

I am sitting on the launch pad, in full flight gear ready to launch. I feel the heavy weight of my protective suit and my essential helmet. The hundreds of flashing lights, knobs, and buttons that I have studied so closely are all blinking and flashing in front of me. I look out the window and see the steam rising from the bottom of the rocket as I sit with my feet toward the sky and my back toward the ground. My heart rate is so high mission control asks me if I'm okay. The anticipation is building. This mission is called Discover and it will be the most important yet, and if it succeeds, I will be the most famous astronaut in the world. The goal is to look for life outside our earth. After orbiting around the earth for a few days, my one-man crew and I will tour the planets. There is only ten minutes till the launch, and my mind is racing. What if something goes wrong? What if I black out during takeoff? What if, what if, what if that's all I can think about. I know my family is waiting a couple miles away feeling the same fears I am, and hoping for the best. T-1 minute and we are doing comm checks, T-30 seconds and I close my visor. T-10, 9,8,7,6,5,4, Orbiter ignition, 2,1, main engine ignition! T+3,4,5, and the rocket has cleared the tower! I feel the deep, skull-rattling vibration as the rocket rapidly picks up speed and altitude. During the roll program, I feel slightly light headed as the rocket barrel rolls in mid air, but it is so minor and it goes away so fast that I don't even tell mission control. SRB separation and I am almost in space! Next comes a very hard and dangerous part. The rocket must slow down so it does not get ripped apart by forces many times the strength of earth's gravity. After we slow down, we have to speed up again to make it out of the atmosphere. This is when I am afraid of blacking out. I get the okay and start the throttle up program. Suddenly my head starts to hurt. In fact, it feels like it is about to explode! Then I see rainbow colors flashing in front of my eyes. I look out the window and see the blackness of space. That is the last thing I see.

I wake up in my rocket. Everything seems the same. My equipment is flashing, and my suit feels very light. I look out the window and see the earth. I am on the bright side of the earth, and everything looks normal. Then I realize that I should call mission control and tell them I'm okay. I say into my headset, "Houston this is Discover, I think I blacked out, but I'm okay now. How do you read? Over." I wait,

and wait, and wait. I wait five minutes and frantically try to call again, "Houston this is Discover. Do you read?" I wait another ten minutes with out any response. Apparently I am on my own. I look at my watch, and notice something very mysterious. I launched at 3:00, but my watch says it is 2:00! Now I am starting to get worried. This makes no sense! Since day and night when you're orbiting the earth is only about forty minutes, I am coming around the dark side of the earth. My gaze is abruptly cut off when I notice that the earth is perfectly dark! I can't see any lights on the surface! I know this is very odd because the earth is filled with the man made lights of the twenty first century. I have to make a decision. Without mission control, it is almost impossible for me to go on and explore the planets, but it will also be very hard for me to reenter the earth's atmosphere. Because it seems impossible to leave orbit with out contact with mission control, I decide to go for the reentry. I check all the systems and follow the instruction book for emergency reentry. The mission is planned to splash down off the coast of London. Since Houston will not be expecting me for a long time, I figure I will have to get ashore and walk to London to call mission control. So, after checking everything over again, I start the reentry. The heat on the spacecraft is immense as my tiny ship pierces earth's thick atmosphere. I wait and hope that I will hit water and not land. Finally the heat dies down and I wait for the huge jerk when the parachutes open.... Now! The parachutes open successfully and I splash down off the cost of London. Immediately I inflate the floats to keep the craft upright in the rough ocean, and then I prepare to exit. I take all the food packets I have and anything else I might need on my walk to London. I get out of my craft and jump into the water, it is really hard to swim with all the heavy equipment I have, but my flotation devices kick in and I am okay. I can see the shore off in the distance, but I have a solution to that. I take a small floating board out of my pack and when I hit a button, a propeller comes out of the bottom of the board and we are ready to ride the waves.

I arrive in London I notice why there are no lights from space! There are no street lamps! Maybe they are replacing them or something. After I come ashore I take off my space suit by hitting a small button that causes the suit to pop off of me into a

small square that I put into my pack. I see a small, grubby looking man wearing strange clothes walking on the street, and I figure I will just ask him if he knows where there is a phone I can use to call NASA. Approaching the man I ask, "Excuse me sir, do you know where I can find a pay phone?"

