

# The Astronaut Wives Club

Episode 102  
"Protocol"

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based on a book by  
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FAKE EMPIRE  
GROUNDSWELL

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"PROTOCOL"

ACT ONE

1 INT./EXT. SPACE CAPSULE - DAY 1

QUICK IMPRESSIONISTIC CUTS of -- SMOKE. FLAMES. And GUS's distorted VOICE, echoing.

GUS

We've got a fire in here --

2 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING 2

BETTY wakes, gasping. She looks at Gus's side of the bed - empty - and sighs, relieved. She doesn't have to explain.

BETTY (O.S.)

It felt so real.

REVEAL we're now in --

3 INT. GARFINKEL'S DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY 3

Betty's with ANNIE in the dress department. (NOTE: after 101, Annie's stutter will no longer be indicated in dialog.)

ANNIE

It was just a bad dream. \*

BETTY

No, I've had dreams like this before. And they're more like...  
(drops her voice)  
... like I'm seeing what's gonna happen. There was a tornado, a farm accident, now this... \*

ANNIE

(firm)

It's nerves. That's all. \*

To get Betty to focus on the task at hand, Annie takes a yellow dress from a rack and holds it up, gestures like a game show host.

BETTY

It's pretty, but too... bright.

Annie holds up a cute black dress and does the same perky presentation. Betty sighs.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (CONT'D)

How can I think about what to wear  
to the White House after Gus's  
launch when I can't shake the  
feeling he's not gonna survive it?

They arrive at a mannequin decked out in a knock-off of the  
outfit Louise wore when she and Alan visited JFK and Jackie  
Kennedy. Behind the display is a framed photo of Louise and  
a sign that reads: "The First Lady of Space."

ANNIE

Talk to Louise. I bet she went  
through the same thing.

As Betty considers...

ALAN (O.S.)

She's my rock.

4 INT. LOCAL TV STUDIO - DAY

4

LOUISE and ALAN SHEPARD are in a local television studio  
being interviewed by GREGG FISHER, early 40s, Arlington's  
answer to Charlie Rose.

GREGG

Tell me about the first time you  
two met.

ALAN

I was visiting my sister at school.  
I saw Louise at a dance and I knew  
she was the one.

The Shepards share perfect smiles. This is exactly what the  
world wants from them.

ALAN (CONT'D)

The Mercury flight is my second  
proudest accomplishment. Getting  
Louise to marry me is number one.  
(teasing)  
Her nickname was "Frosty."

Louise twitches, slightly thrown by his revealing of this  
personal detail...

GREGG

Well, Mrs. Shepard, you must have  
had ice water in your veins the day  
your husband became the first  
American to go into space.

(CONTINUED)

... but she rallies, strong.

LOUISE

It wasn't ice water. It was faith.  
In God, in NASA and, most of all,  
in Alan.

We PAN ACROSS and watch Louise through a monitor on the set,  
then PULL BACK and find ourselves --

5 INT. SLAYTON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

5

MARGE, JO, TRUDY and RENE play the card game Euchre as they  
watch the interview on television. Marge finishes dealing  
and flips over the card on the top of the deck.

LOUISE (ON TV)

I had no doubt the mission was  
going to be a success.

JO

She's really good.  
(re: cards)  
Pass.

TRUDY

It's as if NASA programmed her.  
(re: cards)  
Pass.

MARGE

Eh, she's not bad, but she's no  
Primly Stable.  
(re: cards)  
No trump.

Marge and Rene share a smile. Private joke.

JO

Primly Stable?

MARGE

Rene, you gotta do it.

Rene hops up out of her chair. She loves doing this bit.  
She plays both the intrusive interviewer and Primly, the  
parody of the perfect astronaut Wife (aka, Louise).

RENE

(as interviewer)  
Tell me Mrs. Stable about the day  
of your husband's launch.  
(as Primly)  
Please, call me "Primly."  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RENE (CONT'D)

(as interviewer)

Primly, tell me about that day.

(as Primly)

I fed my family a hearty breakfast of fresh eggs and bacon from a pig I slaughtered myself, drove the kids to school, then came home and watched my husband's launch while singing the National Anthem.

Marge and Trudy laugh.

JO

Laugh all you want, but appearances matter. As it says in *The Navy Wife*, our job is to be our husbands' jib sail. We not only help them face the headwinds, we're the first thing people notice when he pulls into port.

Rene nudges Marge.

RENE

Take notes, 'cause after John goes up, it's Deke's turn.

Just then, the DOORBELL RINGS. Marge rises --

MARGE

I'll get right to work on my jib...

Marge opens the door and finds a SHIFTY-LOOKING MAN.

MAN

Mrs. Slayton? May I have a word alone with you?

MARGE

Depends on what the word is.

He slips her a card that says "NORMAN BURGESS, Licensed Private Detective." She raises a brow and hands it back.

MARGE (CONT'D)

No one in this house has any use for a private dick.

BURGESS

I'm actually fact-checking a story for *Confidential* magazine.

(CONTINUED)

MARGE

My husband's got no place in the pages of a rag like that.

BURGESS

I don't disagree, Ma'am. This story is about you.  
(off her look)  
Apparently you told quite a tale the other night. At a bar? One of the patrons was very taken with it.

She looks at him -- are you fucking serious? He is. She glances at the women, who peer over their Euchre hands at the front door. She steps out --

6 EXT. SLAYTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

6

Marge stares Burgess down.

MARGE

I don't know what you've dug up --

BURGESS

You had some pretty interesting times back in Los Angeles.

MARGE

I was poor. So was everybody else back then. If I did what I had to do, that doesn't make me a tabloid story, that makes me an American.

BURGESS

Does the name "Bud" ring a bell?

Marge tries not to flinch.

MARGE

You need to leave.

BURGESS

(smiles)  
Thanks, Mrs. Slayton. I think I got what I need.

He turns and starts to walk away --

MARGE

Yeah? And what's that?

BURGESS (OVER HIS SHOULDER)

A photo we can run.

(CONTINUED)

And Marge looks up as CLICK CLICK CLICK -- a PHOTOGRAPHER with a LONG LENS hangs out of a waiting CAR, snapping away. Burgess smiles. OFF MARGE --

**TITLE: THE ASTRONAUT WIVES CLUB**

7 INT. NASA - DUNK'S OFFICE - DAY

7

A cramped office - The wall is filled with framed articles featuring the Mercury Seven. DUNK PRINGLE faces Annie and JOHN GLENN as he pours himself a Scotch.

DUNK

You sure neither of you want to join me? I hate drinking alone.

Annie shakes her head, "no."

JOHN

No thank you, we'll pass.

DUNK

That's what I love about you two. The squeaky clean image.

JOHN

It's just who we are.

DUNK

That's what I mean, you don't stop. That being said, with Gus's launch coming up, we need to talk about how we're going to handle the public relations challenges that may occur when it's your turn.

He tries not to look at Annie. But they all know what he's talking about.

ANNIE

You mean me?

DUNK

(yes)

No, no. Of course not...

Dunk tosses back his Scotch.

JOHN

Give her time to prepare and don't throw Annie any curve balls, she'll have a few sentences ready.

(CONTINUED)

DUNK  
Without the...?

JOHN  
No stutter.

DUNK  
They may want more than a prepared  
statement. There could be  
questions --

ANNIE  
A wife who knows when to shut up?  
America will love me.

She smiles knowingly. John chuckles.

JOHN  
Like I said, she's gonna be fine.

On Dunk, less convinced...

