

WILLIAMINA. Of course he couldn't.
 PETER. *Would you be nice to me?*
 ANNIE. Henrietta was right!
 WILLIAMINA. You were right! Look at this.
 ANNIE. Oh my goodness, look at this!
 WILLIAMINA. That's what I said! Look at this! The whole world should be looking at this!
 ANNIE. Henrietta.
 HENRIETTA. I know.
 ANNIE. This is ... This is just ...
 WILLIAMINA. It's everything.
 ANNIE. It is. Everything. *(A moment for the size of this discovery to sink in ... Annie whispers something to Will.)*
 MARGARET. How do you celebrate measuring the universe?
 PETER. I have no idea.
 MARGARET. I have cookies?
 WILLIAMINA. *(To Annie.)* That's brilliant. *(To Henri.)* Alright. Come on. We're celebrating. *(Whispers something to Peter.)*
 HENRIETTA. We already are celebrating.
 ANNIE. Not enough. And you deserve it.
 HENRIETTA. Thank you all but —
 PETER. *(To Will.)* That's perfect! Let's do it. Let's do it right now.
 HENRIETTA. Do what right now?
 MARGARET. What are we doing?
 ANNIE. *(To Margaret.)* You're coming too.
 MARGARET. Me what? Wait.
 HENRIETTA. No. I can't go anywhere.
 MARGARET. She's really not supposed to.
 PETER. You have to.
 ANNIE. You deserve this, Henrietta.
 HENRIETTA. It doesn't matter if I can't. *(Annie whispers the plan to Margaret aside ...)*
 WILLIAMINA. It's not that far.
 PETER. Only a few blocks away.
 WILLIAMINA. Just up the hill!
 HENRIETTA. It's freezing! I can't. Cannot. Go anywhere. So thank you. But let's just sit down, have a nice dinner — *(Margaret gets it, springs into action.)*
 MARGARET. Leave the ham, get the car.
 HENRIETTA. For a few blocks?

WILLIAMINA. Now we're talking!
 HENRIETTA. *Margie.*
 MARGARET. Henri. Relax. *(The room falls away as they run off. Perhaps Annie and Peter sing into —)*

Scene 5

BOOM. Faraway we hear "For the Beauty of the Earth."

Start

HENRIETTA. *(To us.)* On top of a hill ... Just blocks away ... Across the courtyard from my old desk ... where it stood off-limits ... I see. The Great Refractor Telescope. To which we happily break in that night. And taking Margie's hand. I lean close. Hold my breath. And see ... *(She gasps.)* My heaven. *(BOOM. Stars everywhere — more than ever — Peter, Will, Annie, and Margie fade as Henrietta takes out her hearing-aid. Tosses it.)* Some time from now I gather myself. And sneak outside — and look up. In perfect silence. And I know — that distance is only space and time, and for some of us ... light. I am out of time. But light has never let me down. And so. I shift. *(She points up. The ocean liner takes over — Henrietta stands tall on the deck, breathes deep.)* The next year ... Annie gets a vote. *(Faraway. Annie and Williamina put ballots in a box.)* The next year, a man named Hubble uses my work to prove that our most unique galaxy is in fact one of billions ... upon billions. *(Faraway, Peter hears this — wow.)* Then a man from Sweden calls wondering if I might like ... a Nobel Prize. It's too late for me, but I take the compliment. *(Faraway Annie, Will, Peter, Margaret look up.)* Another few years and Will dies in Boston, Annie by her side. *(Williamina joins Henrietta on the ocean liner.)* Another year and another war takes over the world. Then Annie dies. *(Annie joins Henrietta and Will on the ocean liner.)* Then Peter. *(Peter joins them.)* Then my sister, kissed by twelve grandchildren, a symphony on the radio. *(Her symphony crackles through a radio as Margaret joins them on the ocean liner.)* Then we harness the atom, then orbit the Earth, then stand on the moon. *(Shocking human achievements.)* Then a telescope named Hubble, with wings set for space, shows us how vast

and beautiful it all is ... *(Pictures from Hubble Telescope projected everywhere. The music stops. Silence. True sound of space. The stars begin to take over — the ship, the women, the audience. Spots of light powdering every surface.)* Because wonder will always get us there ... Those of us who insist that there is much more beyond ourselves. And I do. *(A pulsing light surrounds and becomes Henrietta. She is now a blinking star.)* And there's a reason we measure it all in light. *(Blackout — but for stars everywhere.)*

End of Play

End

PROPERTY LIST

Hearing-aid
Star plates in boxes
Star spanker
Notebooks and pencils
Letters
Gloves (man's and woman's)
Man's hat
Piano
Suffragette sash and pamphlet
Luggage
Book of collected poems by Walt Whitman

SOUND EFFECTS

Single musical notes for stars
Romantic far-off music
Doorbell (early 1900s)