

To the Moon by Natalie Keith  
WGAE Registration #I345260

FADE IN:

INT. THOMAS'S BEDROOM - DAY

A 13-year-old boy, THOMAS SPENSER, is lying in bed sleeping. A series of loud, whooshing sounds from a descending hot air balloon can be heard. He throws back the covers, jumps out of bed and rushes out of the room.

INT. DOTTIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Thomas shakes his 6-year-old sister, DOTTIE SPENSER, to wake her.

THOMAS  
Wake up, Dottie. They're coming.

Dottie sits up and rubs her eyes.

EXT. SPENSER'S YARD - DAY

Thomas and Dottie are running, waving their arms to the hot air balloon as it drifts past them. The loud, whooshing sounds continue.

THOMAS  
Land, land!

DOTTIE  
Land, please!

The hot air balloon drifts past them into the horizon and out of their sight.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - DAY

Thomas, Dottie and their mother, HELEN SPENSER, are sitting around the table eating breakfast.

DOTTIE  
If they land in our yard they have to bring us champagne, right Mommy?

HELEN  
That's right.

THOMAS  
And they have to open the bottle and toast to our good fortune.

HELEN  
You bet they do.

THOMAS  
I wish they'd land.

DOTTIE  
Me, too.

HELEN  
Some day they might.

FRANK SPENSER, husband and father, enters the kitchen with a bag of groceries in his arms. He pulls out a box of doughnuts.

FRANK  
Look what I brought, doughnuts!

THOMAS  
Way to go, Dad.

DOTTIE  
Did you bring me a jelly doughnut?

FRANK  
Did I bring you a jelly doughnut?  
Is the sky blue? Does the Pope live  
in Rome?

Frank opens the box of doughnuts.

FRANK  
Dottie, my dear. I brought you  
three.

Dottie smiles and reaches into the box for a doughnut.

DOTTIE  
Can I have some cocoa?

FRANK  
(in a joking voice)  
Cocoa? Why even the bloomin' king  
doesn't have cocoa!

Dottie giggles.

HELEN  
Did you buy potatoes, like I asked?

FRANK  
(hesitating)  
No.

HELEN  
How am I supposed to make  
Shepherd's pie without potatoes?

FRANK  
I forgot.

HELEN  
(angrily)  
All I asked was for you to buy  
potatoes. Couldn't you remember  
that one item?

THOMAS  
I'll go to the store for you, Mom.

HELEN  
(to Frank)  
You know I can't go to the store  
for myself. You know I don't drive.

FRANK  
(angrily)  
Why are making such a big deal?  
I'll go to the store later.

THOMAS  
I can do it.

HELEN  
Thomas, don't be ridiculous. How  
are you going to balance a sack of  
potatoes on your bicycle?

THOMAS  
I balance my newspapers every  
morning.

HELEN  
You wouldn't have to balance  
anything if your father had just  
done as I asked.

Frank slams down the box of doughnuts and grabs Helen's arm,  
squeezing it hard. Helen winces.

FRANK  
I said I'd go to the store later!

INT. THOMAS' SCIENCE CLASS - DAY

The science teacher, MR. JENKINS, is handing out flyers.

MR. JENKINS

I know you're going to be very busy this summer, but I have a homework assignment for you.

The class groans.

MR. JENKINS

The good news is that it's optional. The county is holding a science fair next fall called "To the Moon." The grand prize is a trip to Cape Canaveral to see where the astronauts are going to be launched into space.

The students chatter with excitement.

MR. JENKINS

The only requirement is that your project be somehow related to space.

Mr. Jenkins finishes handing out the flyers.

MR. JENKINS

I'd like you to give some thought to entering this summer. I've seen some brilliant science minds at work this year.

Thomas stares at the flyer with interest. His classmate, GEORGE, leans over to whisper to him.

GEORGE

Are you going to enter, Thomas?

THOMAS

I don't know.

GEORGE

I'd love to see where the astronauts are taking off.

THOMAS

Me, too.

Mr. Jenkins notices the two boys talking.