8 INT. COOPER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

8

MUSIC comes from a radio. TRUDY folds laundry as her  
daughter CAM cuts out articles from the newspaper for a  
project with the title: "Bay of Pigs."

TRUDY  
Cam, it's way past your bedtime.

CAM  
Why aren't there any pictures of  
pigs?

TRUDY  
You know it's the name of a place  
in Cuba? No pigs were actually  
involved.

Cam sighs. Her mother can be so annoying.

CAM  
I'm not an idiot. But Mr. Ganders  
said we should put something "eye-  
catching" on the poster board.

TRUDY  
Got it. Sorry...

As Cam scours the paper, something catches her eye.



CAM  
Hey, did you know your friend Dot  
won the...  
(reading)  
"All Women Transcontinental Air  
Race?"

TRUDY  
Dot won?! We were training for  
that race...

Trudy takes the paper from Cam and starts reading.

CAM  
So then you might've won it?!

That's exactly what Trudy was thinking.

CAM (CONT'D)  
Why do they call it the "Powder  
Puff Derby?"

TRUDY  
Because they wanna make it seem  
like it's not important. But it  
is.

Trudy reads a little more about the race. We see the pain in  
her eyes. \*

PRE-LAP: LOUD SPLASH! \*

9 EXT. LANGLEY POOL - DAY 9

SCOTT GRISSOM just did a CANNONBALL into the pool as Betty  
and Louise enjoy a picnic spread on the grass nearby. A LIFE  
photographer takes pictures and reporter MAX KAPLAN takes  
notes. Betty brings a dipped chip to her mouth.

BETTY  
... I call it Texas Caviar, but  
that's just a fancy way of sayin'  
bean dip.

LOUISE  
It looks delicious.

It doesn't. An awkward beat. These two could not have less  
in common. Louise looks to Max.

LOUISE (CONT'D)  
Is there anything in particular you  
want us to talk about?

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Whatever you want. This is just a slice of life piece. One astronaut wife passing the torch to the next.

BETTY

Well, I read your LIFE article, and to be honest I don't think I could ever be that calm. How'd you do it?

Louise glances at Max. She hates that he knows the truth.

MAX

This can be off the record. Say whatever you want.

Louise turns to Betty. Hesitates, and then --

LOUISE

I had faith that everything would be all right. I refused to let myself waste time worrying.

Max reacts, surprised, and Louise avoids his gaze. Betty decides to just ask her question.

BETTY

Okay, but if you had a feeling -- not like a regular worry, but a strong, clear feeling that something was gonna go wrong with Alan's launch... would you have said something to him?

\*

Louise reacts, a little shocked.

LOUISE

Betty, you don't talk about that kind of nonsense with anybody, least of all your husband. If our men start to doubt themselves, even a little...

(stern)

Never share anything like that with Gus. Ever.

BETTY

But...

(fighting emotion)

I feel like I'm keeping it from him...

Max looks to Louise: you're seriously going to let her struggle like this? Louise turns away, pats Betty's arm.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE

That's exactly what you should do.  
I was fine. You will be too.  
(rising)  
My girls have been in the water  
awhile. I should get them out.

Louise crosses to the pool. Betty looks to Max.

BETTY

I'm taking the boys down to  
Florida. Last time we'll see Gus  
before the launch.  
(a decision)  
I won't tell him...

Max nods, watching Louise walk away, seemingly unperturbed.  
OFF LOUISE -- privately feeling the full weight of this  
exchange land.

10 INT. HOLIDAY INN - GUS'S ROOM - NIGHT

10

Betty, in her slip, unpacks her suitcase as GUS enters.

GUS

Betts!

She crosses and gives him a big hug.

BETTY

Hey, Hon. Just in time for a  
fashion show. The store let me  
take a few dresses on loan so you  
can pick the one you like the best  
for the White House.

She crosses to the closet and pulls out four black dresses.  
She holds one up against her body. Gus doesn't look happy.

BETTY (CONT'D)

You don't like the bow..?

Gus isn't paying attention to the bow, he's staring at the  
dresses lying on the bed. All black. Every one of them.

GUS

What the hell Betts? You plannin'  
on goin' to the White House or a  
funeral?

\*

Betty freezes, caught.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY

What--? No... that's...  
(off his look)  
Oh, you were joking.

GUS

(stares at her)  
I was. But now I got a feeling I  
might be onto something. What's  
goin' on? \*

Betty doesn't answer. Gus suddenly realizes what's wrong. \*

GUS (CONT'D) \*

You had one of your dreams, didn't  
you? About me... \*

BETTY \*

Yes. \*

He doesn't want to ask, but he needs to know. \*

GUS \*

And it was bad...? \*

BETTY \*

Real bad. \*

Betty tears up. Gus takes it in. He believes in these  
dreams as much as Betty does. He sits down on the bed. \*

BETTY (CONT'D) \*

I didn't wanna say anything. But  
maybe... maybe it's better I told  
you. 'Cause now -- \*

GUS \*

'Cause now... what? Now I march  
into NASA and tell them I can't go  
up 'cause my wife had a bad dream? \*

On the two of them, what are they going to do...? \*

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

11 EXT. BURGESS INVESTIGATIONS - DAY 11

Marge walks past a PAWN SHOP. In the window, a TV SET is tuned to a news broadcast. WE SEE footage of Freedom Riders fleeing a burning bus and then being attacked by Bull Connor and his cronies. Marge looks at the number above a shitty wooden door, steels herself and enters.

12 INT. BURGESS INVESTIGATIONS - DAY 12

A cramped space on the second floor of a pre-war building. File cabinets, stacks of yellowing paper. Marge enters and finds Norman Burgess typing on a clackity old Royal.

MARGE

Mr. Burgess?  
(he keeps typing)  
If you don't mind.

Marge tugs on the paper in the typewriter. Burgess looks up.

BURGESS

You here to give me a quote?

MARGE

No. Two hundred dollars. I don't know how much they're paying you to look into my past, but this is my rainy day money...  
(smiles wryly)  
And I'd say it's pouring right about now. Take it and tell them you didn't find anything.

She holds out her wad. Burgess takes her in -- she's desperate. He smiles.

BURGESS

Keep your money.  
(off her look)  
And bring me a real story.  
Something I could shop to a real paper.

MARGE

We've got a deal with LIFE magazine.  
I can't jeopardize that --

(CONTINUED)

BURGESS

An exclusive. Something no one knows about Grissom's flight, or John Glenn's. The public's crazy for that guy...

MARGE

My husband doesn't talk to me about his work.

BURGESS

Knowing your history, I'm sure he doesn't.

(off her)

But you strike me as a resourceful woman.

As Marge takes this in...

PRE-LAP: A CRASHING SOUND

13

EXT. HOLIDAY INN - COURTYARD - DAY

13

ICE pours out of a machine, into a bucket. The Grissom boys (Scott and MARK) play with the buttons as Betty and Gus step out of their room.

BETTY

Gus, we can't just ignore this. We have to do... something. Talk about it, at least --

\*  
\*  
\*

GUS

(ignores her, re: Mark and Scott)

Our boys are easily amused.

\*

BETTY

Mark and Scott, leave that thing be.

The Grissom boys scamper off.

Next to the ice machine is a small housekeeping closet, filled with towels and cleaning supplies. Tucked in the corner, on a small cot sits ZAVIER (African-American, 10), diligently doing his homework. The wall next to him is plastered with photos of the astronauts.

When Zavier spots Gus, he looks away shyly, jumping up to shut the door. Gus stops him.

(CONTINUED)

GUS

Son, I was wondering if you would  
mind doin' me a small favor?

Zavier's eyes grow big. Sure he would.

