

Scene 2: Take Off

The interior of the Hummingbird, the space rocket of the Rocket Squad. Final preparations are under way. Roy checking the controls. Gizmo working inside an engine panel. Suzie and Phil looking over various charts and reference books.

Roy: Step on it, Gizmo. Ned will be here any minute.

Gizmo: Aw quit yer yapping. What does it look like I'm doing? I'm moving as fast as I can. These liquid hydrogen tubes aren't tiddlywinks, you know.

Roy: Sure, sure I know. But everything has to be all set when Ned gets here. He seemed in an awful state when he asked me to get the gang together.

Suzie: And Ned's always got such a cool head about him. I wonder what could be eating him?

Phil: Hoping it might be you that's got him so bothered, Suzie?

Roy: This is no time for jokes, Phil.

Phil: You're right. Sorry, Roy. Suzie.

Suzie: That's all right, Phil. I don't really mind.

Roy: Suzie, Ned wouldn't say where it was we were headed so I hope you brought along plenty of resources.

Suzie: Check, Roy. I've got ample information on most of the cultures of the North East Milky Way. If he's planning to go further than that, we'll need more than just my books to get us through.

Phil: I'll say. And I've only brought along enough jam to last us two weeks tops.

Gizmo: Well, the hold couldn't carry anymore than that. We wouldn't be able to travel at any supersonic speeds at all with too much cargo.

Suzie: Right. Where do you think, we're headed, Roy? You're the only one that's spoken to Ned today.

Roy: I don't know, kids. But I've got a feeling that this may be the most exciting, dangerous and important adventure we've been on yet.

Gizmo: Boy, oh boy! I'd better double check the velocity levers.

Phil: Roy, he didn't say anything about how long it would take, did he? I've got basketball practice on Saturday and if I miss another one, they're surely going to boot me off the team.

Roy: Like Ned says, some things are more important than basketball, Phil.

Phil: I guess.

Betty enters covered in grease.

Betty: Roy, I'm worried about the expansion propeller.

Roy: Now that makes two of us. What's the problem?

Betty: I really need to get to the old airplane hangar and see if they have any old fan belts lying around. The only one we have is on its last legs and about as tight as your sister Louise's knees.

Roy: Hey! I should sock you in the mouth for that. That bad?

Betty: Yes, that bad.

Roy: We don't have any time, Betty. Isn't there anything on board you can use?

Betty: You wearing clean underwear?

Roy: Now what does that have to do with anything?

Betty: Your belt is elastic. Do you need it?

Roy: Well, sorta. But I guess I can make do.

Betty: Then give it here.

He does.

Betty: (*As she exits*) Hey Gizmo, I think you broke a nail.

Gizmo: (*Looking and dropping his tools*) Where? (*Seeing nothing*) Aw, Betty I asked you to cut that out! Roy!

Roy: Tell her yourself.

Suzie: What are these charts for, Phil?

Phil: Oh those? Nothing really, just something I'm working on. Not Rocket Squad business. I have to do a paper for Ms. Congreve's class.

Suzie: A paper? It's July. (*Reading*) "Bluesy, choosey, doozey, one-zy two-zy." Hey, all those words rhyme with my name!

Phil: Oh yeah. That's strange isn't it? What a coincidence. Huh. I had no idea. (*Taking the chart from her*). Well, um, anyway, I'll just put that away for now. We should concentrate on the task at hand.

Suzie: Sure. But maybe if we get some time later I can look over that paper for you, Phil. If you want my opinion that is.

Phil: Yeah, um, I should be OK, but yeah, I mean if you really want to. I mean if we get some time. That would be swell.

Roy: Hey, here's Ned, everyone!

Ned enters.

Ned: Hi Gang!

Gang: Hi Ned!

Ned: Thanks for getting ready on such short notice, everyone. This is really the best rocket squad a kid could ever hope for.

Gang: No problem, Ned. Of course. Why wouldn't we? Don't mention it.

Ned: Where's Betty?

Roy: (*Struggling with his loose pants*) She's had some trouble down below.

Betty: (*Entering*) Not anymore, Baggypants. That is now that you're the one with the trouble below.

Ned: Great. You're all here. Now I can tell you about our mission.

Gang: Yes, tell us. What is it, Ned? We can't wait to find out. Is it something very exciting?

Ned: Gang, this mission means more to me than any other we have ever been on. We've had a lot of adventures and even a lot of fun since we built our Hummingbird Rocket together. But this is going to be a very serious undertaking. Last night my father was abducted by an alien of powerful resources.

Gang: What? It can't be! Professor Nimble? Abducted?

Suzie: What type of alien was it, Ned?

Ned: I don't know. It was a creature that I've never encountered before. It was a giant eye.

Gang: An Eye! How horrible! Ghastly!

