

THE ASCENT

Ilona Gaynor



THE ASCENT

Script written by Ilona Gaynor and Oscar Gaynor

CHARACTERS

OPERATOR ONE
OPERATOR TWO
TANNOY
PILOT

INTERNS

WOMAN ONE
WOMAN TWO

FIRST CLASS PASSENGERS

PRICK ONE
PRICK TWO
NOBODY ONE
NOBODY TWO

BUSINESS CLASS PASSENGERS

PASSIVE ONE
PASSIVE TWO

ECONOMY CLASS PASSENGERS

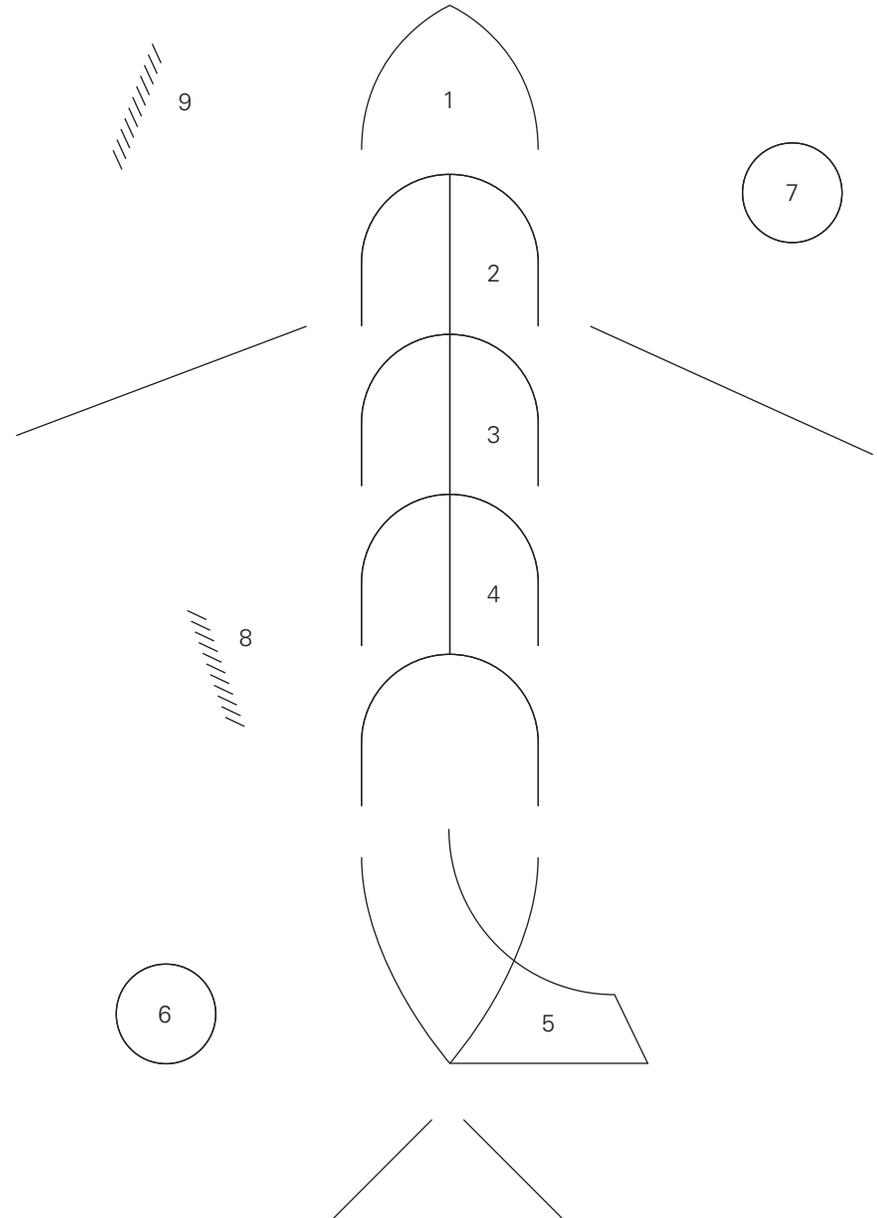
SEAT 27A
SEAT 27B
SEAT 27C
SEAT 27D
UNKNOWN PASSENGER

