

PLAYS FOR  
**New Audiences**

A Division of Children's Theatre Company

***Infinity***

by Charles Way

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## **Infinity**

By Charles Way

### Characters

Helen {30's}

Sarah {30's}

Eloise {12+}

The play takes place in the 2030's.

Section One – **On Earth**

Section Two- **In Flight**

Section Three- **On Mars**

Section Four- **The Return**

Section Five- **On Earth**

'To everything, turn, turn, turn.

There is a season, turn, turn, turn.

And a time to every purpose under heaven.

A time to build up, a time to break down.

A time to dance, a time to mourn.

A time to cast away stones.

A time to gather stones together.' {The Byrds}

WORDS FROM THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES adapted by- PETE SEEGER.

**Notes.**

1 There are planned missions to Mars in the 2030's. It will probably be a mixture of private companies and national funds from various nations.

2 A ten year old in the audience will be the right age to be an astronaut in 2030 +

3 In reality communications between Earth and the Space ship would have a twenty minute delay- which would make the play, unplayable. In the best traditions of Science Fiction I have therefore created a new satellite which enables instant communication. By 2035 this could be science reality.

4 Peter Brook defines theatre as an exploration of the nature and of space and time. This is the substance of this play. The stage directions make reference to 'three chairs' which are a physical definition of space but should not be taken literally. They were simply a device that enabled me to write. A play with no chairs is fine- indeed it is important that the 'conversations' are not restricted by the reality of sitting down.

5 Eloise's film. At present I have gone with the idea that the film has Lego figures/ homemade rockets etc. I asked a friend of mine to create a stop-motion film with his thirteen year old daughter and this is what they came up with using materials to hand. The film however might well be made of different stuff- like a Wallace and Gromit movie- or perhaps created with cut out figures- as in a shadow play. Also, the suggested music for the homemade movie by 'The Byrds' is not a prerequisite. There are many options which might connect more with young people now.

5 In several early drafts I called INFINITY a dance drama but I have pulled away from that expression. I believe however that in form and content the material offers sophisticated choreographic opportunities.

CW

## Section 1 **On Earth**

A space.

A screen.

Three chairs.

A screen showing the date. 203--A homemade stop motion film is shown. It lasts now more than two minutes. It starts with music-, 'Turn-Turn-Turn' by The Byrds which is the accompanying soundtrack. All the characters are made of Lego. It is essentially humorous, simple and yet quite sophisticated. Eloise has made it with the help of her mother-Sarah. It shows a glamorous Lego lady {Helen} waving goodbye to two other Lego characters, {Sarah and Eloise.} at the front of a toy farm house. Cows can be seen as the 'Helen' character drives away in a posh sports car. The car speeds across the desert. She arrives at space age looking building enters and reappears in a tinfoil space suit. She walks to a rocket, Infinity One, and gets in. Numerals on the screen countdown to take off. The rocket fuel is done with candles stuck to a homemade rocket and then filmed upside down. We see Sarah's arm and maybe her face for a fleeting moment. There is a close up of the Lego astronaut shaking with the vibration. Once in space-the space craft jettisons its fuel engines-then stillness. The musical soundtrack fades away and is replaced by the real sound of Mission control calmly conversing with the crew-controlling the mission.]

[Lights rise on Eloise, Sarah and Helen.]

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Eloise | Mars was the Roman god of war. He gave his name to the term martial arts-but Taekwondo is not a warlike pursuit. The purpose of taekwondo is to make each person responsible for their own actions-to have courage in the face of adversity and to become an honourable person.   |
| Sarah  | Dairy cows are bred specifically to produce large quantities of milk. Each cow is required to give birth to one calf a year to keep the herd going and thus continually producing milk. The cows are artificially inseminated when they are about 15 months old. When they start to produce less milk they are butchered and the meat sold as beef. |
| Helen  | Living on a space station requires a particular type of person. Someone who doesn't mind small spaces. Someone who is tidy, who can occupy their time with books and games like chess, who listens well to others and who will not panic when something goes wrong- despite the fact that one mistake will kill everyone on board-----              |

Sarah I don't want you to explain. You hear me?

Helen Sarah just-

Sarah Don't tell me to calm down-don't even try it. It's always been the same with you—going back on your word.

Helen That isn't fair.

Sarah You promised.

Helen Not exactly.

Sarah You promised Eloise.

Eloise [From her room/chair]What?

Sarah Nothing.

Helen They need me.

Sarah 'They' need you. Why? You're no one special, believe me.

Helen My experience is—

Sarah Your experience is in that stupid book —which she has read cover to cover three times especially the last paragraph.

Helen Sarah-

Sarah And I quote.

Helen You quote?

Sarah 'I knew in my heart when the capsule landed safely on earth that I would never return to space again. ' Full stop. A big fat full stop. A promise'.

Helen If you call that a promise I made it to myself-and I'm allowed to break it.

[Silence]

Helen Sarah-this trip is different. The whole thing is different.

Sarah Don't.

Helen Mars.

Sarah Mars. Wow. Who cares about Mars? Do you 'care' about Mars? It's a lump of rock-don't sneer at me.