MR. JENKINS  
Is there something you'd like to  
share with the class, Tommy?

THOMAS  
It's Thomas.

MR. JENKINS  
(a little taken aback)  
What?

THOMAS  
My name is Thomas, not Tommy. I'm  
not a little kid.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Frank and Thomas are looking at cans of paint.

FRANK  
I need latex. Try to find it in  
semi-gloss.

A man about the same age as Frank, RAY FREEMAN, walks down  
the aisle.

RAY  
Frank?

FRANK  
Ray! What a surprise. Thomas, look  
who's here.

THOMAS  
Hi, Mr. Freeman.

FRANK  
I haven't seen you around much  
lately. How have you been?

RAY  
(whistfully)  
I'm doing okay. It's hard without  
Susan.

Frank shakes his head.

FRANK  
They really need to do something  
about that road.

RAY

The police said even if she had been driving slower, it wouldn't have mattered. I guess they don't call it Dead Man's Curve for nothing. (beat) How's Helen?

FRANK

She's fine.

RAY

And Dottie?

FRANK

She's great. (beat) Did you see the Jefferson Eagles almost took the whole state last year?

Ray chuckles.

RAY

Just like the good 'ole days, huh?

Frank cocks his arm back and pretends to throw a football.

FRANK

Freeman to Spenser for six.

RAY

We were quite a team.

FRANK

A one-two punch.

RAY

Thomas, are you playing baseball this year?

THOMAS

(excitedly)

I'm playing shortstop this season.

RAY

(proudly)

I knew you had it in you!

FRANK

That glove work you did with him last season really paid off.

RAY

I can't take any credit. It was all Thomas.

Thomas beams.

FRANK

We miss you down at the ballfield.  
Are you going to coach again?

RAY

(pensively)

Not right now. It's just too hard.  
You know I still haven't sorted  
through Susan's things?

FRANK

Just give it time.

RAY

Well, I guess I should be going.  
Say hello to Helen for me. Thomas,  
keep up the good work.

FRANK

We should get together some time.  
Like the good 'ole days.

As Ray is walking away, Frank pretends to throw him a football. Ray pretends to catch it.

INT. SPENSER'S DEN - NIGHT

Frank, Thomas and Dottie are staring at Frank's latest would-be invention, an automatic card shuffler. The shelves of the den are filled with similar devices. Frank demonstrates how it works.

FRANK

You place the cards in this slot,  
flip the switch, and voila! If  
shuffles the cards for you.

DOTTIE

Wow, you're a real inventor.

FRANK

Some day these inventions will make  
us filthy rich.

Dottie and Thomas continue to play with the device.

THOMAS

Are you going to quit your job?

DOTTIE

Are you going to stop being a  
distribution manager?

FRANK

I'd love to quit that dead end job.  
But I have to strike it rich first.  
Then we'll take a long vacation.  
Like in those pictures you always  
look at in the travel agency,  
Thomas.

Frank picks up Dottie and places her on his lap.

FRANK

We'll go to Disney World and see  
Mickey Mouse. Then we'll go to the  
ocean and swim in the blue waters.

THOMAS

Can we stay at a hotel with a pool?

FRANK

You bet we can!

THOMAS

You're the greatest, Dad. We're  
going to be rich!

FRANK

Nothing's going to stop Frank  
Spenser.

Thomas looks at the device.

THOMAS

(innocently)

Hey, Dad, can't people just shuffle  
their own cards? I mean, this is a  
neat machine but...

FRANK

But why would you want to shuffle  
your own cards if you had this. You  
just put the cards in the slot and  
the work is done for you.

THOMAS

Don't people like to shuffle their  
own cards sometimes.

FRANK

Well, sure, but this will be available for the times that they don't.

THOMAS

I guess you'll figure it.

FRANK

You guess I'll figure it out? Doubting Thomas, what am I going to do with you?

Helen pokes her head into the den.

HELEN

(smiling)

Hey, guys, it's on!

INT. SPENSER'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The family is gathered around the television set. A news broadcast about the Apollo 11 mission to the moon is being aired. The astronauts are set to launch in a few months.