THE SET

The set is minimal in its design. It comprises of a wireframed American Airlines Boeing 747¹, a grid of passenger seats that have been divided by class and separated by curtained barriers. Additional to the main structure are several sloping platforms on wheels depicting 'fire' and 'water' that can be wheeled on stage at the appropriate correspondence.

This play script will guide one through the narrative of a play, which, to all intents and purposes, is an impossible play to enact.

- 1 The Cockpit
- 2 First Class
- 3 Business Class
- 4 Economy Class
- 5 The Tail Fin
- 6 The Sun
- 7 The Moon
- 8 Water
- 9 Fire



ACT 1

**THE
STUDIO**

ACT 1 THE STUDIO

Morning.

Inside a blacked out hangar. Final preparations are being made to the set. The sound of clanks, forklift trucks reversing and the echoing splashing of water are heard in the distance.

Version 3.14.122
DECLARE FUNCTION
LATITUDE: 34.0522°
LONGITUDE: 118.2437°
ALTITUDE FT: 0
AIR SPEED KIAS: 0
UTC TIME: 0834 H
LOCAL TIME: 1634 H
ACFT WEIGHT: 189762 LBS
FUEL WEIGHT: 62000 LBS
V1 (FLAPS 1): 147
VR (FLAPS 1): 149
V2 (FLAPS 1): 151
VREF (FLAPS FULL): 142
Good morning! (Flashing)

Ceiling moon flickers into life.

OPERATOR ONE *(Voice off-stage, very muffled.)* You fucking asshole. Where's that controller? And where are you moving that fuckin' moon?

OPERATOR TWO We don't need it til noon.

OPERATOR ONE *(Enter stage left.)* Wheel it round the pool. No, not that way. The other way. You're going to crack the sun.

OPERATOR TWO Well this shit's heavy. Come over here and help me push.

OPERATOR ONE Are you totally retarded? Take the brake off; gather the cable... I'm busy... And miss that fuckin' wing, it's made of that poisonous glass stuff, what's it called?

OPERATOR TWO Fuck.

OPERATOR ONE What?

OPERATOR TWO Oh man! It's cracked. There's furry shit coming out of it.

OPERATOR ONE That's the glass, don't touch it. *(Pushing fire off the stage.)* Oh man, you smell like a liquor store. You been drinkin' this morning?

OPERATOR TWO Hell yes.

OPERATOR ONE Switch on the gen man; let's see what's goin' on.

Throwing the switch, the floodlights flicker and crack into life, illuminating the room and staging area from the ceiling.

BOEING 747
UTC TIME: 0858 H
LOCAL TIME: 1658 H
Chance of Rain: 20%
Precipitation: 0.2 in
Pressure: 29.92 inHg
Visibility: 10 mi

OPERATOR TWO *(Both men stand amongst a mountain of flight cases, sipping coffee.)* Remember that guy from the Fed last week? Thought he was some kind of hero.

OPERATOR ONE Quit talking, let's get this thing back in the sky.
Hit that switch...

OPERATOR TWO Shit, which one is it again?

OPERATOR ONE Move over. What the fuck is that on your lip?
What've you been drinking?

OPERATOR TWO Jack and Milk.

OPERATOR ONE Milk? Milk and Jack Daniels?

OPERATOR TWO Fuck... Switch is blue and green at the same time.

The plane tips backwards, nose in the air.

OPERATOR ONE Shi-i-i-it. Gimme that.

A tall woman enters stage right; wearing spectacles, carrying a clipboard, a black box recorder and dressed in full-length white cotton overalls, she looks over briefly and immediately leaves.