GUS (CONT'D)

I was just tellin' my wife Betty  
that I was feeling an urge to sign  
an autograph. Would you mind if I  
signed one for you?

Betty tries to smile and fishes a pen out of her handbag.  
Gus grabs a MOTEL NAPKIN off a cart.

\*

\*

GUS (CONT'D)

Y'know, I'm takin' some dimes with  
me in the Liberty Bell so I'll have  
some souvenirs from space. I'll  
make sure I bring one back for you.

Betty's dying inside, but keeps a brave face. Zavier smiles  
as his mother ANTOINETTE, mid-thirties, weary and warm, head  
of Holiday Inn housekeeping and keenly aware of protocol,  
spots her son talking to Gus and quickly crosses.

ANTOINETTE

Zavier?! What are you doin'  
botherin' Mr. Grissom?

Zavier sheepishly steps away.

ANTOINETTE (CONT'D)

I am so sorry. I had to bring my  
boy to work with me 'cause there  
was no school today.

GUS

Ma'am, you've been picking up my  
dirty socks for months, I should be  
apologizing to you. And meeting  
your son is nothing but a pleasure.  
He's gonna make a fine astronaut  
some day.

ZAVIER

(surprised)  
Me, sir?

GUS

You keep at that homework,  
'specially the math, and you'll get  
there.

(CONTINUED)

Gus smiles warmly at Xavier, who shyly smiles back. On Betty, this is why she loves her husband so much. This is why she's terrified of losing him...

\*

14 EXT./INT. DRUG STORE - LUNCH COUNTER - DAY

14

Louise spots Max eating at the counter, enters and crosses to him. Max, who's just taken a large bite out of his sandwich, looks up, surprised and a little self-conscious. He motions hello, gesturing that his mouth is full.

LOUISE

I hope you don't mind the interruption. I just wanted to talk to you about what happened at the pool.

Max finally finishes chewing and swallows.

MAX

You mean how you didn't want to admit to Betty that you were actually scared out of your mind during Alan's launch?

LOUISE

(slightly thrown)

No, that's not what I mean. How would that have helped her?

MAX

I dunno. Maybe she'd have felt a little better knowing that fear is normal in a situation like this. Of course, that would require you acknowledging that you are not actually a "rock," but a human being with emotions.

\*

\*

She wasn't expecting this. He takes another big bite.

LOUISE

I was only thinking of Betty. Encouraging her to be her better self and rise above her emotions.

He motions "chewing" and she rolls her eyes.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I know you're doing that on purpose.

(off his smile)

You know what? Forget it. I don't even know why I'm here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



14 CONTINUED:

14

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I don't need to explain myself to you. And I certainly don't care what you think of me.

She turns on her heels, frustrated. He swallows, calls.

MAX

You're mad at me? I was minding my own business, enjoying a tongue sandwich. You tracked me down --

Max watches her go, both amused and more than a little puzzled. As he takes another large bite, we...

15

INT. COOPER HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

15

Trudy cooks dinner, when GORDO enters, overnight bags in tow.

GORDO

Surprise.

He leans in for a kiss. Trudy pulls away.

TRUDY

You know that's not part of the deal.

\*

GORDO

Can't blame a guy for trying.

TRUDY

What are you doing home?

GORDO

We've got one last weekend before it's all hands on deck for the launch. Figured I'd spend it with you and the girls.

TRUDY

How are the ground tests going?

GORDO

No problemo.

TRUDY

Did you solve that compensation issue created by adding the window?

GORDO

Don't you worry yourself about that, Trude. We're all over it.

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)

TRUDY

I'm not worried. Just interested.  
(tentative)  
Last time I brought it up, you  
seemed to like some of my ideas...

GORDO

(smiles, charm on)  
C'mon... I gotta talk to the guys  
about this stuff all week. I came  
here for a home cooked meal and to  
see your smiling face. \*  
(opening the oven)  
How long 'til dinner's ready?

Trudy tries to cover just how much that stings.

TRUDY

(cold)  
I wasn't expecting you. It's just  
a casserole and it's got another  
ten minutes. Why don't you go say  
hi to the girls?

As Gordo exits, Trudy slams the oven door closed in  
frustration.

16 INT. HOLIDAY INN - GUS'S ROOM - NIGHT

16

Betty's in her nightgown getting ready for bed as Gus steps  
out of the bathroom. Betty stares at him, trying to sear  
every detail in her memory. \*

GUS

Betts, stop staring at me like  
that. \*

BETTY

I hate that NASA makes the families  
watch the launches back in Virginia. \*

GUS

It's their protocol. \*

BETTY

And this is ours? Pretending like  
I never told you about my dream. \*

GUS

I know you've a track record with  
these things, but I've also never  
done anything this dangerous. \*  
We're both under a lot of pressure. \*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GUS (CONT'D)

Maybe it's just a regular, run-of-  
the-mill old nightmare?

\*  
\*

Before Betty can respond, Scott and Mark enter.

\*

MARK

Scott says he's too big, but I'm  
not. Can I sleep with you tonight?

\*

Betty and Gus exchange a look. How can they say no?

BETTY

You gotta make sure your Dad gets  
his rest.

She pulls the blankets back and Mark climbs into the bed and  
tucks himself under Betty's arm. A beat, then Scott joins  
them. He throws an arm over Gus, a little boy again.

Betty can hardly take it. She turns off the light, but as we  
pull out, we see both she and Gus stare up at the ceiling, a  
GROWING sense of DREAD.

\*

17 INT. SLAYTON HOUSE - NIGHT

17

Marge is on the phone.

MARGE

(faux casual)

So, you're still at The Cape?

18 INT. HANGAR S - INTERCUT

18

DEKE is on the pay phone.

DEKE

Yup. Just about to head out. Me  
and Wally drove together.

MARGE

Everything going okay? You're not  
staying late because there's... a  
problem?

DEKE

Just goin' over everything for  
Gus's flight one final time.

Marge looks at a newspaper under her arm, a story: **"When Will  
America Get into Orbit?"**

MARGE

And Gus's flight is definitely...  
(reading)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MARGE (CONT'D)

...sub-orbital? But maybe John's  
will be... orbital?

DEKE

(chuckles)

You're full of questions. But you  
know I'm not allowed to talk about  
that stuff.

\*

WALLY exits, keys in hand. Motions for Deke to wrap it up.

MARGE

(sighs)

Sorry. Just... missing you.

DEKE

I gotta go. Miss you too, Red.

She hangs up, more worried than ever. And a little disgusted  
with herself.

19

INT. HOLIDAY INN - GUS'S ROOM - DAWN

19

Morning light streams into the bedroom. Gus, already  
dressed, quietly tries to slip out. Betty, who hasn't slept  
a wink, gently tosses the blankets aside so as not to wake  
the boys, and follows him into the living room area.

\*

GUS

Hon, get back to bed.

(off her, not moving)

I flew a hundred missions in Korea  
and you didn't say boo.

\*

BETTY

That was war. This is --

\*

\*

GUS

This is history. And I'm gonna be  
part of it. Me, Gus Grissom from  
Mitchell, Indiana. Too short for  
basketball, too skinny for  
wrestling -- I got picked to be the  
second American in space.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

BETTY

(softly)

But you know who else picked you?  
Me. I want to spend the rest of my  
life with you, Gus. Please --

\*

\*

\*

\*

She's about to violate the Astronaut Wives Code and ask Gus  
to make a choice, but first --

\*

(CONTINUED)

GUS

(sharp)

Don't. Don't say anything you'll regret.

