

## Section 11 - Some Kind of Lovely

At launch minus six I was still insanely hoping that Dad would actually turn up. Especially at launch minus six, to be honest. Because at launch minus five they were going to do the spray-on Power Rangers space suit thing.

The thing about the spray-on space suits is that you have to have a bald chest before they put the stuff on you. So, if you're a dad, you have to have your chest waxed. That means they pour warm wax all over you and then rip it off with strips of cloth. When the wax comes off it pulls all your chest hairs out with it.

At launch minus five my dad still hadn't come and I was screaming in pain and looking at a piece of wax covered in curly hairs that had been pulled out by the root.

"There," said Dr. Drax. "The agony of reentry will be nothing after that."

Apparently women do it to their own legs, and they don't even get to go to space afterward!

After that they sprayed on my space suit—it felt warm and tickly—and I was allowed to go back into the living quarters and wait for it to dry.

When I got there, Mr. Bean was waiting for me. He shook my hand and wished me well. "You take care of yourself now," he said.

I said, "I thought *you* were going to be taking care of us. I thought all we had to do was enjoy the view."

He laughed. Then he said, "Since you mentioned the view, there was something I wanted to tell you. You got your PiPs, right?"

"Yes."

"Think hard about what you put in there. It could be your most important piece of safety equipment."

"What? More important than our space suits?"

"Maybe. You see, the thing about space is—"

I said, "—it's full of dead people. You already told me."

"Space is somewhere else. D'you see? It's not just far away. It's a different kind of place. It can get a hold of you."

"Are you saying, 'You'll like it when you get there'?"

He smiled. "My mother used to say that. Did yours?" He looked out of the window. Even though it was daylight, you could still see the moon, pale but huge, like a big balloon. He said, "Did you ever hear of Ed White? First

L) Who was the first American to Spacewalk? Who stopped him getting carried away and staying out of the spaceship for too long?

I) Why does Florida use Liam's favourite word "Cosmic"?

V) What does the word beguiled actually mean?

E) What would you take in your PiP bag? Why?

GD) What advice is Mr Bean giving Liam?

American to spacewalk. A long time ago now—1965. First American to open a door into space, to dangle from a wire and look down at the Earth and see the whole planet roll by beneath him. He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

"Everything he knew and didn't know. His friends, enemies, places he'd been, places he'd never go, all just sitting there in his field of vision. When it was time to go back inside he couldn't tear himself away. He was like, 'Ah, let me stay a little while, why don't you?' And, 'Isn't that America? Oh no, it's Africa.' And...you know. The command pilot—Jim McDivitt—he had to bawl him out somewhat to bring him back to his senses. Do you see what I'm saying?"

I said, "Not really."

Florida had just arrived in her Power Rangers getup. She said we were supposed to keep moving around to check for fissures and flaws.

Mr. Bean went on. "I'm talking about how to stay in one piece. Try to get hold of the things that are important, the good and true things about your life. Up there is some kind of lovely. And maybe you need to have something in your heart, you know, something even more lovely. To help you find your way home. Otherwise maybe you could be beguiled."

"Beguiled?"

"I think that would be the word. I'll say good night."

"Good night, Mr. Bean."

He smiled and said, "Call me Alan."

Just as he was about to go out the door, Florida shouted, "Wait! Alan Bean? *Apollo 12*, 1969? That is cosmic."

It was the first time she'd ever used my word. There probably isn't any other word for being able to touch someone who has walked on Another World.

"Wow!" said Florida. "An Apollo astronaut? That makes you dead famous, doesn't it? I mean, you had ticker-tape parades and went to all these parties, and you were on TV all over the world."

"I wasn't on TV so much, actually. I broke the television camera. When we landed on the moon, I accidentally pointed the camera at the sun and burned it out. Imagine that—we went all the way to the moon and didn't get any holiday footage. So...not on TV as much as some! What I remember is being on the moon. I remember every second. Every stone. Every star we saw. Sometimes it feels like I never really came back."

He shrugged. "But I did come back," he said, "and you remember that. Where you're going—it seems far away and dangerous. But you will come back."

Which is more or less exactly what my dad said to me on my first day at Waterloo High.

As soon as Alan had gone I wedged my old phone into the PiP, because it had pictures of home on it. And Dad's St. Christopher statue. It wouldn't have fitted if it hadn't been a bit broken.

Florida said, "What're you taking that for?"

I said, "Why? What're you taking?"

She said, "Haribo, mostly."

## ANSWERS:

L) The first American to spacewalk was Ed White and the person who stopped him getting carried away was Jim McDivitt

I) Florida uses Liam's favourite word "Cosmic" because she realises Alan Bean was an actual astronaut who has walked on the moon.

V) To deceive or charm someone