were married-

Joylette (10) cuts him off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOYLETTE (10)

For 52 years.

Jim looks at Joylette (10). Are you going to let me do this?

JIM JOHNSON

I figure it's about as lucky a ring as you can get.

Jim takes the ring. Takes Katherine's hand.

JIM JOHNSON (CONT'D)

The day I met you, I called my mother and asked her if I could have it. I said, "Mom, I met the woman I want to marry."

Katherine cries more. Kathy butts in:

KATHY

What'd she say?

JIM JOHNSON

She said, "She must be something, Jimmy. Really something."

Everyone's enrapt in the story. Constance:

CONSTANCE

What did you say?

JIM JOHNSON

I said, "She's not something. She's everything."

Jim puts the ring on Katherine's finger.

JIM JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I planned on this being more romantic. I'll make that up to you real soon. But I know marrying you...includes the girls as well.

Joylette (Mom) clears her throat.

JOYLETTE COLEMAN

Amen to that.

Katherine takes Jim's hands.

KATHERINE

I do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JIM JOHNSON

I didn't ask you yet.

Katherine kisses Jim. She folds into his arms. The girls wrap their arms around the two of them. A family is born.

INT. NASA HANGAR - ANOTHER DAY

A group of Engineers and NASA Techs surround the Mercury Capsule. As we push through the crowd, we find AEROSPACE ARTIST, CECELIA BIBBY, painting "Friendship 7" on the side of the capsule.

John Glenn's sitting in the capsule's hatch, dressed in full gear. As a camera flash bulb pops, capturing the moment.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - ANOTHER DAY

Raining. A gray day in every way.

INT. HARRISON'S OFFICE - LATER

Harrison is surrounded by piles of work. Katherine steps in.

KATHERINE

You wanted to see me, sir?

AL HARRISON

Have a seat.

This is serious. She obliges.

KATHERINE

Something wrong, Mr. Harrison?

AL HARRISON

No. There's nothing wrong. In fact our IBM is churning out numbers in fractions of the time any human can. Present company included.

KATHERINE

That's good then.

AL HARRISON

Maybe. The thing is, the Cape is now insisting on doing all the backups down there. On site.

Oh, boy.

KATHERINE

I see.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL HARRISON

So, we won't be running backups here.
And truth be told, we can't keep up with
that IBM anyhow.

Katherine can barely move.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Long story short, we no longer need a
computer in this department. Progress is
a double edged sword.

Harrison is struggling. Hard to look her in the eyes.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)

Let's have you report back to the West
Group for now. We'll see if we can find
another assignment.

KATHERINE

Thank you, sir.

All the effort. All the work. Gone in a split. Katherine
stands.

AL HARRISON

I'm sorry about this, Katherine. It's
out of my hands, if you can believe it.

KATHERINE

I understand.

Katherine walks out. She doesn't say good-bye.

KATHERINE'S DESK - LATER

Katherine's gathering her things. Putting her belongings in
a file box. Ruth walks over, with a small present.

RUTH

Katherine...

She holds out the box.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Heard you got engaged.

KATHERINE

Oh. Yes. That's very thoughtful of you.

Katherine takes the box.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ruth waits. Until Katherine does the polite thing: she opens the present. Looks inside: it's a necklace of pearls. Real ones. A consolation prize.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

They're lovely.

RUTH

Mr. Harrison's idea really. Beats the fake ones, that's for certain.

Katherine's holding back a flood of tears. Ruth rambles:

RUTH (CONT'D)

Although I suspect his wife did the picking out. I can't imagine he has an eye for such things...

As Ruth carries on, Katherine takes it all in: the Space Task Group bustles around her. Never stopping. Never slowing down. Stafford is at the board, conferring with Other Engineers.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Now you have a great wedding. You did good work around here.

Katherine looks up at Harrison's bubble. He's on the phone. He makes eye contact with her. Nods a thank you.