(off her)

'Cause here's the thing: I'd rather die trying to get into space than live the rest of my life a quitter. So the only thing I wanna hear from you is, "I love you and I'll see you soon."

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Betty nods, fighting tears. Gus takes her in his arms, kisses her hard, and exits without looking back. On Betty, her heart breaking, feeling like she just lost her husband.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

20 EXT. GRISSOM HOUSE - DAY

20

**TITLE: JULY 21, 1961**

Cameras FLASH and reporters swarm the Grissom home as Jo, Rene, Marge, Trudy, Annie and Louise arrive for Gus's launch. The reporters seem particularly interested in getting Louise's attention. A television reporter thrusts a microphone at her.

REPORTER #1

Mrs. Shepard? Are those the same cookies you baked when your husband went into space?

REPORTER #2

Mrs. Shepard, can we get a picture of you?

REPORTER #3

(to Louise)  
Did you talk to Mrs. Kennedy today about the launch?

LOUISE

I'm not answering any questions. Today is about Gus and Betty Grissom.

Louise heads towards the front door, but Rene is not nearly as modest. She holds out a beautifully put together salad and turns to the reporter who asked Louise about the cookies.

RENE

(to Reporter #1)  
I'm bringing a new dish, "Chinese Chicken Salad."  
(whispers, a big secret)  
It's got cashews.

She winks and poses. Rene and the media, it's a mutual love affair. Then Marge spots Burgess the P.I. Oh shit...

BURGESS

(meaningfully)  
Mrs. Slayton, any comments?

MARGE

Not at this time, no.

As Marge heads to the front door...

21 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - DAY

21

Betty is nervously straightening, focusing her anxiety and guilt into cleaning.

(CONTINUED)

MAX

Betty, our readers want to see what your life is really like. We actually want a little mess.

BETTY

Mr. Kaplan, here's what my life is really like: If I have company, I have a clean house.

She keeps cleaning as the wives enter and ad-lib greetings.

TRUDY

How you doing, Betty?

BETTY

Gus told the cops I didn't want my yard looking like the Shepards', but where are they now? All watchin' TV at the station. Also, Max thinks it will feel more "real" if my house looks like a pig sty. I can't wait for this to be over.

TRUDY

Gus is gonna do great. And with that window, he'll be the first man to really see the earth from space!

\*  
\*

REPORTER #1 (O.S.)

We are getting reports from NASA that there is a delay.

22 EXT. GRISSOM HOUSE - DAY

22

Television and radio correspondents are on the lawn reporting that Gus's launch has been temporarily delayed.

REPORTER #1

It seems one of the titanium bolts around the hatch has become cross-threaded. No word yet on when the countdown will resume.

23 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

23

CLOSE ON -- Ashtrays filled with cigarette butts. PULL BACK and find Marge dumping them into the trash. Jo enters with a tray of dregs from deviled eggs. Max is in the corner taking notes. Rene and Annie enter, carrying other empty trays of food. They've clearly been waiting a while.

Betty's watching water boil in a pot filled with eggs.

(CONTINUED)

RENE  
The waiting's the hardest part.

BETTY  
Hope so.

Annie crosses to Betty.

ANNIE  
You okay?

Betty shakes her head, no. Speaks quietly, just to Annie.

BETTY  
I told him. I told Gus about my  
dream. I got him all upset. And  
if something happens --

\*  
\*

ANNIE  
It won't.

One of the eggs hits the side of the pot, cracks open and egg  
white spills out into the water.

BETTY  
(starts to tear up)  
Oh shoot!

All eyes turn to Betty. She tries to collect herself.

BETTY (CONT'D)  
(glances at Max)  
Great. Now you're gonna have to  
write about how ol' Betty Grissom  
was so worked up, she started  
crying over a broke egg.

Just then, Louise enters. Max makes eye contact with her:

MAX  
I won't write anything of the sort.  
You could faint right now and the  
article will say you were the  
epitome of reserved strength.

Louise reacts, ignoring him.

MARGE  
In other words, Max will channel  
your inner Primly Stable.

MAX  
Primly Stable?

(CONTINUED)



TRUDY

Rene, you gotta do it.

As we've seen, Rene loves this bit.

RENE

(a la Primly)

While my brave husband flew into space, I discovered a new omelette recipe, planted a flower garden and recited the Constitution...

All the women start to titter. Max tries to suppress a smile. But Louise isn't laughing.

LOUISE

Who's that supposed to be?

The women exchange looks -- uh oh...

MARGE

It's not you, Hon. It's what NASA wants us to be.

(realizing)

Which you may embody... slightly.

Rene jumps in, trying to help.

RENE

It's just for fun...

LOUISE

Right. Well. It's very amusing.

But clearly not to her.

TRUDY (O.S.)

Betty! Everybody! The countdown started again!

As they all quickly hustle out of the kitchen. Louise trails behind and gives Max a dark look as they exit.

24 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

24

A terrified Betty sits on the couch with Annie holding one hand and Marge holding the other. The Grissom boys are sitting at her feet. The other women stand behind them. All their eyes are glued to the television.

TV ANNOUNCER

And T minus 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2- And we have lift-off!

(CONTINUED)

CLOSE ON the TV SCREEN - The Mercury-Redstone rocket fires up and rises out of the launch pad, into the sky. Betty remains frozen, unable to move, barely able to breathe.

Max looks at Louise. He notices that despite her calm demeanor she's digging her nails into the Grissom couch. She notices Max watching her and they both look away.

TIME LAPSE -- FAST MOTION VIDEO: Betty remains frozen, same terrified expression, as the other women pace, nibble on food, light cigarettes, stub out cigarettes, head in and out of the kitchen. The Grissom boys get up, sit back down. But Betty doesn't move once. Just stares at the screen, silently praying.

Back to real time.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

We should be getting a report of re-entry activity at this time...  
Astronaut Gus Grissom says everything is A-okay, everything is looking good...

Annie looks at Betty hopefully.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

He is at 65,000 feet on his way down, 50,000 feet...

Betty still can't breathe.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

He's going through some clouds.

A crude map of Cape Canaveral and the Grand Bahamas, and the landing location appears on the screen.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

And we have confirmation that Gus Grissom has landed in the water and the helicopters have dispatched.

The women all hug and CHEER. Trudy, Jo and Marge all pop champagne bottles! Betty still watches the screen nervously, not yet willing to exhale.

RENE

Looks like somebody's gonna be going to the White House!

MARGE

(re: champagne)  
We need glasses.

(CONTINUED)

We follow Marge and Jo as they head into the kitchen.

25 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 25

As Marge and Jo find glasses, Marge looks out the kitchen window at the press camped outside.

MARGE

I know we don't know each other  
that well, but I need some advice.

Jo smiles. She lives to dispense wisdom.

JO

Advice on what?

MARGE

Remember that man who came over the  
other day, during Euchre? Seems I  
told a few stories about my past  
that I shouldn't have...

(off her look)

He works for *Confidential* magazine.

JO

(shocked, titillated)

Oh my.

\*

MARGE

And the only way he'll kill this  
story is if I give him some kind of  
classified scoop.

JO

What kind of unsavory information  
might come out?

MARGE

Use your imagination, Jo. But  
Deke's finally on deck and I've  
gotta fix this...

Jo thinks for a beat.

JO

Well, it's not like *The Navy Wife*  
has a chapter on blackmail. But  
growing up the stepdaughter of an  
Admiral, I learned that the  
military looks after its own. You  
should talk to Dunk Pringle.

(CONTINUED)

MARGE

Isn't that like asking the principal to help you skip school?

