

Astronaut Girl

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

A stark white bathroom. Everything is pristine and sterile looking. A vase with a few purple iris in it rests on the back of the toilet.

CHRISTINE stands in front of a mirror, staring at herself. Her dark hair is pulled back in a pony tail secured at the nape of her neck. She wears a white tank top with a purple bra strap peering out from underneath.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

When I was a little girl, I wanted
to be an astronaut.

FADE TO WHITE.

FLASH TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

A moderate late 1970's styled room; avocado green carpet, plaid tweed like couch, small dial TV. A young (5 y.o.) Christine sits mesmerized by the TV. Her long blonde hair is pulled back in a pony tail secured at the nape of her neck. She is wearing a purple tank top and cut off jean shorts.

On the television is news coverage of the latest space shuttle launch. The legs of adults cross in front of the TV, but Christine stays focused.

EXT. SUBURBIA - EVENING

A six year old Christine is dressed up in an obviously home made Astronaut costume. She carries a pillow case to collect candy. Her pony tail sticks out from her over-sized cardboard astronaut helmet. Her "space boots" are actually purple snow boots. She is led around from house to house by adult legs.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Six year old Christine sits at her desk, diligently working. Her pony tail is secured at the nape of her neck. She wears a purple sweater and blue jeans. A math book sits open in front of her as she tries to plug through the first grade addition and subtraction.

The desks around her are empty.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
That was my dream, and that's what I
was working towards.

In the corner of the room the rest of her classmates, approximately 20 other six-year-olds, sit intently listening to the teacher read for story time. Christine looks back to her classmates, then refocuses on her math.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A small television on a cart is set up at the front of the classroom. All of the desks are aligned in a grid, with eight year old Christine sitting in the front. She sits nervously, with a purple notebook on the desk in front of her.

The chalkboard reads "JANUARY 28 1986" Various facts about the Challenger are also inscribed on the chalkboard. There is a murmur of excitement amongst the students.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
And then little by little, pieces of
it started to chip away.

FLASH TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The teacher stands in front of the television, blocking the view of the explosion from the children. The children are in a buzz, clamoring to see the TV and understand what happened. Christine is still mesmerized.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Adult Christine still stares into the mirror. She gingerly touches her face, inspecting it.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
I don't know exactly how, or when
even. But pieces were chipped away.
And now, as I look, I hardly recognize
it; or myself. Where did that little
girl go? Where did that dream go?

FADE TO WHITE:

FADE IN:

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Eighth grade science fair. Rows of folding tables covered in science fair poster boards line the gym. Students stand next to their projects; recycling, pollution, and volcanoes are the science order of the day.

Christine, donning purple rimmed glasses and a small pony tail at the nape of her neck, stands proudly next to her "Outer Space" project, complete with a model solar system. People mill around the gym, stopping at the projects on either side of hers, but passing hers by with barely a look. A hub-bub of middle-schoolers and parents fill the air.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

I usually hate the concept of dreams.
Hopes and dreams. Stupid. Goals,
those make sense. At least goals
are measurable.

A science fair "judge" - a teacher in a brown tweed jacket and black rimmed glasses, stops in front of Christine's project. Christine assumes the position, prepared to talk about her research. The teacher reaches into his briefcase and affixes a blue ribbon to her project, then walks away without a word to Christine.

Christine looks at the ribbon. It reads "1991 SCIENCE FAIR PARTICIPANT."

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Card tables and chairs clutter the gym floor. It's club day at the school, and various teams have tables set up, decorated to the nines, promoting volleyball, marching band, flag team, and the like.

In the corner, Christine sits alone at a table with a hand drawn "FUTURE ASTRONAUTS of AMERICA" sign taped to the front of it. Her dark blonde hair is pulled back into a pony tail secured at the nape of her neck. She is wearing a cream sweater and purple corduroy pants.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

Hopes and dreams are ephemeral
amorphous messes. They have no place
in any self-respecting person's life.

Christine looks around at the hustling eighth graders milling around her, then goes to scribbling on a pad of paper in front of her. In her neatest handwriting, she writes "THE PLAN" on top of the page and begins her list.

"High School Valedictorian" tops the list, followed by "Learn to fly" and "College," with small boxes drawn next to each.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

High School Graduation. Approximately two hundred students sit in folding chairs waiting to receive their diplomas. A line of students wait next to the stage. Christine is next in line. She walks gracefully across the stage, her browning hair pulled back in a pony tail. Adorned in a purple cap and gown, she has the gold honors stole over her shoulders. She stops center stage, performs the shake and take with her diploma, looks out to the crowd, and slides the tassel from one side to the other.

EXT. FOOTBALL FIELD - LATER

Still in her cap and gown, Christine hugs and waves good-bye to fellow graduates.

She pulls her list from her pocket.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

When those amorphous dreams don't work out, we can say we have new dreams.

Christine pulls out a small golf pencil and unfolds her list. She looks at "High School Valedictorian" written in her eighth grade handwriting.

CHRISTINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

That's bullshit.

Christine scratches it from the list. She stares at the list for a moment, then folds it back up and puts it back in her gown pocket.

CHRISTINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When you have goals, you make a plan. And if that plan doesn't work out, it's failure. And maybe that's what we need.

EXT. LOCAL AIRPORT - DAY

Christine stands at the entrance of the small airport's main office. Her hair is pulled into a pony tail and she is wearing faded blue jeans and a faded purple t-shirt. She stares at her list, concentrating on "Learn to Fly." A Cessna airplane sits on the runway. She stuffs the list in her pocket and walks in the office.

EXT. LOCAL AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Christine walks through the building and exits walking next to a FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR. Christine follows the Instructor around the plane, listening intently to his speech about safety and the features of the plane.

They climb into the Cessna and it starts off down the runway.

EXT. LOCAL AIRPORT - LATER

The runway sits empty.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
Sometimes we need to fail.

The Cessna comes to a quick landing on the runway. The "passenger" side opens and Christine nearly falls out. She is holding a vomit bag that has clearly been over filled. The inside of the plane has been the victim of Christine's projectile air-sickness. Christine stumbles towards the airport office.

CHRISTINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It sucks and it hurts like hell.

The pilot slowly exits the plane and leaves the doors wide open. He pulls a hose from near the runway and starts spraying out the plane.

CHRISTINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But ultimately failure is what gets us through. It gets us through the stuff that's almost failure, but not quite. And that's really all you have.

INT. COLLEGE - DAY

A typical engineering college building lobby - the Aerospace niche. Pictures of alumni, Aerospace societies, and engineering projects adorn the walls. Christine stands staring at the wall. Her brown hair is pulled back at the nape of her neck; she is wearing a Calvin & Hobbes "WHY YES, I AM A ROCKET SCIENTIST" T-shirt. Her purple backpack is full of books.

A college-aged man, MATT, walks slyly up to Christine and puts his arm around her, joining her in looking at the wall. He then turns his head to look at her.

MATT
Ready?

Christine nods and they walk off together.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Christine and Matt sit at a large study table, surrounded by shelves and shelves of books. Christine is dressed in a large grey-with-purple-lettering sweatshirt and her ever present pony tail. Books and papers are strewn over the table. The two of them are in a loud whisper argument about the fundamentals of aerodynamics.

CHRISTINE

(whispering)

Alpha sub a is angle of attack. If
the angle of attack, here... is larger
than ... something ...

She starts flipping through the books.

CHRISTINE (CONT'D)

... then it stalls. Stalls, Matt.
That's bad.

Matt looks at Christine, then the paper, then back at Christine. He smiles and moves in closer, as though he is going to kiss her.

MATT

(whispering)

Because as the angle of attack
increases, the lift coefficient
increases ...

Christine looks away from her books and meets Matt's gaze.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

Ultimately, failure gets us through
the stuff that's almost failure, but
not quite.

MATT

... until you reach to the critical
angle of attack ... and then...

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

That's really all you have. You
have the good times which, are
obviously good.

Matt and Christine are nose to nose. The whisper argument has subdued to just whispering.

MATT

...the airflow separates ...

CHRISTINE

...and then stall.

Talk of angle of attack is clearly Christine's weak point. Matt presses his lips to Christine's and she takes his face in her hands.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Christine is sitting on the couch, staring at a letter. She is dressed casually in jeans and a t-shirt, with purple slippers on.

The living room is a typical post-college place, with Ikea furniture and college degrees on the wall.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
And then you have the failure.

Matt enters and stands behind the couch where Christine sits. She holds the letter up for him to see. It is a rejection letter for NASA's astronaut program. Matt leans over to kiss the top of Christine's head and drops the letter on the couch next to her. He exits and Christine does not move.

CHRISTINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And then you have everything in between. Which is mostly there to remind you that it's not as bad as the failure.

FADE TO WHITE

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Present day Christine is still staring into the mirror.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
If you made it through the failure, you can surely make it through the day.

A child's voice calls out.

CHILD (O.S.)
Mooooommmmmmm.

Christine breaks her gaze, sighs, and leaves the bathroom.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
The day is not as bad as the failure.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Christine, still dressed in her white tank top with purple bra sticking out, walks through the nicely kept backyard towards a small tool shed. She opens the doors and takes a step inside.

INT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

The shed is filled with mementos from Christine's childhood - a virtual astronaut's shrine. Pictures of her astronaut costume, her science project with participant ribbon, pictures and posters from every major and minor shuttle launch, old school notebooks, and even her NASA rejection letter plaster the walls.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

Dreams leave us flitting from one thing to the next, believing in things that aren't real.

She pulls out her tattered old list from her pocket and tacks it up to the wall. Most of the things are scribbled out. At the bottom of her list, written in large bold letters, reads "MAKE NEW PLAN."

EXT. BACKYARD - MORNING

Christine closes up the shed. A young blonde-haired boy dressed in airplane pajamas bounds through the lawn towards Christine.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)

Goals, plans, and failure - that's what makes up life.

Christine holds her arms out and scoops up the little boy, giving him a big hug and spinning in circles. The boy laughs hysterically.

CHRISTINE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And of course, making new plans.

FADE TO WHITE.