INT. MCCLEAN BAPTIST CHURCH - ANOTHER DAY

Katherine's standing in front of a mirror, adjusting the pearl necklace. She studies it in the reflection. We pull out to reveal...she's dressed in white. Immaculate. Her wedding day. Dorothy and Mary join her in the reflection.

KATHERINE

I don't think I could feel a thing the first time I did this.

DOROTHY

You look even more beautiful than you did back then.

KATHERINE

You think so?

DOROTHY

Just a little older.

MARY

And a little fuller.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Katherine laughs.

MARY (CONT'D)
But you look good.

They wrap their arms around her. Family forever.

Titles over: February 20, 1962

EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL - DAWN

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE are camped outside the chain-link fence. Signs, banners. American history in the making. John Glenn's spacecraft, the Friendship 7, sits atop the Atlas booster. A NEWS REPORTER talks to camera.

NEWSCASTER #3
...John Glenn, the first American to orbit the Earth. There are thousands of people here today...

People scream. Wave at the camera.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We pull out of the newscast on a TV to find: Dorothy, Katherine, Mary and the West Computing Gals huddled watching.

INT. NASA - TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Langley Command Central. ENGINEERS man every station. Stafford is chewing a pencil. Zielinski's pacing.

Sam brings Harrison the latest launch calculations. He scans them. Something's off.

AL HARRISON
These landing coordinates don't match yesterday's.

PAUL STAFFORD
The IBM just ran them.

AL HARRISON
Then the IBM was wrong yesterday. Or it's wrong today.

INT. CAPE CANAVERAL - CREW QUARTERS - MORNING

John Glenn pours himself a coffee. Surrounded by NASA PERSONNEL. Scott Carpenter enters, with a data sheet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SCOTT CARPENTER

The landing coordinates are off.

He hands John Glenn the data. He scans it.

JOHN GLENN

What's Langley saying?

SCOTT CARPENTER

They're on the line.

John Glenn walks over to the phone. Picks up.

INTERCUT WITH:

NASA - TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harrison's on the phone with John Glenn.

AL HARRISON (ON PHONE)

The IBM has been spot on up to this point, John, but we'll run it again, see what it comes up with.

JOHN GLENN ON THE PHONE AT THE CAPE - CONTINUOUS

JOHN GLENN (ON PHONE)

To be honest with you, Al...when I fly, I fly the machine and now I feel like the machines are flying me.

John Glenn laughs. Always a cool customer.

AL HARRISON

We're on the same page. We're staying on the ground until this works out our way. Stay tuned.

JOHN GLENN

Let's get the girl to check the numbers.

AL HARRISON

The girl?

JOHN GLENN

Yes, sir. The smart one. If she says they're good, I'm ready to go.

AL HARRISON

All right. We'll get into it.

Harrison hangs up, calls out to Sam:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HARRISON

Sam...go find Katherine. She needs to verify Glenn's Go/No Go or we're staying on the ground.

SAM

Yes, sir.

The Assistant Engineer rushes off.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Sam runs off toward the West Campus, lugging worksheets.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sam barrels into the room. All heads turn his way.

SAM TURNER

I'm looking for Katherine Goble?!

Katherine holds up her hand. Like a student.

KATHERINE

It's Katherine Johnson now.

SAM TURNER

They need you to verify these.

He holds out the data.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - A DESK - MOMENTS LATER

The stack of worksheets slam on a steel table. Followed by pads of paper, an old calculator, slide ruler, several pencils and erasers.

Katherine sits. Starts organizing her work, her area, her thoughts.

The entire West Group hovers around her.

DOROTHY

Alright, give her space. Let her work.

The Computers back off. Katherine takes a deep breath and digs in.

EXT. NASA HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

John Glenn, fully dressed in his space suit, steps out of the hangar, carrying his own portable air conditioner. Scott Carpenter's at his side:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN GLENN
Anything from Langley?

SCOTT CARPENTER
Not yet.