Then man immediately looks at me and yells, "Ahhh it's a wizard, a wizard! He has come to curse us! Ahhhh!" The strange man runs away screaming. I am not overly surprised, because I am pretty sure there are some odd people in London too, but I am slightly disturbed by his reaction. I walk around the corner of a very old looking building and step onto what I think is the main road. I am amazed! The road is dirt, and the people that fill it are all dressed like the strange man! They are clumped together in a huge pack, yelling and screaming in a strange accent. Some of them are riding horse drawn carriages, and they are going in and out of old, dirty, smelly houses. Now, I know a bit about history and I realize what has happened to me. I am in 1530's London. As I walk down the street, people look at me aghast and most run for their lives.

I need a place to live, but it seems that the only way to get someone to help me is to change into clothes more of the period. I find an old cloak on the ground and drape it over my shoulders. After slipping on some scavenged pants, I am ready to go. I see a man holding a scroll, and decide to ask him to lodge me. He is nimble looking like an actor or a gymnast, and sounds like he can project his voice very well as he talks to other people on the street. Posing as a poor person, but not a beggar, because the streets are filled with those, I approach the man. I say, "Hello kind sir, I am a poor traveler from far away, and I need a place to lodge. Do you know of a place I can stay?". The man smiled a warm, welcoming smile.

"Hello son, thee art very welcome to stay in my house until you can find a job to pay for your own, and by the way, my name is Willy, Willy Shakespeare." I don't even think twice about the name as the friendly man leads me to the house to get settled in. We are walking down the street when the man suddenly says, "Here, This is my house, thou may go inside and get settled. There is food in the basement for thee to eat, and I will be back in a couple of hours. While I'm gone, it would be nice of thee to clean up

my house to repay me for thou lodging." So, I step inside the humble little house and take a look around. Seeing a duster and a bottle of water, I start to clean with the primitive supplies that I have. As I move through the house I notice a couple rooms with regular beds and unlit candles hanging on the walls. Then, I come to a slightly bigger room that I take to be Shakespeare's. Sitting on a small desk is a scroll. The letters are old fashioned and hard to read, but I am able to read the title: *A Midsummer Nights Dream*. Just then, it hits me. This is William Shakespeare I'm dealing with, the famous playwright everyone learns about in seventh grade! Then, I hear the door open and decide its time to get back to work, so I wipe off the desk and continue to the bedside tables, when Willy walks in and says, "Good job! I can see that everything in my house is cleaner! Thou art a great worker and I am happy to lodge thee.

Surprised, and very thankful, I say, "Thank you very much sir, you have made my day!"

"How can I make your day?"

I quickly realize I have made a mistake by using a modern expression, and I say, "Uh-h never mind, I am from a far away place, and my speech is different from your kind." Shakespeare looks puzzled, but seems to believe me. After all, it was true. When night comes, Shakespeare gives me a lit candle, shows me to my bed and wishes me good night. The "bed" is made of tightly packed together straw, and I feel that I am not alone. After a restless night, I awakened to Willy leaning over me. He said, "Thank the Lord thou art okay! I thought thee might have perished in the night!"

"No I am quite okay!", I said tiredly.

"Now friend," Willy says, "I have a play called *Midsummer Nights Dream* showing today at the wonderful Globe Theatre. Would thee like to attend and watch this beautiful production?"

"Yes!" I say. I have never seen a play before, and I really wanted to see one. Plus when I get home I will tell everyone about it!.....Wait...home... To be honest, I haven't thought about it until now. Why am I even here? Why would I suddenly be warped back in time for no reason?

I think over my life. I analyze every single aspect of my life. My family, my friends, my work, my self. Then I realize something. I was a very selfish person. My whole life I had been a person that only cared about me. Me, me, me. I was going to be the most famous person in the world. I would fly the first manned space flight to find other life. I, I, and I that's all that mattered to me. I conclude that a greater power must have decided that I need to change. But now, I am going to see one of Shakespeare's greatest plays and nothing will keep me from enjoying it.