JO

He's NASA's Head of PR. It's his job to make sure we all get presented in the best light possible.

\*

As Marge considers this, Louise enters with dirty dishes.

MARGE

(tight smile)

Let's grab that champagne.

Marge and Jo exit and Max crosses in. Louise runs water in the sink and Max picks up a drying towel.

MAX

Just so you know, I didn't say anything to Betty about what happened during your husband's launch.

He holds out his hand for a clean dish. She gives him one.

LOUISE

I appreciate that.

MAX

But just 'cause I didn't, doesn't mean you shouldn't. Take a break from being the "First Lady of Space" for a minute or two.

Louise ignores him, hands him another dish.

MAX (CONT'D)

Does Alan even know?

Louise turns off the water.

LOUISE

These can wait 'til later. I don't want to miss the festivities.

Max watches her cross out.

Wives and kids mill about, celebrating as the TV coverage continues chattily. Betty continues to be glued to the set.

TV ANNOUNCER

We should get official confirmation  
that Gus Grissom has come into the  
helicopter any moment now --

The announcer's tone changes. It's no longer routine.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

I'm now hearing that there is some  
trouble with the Liberty Bell 7. I  
repeat, there seems to be a problem  
with the space capsule.

Betty grabs a pillow.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Reports are coming in that the  
hatch has blown prematurely and the  
Liberty Bell 7 is filling with  
water. No word yet on the status  
of Gus Grissom...

As everyone stops and turns to the TV. On Betty's terror,  
her premonition may have been right all along. Gus might be  
dying out there, and we...

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

27 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

27

We OPEN TIGHT on TV coverage. Images of people watching anxiously aboard the USS Randolph, people standing on the shores of Cape Canaveral (but no images of Gus or what is actually happening). The room is tense and hushed.

TV ANNOUNCER

The helicopter cable has broken and the Liberty Bell capsule is sinking into the ocean.

They all react.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Astronaut Gus Grissom remains in the water.

Betty holds Annie's hand tightly. Annie's eyes are shut tight in prayer.

TV ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

I am now hearing that a second helicopter has been deployed and is bringing Gus Grissom aboard.

TRUDY

(to Betty)

He's gonna be fine.

TV ANNOUNCER

Yes, I have confirmation that Gus Grissom is safely aboard the helicopter and heading to the USS Randolph.

Betty smiles for the first time in hours. A wave of relief washes over her. Annie gives her a hug.

BETTY

I can't believe it's finally over.

There's a CHEER outside, followed by a BANGING on the door.

REPORTER #1 (O.S.)

(from the porch)

Mrs. Grissom, are you ready to make a statement?

MARGE

Come on, Doll. Your fans await you.

(CONTINUED)

Betty straightens her dress, as Rene fusses with her hair.

RENE  
Knock 'em dead.

As Betty takes a deep breath and heads to the front door.

28 EXT. GRISSOM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 28

As Betty stands on her lawn, facing the press. She's smiling and expecting to receive Louise Shepard-like fawning.

BETTY  
I'm overjoyed my husband is doing well and that the mission was a success. I can't wait to fly to Florida tomorrow and congratulate him in person.

Reporters' hands shoot up, others bark out questions.

REPORTER #2  
Any idea why Gus opened the hatch early--?

BETTY  
No... I... I don't know.

REPORTER #1  
We heard Gus was tidying up the capsule when the hatch blew. Do you make him clean up at home?

BETTY  
(thrown)  
Oh, uh, no. I take care of everything on the home front.

REPORTER #1  
The capsule cost tens of millions. All the flight data is lost --

REPORTER #2  
Did he seem distracted before the launch? Was there anything weighing on him? Anything at all?

On Betty, realizing Gus's mission is being considered a giant failure.

MARGE (O.S.)  
I know, it's a mess.

29 INT. NASA - DUNK'S OFFICE - DAY

29

Marge sits across from Dunk, leg shaking. She is not a fan of talking about her past, at least not when she's sober.

\*  
\*

DUNK  
What do you think he dug up?

\*  
\*

MARGE  
Who knows?  
(off Dunk, reluctant)  
My father worked for the railroad.  
He was a drunk, violent. My mother  
divorced him, but not soon enough.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

DUNK  
(that all?)  
Well people love a good rags to  
riches story...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

But she's not done.

\*

MARGE  
I also lived in Japan for a number  
of years... alone. I worked as a  
secretary, but I know how it sounds.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

DUNK  
It's quite unusual for a single  
woman to work overseas.

\*  
\*  
\*

MARGE  
It was after I left my... husband.  
My first husband.  
(hates to say this)  
I'm divorced.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Dunk reaches for his bottle of Scotch.

\*

DUNK  
And you didn't think to mention  
this when we were vetting Deke?

\*  
\*  
\*

MARGE  
You didn't ask. And would you have  
picked him if I did?

\*  
\*  
\*

Dunk doesn't respond. They both know the answer.

\*

MARGE (CONT'D)  
(heartfelt)  
Have you ever felt some way about a  
person, and then realized that they  
weren't who you thought they were?  
(MORE)

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)



MARGE (CONT'D)

I made a mistake. A big one. But  
I fixed it.

(off Dunk)

If this gets drudged up and hurts  
Deke, it'll be worse than anything  
Bud ever did to me.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

DUNK

Don't worry, Mrs. Slayton. This  
article will never see the light of  
day.

\*  
\*

Marge smiles gratefully and rises.

\*

MARGE

Thank you. Thank you.

As she leaves, we stay on Dunk, not looking particularly  
happy about the situation. As he pours himself a Scotch...

30

EXT. NASA VIP HOUSE (FLORIDA)- NIGHT

30

Gus is waiting outside the house as Betty and the boys arrive  
down a dirt road in a car from the airport. As they step  
out, Betty and Gus exchange an awkward hug as the boys take  
in their surroundings. Everything about this feels off.

MARK

Daddy, what is this place?

GUS

NASA got us a beach house as a  
reward for me goin' up into space.  
It's for VIP's -- very important  
people.

MARK

But it's so far away from  
everything...

GUS

They wanted to make sure nobody  
bothered us.

Betty realizes what it's really about.

BETTY

I'm sure they did.

MARK

Hey Dad, you got any of those dimes  
you took into space? I wanna give  
some to my friends.

(CONTINUED)

GUS

Sorry kiddo, they didn't make it.  
They sank with the Liberty Bell.

MARK

And you couldn't save 'em? Not  
even a few?

Gus tries to hide his hurt as Betty quickly hustles the boys  
towards the door.

BETTY

You boys go inside and wash up.  
We'll be right in.

The boys run in, fighting over who gets the top if there's a  
bunk bed. Once the boys are inside, Betty turns to Gus.

BETTY (CONT'D)

This NASA's way of hiding us away?

GUS

No, I think they wanted to do  
something nice...  
(quickly)  
... to make up for us not going to  
Washington.

Betty looks like she was just punched in the stomach.

BETTY

We're not invited to the White  
House?

Gus shakes his head sadly. He knows it's humiliating. For  
both of them.

GUS

The president's probably busy,  
trying to clean up that Bay of Pigs  
mess...  
(changing the subject)  
They packed the fridge with food,  
want something to eat?

Betty looks at Gus, at the house, the dirt road. It all  
feels wrong.

BETTY

Why don't we get outta here, see if  
there's a room back at the motel?

\*

GUS

You haven't even been inside.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY

I'm not gonna let 'em hide us. No matter what happened --

GUS

No matter what happened, when?

BETTY

Nothin'...

GUS

(rising anger)

You think I blew that hatch open?