THOMAS

Do you think they'll make it, Dad?

FRANK

Sure they will. The United States of America never misses.

HELEN

I wonder what the moon's like.

FRANK

(to Dottie)

The moon's made of cheese! Swiss cheese!

DOTTIE

The moon's made of cheese!

HELEN

It's really incredible, Frank. I just never imagined we'd put a man on the moon.

DOTTIE

Daddy, are you going to invent something for the moon?

FRANK

How about a moon fondue pot? Or a moon slicer? You can make moon pizza.

DOTTIE

You're silly.

FRANK

What do you think, Helen? Can I invent something for the moon?

HELEN

(hesitating)

If you set your mind to it.

FRANK

If I set my mind to it? Of course I'll set my mind to it. What do you think, Thomas? Can your old man invent something for the moon?

THOMAS

(excitedly)

Sure, you can.

(to Helen)

We're going to go to Disney World. You know, in Florida? After Dad strikes it rich.

HELEN

(chuckles)

Disney World, huh? I'd settle for the bills being paid on time.

FRANK

C'mon Helen, can't we dream a little?

Frank approaches Helen. He lifts her to her feet and they dance while Frank sings "Blue Moon."

FRANK

Blue Mooonnn. I saw you standin' alooone. Without a dream in your heart, without a love of your own.

Helen and the children laughs.

HELEN

You're crazy.

FRANK

You know, there was a day when you used to believe in my silly dreams.

HELEN

You're right, there was a day. One day. Or maybe it was two.

Frank smiles. He dips Helen.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Helen is sitting at the kitchen table, mending a pair of Frank's pants. Frank enters and puts on his coat and hat.

HELEN

Where are you going?

FRANK

I'm going out for a while.

HELEN

To the VFW?

FRANK

Yes, to the VFW.

HELEN

This is the third time this week.

FRANK

I'll be home early.

HELEN

That's what you said last time. You didn't make it home until two o'clock in the morning.

FRANK

I work hard. I deserve to go out once in a while, don't you think? I have a lot of responsibilities at work. People depend on me. I need to blow off steam.

HELEN

What about us? The kids and I depend on you, too. And why did you tell them that we're going to Disney World. You know we can't afford it.

FRANK

You make it sound like I'm abandoning my family. I'm just spending some time with my friends. Just blowing off a little steam is all.

HELEN

And while you're blowing off steam, I'm home mending your pants so you don't look like a vagabond at work. I'm making sure the kids are fed and ready for school.

(beat)

I wish I could blow off steam sometimes.

Helen throws the pants on the floor and marches out of the kitchen.

INT. VFW BAR - NIGHT

Frank is sitting on a bar stool in between two friends, JACK and BILL. Several empty glasses are on the bar in front of them. The bartender, DONNIE, approaches the trio.

DONNIE

What it'll be, Frankie?

FRANK

Line 'em up. This round's on me.

(to friends)

So Jacobs tells me I got to work overtime or he'll fire me. He says it's company policy and he doesn't want to tell the higher ups but, if I force him to, he will. So I stand up, walk over to him and put my cigarette in his coffee cup.

Jack and Bill laugh loudly, clapping their hands.

JACK

So what have you invented lately?

FRANK

I got this card shuffler I'm working on. You put the deck in and it shuffles automatically.

BILL

Brilliant. You could sell 'em in Vegas. Sell millions of 'em to all those casinos.

JACK

Yeah, millions of 'em. Frankie's always on the money. Like 1946. The Eagles are down by five as Frank Spenser marches onto the gridiron. It's late in the fourth quarter.

As Jack is talking, Frank gets up and jogs to the other end of the bar. On the way, he climbs over a few chairs for effect.

JACK

He's going deep.

Jack picks up his wallet and cocks his arm back like he's throwing a football.

JACK

He gets past one defender, then another. He's in the end zone.

Jack throws his wallet.

JACK

It's good! Touchdown! The Jefferson Eagles do it again!

BILL

You were quite the catch back then.

FRANK

That's what all the ladies told me.

BILL

You could have went to State. On a full scholarship, I bet you.