Ned: And it took my dad. And it had nothing but scorn for my mother and me. I don't know where they went. They dematerialized together right in front of me. We've got to get my dad back. He was so close to perfecting the Instance Oscillator. He was on the cusp of fame and renown in his field of time manipu-management. The work will never be complete without him. Our country needs him back. Science needs him back. My mother and I need him back. But I have to warn you, I think this eye creature may be more than the run of the mill alien we've come across before. I think it may be something bigger and stranger than an alien.

Phil: Like what, Ned?

Gizmo: Yeah, what can be stranger than an alien?

Betty: Take a look in the mirror some day, Giz.

Gizmo: Aw, cut it out, Betty.

Ned: I'm not sure what it is. But I had a horrible feeling when I looked at it. A feeling of loss and confusion and doubt. I didn't want to do anything but...give in to it. It was so powerful. So willful and potent. I seemed so small and insignificant before it. I don't know...I can't really explain it. What I'm saying is that this may be an incredibly dangerous adventure. I can't say with certainty that we can beat this thing, not to mention find it. And if some of you want to disembark the Hummingbird right now and stay here on earth with your families in the safety of your homes, well, I wouldn't blame you. But I have to do this.

A small pause.

Roy: Well, I'm staying right here with you, Ned.

Suzie: As am I.

Phil: Me too.

Betty: I wouldn't want to be anywhere else right now.

Gizmo: Sure. I'm going to look this eye right in the eye and poke him in it.

Ned: Thank you. You're the best. All of you. Much thanks to you all. Now, let's get this bird off the ground and head up!

Gang: Head up!

Roy: To your stations, everyone!

They all strap themselves into their seats.

Gang: Ten...nine...eight...seven...six...five...1-2-3-4!

The Gang breaks into song, during which there is a perspective change in which we see the exterior of the Hummingbird, red and white checkerboard with portholes, flying through space, passing magnificently colored planets and stars.

Song:

Ned:

Gravity's heavy and it makes me fall down
Flat on the earth that's spinning around 'round
The shining sun that looks like a star
When you see it if you go real far
But gravity's not got the last word
Cause like a bird
I rise

Professor Nimble:

The space that's grown between you and me
Is deeper than the deepest deep, deep sea
Time passes now without a sound
Is something lost if it can't be found?
I am nailed here to this floor
But when you open the door
I rise

Ned and Professor Nimble:

The world started with a bang
Now we watch it disappear
I want to tell you what I saw
But you're too far to hear
My nights aren't black
But incredibly blue
Like the moon without the sun
I'm not seen without you

Ned:

To move forward in the universe
There's a point where you have to reverse first
When I don't know what to do
I think about what got you through
It stops your breath to see a planet roll
Out of a black hole
And rise

Scene 3: Planet of the Abenake

The Hummingbird lands on a planet that is a cross between Mars and Monument Valley. The crew gets out to explore. They wear fishbowl-like glass helmets on their heads.

Ned: What is this place, Phil?

Phil: I'm not sure exactly. We're either on Theranium-IV or a moon of Krak.

Gizmo: Where would we be without you, Phil?

Suzie: We'd be lost, Gizmo.

Phil: I don't know what happened. I got all mixed up after that asteroid storm. But I'm pretty sure we headed north northwest after we got clear. Or west northwest. But I'm sure it was one of those. Or something else.

Roy: Well, how do we find out?

Gizmo: We do what we always do. We ask somebody.

Betty: Yeah, all we have to do is wait till someone colonizes the place.

Ned: I don't think we'll have to wait that long. Look what I found. An arrowhead.

Gizmo: An arrowhead? That thing could've been here since... well who knows how long it's been here.

Suzie: Let me send it through my mobile carbon dating utility pack and I'll tell you in a jiffy.

Ned: Here you go, Suzie.

Suzie: Okay, I'm getting a reading. It looks like the last time this was touched by a living creature was...this morning at 10:26.

Gizmo: This morning? This place hasn't seen a living creature since... well who knows how long it hasn't.

Suzie: Let me do a reading of the soil in my portable bio-dating terrain reader and I'll tell you in a jiffy.

As she bends down to take a sample, an arrow flies through the air just missing her head.

Phil: Wow, that was a narrow escape!

Ned: But this may not be. Look, everybody!

A small tribe of what looks like American Indians come charging in on space scooters, primitive bow and arrows at the ready. They do a war-whoop, but they also wear fishbowl-like helmets, and so wave their hands in front of their helmets rather than their mouths.

Closed Thorn: You stopem right there. Strange young creatures.

Stable Cloud: Don't move or we shoot. And we meanum business.

Dark Question: And how!

Ned: Wait. Please. We come in peace. We mean no harm to you or your planet. We are space explorers and we are in search of a missing scientist from our planet earth. And he's my father too.

Dark Question: You say you from other planet?

Ned: Yes. Earth. The third planet from our sun.

Stable Cloud: Son? Your planet is son of who?

Roy: No sun. S-U-N. Which to you is that bright star in the constellation of Cassiopeia.

Closed Thorn: From Oorth! They say they from Oorth!