BETTY

Even if you did, it's not your fault. It's --

GUS

(interrupting)

"Even if I did?" Do ya think I blew open that hatch? Yes or no?

Betty looks down.

BETTY

I don't know. But --

GUS

Stop!

(hurt)

I woulda thought you of all people would've believed in me.

BETTY

I do. It's me I --

GUS

You wanna get out of here? Fine. I'll drop you and the boys off at the motel. Then I'll head down to The Cape...

\*

Gus starts to head into the house.

GUS (CONT'D)

(calling)

Boys, get your stuff!

On Betty, Gus may not have died, but she's losing him any way...

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

31 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - DAY 31

Betty's vacuuming, when Gus comes in carrying a stack of mail including an issue of LIFE magazine. Betty turns off the vacuum.

BETTY

Is that the LIFE magazine with you  
on the cover?

Gus tosses the magazine onto the coffee table. Betty looks at it, surprised.

BETTY (CONT'D)

But... but that's... Bridget  
Bardot?

The cover features the French starlet smiling seductively.

GUS

There's a page about the launch  
inside. After a photo essay on the  
runnin' of the bulls.

Betty, wracked with guilt, can't look Gus in the eye. He crosses to the bedroom and angrily closes the door.

32 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 32

Betty, Gus and Mark are getting ready to sit down to dinner when Scott comes in with a black eye.

BETTY

Scott, what happened?

SCOTT

A kid at school said Dad "screwed  
the pooch" so I socked him. Then  
he socked me.

BETTY

I'll get you some ice. And you  
tell that kid, nobody knows what  
happened to that hatch. NASA's  
still looking into it.

She looks at Gus, who looks more miserable than ever.

GUS

I'm not hungry. I'll eat later.

As he heads out the front door --

33 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 33

Betty fixes breakfast. Gus grabs a cup of coffee. The silence is deafening. Finally --

BETTY  
You hear anything yet?

GUS  
You know I'd tell ya if I did...

And the silence fills the room again.

34 INT. GRISSOM HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT 34

Betty and Gus lie in bed, back to back, as far away as they can be from each other. They're both awake. They both look miserable. On Betty, feeling more alone than ever...

ALAN (O.S.)  
Are you seeing this...?

35 INT. SHEPARD HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 35

An unhappy Alan looks up over a NASA engineering manual on the Atlas rocket as he talks to Louise. ON the TV NEWS is a report announcing that John Glenn's flight will be orbital.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (ON TV)  
... since Titov's flight is now the Russian's second orbital mission, NASA has decided that John Glenn is going to go all the way... All the way around the earth. In the United State's first orbital mission.

An INTERVIEW with JOHN comes up on the screen...

LOUISE  
You'll always be first. No one can take that away.

ALAN  
It was fifteen minutes. I didn't even have a goddamn window.

LOUISE  
And what you did was more daring, more dangerous because of it. There were so many unknowns...

She takes a deep breath. It's time to let down her guard, at least a little.

(CONTINUED)

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I should have told you at the time,  
but when you were up there, I --

But he's not listening. ON TV, Annie smiles silently at John's side.

ALAN

(re: the TV)

He's gonna have his hands full with  
that wife, though...

(to Louise)

At least I never have to worry  
about you.

He starts reading again. On Louise, realizing there's no room in her marriage for her to be anything less than perfect.

36 INT. COOPER HOUSE - DAY

36 \*

Trudy's on the phone.

\*

TRUDY

\*

Just make sure the plane is fueled.  
I'll be there by three.

\*

\*

PRE-LAP: KNOCKING.

\*

Trudy hangs up and opens the door to find Jo.

\*

JO

\*

I'm here for the cupcakes.

\*

Trudy looks stricken. Oh shit.

\*

JO (CONT'D)

\*

You made three dozen cupcakes,  
didn't you? For the children's  
hospital bake sale this afternoon?

\*

\*

\*

TRUDY

\*

I completely forgot. I'm sorry.  
Do you have enough without mine?

\*

\*

JO

\*

We're all supposed to be there  
selling our delicious wares.

\*

\*

TRUDY

\*

I have... plans this afternoon.

\*

(CONTINUED)

JO \*  
Plans? I'm sorry, but astronaut \*  
wife duty calls. \*

Jo steps in and heads straight to the kitchen. \*

JO (CONT'D) \*  
Let's see what we can whip up. \*

As Jo takes stock of Trudy's refrigerator contents, Trudy \*  
picks up the phone and dials, facing the reality of the \*  
bargain she struck...

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Everybody's getting excited about  
John Glenn's upcoming flight...

37 MONTAGE OF NEWS FOOTAGE OF PRE-JOHN GLENN ORBIT HOOPLA 37

JOHN GLENN at a PRESS CONFERENCE. PHOTOS flashing. Anxious  
space FANS on the shores of COCOA BEACH. A CLIP of JFK and  
JACKIE greeting JOHN AND ANNIE AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
And the president and first lady  
are no exception.

A shot of the HOLIDAY INN STAFF, including Antoinette and a \*  
man we'll meet shortly, HENRI LANDWIRTH (late 30s, the \*  
elegant hotel manager of unclear European origins), in front \*  
of a giant cake - a model of the Friendship 7.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
And in Florida, the Cocoa Beach  
Holiday Inn baked a nine-hundred  
pound cake in the shape of the  
capsule to celebrate.

FOOTAGE of THE ROCKET at the launch pad. The cherry picker  
being pulled away.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
John Glenn has finally been given  
the okay to board the capsule.

38 EXT. GLENN HOUSE - DAY (JANUARY 27, 1962) 38

The announcer we just heard stands on the Glenns' lawn amidst  
a crowd of reporters and well-wishers.

**TITLE: JANUARY 27, 1962**

(CONTINUED)

TV ANNOUNCER

And now we're all anxiously  
awaiting the countdown. Nobody  
more so than Mrs. Glenn.

39 INT. GLENN HOUSE - SAME

39

Annie's pacing and reading a card with her statement on it.

ANNIE

(slowly but surely)

I am so proud of my husband and my  
country. Thank you all for your  
support. God Bless America.

She smiles. It's going to be okay.

40 EXT. GLENN HOUSE - DAY

40

The other wives arrive with casserole dishes, ambrosia and  
champagne, and fight their way through the crowd. Betty and  
Louise arrive at the same time. A photographer waits for  
Betty to pass so he can snap Louise. Betty takes note.

41 INT. GLENN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

41

Annie paces quietly reciting her statement while Louise and  
Jo lay out the spread and Rene and Betty bring out beverages.

Max is parked in the corner, taking notes. Louise carefully  
avoids making any eye contact with him.

TV ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

NASA will track John Glenn's orbit  
from 16 land-based stations and two  
Air Force ships, one in the Indian  
Ocean, the other in the Atlantic...

While the announcer continues, Betty crosses to Annie.

BETTY

You doin' okay?

Annie nods.

ANNIE

You?

BETTY

All those dreams I had 'about  
losing Gus? He didn't die, but  
seems like I'm losing him anyway.

Annie squeezes her hand in sympathy.

(CONTINUED)



ANGLE ON

Trudy and Marge. Trudy's glued to the TV, taking in all the space-related details.

TRUDY

I wonder what it feels like in zero gravity. Must be amazing.

MARGE

You really love this stuff, don't you?

TRUDY

It's what got me to come back to Gordo.

Marge studies Trudy, then notes.

MARGE

Nobody loves space that much.

This hits Trudy, but she turns her attention back to the TV.

TV ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

NASA has announced that the mission has been scrubbed due to poor weather conditions.