Willy and I start to walk through the crowded streets to get to the theatre. The streets and the people smell the same: horrible! Then we arrive at the theatre. "Let me just glance in here and see if it is crowded.... Whoa! The place is crowded! Lets go in the back door." Says Shakespeare. As we walk in the back door, I see all the stagehands running around carrying huge banners and costumes and numerous other things. Willy stops one and talks to him for a couple seconds and then says, "Hither follow me and I will take thee to one of the best seats we have at the theater."

He shows me to a royal looking seat in a balcony. As he starts to leave I say, "Thank you so much Mr. Shakespeare for letting me sit in this great seat and watch your amazing play!"

"Thou art very welcome", said Willy, "and I prithee enjoy it." I assume "prithee" means something like I hope? Well any way, the play was about to start and I was excited to see the actors dance across the stage. Then, suddenly an actor popped out from behind the curtain! He was wearing a bright colored costume and he had streaks of makeup across his face.

He said, with expression and volume,  
*"Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour  
 Draws on apace; four happy days bring in  
 Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow  
 This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,  
 Like to a step-dame or a dowager  
 Long withering out a young man revenue".*

I sit back and enjoy the play. It is wonderful with the brightly colored actors dancing across the stage and beautiful words flowing out of their mouths. Something inside me changes. I feel like a different person, but I can't put my finger on exactly what has changed. I am starting to feel really homesick! My family is probably missing me and I really need to get back before I forget I ever left my own time. What I mean is, my memory is starting to get a little fuzzy. I am having trouble remembering my extended families names and I really need to get back to my time before I forget I ever left! I decide that the best thing to do at this point is to try to go back to the spacecraft to retrieve any other supplies I might need that could help me get back. So, after the play is done I flag down Willy, as he is running around telling everyone they did a great job, I say, "Wow that play was amazing! I had so much fun watching it! If it is okay with you, I am going to go out looking for a job. See you later!"

Willy says, "Thank thee very much and I prithee have good luck finding a job." Leaving the theatre, I go to the shore where I buzzed in on my motorized kick board, and pull that very thing out of my backpack. I fire it up and jump on! Putting up the throttle to full speed, I look back at beautiful London and then look ahead at the stunning sunset I am zipping off into.

Up ahead, I see my spacecraft floating in the water. It looks a bit unstable, but I have to risk going in to look for supplies. I put my kick board in my backpack and climb up the side of the spacecraft. I jump down into my vehicle, but keep the hatch open so I can escape if I need to. As I start to look around inside the craft, it is wobbling in the water and I hear the stabilizing floats pop! At this point, I figure it is probably a really good idea to get out of there! I start to climb up to the hatch, but the craft is quickly sinking. Just as I am about to reach for the hatch, water gushes over the edge of it and pushes me back to the bottom of my craft. Then, I hear the hatch close and I am holding my breath. I get this horrible feeling. The cold water freezes up all my limbs. I realize I am going to die in 1539 London and I will never see any one of my loved ones again. All those friends back at NASA will be wondering where I am and I will just be dead in the bottom of a spacecraft in 1539. My whole body is on fire by now. My lungs are yelling at me, "Move! Get out of here! I need air!", but I can't, my body is

frozen. I can't move at all. Then, my chest tightens up. I can't do this any more. I let out my last breath.

I wake in my bed, feeling all wet and sticky, still figuring out that I had not drowned. I am Joe, a ten-year-old kid, and that was the weirdest dream I have ever had. Now, you gotta believe me when I tell you I'm not dreaming anymore, ok? Good. So, my life has been a little bit weird since my experience with Shakespeare. I feel like my dream actually taught me something about myself. I said weird, but actually, my life has been a little bit **better**. Someone who didn't even know me genuinely cared about me. He took me into his home and gave me the best seat in the house for his magical play. His kindness made me realize that I had to change how I live my own life. Now people tell me I am a nicer person and that I put others before my self. My pastor at church even tells me I value others opinions more then my own. The people who are closest to me tell me I have always been selfless, but I know that I was once selfish. God saw that I was being selfish and conceded, so he sent me back to Shakespeare's time to realize my mistakes, and when I came back, no one knew I was ever selfish. It was like their memory of my past behavior had been erased. God saw a problem in my life, helped me fix it, and then gave me a second chance. I think that's really cool!

THE END.