Stable Cloud: It cannot be so!

Dark Question: Oorth. At last! Oorth!

Closed Thorn: Stable Cloud, you ride-um like light and tell chief. Visitor from Oorth!

Stable Cloud: I take space scooter and vanish.

He leaves.

Roy: What's going on, Ned?

Ned: I can't say for sure but it seems that they have some relationship with our earth.

Gizmo: They look like Injuns.

Suzie: Actually they are dressed in the traditional costume of the Abenake tribe, a subdivision of the northeast Algonquian Nation whose culture was mysteriously wiped out after white settlers introduced hitherto unknown diseases such as smallpox and diphtheria to their region.

Gang: Oh!

Closed Thorn: We wait heap many moons for you to come get us from Oorth.

Dark Question: Ug. We sing songs and make dances to bring the Oorth people here to our harsh lands where no corn grow and no river waters wash.

Closed Thorn: Legend tell of great bird in sky to come carry us to Oorth.

Phil: The Hummingbird!

Closed Thorn: We bend down like dog before you. Great young people of Oorth.

Dark Question: I am slave to you!

Closed Thorn: Take my girl child!

Ned: Wait. Please get off the ground. There must be some mistake. I'm sincerely sorry to say that we have not come to take you to our planet. We have just left our planet and are in search of my father. We will not rest until he is found.

Dark Question: Maybe you pick us up on way back?

Ned: Yes, well, maybe.

Gizmo: Ned! You know the hummingbird won't be able to take on more passengers. Even with your dad on board, we'll be in great danger of not having enough express power to make it home to earth safely.

Ned: But what can I tell them? They seem so pathetic and desperate.

Closed Thorn: Legend tell of great land of Oorth where clover grow without aide of test tube.

Dark Question: Where papoose is born without glass bowl on head.

Closed Thorn: Where water is drunk by mouth.

Dark Question: Where great animal with four legs run like wind and carry you on back.

Closed Thorn: Where great light in sky shine and make skin hot.

Dark Question: Where sound of night creeper sing you to sleep.

Closed Thorn: Where there is such thing as leaf and tree. And leaf fall from tree.

The Indians laugh long and hard at that one. They are interrupted by the approach of their chief, Adequate Glow.

Closed Thorn: Hush now. Chief approaches. He wise and have better ability to persuade.

Adequate Glow: What is this great powwow? Me see great red and white bird land on this barren terrain we call home. Me hear children sing and squaw cry. They say our mighty struggles come to end. They say you sent here from Oorth to carry us home. Who you be, great bird men? Me think you may be salvation of my once strong nation even if you be small as young brave not yet steady with axe and bow. You come to save nation? Or you come to raise hopes of tribe and mock me in front of my people? I see my boys put fear in you. They good boys. They know not the ways of peace and hospitality.

Ned: Chief, I am Ned Nimble, space explorer, and this is my Rocket Squad.

Adequate Glow: This number one son, Closed Thorn. He long to feel sweat on brow. This number two son, Dark Question, he long to kiss squaw with lips and tongue.

Dark Question: Heap squaws!

The Indians laugh.

Adequate Glow: Enough! And this is son three, Stable Cloud. He long to paint picture of blue sky. Me called Adequate Glow, chief here of sorry aching tribe. Me long to hear sound of wind through hair when standing proud under shade of green tree on top of mountain high above tranquil camp.

Ned: We are very pleased to meet you all and we truly want to help you. But Chief Adequate Glow, as I was explaining to your boys here, we cannot take you to earth right now. We can try to send a message back home and see if a shuttle can come get you. But we have urgent business to attend to. My father has been abducted by a strange being. Do you understand?

Adequate Glow: Many generations pass here with no one coming until you. You take us. Tribe can wait no longer.

Ned: But my father is in danger. Time is weighing heavy on me.

Closed Thorn: What is fate of one father next to future of entire people?

Roy: But like you said, you've been living this way for generations. What's a few more weeks or months going to matter? We only stopped here to get our bearings.

Adequate Glow: No. You think you stop here for that. Fate bring you to us. You cannot change what fate plan for you. You take us. Closed Thorn, tell tribe to pack essentials.

Closed Thorn: Ug.

Ned: No. Closed Thorn, don't go. We are not taking you.

Adequate Glow: But you are dream of nation come true.

Ned: How can I be your dream if I have dreams of my own?

Phil: Can a dream have dreams?

Gizmo: Ug, beats me.

Ned: Come on gang, let's get back to the Hummingbird.

Adequate Glow: No Ned Nimble and Rocket Squad. You take us.

Ned: Chief, I have to follow my own fate. It was not to take you to earth. It was to find my father.

Adequate Glow: You make great mistake, young Ned Nimble. You never return. Great Eye in sky is unassailable.

Ned: How do you know about the eye?

The Indians all raise their bows and aim at the Rocket Squad.

Adequate Glow: Take us to Oorth, boy of my dreams!