The women all let out an audible, collective groan.

TRUDY

Not again...

The phone rings. Jo answers it.

JO

(into phone)  
Glenn residence.

MARGE

Poor Annie.

RENE

(to Annie)  
I'm sorry.

JO

(covers phone)  
Annie? It's somebody from Vice President Johnson's office.

The women all react.

(CONTINUED)

JO (CONT'D)

He wanted to tell you how sorry he is about the delay. He knows how disappointed you must be.

ANNIE

That's kind of him to think of me.

JO

(into phone)

She says that's very kind... Oh.

(to Annie)

He's on his way here so he can comfort you.

MARGE

Vice President Johnson?

ANNIE

Is coming here?

JO

Yep. And he's got camera crews from all three networks with him. He wants to film the two of you talking together.

As all eyes turn to Annie, who is frozen in terror...

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

42 INT. GLENN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

42

The wives are abuzz about LBJ's potential arrival. Annie looks overwhelmed.

JO

(to Annie)

You don't have a choice. The Vice President is waiting.

BETTY

Gus and I weren't good enough to go to the White House and Annie's gettin' house calls from the Vice President before John even goes up.

There's a POUNDING on the door.

V.P. AIDE (O.S.)

The Vice President needs an answer.

Annie looks more panicked than ever.

MARGE

(through the door)

He's gonna have to wait a few more minutes.

RENE

I'll talk to him.

JO

Of course you will.

RENE

Somebody has to deal with this. Why not me?

JO

Don't go anywhere. We can fix this.

(to Annie)

Don't worry about the stutter. We'll just tell the Vice President that you're overcome with emotion. He'll hug you. He'll be happy. America will be happy.

ANNIE

But I'm not happy.

(CONTINUED)

MARGE

And he doesn't just want to bring cameras in, he wants Max out.

MAX

I don't mind leaving...

LOUISE

That doesn't seem fair. We have a special understanding... with LIFE.

Unnoticed by the other wives, Max and Louise briefly share a look, then she turns away.

TRUDY

He's not just the V.P. -- the space program, it's his baby.

JO

And the Russians have already been in orbit twice. How's it going to look on TV today with another failure to launch? The country needs to see that you're okay, so they can be okay.

Annie is pained.

BETTY

(from the heart)

Annie, do whatever you want. They're all usin' us as pawns. They'll cut you out just as fast as they'll claim you. Whatever makes them look good...

JO

Betty, you're starting to sound like a Commie.

TRUDY

What do you think NASA will do to John if Annie says, "No"?

MARGE

So we're all supposed to live our lives worrying about NASA?

The arguing continues to build...

RENE

Don't we have some right to privacy?

JO

(to Marge)  
Yes. That's what we signed up for.

(CONTINUED)

TRUDY  
(to Rene)  
You want privacy?!

Finally, Annie grabs a plate and THROWS IT TO THE GROUND! It SHATTERS and the women immediately stop talking.

ANNIE  
I have to call John. \*

She picks up the phone and starts dialing.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
We're in this together. \*

We see this land on Betty.

43 INT. HANGAR S - MOMENTS LATER 43

The other members of the Mercury Seven and a very angry Flight Director CHRIS KRAFT (30s) surround John, still in his space suit. John's on the phone with Annie. \*

JOHN  
He's got camera crews? \*

CHRIS KRAFT  
Tell her to let him in right now! \*

JOHN  
(into phone, to Annie)  
How do you feel about that? \*

CHRIS KRAFT  
Who cares how she feels? She doesn't invite Johnson in, I'll find somebody else to take your flight! \*

John ignores Chris Kraft, focuses on talking to Annie. \*

JOHN  
(gently)  
Annie? Do you want Vice President Johnson to come in? \*

44 INT. GLENN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - INTERCUT 44

Annie's on the phone, surrounded by the other wives. Max is still in the corner taking notes.

ANNIE  
No. \*

(CONTINUED)

John takes this in, looks at Chris Kraft, then:

JOHN

Then don't let him in.

ANNIE

But... but what about you?

JOHN

Don't worry about me. I'll be fine. I love you.

ANNIE

I love you too.

John hangs up. Kraft looks like his head is going to explode.

CHRIS KRAFT

Glenn, you're grounded. Carpenter, you're not backing up anymore, you'll be manning Friendship 7 when we're cleared for take off.

SCOTT

Sorry, sir, but I'm not taking John's place.

Kraft looks at the other astronauts. They look at each other, all thinking the same thing. Then Alan steps up. It's a big moment for him. Hell, he could probably get the flight for himself.

ALAN

None of us will.

(off Kraft)

If John doesn't go up, you've got no one.

As Chris Kraft takes this in...

45 INT. GLENN HOUSE - SAME

45 \*

Annie has just hung up the phone.

ANNIE

I don't have to let him in!

BETTY

Okay, if Annie and John don't want the Vice President comin' into their home, then he's not comin' in. I'll barricade the door if I have to.

(CONTINUED)

MARGE I'll join ya. RENE Me too.

Trudy and Jo exchange a look, then:

TRUDY And me.

JO Using a chair under the doorknob is actually more effective... so I'll grab one and do that.

As the women rally around Annie, we zero in on Betty, who's realizing something else...

46 EXT. HOLIDAY INN/ INT. TAXI - NIGHT 46 \*

Betty sits in the back as the taxi pulls up in front of the motel. She looks determined. \*

PRE-LAP: KNOCKING.

47 INT. HOLIDAY INN - GUS'S ROOM - NIGHT 47

Gus answers his motel room door and finds Betty. \*

GUS (surprised) Betts? I wasn't expecting you.

He lets her in. They settle.

BETTY I know. But I miss you.

Gus looks at her expectantly. What's this really about? \*

BETTY (CONT'D) I miss you even when we're together. We haven't been right since you went up. \*

GUS I really can't do this --

But she's going to say what she needs to say.

BETTY I know you don't want me talking about the Liberty Bell --

GUS Honestly no, I don't...

BETTY

But you gotta stop blaming me.

GUS

Blaming you?

BETTY

For telling you about my dream,  
worrying you before the mission.  
I should've been stronger, kept it  
to myself. So yell at me, curse at  
me, do whatever you have to do to  
stop hating me.

\*

Gus takes this in.

GUS

Betts, the only thing I hate is how  
this whole mess has meant you  
didn't get what should've been  
yours. Dinner with Jackie, a  
parade...

(then)

I gotta show you somethin'...

48 EXT. CAPE CANAVERAL CHECKPOINT - LATE NIGHT

48

Gus and Betty sit in his beloved Corvette as they drive up to  
the checkpoint. Betty's still not sure what this is about.

GUARD

Can I see some ID?

GUS

You know who I am. This is my  
wife. And we're getting through.

The guard quickly relents and lifts the gate. As they make  
their way down the road to Cape Canaveral...

PRE-LAP: Film being run through a projector.

49 INT. NASA - FILM ROOM - LATE NIGHT

49

Gus shows Betty the footage of his rescue.

GUS

This is what they didn't show on  
the news.

CLOSE ON the screen to see NASA color film. Gus flails in  
the choppy sea; his space suit fills with water while the  
helicopter ignores him and focuses on rescuing the capsule.

(CONTINUED)



GUS (CONT'D)

My space suit was half full of water. And you know I'm not much of a swimmer in the best of circumstances.

BETTY

The newsmen didn't say anythin' about you nearly drowning...

They watch the capsule slip out of the helicopter's grip and hit the ocean.

GUS

Every time the Liberty Bell hit the surface, the water'd get choppy. I went under a coupla times.