FRANK

If my knee hadn't given out.

BILL

It's too bad.

FRANK

(longingly)  
I miss the good 'ole days.

JACK  
But Frankie Spenser never misses.

Frank takes the cue and gets up from the bar stool. He jogs to the end of the bar.

JACK  
It's a Hail Mary!

Jack tosses his wallet to Frank, who catches it and spikes it on the floor like a football. Jack and Bill howl with laughter.

INT. THOMAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

A door slams and Thomas awakens startled. The sound of his parents arguing downstairs can be heard. Thomas tosses and turns trying to ignore the yelling. He places a pillow over his head trying to muffle out the sound. Dottie runs into the room clutching her Piglet stuffed animal and jumps on his bed.

DOTTIE  
I hate it when they fight.

THOMAS  
Me, too.

The arguing continues. A loud crash can be heard.

DOTTIE  
What should we do?

THOMAS  
I don't know. Maybe they'll stop.

The children hear a loud thud, then the sounds of their mother crying.

DOTTIE  
Is Mommy okay?

THOMAS  
I think so.

Thomas pulls the curtain back from the window to distract Dottie.

THOMAS  
Look at the moon.

DOTTIE  
It's so bright. It looks hot.

THOMAS  
That's where the astronauts are  
going to land.

DOTTIE  
Will they get burned?

THOMAS  
No.

The children hear more noises. Dottie looks at the stuffed  
animal.

DOTTIE  
Piglet says we need to be brave.

THOMAS  
Piglet's right. What else does he  
say?

DOTTIE  
He says not to worry because Thomas  
will take care of us. Thomas is  
big. He's in junior high school.  
(beat)  
If things got really bad, could you  
help Mommy?

THOMAS  
I could help her.

DOTTIE  
How?

Thomas gets up and pokes his head out of the bedroom door.

THOMAS  
I can call the police.

DOTTIE  
Will the police help Mommy?

THOMAS  
They have to. That's their job.  
They keep the peace.

The children hear more loud noises. Thomas climbs back onto  
the bed.

DOTTIE  
I'm scared.

THOMAS  
I know.

Thomas moves closer to Dottie. He places his hands over her ears.

CUT TO:

Dottie has fallen asleep so Thomas lifts her and brings her back to her bedroom.

CUT TO:

It's still dark when an alarm clock sounds. Thomas turns off the alarm and gets up.

INT. OUTSIDE PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY

As he is making his way downstairs, Thomas peeks into his parent's bedroom and sees that they're sleeping.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - DAY

Thomas is working his way through a large stack of newspapers, methodically folding each one into a tight bundle before carefully placing it into a bag. As he folds, he looks at a news story about the Apollo 11 mission on the front page of the paper.

EXT. THE STREET - DAY

It is before dawn. Thomas is riding his bicycle down a deserted street, balancing a large bag of newspapers at his side. A car, with its headlights on, slows down and drives in the opposite lane as it passes Thomas. He puts the newspapers into mailboxes until he reaches Ray's house.

EXT. RAY FREEMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Thomas parks his bicycle in front of the house and walks to the front porch with a paper in his hand. He opens the screen door and is about to place the paper down when the front door opens.

RAY  
It's awful early.

THOMAS  
I don't want to be late for school.

RAY  
I'm glad they got you at short stop  
this season.

THOMAS  
(smiling)  
Thanks.

RAY  
Got time for some cocoa? I can give  
you some more pointers.

THOMAS  
Not this morning, Mr. Freeman.  
Maybe next time?

RAY  
Any time.  
(beat)  
Say, tell your parents we should  
have a barbecue sometime.

Thomas walks back to his bicycle.

THOMAS  
(over his shoulder)  
I will.

EXT. A SMALL TRAVEL AGENCY - DAY

A "closed" sign hangs on the agency door. A window display features a colorful brochure advertising a trip to Bermuda. The rising sun has cast a glare on the store front window so Thomas, with the empty newspaper bag at his side, places his hands on the window and presses his face against it to look inside.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - DAY

Thomas enters the kitchen, takes off his coat and puts his newspaper bag away.

