

# Defying Gravity

Character: Elizabeth

Description: The daughter of the first teacher astronaut

**ELIZABETH:** The day my mother left, a reporter asked me what I thought of my mother going into space. I didn't want to answer so I hid my face behind my grandmother's purse. My brother laughed at me so I hit him on the arm. My grandmother gave us Lifesavers to quiet us down. I told her I wanted a cherry so she peeled the paper down until she found one for me. I put it in my pocket for later. Then my mother joined us and she let me hold her hand while she talked to the reporters. I played with her wedding ring and I was very proud that I was one of the few people who was allowed to touch her hand. She showed the reporters some of the things she was taking into space. She had a journal and in the journal was a bookmark that I made for her. I had drawn a rocket and stars and Saturn with the rings and I ironed it between two pieces of wax paper so it would be protected from the gamma rays. Then she showed the reporters something her class had given her. I was jealous and I wanted to give her something else. So I took out the Lifesaver. It was fuzzy from the lining of my pocket. While my mother and the reporters talked, I tried making the Lifesaver presentable. I told myself that I had to pick all the lint off the Lifesaver or my mother wouldn't come back. Finally my mother crouched down next to me. She was wearing her blue space suit. I touched the patches on her shoulders. She looked so beautiful. Suddenly I couldn't grasp that this woman was the same person who every morning sliced banana on my granola. My grandmother kept saying, say good-bye, honey, say good-bye to your mother. But all I could manage to do was to hold out the Lifesaver. My mother took it and put it in her pocket and I knew that everything would be all right.

## Sophie. ACT I. Scene ii.

*Until Sophie moved into their building, Norman had been a literary wonk, dedicated to writing Fallout magazine, a protest monthly published by him and his partner/roommate Andy. But since meeting Sophie, Fallout has become a feeble second to his efforts to woo this ultra-attractive neighbor. He has literally gone bonkers for the girl, and his efforts to capture her attention have gone to extremes. On the steps leading to her apartment he has painted "I-love-you-Sophie-Rauchmeyer." He has given her gourmet food. He has sneaked into her apartment and painted her balcony. He spies on her through his telescope. Norman is a man possessed.*

*Sophie, an athletic, all-American, good girl from Arkansas, finds his behavior outrageous, and in this speech admonishes him for his improprieties.*

## SOPHIE

*(To Andy.)* Excuse me. *(To Norman.)* Mr. Cornell, ah have tried to be neighborly, ah have tried to be friendly and ah have tried to be cordial . . . Ah don't know what it is that you are tryin' to be . . . The first night ah was appreciative that you carried mah trunk up the stairs . . . The fact that it slipped and fell five flights and smashed into pieces was not your fault . . . Ah didn't even mind that personal message you painted on the stairs. Ah thought it was crazy, but sorta sweet . . . However, things have now gone too far . . . *(Goes down to pole table.)* Ah cannot accept gifts from a man ah hardly know . . . *(Puts basket on pole table.)* . . . Especially canned goods . . . And I read your little note. Ah can guess the gist of it even though I don't speak Italian. *(Andy sits on stool below kitchen bar.)* This has to stop, Mr. Cornell . . . Ah can do very well without you leavin' little chocolate almond Hershey bars in mah mail box . . . They melted yesterday, and now ah got three gooey letters from home with nuts in

'em . . . And ah can do without you sneakin' into mah room after ah go to work and paintin' mah balcony without tellin' me about it. Ah stepped out there yesterday and mah slippers are stilled glued to the floor . . . And ah can do without you tying big bottles of eau de Cologne to mah cat's tail. The poor thing kept swishin' it yesterday and nearly beat herself to death . . . And most of all, ah can certainly do without you watchin' me get on the bus everyday through that high-powered telescope. You got me so nervous the other day ah got on the wrong bus. In short, Mr. Cornell, and I don't want to have to say this again, *leave me ay-lone!* *(She turns and starts to go.)*

## The Ash Girl

Character: Ash Girl

Description: A young girl who lives in the ashes, an orphan.

**ASH GIRL:** I don't remember much. It was another countryside, another country. Flowers inside. My mother loved flowers. I don't know when she died, if she died. I was always with my father. He was my friend. I am your friend forever, he said. He took me everywhere, travels, hunting I sat under castle tables and listened to the men talk. We slept on his cloak in the woods, naming the stars. Until we came here. First for an afternoon, then a night, then days, and finally to stay. He never told me he wanted to marry her, he didn't even ask me, his friend. And that these girls would be his daughters, call themselves my sisters. He said he loved me most, but he needed, needed – but he loved me. He wasn't happy long. I saw lines of loneliness return to his face. I went to him, but he was strange. He told me he was not a good man, he had monsters to fight. I said I would fight them with him, but he said no, these monsters were different, they'd poisoned the blood to his heart and I must forgive him. And so my father went in search of his heart and broke mine. And that's when I found the ashes. Ashes are warm and in the ashes no one sees you, you do no wrong. Ashes on your head, no one talks to you, ashes on your arms, no one touches you, ashes are safe. I will stay in these ashes, melt into them, shrink to their weightlessness. Cloak of crumbling grey. My ashes.