They step into a waiting transport van.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy, Mary and the Computers are back in front of the TV.
Dorothy has one eye on Katherine.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)
T-minus 60 minutes. All the final
tests and checks are being conducted.
John Glenn is ready to board the
Friendship 7.

Katherine scribbles furiously. She writes Azimuth Angle and
a degree with multiple decimals. Then: 'RE-ENTRY Go/No Go'
and numbers through the sixth decimal place.

KATHERINE
Recovery position: Longitude 21.347821.

The Ladies abandon the TV. Move to Katherine, in awe of her
pencil scrawling the most complex calculations.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)
Latitude -69.643667.

She writes the final number, a hard point on the decimal.
Drops her pencil. Takes a breathe.

MARY
What the devil are you doing? Taking a
break?

Katherine jumps up, gathers her work, runs like the wind.

WEST HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine and Sam fly down the hall.

PAD 14 - CONTINUOUS

John Glenn and the NASA Entourage step onto an elevator.
John Glenn asks Scott Carpenter for the time. He shows him
his watch.

EXT. NASA GROUNDS - MORNING

Katherine and Sam run. Katherine turns sharply, she knows the inside track. Sam catches up.

NASA TRACKING ROOM HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Katherine and Sam race toward the Tracking Control Room. NASA EMPLOYEES jump out of the way. Sam wraps on the door. Bang! Bang! Bang!

OUTSIDE THE TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Another Assistant Engineer opens the door. Katherine hands him the work:

KATHERINE

Here you go.

Sam steps inside. And before Katherine can get a word in, the door closes in her face. She's locked out.

She stands there, decompressing. All that work. All that energy. Never an ounce of satisfaction.

Eventually...she walks away. Down the hallway.

Crash! The door springs open. Harrison steps out into the hallway:

AL HARRISON

Katherine.

She turns at the familiar voice. He holds up a lanyard: a special clearance badge.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harrison escorts Katherine into the room: the Engineers at control stations, the massive screens, the live feeds, tracking stations, tech details, etc. The energy. Katherine's in awe. This is the culmination of her work.

SAM TURNER

(calls out to Harrison)

Sir, we've got Pad 14 at the Cape on the line.

Harrison hits a button on the intercom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AL HARRISON (ON MIC)
This is Langley. We have the coordinates confirmed.

INTERCUT WITH:

PAD 14 - CONTINUOUS

Scott Carpenter's on the Pad phone.

SCOTT CARPENTER (ON PHONE)
(to John Glenn, at the prep pad)
Langley's on the phone.

JOHN GLENN
Right on time.

John Glenn stalks over.

SCOTT CARPENTER (ON PHONE)
What do you say, Langley?

Harrison pipes up:

AL HARRISON (ON MIC)
We can confirm the Go/No Go point for re-entry is 16.11984, -165.2356. The launch window is a go. The landing coordinates match.

John Glenn answers himself.

JOHN GLENN (ON PHONE)
Good to hear that, Al. Hard to trust something you can't look in the eyes.

The whole Team lights up at the sound of John Glenn's voice.

AL HARRISON (ON MIC)
That's right, Colonel. Katherine did manage to calculate a few decimal points further than that hunk of metal.

JOHN GLENN (ON PHONE)
I'll take every digit ya got. Be sure to thank her for me.

AL HARRISON (ON MIC)
Copy that. Good luck, *Friendship 7*. We'll see you in the Bahamas.

JOHN GLENN (ON PHONE)
God speed, Langley.

INT. WEST COMPUTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy, Mary and the West Group are glued to the TV.

NEWSCASTER (ON TV)
T-minus 10 seconds. 9. 8.

THE FRIENDSHIP 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

John Glenn is laser focused. Still. Calm.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (IN JOHN'S EAR)
7. 6. 5.

SHOTS OF THE ENTIRE NATION COUNTING DOWN - CONTINUOUS

-- The throngs of people at Cocoa Beach.

