

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Fade up on BETTY and ED on the beach waiting for the launch. ED is making last-minute adjustments on his camera which is set up on a tripod. BETTY is listening to a portable radio.)

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. ...T minus 15 seconds and counting.../no unexpected errors.

BETTY. Do you think it will actually go up this time?

ED. Well, I'll believe it when I see it.

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. T-minus 14...13...12...11.../10...
9...8...7...6...5...we have main engine start...

BETTY. *(over this)* Where are we supposed to be looking?

ED. It should be coming up about twenty degrees to the south.

BETTY. That doesn't mean anything to me, Ed. Do I look straight ahead or to the right, or what?

ED. *(pointing impatiently)* Over there, just look over there.

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. *(over this)* ...4...3...2...1...and lift off. We have lift off of the twenty-fifth space shuttle mission. And it has cleared the tower.

(ED looks through his camera, starts clicking. We hear the distant roar of a rocket.)

BETTY. There it is! I see it! Oh my God! Look at it! Oh Ed, look at it go!

(ED is madly clicking and advancing the film.)

ASTRONAUT VOICE ON RADIO. Houston, we have roll program.

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. Roger, roll Challenger.

BETTY. Isn't it beautiful! It's just beautiful! How do they do it?! Oh my God, it's just magnificent.

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. Challenger, go with throttle up.

ASTRONAUT VOICE ON RADIO. Roger, go with throttle up.

(an explosion)

(BETTY looks puzzled. ED looks up from his camera.)

BETTY. Was that supposed to be part of it?

NASA VOICE ON RADIO. One minute, 15 seconds. Velocity
2,900 feet per second. Altitude nine nautical miles.
Downrange distance seven nautical miles.

BETTY. *(over this)* Are they all right?

(ED doesn't say anything, stares at the sky.)

Oh my God, oh Ed, my God. Oh my God.

*(ED puts his arm around BETTY and leads her off.
Then:)*

NASA VOICE. Flight controller here looking very carefully at
the situation. Obviously a major malfunction.