

STICK UP FOR MARS

By Patrick Gabridge

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CHARACTERS: (2f)

FIONA: Astronaut and scientist. L20s-40s

KELLY: Astronaut and engineer. L20-40s

TIME: Any day now.

SETTING: A space ship on the ways to Mars.

(Note: Though it's written to be performed by two women, you could stage the play with two men in the roles. Change "Fiona" to "Fred" and "boyfriends" to "girlfriends" and personal pronouns. Don't, however, cast the play with one woman and one man--the dynamics won't work out right.)

AT RISE: A space ship on the way to Mars. FIONA, carrying a large three-ring binder (labeled NASA MARS TOPOGRAPHY) and wearing a NASA jumpsuit, carefully works her way over to one of two recliners (there's no gravity) and straps herself in (reclining lawn chairs might do the trick). SHE produces a space drink from one of her pockets (a Capri Sun or similar will do fine) and drinks it all, slurping loudly at the end. SHE carefully puts the empty container in an overly full trash bag attached to the chair. Muttering to herself, SHE reaches into one of her other pockets, takes out a pen and a post-it pad, and begins to write. KELLY, wearing a bright red t-shirt with some clever motto ("Martian In Training") over her NASA jumpsuit, enters and pulls herself over towards FIONA. In one hand KELLY holds a cloth bag full of something.

KELLY: Put down that pen.

FIONA: I'm almost done.

KELLY: Fiona. Do not write that note.

FIONA: You forgot to empty this trash bag.

KELLY: I was busy re-calculating our position.

FIONA: I didn't want to bother you, so I'm writing you a little note.

(FIONA finishes writing the note and sticks it to the trash bag, then carefully puts away the pen and pad.)

KELLY: You didn't want to bother me.

FIONA: Exactly.

(FIONA opens the binder and begins to read.)

KELLY: I'm trying to have a conversation here. You can study crater maps later. We have a whole year until we get to Mars.

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FIONA: We'll be there before you know it. I need to have every square mile of Mars memorized.

(FIONA keeps studying her book. KELLY opens up her bag and pulls her way over to FIONA. Once there, KELLY takes out a vast rainbow collection of sticky notes and sticks them all over FIONA and the chair. SHE keeps doing this throughout the following.)

KELLY: "Please wipe toilet after use." "Please gather sandwich crumbs." "Watch out for heater coil." "Empty Trash." "Don't forget skin lotion." "Mouthwash please." "Day 373!" "Mars here we come." "Wash windows." "Reset top side camera."

FIONA: Kelly. Please stop.

KELLY: Why don't you write me a note? Wait, wait. I'm sure there's one in here that says "Kelly. Please stop." There's every other combination in the English language. They're all in here. One thousand seven hundred and seventy-four color coded sticky notes. Red for urgent messages, yellow for little pick-me-up sayings, green for hygiene, and blue for... how exactly would you define the blue notes?

FIONA: Blue is for Earth-focused notes. Salmon is for Mars-focused messages. Purple is for--

KELLY: --general nagging. "Please secure loose socks."

FIONA: I woke up the other night with one of your disgusting socks doing orbits in front of my nose. I'm just trying to bring a sense of order to--

KELLY: I'm pulling my weight.

FIONA: I never said you weren't.

KELLY: Seventeen hundred times you have. Look, I know you have a little more time on your hands than--

FIONA: Time on my hands? I'm trying to absorb every possible speck of data about Mars. The surveyor satellite sends new data all the time -- geologic reports, hydrographic maps, volcanic images. When we're finally suited up, standing on the surface, one of us needs to know where we should go. Only one pair of astronauts get to be there first. I'm not going to screw it up.

KELLY: Neither am I. But if you write me another sticky note, I will open the hatch and throw you out.

FIONA: Ha. Ha.

KELLY: Do I have my joking face on?

FIONA: No.

KELLY: Good, the NASA geniuses must have paired us up correctly, because you can tell when I'm irritated.