-- People in front of a TV Store in Times Square.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harrison turns away from the screens. Doesn't care to watch.
Katherine's riveted.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (ON INTERCOM)
4. 3. 2. 1. Ignition. Go for
liftoff.

CAPE CANAVERAL - CONTINUOUS

The rocket blasts off the pad. Heads toward the heavens.
People stare in awe.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
We're programming into a roll.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Roger that.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
It's getting bumpy along here.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Roger that. You are in Max Q.

THE WEST COMPUTERS - CONTINUOUS

No one moves:

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Roger that, smoothing out real fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Twenty seconds to SECO--

HARRISON, KATHERINE AND THE TRACKING TEAM - CONTINUOUS

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Zero G. Feeling fine. I feel fine.

Harrison rubs his eyes.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Go for SECO.

The rocket becomes an indiscernible blaze high in the air on the screen.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Roger that.

And then...it's gone.

CAPE CANAVERAL - CONTINUOUS

The crowd is silent.

HARRISON, KATHERINE AND THE TRACKING TEAM

Harrison cracks his neck. The silence is torture. Then:

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Oh, that view is tremendous.

And, John Glenn's in space. A collective sigh of relief.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Roger, that, Friendship 7. You are go
for orbit.

The journey has just begun. Harrison finally turns to the screens.

AL HARRISON
10.5 hours to go. If we make 7 round
trips.

He sits down. A rare event.

AL HARRISON (CONT'D)
I need a coffee.

Assistants scramble.

INT. WEST COMPUTER ROOM - LATER

The Computers are packing up for the day. Heading home. Dorothy's the last. She shuts off the TV.

Vivian Mitchell enters. Envelope in hand, she holds it out.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

New assignment came down the pike.

Dorothy takes the envelope. Doesn't want to open it.

VIVIAN MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Always changin' 'round here. Hard to keep up.

Dorothy opens the envelope. Reads. Poker-faced. She looks up to Vivian.

VIVIAN MITCHELL (CONT'D)

Seems like they're gonna need a permanent team to feed that IBM.

DOROTHY

How big of a team?

VIVIAN MITCHELL

30 to start.

They stare at each other for the longest time. An understanding between them. Some growth. But mostly...respect.

DOROTHY

Thank you for the information, Mrs. Mitchell.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

You're quite welcome...Mrs. Vaughan.

Mrs. Vaughan? Yes. She called her Mrs. Vaughan. Vivian walks out.

Dorothy opens the letter and re-reads:

INSERT - Dorothy Vaughan, Transfer Assignment to: IBM Computing Lab. Position: **Supervisor**.

She walks to the door. Turns back. Takes one last look at her old digs: the adding machines, the mismatched desks...and finally the "Colored Computers" sign. And...she shuts off the lights.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harrison's drinking coffee. Katherine's sitting in a chair. Stafford is talking to TECHS. Zielinski's eating a sandwich. Suddenly, a warning light blinks red.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Capcom 7, I have a warning light.

THE FRIENDSHIP 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

John Glenn inspects his console.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (IN JOHN'S EAR)
Standby, Friendship 7.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zielinski turns to Harrison.

ZIELINSKI
It's the heat shield lock, Al.

AL HARRISON
What are we looking at, Stafford?

STAFFORD
The heat shield may have come loose.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
7, will you confirm the landing bag is in
the OFF position?

THE FRIENDSHIP 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

John Glenn checks:

JOHN GLENN
Affirmative, Capcom.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (IN JOHN'S EAR)
Have you heard any banging noises or
anything of this type at higher rates?

JOHN GLENN
That's a negative.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stafford is a mess:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAFFORD

We need to get him down, now. We could
burn up on re-entry.

Harrison considers. Then:

AL HARRISON

Get Hawaii Capcom.

EXT. GRAMMAR SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Mary's outside her kids' school, scanning the dozens of
children for her little ones.

Levi, Jr. and Carolyn Marie break through the crowd. Hug
their Momma.