THOMAS  
(surprised)  
Mom? Where are you?

INT. SPENSER'S BATHROOM - DAY

Helen is looking at her face in the mirror when Dottie enters.

DOTTIE

Mommy?

Helen turns around. She squats down to talk to Dottie, but keeps her right hand over her eye.

HELEN

What are you doing up do early?

DOTTIE

I couldn't sleep.

Dottie places her hand over her mother's. Helen slowly moves her hand down her face revealing the bruise that's underneath it.

DOTTIE

(shocked)

Are you okay, Mommy?

HELEN

I'll live.

Helen picks up Dottie and places her on edge of the sink. She is studying her face in the mirror when Thomas enters.

THOMAS

Mom, why aren't you...?

Helen turns around revealing the bruise. Thomas is taken aback. The two stare at each other at a loss for words.

HELEN

Why don't you come sit up on the sink with us?

Thomas moves closer to his mother. He tries to fight the tears that are streaming down his face.

THOMAS

I'm too big for that.

HELEN

No, you're not.

Thomas crosses his arms and looks away. Helen runs her fingers through his hair. Thomas embraces her.

HELEN

I need you to go wake up your father.

INT. PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY

Thomas hesitates at the doorway of the bedroom. He walks over to his father and nudges him.

THOMAS

Dad, wake up.

Frank rolls over but ignores Thomas. Thomas nudges him again.

THOMAS

Wake up. You have to go to work.

FRANK

I got time. Don't worry.

THOMAS

You'll be late again.

FRANK

I won't be late. Go get ready for school or something.

Thomas pulls on Frank's arm, trying to get him to sit up.

THOMAS

I'm not leaving until you get up.

FRANK

Jesus Christ.

Frank finally sits up. Thomas rifles through the closet.

THOMAS

Where are your clean shirts?

FRANK

I can dress myself, for Christ's sake.

THOMAS

Well go ahead, then.

Thomas pulls some clothing out of a drawer.

THOMAS

Are you going to get up?

FRANK  
(angrily)  
Yes, damn it. Now get out of here!

THOMAS  
I'll go downstairs and make some  
coffee.

INT. FRANK'S WORKPLACE - DAY

Frank is sitting at his desk doing paperwork. He looks haggard; the collar of his shirt is slightly torn. A few of his would-be inventions are sitting on his desk. He stops the paperwork and fiddles with the gadgets.

CUT TO:

The outside of a door reads "Richard Jacobs, Manager." The door opens and Jacobs pokes his head out.

JACOBS  
Frank, can I see you for a minute?

FRANK  
I'm right in the middle of these  
distribution reports.

JACOBS  
It's important.

Frank puts down the gadget and gets up from his desk.

INT. JACOB'S OFFICE - DAY

Jacobs is seated at his desk and Frank is seated in a chair across from him. Jacobs looks tense. He scratches his head.

JACOBS  
You were late this morning. That's  
the second time this week. I'm  
getting a lot of pressure from  
upstairs.

FRANK  
I know, I know. It's just that my  
kid's got this paper route and  
sometimes I have to drive him. You  
know how kids can be.

JACOBS  
I got three of my own.

FRANK  
I'll try to do better.

Frank gets up.

JACOBS  
You look like shit, Frank.

Frank sits back down.

JACOBS  
I know we go back a long time, but  
I got a business to run. I can only  
turn my back so many times.

FRANK  
Remember when those files were  
missing? Everybody was saying,  
"Jacobs screwed up." Everybody but  
me. Your old pal Frankie.

JACOBS  
They turned up a week later.

FRANK  
I found them.

JACOBS  
You saved my ass.

FRANK  
Frankie to the rescue.

Jacobs leans back in his car and sighs.

JACOBS  
You seen McElroy at the VFW lately?

Frank looks down at the floor and says nothing.

JACOBS  
I want to believe you Frank. You  
just make it so god damn hard  
sometimes.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Helen, Thomas and Dottie are eating dinner. A place has been set for Frank, but he is not present. Thomas peers up at the clock above the table. It reads 7:10 p.m.

