

VOYAGER (synopsis)

PETER TCHELECHEFF, an astrophysicist at NASA, wants his West Indian fiancée, ELISSA, to marry him. They've been together for a long time, and she's recently pregnant with his child. ELISSA, however, is reluctant; PETER is obsessed with outer space and thanks to both his work and his upbringing, seemingly insensitive to basic human emotions. LILLI, PETER's overbearing mother and an internationally renowned concert pianist, paid little attention to him as a child. She has never forgiven him for turning his back on his own musical gifts in favor of pursuing space fantasies. He has never forgiven her for her neglect and disdain. His marrying a Black wife will, he knows, elicit her further disapproval.

As the play opens, ELISSA has, with great ambivalence, agreed to their union. PETER is set on having the marriage take place 60 feet under the waters off Key West, where he is to spend three months testing a habitat with possible applications for use on the moon. Besides making their marriage a unique event, the location will mean there's no way his fractious mother will want to attend. It's far from what ELISSA had in mind, but she goes along with the plan.

Events conspire. LILLI insists not only on coming, but bringing along her rebellious protégé, RICK, who is chaffing under LILLI's iron discipline. The four of them find themselves uneasily confined together in a small space beneath the sea. A violent storm cuts off their communication with the world above, but just before the habitat loses contact, the radio brings them an astounding news flash: the apparent interception of one of the two, deep-space Voyager spacecraft NASA launched in the 1970s—its interception and what seems a message, in music, from its alien interceptors. The ramifications of such an event affect each of the habitat's occupants differently but profoundly, drastically altering their perceptions, philosophies and relationships.

But the news of Voyager's interception is revealed as a hoax, carefully crafted by PETER to produce just such transformations in perspective, even if only for a moment in time. What he failed to foresee were the consequences of his clever deception. The outcomes are neither what he imagined they would be, nor what he wanted. There is no way, however, to undo what he has done.

What grand visions are worth our pursuit at the expense of all else? What do we stand to sacrifice while pursuing them? Are simple, human emotions expendable in the service of our beliefs in greater causes? These are questions that lurk beneath the surface of *Voyager*.

[120 pages, standard play format]

CAST

PETER TCHELECHEFF

An astrophysicist at NASA; early 40s.

ELISSA

PETER's fiancée; mid-30s

LILLI TCHELECHEFF

PETER's mother; mid-70s.

RICK

LILLI's protégé; late 20s.

SETTING

PETER's office at NASA;

An underwater habitat

TIME

The near future