

LINCOS

By

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INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

DAVE, 13, slouches in his desk, surrounded by fellow students doing the same.

MRS. CAROL HARRIS, 40, lifts her bookmark out of her copy of the assigned reading and points to a student.

CAROL

Dave, would you please start us off with the first paragraph?

At first it appears that Dave is following along, but he is actually focussed on a page of handwritten algebra problems hidden away in the cover of his required reading.

Dave softly sighs with frustration over a problem, when something hits him in the forehead. It's a crumpled up bookmark.

He quickly crumples up his own paper, hiding it away as he looks up.

CAROL (CONT'D)

Pay attention, Dave.

DAVE

Yes, Mo-- I mean... Mrs. Harris.

The class giggles around Dave as he tries to hide his embarrassment behind the book.

CAROL

That's enough, class.

(to Dave)

35, middle paragraph.

Dave promptly finds and begins to read his paragraph.

INT/EXT. CAR - DAY

Dave sits silently in the passenger seat as Carol, his mother, drives them home.

As she parks the car into the driveway, Dave swings open the door and rushes inside, leaving his bookbag.

CAROL

Dave!

Frustrated, Carol begins to gather all of his things. As she does so, she notices the paper he was working on in class sticking out of his bag. Carol pulls out the paper and studies it admiringly.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

CLARK, 42, enters the house. He sets down a hard-hat and a file of blueprints by the front door.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Clark moves next to Carol who is chopping vegetables by the sink.

He kisses her cheek, washes his hands and boots her out of the way with his hip to take over chopping the veggies.

Carol picks up the worksheet and shows it to Clark. He stops chopping, clearly impressed with his son's work.

INT. DINNER TABLE - EVENING

The family sits in silence as they eat. Dave, still upset, plays with his food.

Sharing a glance with Carol, Clark passes the worksheet to Dave who looks up at his father. Clark pushes his plate away with a smile and moves in closer to discuss his son's progress.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Dave writes an equation correctly on the white board in class.

Carol watches Dave work on an equation on the car ride home.

Dave and Clark work on a problem at the dinner table as Carol picks up the dishes.

Dave works on something when, out of nowhere, is punched in the face.

Carol pulls Dave off of the bully who is being choked out.

Carol smiles and winks at Dave as she pushes him into detention.

Dave works on equations in detention.

Clark and Carol hold hands lovingly as they drive into the parking lot of a "Quiz Bowl" competition.

The parents sit in the back of a classroom as Dave frantically works on an equation and buzzes in just before the other team.

Clark and Carol excitedly ask a stranger to take a photo of them and Dave with the First Place Trophy.

Clark and Carol from the doorway as Dave awkwardly opens the door for his date to prom.

Dave, in full graduating gown is lifted up by Clark in a bear hug as Carol laughs.

The family lugs boxes into Dave's dorm at Harvard.

They wave goodbye as they drive away.

Dave works hard in a lecture hall.

Carol gets back to teaching.

Clark points out directions in a construction site, when... a loud BLAST is heard off screen and Clark rushes in.

Dave is at a job fair, happily shaking hands with an employer when he notices his mother off to the side, tears streaking her face.

They stand next to each other in black during the funeral. Dave notices how absent Carol is.

Carol is still absent as she poses with Dave at his College Graduation.

Carol is absent as Dave moves a box full of stuff back into the house. He kisses her on the cheek and moves to grab another load.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's a stormy winter night outside.

Carol sits in front of the T.V. As Dave sits next to her, handing her a plate of food. She regards the food but doesn't eat.

Instead she looks back up to the television, turned to the news with the caption, "First Off-World Colony Open Submissions".

Carol perks up ever so slightly.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Spring is in full bloom and all things are peaceful, until--  
A CRY from inside.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Dave's face is torn with heartbreak. Tears streak his face as his fingers threaten to crumple Carol's space colony acceptance letter on the counter.

Carol wrestles her arms around her son. He finally gives in to the embrace.

DAVE  
Don't go... Don't go...

EXT. COMMUNITY SCHOOL - DAY

DAVE (PRE-LAP)  
Don't go...

Silence.

Flags wave on the pole in front of the school.

SHUTTLE LAUNCH CONTROL (V.O.)  
T-minus 21 seconds...

Students walk past a banner on the side of the building, decorated with stars, a spaceship, and the words, "Safe Travels Mrs. Harris."

SHUTTLE LAUNCH CONTROL (V.O.)  
...the, uh, solid rocket booster  
now underway...

INT. DINNER TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Dave sits in his seat at the table. Holding back more tears as he holds a note that reads, "There's still chicken left in the fridge. Please water my plants from time to time. I love you, Dave - Mom"

SHUTTLE LAUNCH CONTROL (V.O.)  
...T-minus 15 seconds...