THOMAS  
Is Dad working late tonight?

Helen sighs.

HELEN  
He was supposed to be home at six  
o'clock like usual.

THOMAS  
Should I clear his plate?

HELEN  
(distractedly)  
No, he might show up.

DOTTIE  
We learned about caterpillars at  
school today.

HELEN  
Is that so?

DOTTIE  
They're hairy with about a billion  
legs.

Helen begins to pour milk into a glass. It overflows.

THOMAS  
Mom, watch it!

Helen stops what she's doing.

DOTTIE  
If you're real nice to the  
caterpillars, they turn into  
butterflies. But you have to be  
real nice to them, or else they'll  
crawl into a tree and never come  
out again.

HELEN  
Thomas, did you put the lawn mower  
away? It's supposed to rain  
tonight.

Dottie starts to play with the items on the table. She is  
still muttering to herself about the butterflies.

THOMAS  
I'll do it after dinner.

HELEN

If it rains, the blades will rust.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Helen is ironing Frank's shirts. His plate is still on the table. Everything else has been cleared. Thomas walks into the kitchen and looks up at the clock.

THOMAS

I'm going to bed. Goodnight.

Thomas walks over to his mother and kisses her goodnight. Helen kisses him, but it's clear that her thoughts are miles away.

INT. THOMAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thomas is awoken by a loud thud. He bolts upright. The sound of his parents' fighting can be heard, but it's louder than last time. Dottie bursts open the door and jumps into bed.

DOTTIE

(crying)

Thomas! Thomas! You have to do something.

THOMAS

They might stop.

DOTTIE

Please! You have to make them stop!

Thomas walks to the door and looks out.

THOMAS

I'm scared, Dottie. I don't know what to do.

Dottie is beside herself. She clutches onto Thomas.

DOTTIE

Mommy's hurt, I just know it. You have to save her!

Thomas takes Dottie by the hand.

THOMAS

Come with me.

The children go their parents' bedroom. Thomas picks up the phone and dials.

THOMAS  
Is this the police department?

CUT TO:

Thomas and Dottie are huddled together in a corner of the bedroom. A police siren can be heard.

INT. SPENSER'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The doorbell rings and Frank opens it. OFFICER BAKER is at the door.

FRANK  
Can I help you, officer?

OFFICER BAKER  
We got a call about a disturbance.  
What seems to be the problem, here?

FRANK  
No problem.

OFFICER BAKER  
Can I come in?

Frank allows the officer to enter. Helen is sitting at the kitchen table. Her face is red and her hair is a mess. Thomas and Dottie are nearby, tending to her.

FRANK  
My wife and I had a little  
disagreement is all. Nothing we  
can't work out ourselves.

OFFICER BAKER  
Say, aren't you Frank Spenser?

FRANK  
(surprised)  
Yes. Yes, I am.

OFFICER BAKER  
You played wide receiver for the  
Jefferson Eagles. Do you remember  
that game against the Titans in  
'47? You made that diving catch in  
the end zone?

OFFICER BAKER(cont'd)  
You were one of the best receivers  
this county's ever seen.

FRANK  
Thanks, I appreciate it. I do  
remember that game. We won it in  
overtime.

Officer Baker leans back in admiration.

OFFICER BAKER  
Are you sure everything's okay  
here?  
(to Helen)  
Ma'am is everything okay?

HELEN  
I suppose everything's okay now.  
Kids, why don't you go back to bed?

Officer Baker heads for the door.

THOMAS  
Wait, don't go!

FRANK  
Thomas, officer...What's your name,  
officer?

OFFICER BAKER  
Officer Baker.

FRANK  
Officer Baker has important police  
business to tend to. We shouldn't  
prevent him from doing his job.

OFFICER BAKER  
You have a nice night now.

Officer Baker leaves.

INT. THOMAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

With the officer gone, the fighting has resumed. Thomas and  
Dottie are huddled in his bedroom. Dottie has calmed down,  
but is still scared.

THOMAS  
You wait here, Dottie. I'm going to  
get help.