MARY

Gotta hurry, bunny rabbits. There's a
man in space. We don't want to miss it.

Mary stops in her tracks. Across the street: a CROWD is
gathering in front of an appliance store window full of TVs.
Anxiety. Worry on faces. A MAN yells:

MAN

Something's wrong with Glenn.

Mary pulls her kids that way.

APPLIANCE STORE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The TV Newscaster:

NEWSCASTER

We've just learned, the Friendship 7 is
in danger of losing its heat shield.

Mary and her kids, step up to the window. This is bad.

MARY

(talks to the TV)
Tell them not to jettison the retro-
package.

INT. DOROTHY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy's driving home. Listening to the radio newscast of
the mission. She turns the volume up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NEWSCASTER (ON RADIO)

NASA is confirming this is some sort of malfunction with the capsule's heat shield and it may not stay in place. This doesn't look good for John Glenn, America's hero...is in danger.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Panic. Stafford's on the phone. Harrison's talking at him.

AL HARRISON

Tell them not to jettison the retro-package. If the heat shield is loose, the retro-package straps might hold it in place.

PAUL STAFFORD

Hawaii. This is Langely...

He waits.

PAUL STAFFORD (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Oh, God. It's got to work.

KATHERINE

It will work. The retro pack will hold it until the re-entry pressure secures the shield.

Katherine gives Stafford a supportive nod.

APPLIANCE STORE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Mary talks to the TV.

MARY

He has to override the 05g.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The air doesn't move. Zielinski's also on the phone. He hollers out:

ZIELINSKI

He has to override the 05g.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)

Friendship 7, we're recommending that the retro-package NOT, I say again, NOT be jettisoned. This means that you will have to override the 05g switch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)

Ah, Roger, that command. I'll have to make a manual 05g entry, and bring the scope in.

AL HARRISON

He knows.

INT. DOROTHY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Driving. Listening to the radio.

NEWSCASTER (ON RADIO)

Without a heat shield, there's no way for John Glenn to get back through the Earth's atmosphere.

Dorothy sees cars in the middle of the road, pulled over on the shoulder, traffic stopped. Time stopped. PEOPLE are looking up to the sky. Some are on their knees: praying. Some crying.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All eyes on the screens:

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)

You're going to use fly-by-wire for reentry. You'll need to maintain a zero angle. Over.

THE FRIENDSHIP 7 CAPSULE - CONTINUOUS

John Glenn is oddly calm.

JOHN GLENN

Ah, Roger. I'm on fly-by-wire, back-it up with manual. Over.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (IN JOHN'S EAR)

Roger. The weather in the recovery area: 3-foot waves, 10 miles visibility.

JOHN GLENN

Roger. You're ground--
(static)
--you are going out--

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harrison rubs his whole head. Stafford is damn near shaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAFFORD

He's crossing the communication black-out zone.

AL HARRISON

Keep talking to him.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)

Seven, do you copy?

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)

I think the package just let go. Do you copy? There's a real fireball outside and--

John Glenn cuts off abruptly. The room is flattened.

KATHERINE

Please, God.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)

Friendship 7. Do you copy? Over.

Nothing. Stafford bends over, head in his hands.

Harrison walks over to the microphone. Leans down to it. Listens.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)

Friendship 7, do you copy? Over.

Nothing.

CAPE CANAVERAL - CONTINUOUS

Hundreds of people are silent outside the gates.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zielinski is motionless.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)

Friendship 7, do you copy? Over.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Dorothy's out of her car. Amongst the crowd. White, black, united. She gets down on her knees. The Radio broadcast echoes from the dozens of cars.

APPLIANCE STORE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The window reflects Mary and her kids...and the other frozen faces.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nothing moves. No one breathes. The air is still.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Friendship 7, do you copy? Over.

Still nothing. Harrison turns away from the screen.

And then miraculously:

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Loud and clear, Capcom.

Cheers of relief.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Roger that. How are you doing?

