

Sending a Message into Space

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Adapted by LHU Language Center

Characters:

TV Newsman, John Glenn, Mission Control Spokesman, Mayor of Perth, Jessica, Gabbie, Alexis

Scene 1

TV Newsman:

Good afternoon. It's Tuesday, February 20, 1962.
Welcome to our coverage of the first American to orbit the earth. Today Astronaut John Glenn prepares to explore a new frontier. Glenn is not the first man in space, but if he accomplishes his mission, he will be the first man to orbit the globe. Colonel Glenn is in good shape in the *Friendship 7* capsule. Let's go to Mission Control in Houston for the latest report.

Mission Control Spokesman:

Yes, Glenn is still strapped in. He'll complete the first of three orbits in about thirty minutes. He has crossed the Indian Ocean and moved into night. Right now he's approaching Australia, where it's close to midnight.

TV Newsman:

Let's go now to Perth, Australia, where residents are staying up late to send a special greeting to the astronaut.

Mayor of Perth:

Here in Perth we're getting ready to send a goodwill message to the *Friendship 7*. All over the city families will be leaving the lights on.

Gabbie:

Ma, can I stay up? Please, ma. You have to let me help turn on the lights.

Jessica:

Of course, you can help. Open the blinds on the windows in the bedroom. Then go turn on the porch lights. I'll get the ones in the kitchen.

Mayor:

We're hoping the lights from 450,000 homes will be visible in space.

TV Newsman:

Thank you, mayor. It shouldn't be long now. Glenn's orbit should put him over you in just a few minutes. Let's go back to Mission Control.

Mission Control Spokesman:

Colonel Glenn should radio in to the tracking station in Australia in just a moment. Yes, here he is now.

John Glenn:

Good evening, Mission Control. The view from here is tremendous. My condition is excellent. Just to my right I can see a big pattern of light, apparently on the coast. I can see the outline of a town and a very bright light just to the south of it.

Mission Control Spokesman:

That would be Perth. Everyone there wanted to say hello.

John Glenn:

Roger, that. The lights show up very well. Thank everybody for turning them on, will you?

Mission Control Spokesman:

Will do, *Friendship 7*.

Gabby:

He saw us, ma! He saw our lights!

Jessica:

Can you believe it? We sent a message to someone in space. Come on, baby, let's have some ice cream to celebrate!

TV Newsman:

Thank you, Mayor. The people of America send you their thanks. We return you now to your scheduled programming. We will interrupt the broadcast again when it's time for re-entry.

Commercial Reader:

Yum, yum, yum. It's cherry time. Stop in at Bellevue Super Market. Your family will go for these Washington's birthday treats. Sirloin steak, \$.89 per pound. Coke, \$.27 for two 12-ounce cans. Corn flakes, \$.27 per box. Better sales and better prices on the things you shop for every day.

TV Newsman:

Welcome back to our coverage of *Friendship 7*. Mission control has just announced that there may be a problem with the heat shield on the *Friendship 7*. Mission Control has instructed Colonel Glenn to attempt re-entry with the retrorockets attached. They believe this will keep the heat shield in place. We take you now to Mission Control Headquarters at Cape Canaveral.

Mission Control Spokesman:

Friendship Seven, this is Cape. The weather in the recovery area is excellent, three-foot waves, only one-tenth cloud coverage, ten miles visibility.

John Glenn:

Roger, that.

Mission Control Spokesman:

Seven, we recommend that you ...

John Glenn:

This is *Friendship 7*. I think the pack just let go. A real fireball outside.

Mission Control Spokesman:

Hello, Cape. *Friendship 7*. Over.
(Pause.)

Mission Control Spokesman:

Hello, Cape. *Friendship 7*. Do you receive? Over.
(Pause.)

Mission Control Spokesman:

Hello, Cape. *Friendship 7*. How do you read? Over.
(Pause.)

John Glenn:

Loud and clear.

Mission Control Spokesman:

We read you, Seven. What's your condition? Are you feeling pretty well?

John Glenn:

My condition is good, but that was a real fireball, boy.

TV Newsman:

Colonel John Glenn and the *Friendship 7* have blasted through the atmosphere in a fireball that was visible for hundreds of miles. He splashed down in the Atlantic Ocean near the Bahamas and has been picked up by U.S. Navy ships. The entire country held its breath hoping Glenn would make it safely home. It's history in the making and you saw it here. And that's the way it is Tuesday, February 20, 1962.

Scene 2

TV Newsmen:

We're less than few minutes away from John Glenn's historic return to space at the age of seventy-seven. It has been thirty-six years since Glenn's first flight. He's returning to space with the crew of the Space Shuttle *Discovery*. Glenn will be part of medical experiments designed to explore the effects of aging on the human body. Stay Tuned. We'll be back after the commercial.

Commercial Reader:

Now's the time to think about that special dinner you need to prepare. At Food Stars, you'll find the freshest food and the best bargains in town. Lobsters, \$2.99 per pound. Budweiser, \$.99 for six bottles. Buffalo wings, \$2.29. Quality you trust from people you know.

TV Newsmen:

Welcome back to our live report of Space Shuttle *Discovery*. *We're seconds away from the launch of space shuttle, and now we take you to mission control.*

Mission Control:

We have T minus ten and counting. We have a go. In Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Booster ignition. Lift off.

TV Newsmen:

We have lift off of *Discovery* with a crew of six astronauts and one American legend! At T plus forty-eight seconds, they will be at maximum G force. It's much less pressure than John Glenn experienced in the old days, but it's still a lot of pressure.

Mission Control Spokesman:

All engines performing as expected. Traveling at 3,500 miles per hour at an altitude of forty-three miles.

TV Newsmen:

Well, as you can see the astronauts are well on their way. Everything looks good as they head into space for the nine-day flight. Let's move to the other side of the world now. The citizens of Perth, Australia are getting ready to repeat history. Mayor, tell us about the greeting you have planned.

Mayor:

Just like we did thirty-six years ago, we're keeping the lights on for John Glenn and the other astronauts.

Gabby:

Come on, Alexis. You have to help me get all the lights on and all the shades pulled up.

Alexis:

Will the astronauts see us? Do you think they'll really see us?

Gabby:

John Glenn saw the lights of Perth from space when I was a little girl. I was only seven then. Just like you are now.

Alexis:

What will he say? Will he talk about us?

Gabby:

I'm sure he will. Things have changed a lot in thirty-six years. We'll probably be able to hear him much better now than we could the first time he went into space.

Mayor:

The planned orbit is a little farther north than the first time. And of course, the space shuttle is deeper in space, so it's farther away. But we're hoping he will still be able to see our salute. Our city has grown much bigger, and we're all turning on our lights.

Mission Control Spokesman:

Discovery, you are approaching Australia.

John Glenn:

The coastline is coming into view. I can see the lights. I think it looks even better now than it did all those years ago. Pass along our very best to all the folks in Perth.

TV Newsman:

There you have it from Perth. History does repeat itself. Tune in tomorrow for our continuing coverage of the historic flight of John Glenn and the *Discovery*. And that's the way it is Thursday, October 29, 1998.