Betty reacts.

GUS (CONT'D)

But you know what kept me going?

He's not gonna say it, but we know it was her.

GUS (CONT'D)

Hell if I was gonna let you be right about that dream... I was comin' home.

\*

She smiles. He strokes her cheek, Betty starts to well up. She's got her best friend back.

BETTY

I'm so sorry.

GUS

So am I...

TV ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The launch delays continue.

50 NEWS MONTAGE:

50

We follow the SUBSEQUENT DELAYS with footage of the 900-POUND CAKE being hauled in and out of the Holiday Inn, THE ROCKET waiting on THE LAUNCH PAD.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This time a fuel leak has been discovered.

And then... finally... FOOTAGE of the historic LAUNCH.

(CONTINUED)

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Finally, three months after the  
original launch date, the  
Friendship 7 takes off into space.

Vintage graphics track John Glenn's flight.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
John Glenn orbited the earth for  
four hours and fifty-five minutes  
and, although there were a few  
concerns about the heat shield, he  
splashed down just forty miles  
short of the intended landing zone.

Footage of John Glenn stepping off the rescue vessel.

TV ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
And now the nation finally  
celebrates with a Ticker Tape  
parade in New York.

PRE-LAP: PARADE MUSIC

51 EXT. PARADE STAGING GROUND - DAY

51

Seven black CONVERTIBLES are lined up, ready to embark on the  
parade. All the astronauts and their wives, except Trudy,  
are there. Max observes, taking notes while a harried Dunk  
tries to corral them all into cars. Betty's wearing the  
yellow dress from Garfinkel's (the one Annie suggested she  
wear to the White House) and crosses to Annie.

BETTY  
Thanks for making sure we all got  
included.

ANNIE  
You and Gus deserved a parade.

BETTY  
(proud)  
And we're in the third car, right  
after you and the Shepards!

DUNK  
Mrs. Glenn, we need to get you into  
your car, John and the Vice  
President are waiting. Has anybody  
seen Mrs. Cooper?

BETTY  
Annie's riding with Vice President  
Johnson..?

(CONTINUED)

DUNK

Annie and John are America's  
sweethearts. You think Vice  
President Johnson's gonna pass up  
the chance to have his picture  
taken with them? Now, Mrs.  
Grissom, if you and Gus could get  
into your car.

(muttering)

We can send these guys into space,  
but can't get them into a couple of  
cars. Where the hell is Mrs.  
Cooper?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

52 INT. NEW YORK HOTEL ROOM - DAY

52

Trudy, still in her bra and underwear, stares at the fancy  
dress laid on the bed, matching hat and coat next to it, her  
shoes lying on the floor. On her indecision...

\*

53 EXT. PARADE STAGING GROUND - DAY

53

Gus crosses to Betty. He's jubilant.

GUS

They cleared me!

BETTY

What?

GUS

They finally finished the  
investigation. It's a fact that if  
I'd opened that hatch, my hand  
woulda been all black and blue.

(smiles)

It was the external release  
lanyard.

Betty throws her arms around Gus.

BETTY

I have no idea what that is, but I  
love the sound of it!

GUS

You ready to take a little spin?

BETTY

Am I ready to get in a backseat  
with you? Always.

(CONTINUED)

Gus kisses her, then pats her on the rear and heads into the waiting car. Betty stops and takes in the moment, listening to the cheers of the crowd in the distance.

REVEAL -- we are watching in Louise's POV. She takes in their closeness and affection, then crosses to Betty.

LOUISE  
You look beautiful.

BETTY  
You really like my dress?

LOUISE  
I do, but it's not just the dress,  
it's the way you wear it.

BETTY  
Coming from you that means a lot.

LOUISE  
And you should know, you held up a  
lot better during Gus's launch than  
I did during Alan's.

As Betty reacts, Gus takes her by the hand.

GUS  
C'mon Betts.

As the Grissoms climb into their car, Louise turns and sees Max standing by. They exchange a meaningful smile. Alan, who's clearly one unhappy camper, interrupts. \*

ALAN  
Let's get in the car. Sooner this  
thing starts, sooner it's over.

Louise and Alan pass Marge and Dunk as they climb into their convertible. Dunk keeps looking around for Trudy.

MARGE  
I just wanted to thank you again  
for handling my... problem. I  
never heard from that guy or the  
magazine again.

DUNK  
Did what I had to.

Dunk turns to Gordo.

DUNK (CONT'D)  
What's going on with your wife?

(CONTINUED)

GORDO  
Hell if I know.

\*

DUNK  
Well, looks like you're gonna have  
to ride without her.

And then just as the cars get ready to pull out of the  
staging area, Trudy dashes in.

TRUDY  
I'm here.

DUNK  
Get into the car.

As Dunk hustles Trudy into the car with Gordo...

54 EXT. PARADE - DAY

54

We intercut archival footage of the parade with CLOSE-UPS of  
our wives and their husbands in their cars.

CLOSE ON - Annie, John and LBJ. Vice President Johnson is in  
the middle of the Glenns. He takes Annie's hand and raises  
it in the air. She steels herself, then smiles wide as the  
cameras FLASH.

\*  
\*  
\*

CLOSE ON - Marge and Deke share a smile.

MARGE  
The next parade will be for you.

CLOSE ON - Betty and Gus waving madly, smiling ear to ear,  
enjoying every second of this. Betty puts two fingers in her  
mouth and lets out an ear-splitting WHISTLE. Gus LAUGHS.

CLOSE ON - Alan, waving coolly to the crowd, then PAN OVER TO  
Louise, who's calmly waving like the Queen. Then she SEES  
Betty go wild and LAUGHS, does the same.

\*

CLOSE ON - Trudy and Gordo. He looks at her expecting an  
apology. It's not coming.

\*  
\*

TRUDY  
Don't start. It took everything I  
had just to show up.

\*  
\*  
\*

GORDO  
I know some of the normal wifely  
duties are off the table, but  
showing up on time for a parade  
doesn't seem like too much to ask.  
You made me look bad.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

TRUDY

I made you look bad? You cheated on me!

(off his look)

Why do you think I came back, Gordo? 'Cause you're such a good guy?

GORDO

(hopefully)

Maybe...?

TRUDY

I came back because you have the chance to do the impossible. Leave the earth, fly in space, maybe even get to the moon. And I want to be part of that.

GORDO

You are.

TRUDY

Then why don't you talk to me about what you're doing down at The Cape, or show me a flight plan or specs for the capsules?

GORDO

Trudy, I don't mean anything bad by this, but you're not an astronaut, you're an astronaut's wife. And that means you do your part by raising our girls, looking pretty in those LIFE magazine pictures and holding my hand in parades.

(off Trudy, who looks like she might burst)

It's nothin' I did, it's nothin' you did. It's just how it is.

TRUDY

I don't know if I'm cut out for this.

GORDO

C'mon, babe. We're so close now...

Gordo smiles, takes her hand. She looks at him, unsure, then the car starts and the crowd ROARS, and it's time to get their "game faces" on. An unsteady beat, then Trudy smiles and waves. Gordo looks at her, smiles back. She's still in the car. At least for now...

55 INT. SLAYTON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

55 \*

Marge is putting pictures of the parade in a photo album.

MARGE

(calling)

Deke? Should I send your sister a  
copy of the picture of us in the  
parade?

Deke enters from the kitchen, looking shell-shocked.

MARGE (CONT'D)

Deke, what is it?

DEKE

Just got off the phone with NASA.  
They're... grounding me.

MARGE

What? Why?

As this lands on Marge, we...

END OF EPISODE