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
My condition is good. But that was a
real fireball, boy.

Stafford sinks into his chair, overwhelmed.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER
Roger that. Let's get you all the way
home.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Roger. Here's hoping these landing
coords still hold.

Harrison looks over at Katherine, she's on her tip toes.
Leaning, as if wishing the capsule on trajectory.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER
Approaching 16.119.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Roger.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER
Approaching -165.23. In 3, 2, 1.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
Engaging chutes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And then, on the screen, *Friendship 7* comes into view. The parachute deploying.

JOHN GLENN (V.O.)
How do I look, Capcom?

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER
Standby 7.

An Engineer hands the Mission Commander a calculation. He cross checks the coordinates. Then:

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (CONT'D)
Your Go/No Go is good. Landing
coordinates are spot on, 7.

Katherine breaths. Her numbers stood the test.

JOHN GLENN
Roger that, Capcom. Always wanted to
swim in the Bahamas. Over.

Katherine smiles over at a relieved Harrison.

CAPE CANAVERAL - CONTINUOUS

The Crowd erupts. Men shake the fence.

MISSION CONTROL COMMANDER (V.O.)
Friendship 7, we have you in our sights.
The Navy is en route to recover.

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Women are crying. Men hold kids. Dorothy smiles up at the sky.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
John Glenn has splashed-down and is being
recovered.

APPLIANCE STORE WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Mary screams out in joy.

MARY
Thank you, GOD!

The Crowd echoes the sentiment.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA CAMPUS - ANOTHER DAY

Mary's in cap and gown, post graduation. She runs into the waiting arms of: Katherine and Dorothy. Happiest day of her life. The women celebrate, laugh. Karl Zielinski tips his hat to Mary. Smiles at her.

Mary takes off her cap and throws it high into the sky.

Titles over: "Mary Jackson went on to obtain her Master's degree in engineering from the University of Virginia. She became the first female engineer...of any color at NASA."

INT. DOROTHY'S CAR - LATER

Dorothy's driving home.

Titles over: "Dorothy Vaughan became the Head of Langley's centralized Electronic Computing Group, as NASA's first black Supervisor. In 1964 she joined the Scout Team, working to send unmanned explorers to Mars."

INT. IBM COMPUTER ROOM - SOME TIME LATER

Dorothy's standing in front of the mainframe, her sleeves rolled up. Vivian Mitchell walks in with a GROUP OF TRANSFER EMPLOYEES. Black and white. All women.

VIVIAN MITCHELL

Girls. This is Mrs. Vaughan. Your supervisor. She'll show you how things work.

Dorothy looks over her new employees.

DOROTHY

Ladies...better roll those sleeves up. This here is manual labor.

TRACKING CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A celebration. Engineers hug each other. Cigars are lit. Somewhere champagne pops. Harrison walks over to Katherine.

AL HARRISON

Nice work, Katherine.

He offers her his hand. They shake.

KATHERINE

You too, Mr. Harrison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He smiles, for the first time. Ever. Underneath it all...Harrison's a kid:

AL HARRISON

You think we can get to the moon?

Katherine nods, with all the certainty in the world:

KATHERINE

We're already there, sir.

Titles over: "In 1962 Katherine Johnson became a permanent member of the Space Task Group. She went on to perform the calculations for Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins's, *Apollo 11* flight to the moon. A year later, her backup calculations proved critical to the successful effort to rescue the astronauts in the damaged *Apollo 13* spacecraft. In 2015, Katherine was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

INT. SPACE TASK GROUP - A YEAR LATER

The Space Task Group is all but empty. Katherine finishes typing a report: "Notes on Space Technology" by, Paul Stafford...and...Katherine Johnson. She pulls the cover page out of the typewriter, sets it on top of the rest of the manuscript.

Stafford walks over, puts a cup of coffee on Katherine's desk. Picks up the report. He walks off.

Katherine sips her coffee. Another day at work.

FADE OUT.

The end.

*