Helen I'm not. It is a lump of rock-and a lot more-it's a stepping stone-it's-

Sarah A stepping stone? To what? Where?

Helen A possible future.

Sarah Will you listen to yourself--

Helen Will you let me explain?

Sarah What for? You've already decided.

Helen I need to explain.

Sarah Don't. I know everything you're going to say before you say it.

Helen Likewise. You mis-quoted by the way. I knew in my heart I would never return to outer space- and I wept.

Sarah I'd like to see that.

Helen AGH! Only you can reduce me to this-ridiculous form of conversation-this combat.

Sarah Exactly. Only me.

[Silence]

Helen It isn't as terrible as you're making out. The clever people you despise so much have found a way of getting us to Mars and bringing us back. It's been impossible for years and now they've done it.

Sarah In theory.

Helen In practice. It's incredible--

Sarah No-what's incredible is that I'm standing here covered in cow shit. That's incredible.

Helen To be the first. The first humans to go to Mars. To step on the surface. Don't you see?

Sarah Yes. You want to be first.

Helen To go to Mars. I don't understand what you don't understand.

Sarah Alright-You want to humiliate me-you want me to beg. Fine. Stay. Not here on the farm-of course not-just here on Earth. Please.

Helen This is what I was born to do.

Sarah No. No one is born to go to someplace there's no air- no trees- no people-no gravity-

Helen There's gravity on Mars-it's about a third of-

Sarah Stop it! Go on then-go. Catch a rocket, go.

Go on. I want you to leave. Now.

Helen You're being -

Sarah Don't!

Helen And I'd like to see Eloise.

Sarah Then stay- so you can watch her grow up. Like you promised you would.

[Enter Eloise]

Eloise What are you shouting about?

Sarah Tell her to her face.

Eloise What?

Helen I've been selected---chosen- for another mission.

[Eloise screams with delight and embraces Helen]

Helen You don't mind?

Eloise Why should I mind? You'll be famous all over again. So will I.

Helen Your mother doesn't want me to go.

Eloise She doesn't want me to go to Taekwondo either- but I take no notice.

Sarah Eloise!

Helen It's dangerous.

Eloise Taekwondo?

Helen This mission.

Eloise They're always dangerous. Says so in that 'stupid book'. You're going back to the space station right? --Where are you going?

Helen Mars.

Eloise Mars?

Helen Which-obviously-has never been done before.

Eloise That's so cool.

Helen Very cool indeed-

Sarah Please-

Helen           And dangerous-

Eloise           Crossing the road is dangerous. And a farm is 'one of the most dangerous working environments'--

Sarah           She's too young to understand-

Eloise           I am not! She's just jealous.

Sarah           Hah.

Eloise           So-you'll go to Mars --like when?

Helen           About a year from now.

Eloise           A whole year? The way you were arguing I thought you were like-going tomorrow.

Helen           We have to do some special training in Mexico-one year. The actual mission-is nearly three.

[Silence]

Eloise           Three years?

Helen           It's one hundred and forty times further away than the moon. Then -we'll stay -- anything up to nine months.

Eloise           What will you be doing?

Helen           Mostly we'll try to find out why there's no longer any running water. Help us understand climate change here. But we'll also establish a proper living base-for the next crew-grow some vegetables--and then come back.

Eloise           You promise?

Sarah           Eloise.

Eloise           Mother! I'm having a serious conversation here.

Sarah           Eloise-Madam-It's a nice day. I think Helen brought a picnic.

Helen           Yes-I did -- probably a little stale by----

Sarah           And you can ask-no doubt- all the questions you want.

Eloise           You do know I'm a vegetarian now.

Helen           Since when?

Sarah           Wednesday.

Eloise           I will never eat cow again-in my whole life. I'm serious.



Helen           Okay then. Where shall we go?

Eloise           The river-of course.

Helen           Of course.

Sarah           Go fetch something to sit on.

                  [Eloise goes]

Sarah           Promise me.

Helen           What?

Sarah           Not to promise anything.

                  [A Picnic-Sarah sits apart.]

Eloise           Mum said that if you step onto the surface without a space suit your blood boils and your dead in three minutes.

Helen           You should see the suits they're making us-amazing.

Eloise           She said you can drown inside your own helmet.

Helen           It's never happened.

Eloise           Will I be able to talk to you like I did when you were on the space station?

Helen           Better. We have a whole new comms system. A special satellite orbiting Mars. It'll be like-like you're in the room with me.

Eloise           Really?

Helen           Yes-you'll see a room- a virtual room. In reality I'll be probably be upside down in a broom cupboard –but it's more private than last time- and you young lady are an important part of the mission. You've got to keep me sane. You have to talk to me-tell me-lots of detail-not-'How was school?' 'Fine.' 'what did you today?' 'Nothing'.

Eloise           Okay.

Helen           Okay-So-teach me some [She does a few martial arm movements].

Eloise           What? No. I've only just started.

Helen           Me too-this can be my first lesson.

Eloise           Do I have to?

Helen           Come on!