INT. MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dave walks into the main office of the school. He places his resume on the front desk, raising a confused eyebrow from the receptionist.

SHUTTLE LAUNCH CONTROL (V.O.)  
...T-minus 10, 9, 8, 7, 6 - we have  
main engine start...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Students toss bags into lockers, grab their books, and head into class as the electronic bell CHIMES with the countdown.

SHUTTLE LAUNCH CONTROL (V.O.)  
... 4, 3, 2, 1, and lift off. We  
have lift off.

INT. COMMON AREA - CONTINUOUS

The ROAR of propulsory flames erupt and gradually fade as students disappear, leaving the hallways and common area empty and silent.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE - LATER

Space Shuttle FRIGG steadily moves through the vast expanse.

INT. FRIGG - CONTINUOUS

Throughout the shuttle, the passengers sleep, strapped to the inner walls of their cryopods.

Including Carol.

The only people left awake are Commander Matthews and Command Pilot Johnson, who sit in front of the flight control panels.

JOHNSON  
TWI trajectory up to date and  
stable.

MATTHEWS  
Roger that.

Johnson tries to hide a noticeable yawn.

MATTHEWS (CONT'D)

Go ahead and prep your cryopod. Our work is done here. At least for a few more months.

Johnson floats out of the room as Matthews finishes up some last minute records.

Carol sleeps soundlessly beside Johnson as the pilot preps an empty cryopod.

Her sleeping head shifts as the shuttle jiggles ever so slightly.

Johnson pauses.

JOHNSON

(calling to Matthews)

You feel that?

Johnson moves back toward Matthews, who pushes a few buttons.

MATTHEWS

Frigg to Houston.

CAPSULE COMMUNICATOR (O.S.)

(CAPCOMM)

Go ahead, Frigg.

MATTHEWS

Houston, are you getting any unusual navigation readouts?

CAPCOMM

Negative, Frigg. Why, what are you seeing?

MATTHEWS

Nothing as of now, though we've somehow been knocked off course by minus 15--

Matthews is cut off by a FLASH of WHITE LIGHT. He and Johnson strain to cover their eyes.

JOHNSON

Wh...what is tha--

The light strengthens; enveloping the crew, the passengers, and Carol...

EXT. SPACE - LATER

Frigg continues to glide through space...

CAPCOMM (O.S.)  
 (crackly)  
 ...Houston, Frigg. Come in Frigg...

INT. FRIGG - CONTINUOUS

The cockpit is empty...

CAPCOMM (O.S.)  
 ...Frigg. This is Houston. Come  
 in...

...and the cryopods are empty...

COPCOMM (O.S.)  
 Houston to Frigg...

CUT TO:

INT. OVAL OFFICE - DAY

The PRESIDENT sits behind his desk to address the camera in front of him.

PRESIDENT  
 Great pain and sorrow happens, no matter how hard it might be to understand, to all of us. Discovery does not come without risk and the passengers of Frigg took the greatest risk of all. All in the name of humanity.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Below the president, a digital banner reads, "Space Shuttle Frigg Gone Radio Silent One Year into Journey".

PRESIDENT  
 To the families who lost their loved ones, we share your pain. We cannot bring--

A KNOCK at the open door and Dave looks up from the news playing on his computer. His face red with pain.

MRS. RENS, 37, pokes in empathetically.

MRS. RENS  
Hey Dave. You all right?

Dave forces a nod.

MRS. RENS (CONT'D)  
Um, we need someone to sub for Ms  
Schafer.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Dave stands on the side of the gym with a whistle in his mouth as kids play dodgeball on the court.

Dave HUSHES at a couple of giggling students during study hall. He notices another student, GRACE, scribbling something in her notebook.

Dave pops in a DVD and sits in the dark as students watch a war film.

Dave stands to the side with protective goggles on while students work in the wood shop.

Dave is back in the gym. A dodgeball hits him in the face.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

The school day is over.

Dave stands in front of the Plexiglas where the first place quiz bowl trophies are kept. A photo of him and the team stands next to the trophy. In the background, his parents can be spotted.

He turns and moves down the hall to...

INT. CAROL'S OLD CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is full with another teacher's belongings. Another teacher's decorations. Another teacher's essence.

Dave moves to go further in, but decides to shut the door on his way out instead.

INT/EXT. PARKED CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dave unlocks his car and throws a handful of paperwork in the backseat. He is about to get in the driver's seat, but hesitates.

The passenger door opens, and Dave enters. Door shut, he sits there for a moment and breathes in, looking over at the empty driver's seat.