FIONA: Yes, I can tell.

KELLY: Don't write any more notes.

FIONA: Okay.

KELLY: Give me the pen.

FIONA: I need to take notes on this data.

KELLY: Give me the sticky pad, too. Now.

(FIONA gives KELLY her pen and pad.)

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KELLY: I'm going to make sure we don't miss our destination by a few thousand miles.

(KELLY pulls herself out of the cabin. FIONA starts reading again, but after a moment, SHE puts down the binder. SHE unstraps herself from the chair and pulls herself over to the other chair. Once SHE's there, SHE pulls out a spare sticky note pad and pen from another pocket. SHE starts writing note after note and sticks them all over KELLY's chair. KELLY enters.)

KELLY: Hey, I need one of those notes back, I wrote the readout from... Oh, nice.

(KELLY quickly pulls herself over to her own chair. FIONA stares back at her defiantly and sticks another note to the recliner.)

KELLY: *(reading)* "Kelly is a bully." "You stink. Take a shower." "Don't tell me what to do, you big loser." "You cheat at Scrabble." I do not cheat at Scrabble.

FIONA: I added up the score sheet after our games, and you'd given yourself an extra thirty points.

KELLY: Then I made a mistake.

FIONA: You have a PhD in aeronautical engineering--you're not exactly bad at math.

KELLY: I make mistakes. As you constantly remind me. Well, guess what, you've made a mistake, too, because I warned you.

FIONA: Shut up. Stop ordering me around, stop acting like you're the only one who knows anything about this spacecraft. I may be a biologist and a geologist, but that doesn't make me an idiot. Typical engineer--think you know everything.

KELLY: Oh, please, Ms. Supreme Scientist--let me tell you how the universe works, every other sentence out of your mouth is either a lesson or a correction. Well, that's fine. I'll call Houston and tell them I'm turning the ship around. Someone is going to be the first to Mars, but it's not going to you.

FIONA: You wouldn't dare.

KELLY: Spending another three years cooped up in this tin can with you will either drive me to suicide or murder or both. If we turn around right now, one of us might survive.

FIONA: You can't do it, even if you want to.

KELLY: Watch me.

FIONA: The computer won't let you. You need two access codes to turn the ship around. Your password and mine.

KELLY: Says who?

FIONA: They told me before we left. Until we actually set foot on the ground, you can't turn the ship around. They knew this sort of thing could happen.

KELLY: That you'd turn into a raving lunatic, capable of annoying the Dalai lama to death?

FIONA: They knew you might crack under the strain.

KELLY: No, no, no. I'm not the one cracking up. I'm normal, see. It's you. You're the one with the needling, the notes, the little giggle. Oh, yes, the giggle. I hear it--when you're trying to fall asleep, when you're reading. You don't even know, do you? This little subsurface running laugh. The muttering.

FIONA: I do not do any of those things.

KELLY: I didn't want to say anything. Maybe I should have written a little note--"Dear

Fiona, do a self-psych checkup because YOU'RE LOSING IT."

FIONA: I am perfectly fine. There is no little voice or laugh.

KELLY: There. Did you hear it?

FIONA: There was nothing to hear.

KELLY: I heard it.

FIONA: Liar.

KELLY: Say what you want. I'm going to try to turn this bucket of bolts around. I'll find a way to hack around your password.

(As KELLY starts to exit, FIONA lunges across the chair and grabs KELLY. THEY struggle, trying to keep a grip on the chair and each other (all in zero g). THEY finally end up in mutual head locks.)

FIONA: You're choking me.

KELLY: You're choking me.

FIONA: Let go.

KELLY: You first.

FIONA: Can't breathe.

KELLY: Release... me...

(THEY release each other, gasping for breath.)

FIONA: *(under her breath)* That's so just like her, maniac. *(giggles, then notices herself).*

KELLY: Ha!

FIONA: I didn't. I didn't. I didn't.

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