Dave slouches to get a lower perspective. That's more like it.

Carol turns and smiles lovingly at Dave.

Dave JUMPS with fright! He rubs his eyes and looks back at the driver's seat. No one is there.

Dave breathes hard, struggling to calm himself. He turns on the radio, trying to distract himself from what he just saw. It begins to work. His breathing slows. Everything fades back to normal.

The radio plays. Then...

A pitch shift in frequency... Then another...

Dave looks up at the radio.

The frequency becomes more and more erratic. Dave reaches up to fiddle with some dials, but it's no use.

WHITE NOISE BLASTS out of Dave's speakers, forcing him to cover his ears before the frequency dies down to a rhythmic pattern of PINGS, NOTES, and SOUNDS completely alien to Dave.

Stunned, Dave simply listens for a long while. Soon the pinging notes and sounds seemingly start from the beginning again. Dave catches this, slowly reaching for his notebook.

The pinging repeats once again, and something clicks for Dave. He frantically reaches for his pen but drops it. The pinging continues as Dave struggles to find his pen again.

Finally, he flings it up from the floor and slams it onto an open page in his notebook just as the pinging notes and sounds start over again. He begins to write frantically.

The sun begins to set outside.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

We've just been handed this breaking news update. Reports have come in that citizens all around the world have simultaneously been experiencing issues with their radio connection...

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

The sun rises above Dave's house.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Rather than listening to their favorite stations on their car rides to work, people have been hearing strange frequencies that sciences suggest might be a form of unidentified message similar to the mathematical form, Lincos, first introduced by Hans Freudenthal in the mid 1940's...

INT. CAR - DAY

Dave sleeps, still in the passenger seat, with a layer of crumpled up pieces of paper all around him.

A student parks their car nearby, SLAMMING the door shut as they walk away.

Dave jumps at the sound, now very much awake.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Though the code has not yet been deciphered, the Pentagon assures us that the brightest minds are on the case, and spirits are hopeful that the mysterious message might be linked to the loss of communication with Space Shuttle Frigg...

He looks down at the mess around him, and hurriedly scrambles to pick up all of his things.

INT. COMMUNITY SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Dave shuffles into the building and passes the main office where the door is wedged open and the news plays loudly from a mounted television.

NEWS ANCHOR

We'll share more updates as they come in. In other news...

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Dave scribbles in his notebook frantically, whistle in mouth, as kids play dodgeball around him.

Dave, slightly matted hair and scruff, scribbles frantically in study hall, paying no mind to a student who shoots a spitball at Grace's neck.

Dave, facial features even more dishevelled, scribbles frantically in the dark while the war film plays the most gruesome scene and kids OOO and AAAH.

Dave, a complete mess, scribbles frantically in the wood shop, brushing flakes of wood off of his notebook as a student uses the sand belt nearby.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Weeks now, and scientists and mathematicians say they are no closer to deciphering the mysterious message. At this rate, one of our anonymous sources say, we'd be lucky to crack it by the end of the century.

Dave rips out a page in gym.

Dave rips out a page in study hall.

Dave rips out a page in history.

Dave rips out a page in the wood shop.

INT. GYM - DAY

Dave chucks his notebook at the bleachers, YELLING in frustration.

The kids stop playing, and look at him.

A ball hits Dave in the side of the head and bounces away in awkward silence.

Dave picks up his notebook and briskly walks out of the gymnasium.

EXT. COMMUNITY SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Dave struggles to drink from a water fountain outside, but the water barely trickles out. Fed up, Dave smacks the fountains several times and pulls his hand back in pain.

A moment passes as Dave notices the banner wishing Mrs. Harris safe travels has been replaced with a memorial painting.

Carol stands with book in hand as she reads to her surrounding students.

Dave moves closer as tears swell up in Dave's eyes. He looks to the blue sky, then back at his mother's likeness; Her compassionate smile looking down at her students.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dave reenters the building, pausing in the hallway.

He looks down at his failed equation and reaches out to crumple the page. But something holds him back.

He turns to see Grace sitting against the lockers; writing vigorously in her notebook.

Grace pauses, slightly stumped, but completely enthralled by the equation she is writing.

DAVE (O.S.)  
That's very good.

Grace looks up to see Dave studying her work. He sits down on the floor next to her. He lifts his pencil.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
If I may?

Slightly taken aback, she offers up her paper, and he marks a mistake.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
Do you understand what I did?

She nods and takes a moment to look over his changes.

Dave moves to hand the paper back, but pauses. Instead, he hands Grace his notebook, pointing to the equation.

She studies Dave's work for a long moment. Then, she starts making notes of her own.

Dave leans back against the lockers, watching her work.

He smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.