OPERATOR TWO Who the hell was that?

The curtain falls.

Fade out.

ACT 2

BOARDING

ACT 2 BOARDING

The stage is minimal. Nothing but a table, a plant pot and several black briefcases.

ACT 2 / SCENE 1 THE PRICKS IN RECEPTION

WOMAN ONE and TWO are leaning on the reception desk, chewing gum and wearing black polo shirts with words 'Air Hollywood' written on the front and back.

WOMAN ONE Have you heard back from that casting guy yet?

WOMAN TWO Na-uh. *(Stretching gum through her teeth and twisting it around her index finger.)*

WOMAN ONE Me either. He was a creep, though.

WOMAN TWO Yeah, but I kinda like the creep thing. *(Still pulling gum from between her teeth.)* He was like... just staring at my mouth like...

WOMAN ONE He's probably sick. A sick, sick, sicko. Drooling at headshots and picturing the rest. I'm like, hello... I'm a woman, not a thing. *(Long pause.)* His wife's probably fat. Anyway whatever. What part are you going for again?

WOMAN TWO The 'Shackled Inmate'.

WOMAN ONE Speaking?

WOMAN TWO No. Mostly screaming.

WOMAN ONE Oh yeah?

WOMAN TWO Well, they wanted to hear me screaming, so I said OK, no problem.

WOMAN ONE I bet... *(WOMAN TWO screams.)* Wow, yeah. You're loud. You sound like you have a real problem. *(WOMAN TWO clears throat.)* I went for Jailor number three *(Butching' up her stance.)* "Hey you asshole, there's no escaping from Alcatraz!"

Loud chatter is heard. A group of people enter the stage.

WOMAN TWO OK, here they come.

WOMAN ONE Another day, another measly dollar.

Stage left, passengers enter the foyer of the building; some in groups, some on their own. A hum of conversation fills the room. PRICK ONE and TWO walk into the foreground.

PRICK ONE This is what I'm saying to you! *(Jabbing PRICK TWO in the chest with his finger tips.)* Humans. Enterprise². You must be unafraid to take up space. In the face, in the ass, in the office. Who gets trampled in the greater stampede? It's the baby gazelle... trampled by the bison — unilaterally, uncompromisingly — unyielding.

PRICK TWO No, fuck that. I'm a gazelle. Sidestepping the pursuit. *(Picking cotton threads off his black tie.)*

PRICK ONE Sure you are.

PRICK TWO Right.

PRICK ONE I mean. Look at those two idiots. *(Nodding his*

head towards WOMAN ONE and TWO.) A day off from the wage farm. Why the fuck...

PRICK TWO *(Interrupting.)* Why are we even here?

PRICK ONE What?

PRICK TWO Hold on. You remember that guy? *(Nodding in 'that guy's' direction.)*

PRICK ONE Uh.

PRICK TWO John, is it? *(Looking up and pausing.)* Yeah. But no, that's not him. But yeah. *(Shaking his finger.)*

PRICK ONE The 'Brylcreem' guy?

PRICK TWO Yeah, him. Last year, he got taken hostage on the way to the airport in Abuja. Some guards at a freeway checkpoint were gagged and bound — replaced by cartel posing as guards. Apparently siphoning off shipments from Unaoil. *(Chuckling.)* So, he interrupts them, but doesn't notice. They're dressed in cop uniforms. *(Chuckling.)* They dragged him out the car and wrestled him to the ground.

PRICK ONE Did he fight back?

PRICK TWO He tried. *(Holding back laughter.)* Then told them to go fuck themselves... *(Laughs into the air.)*

PRICK ONE *(Sniggering.)* So what happened?

PRICK TWO We dunno. No one's seen him since. He's probably still tied to a radiator, being force-fed falafel in some shit-stinking hole somewhere.

PRICK ONE So what are we doing here? Do ya think this is hostage training?

PRICK TWO Well, yeah. See that? *(Pointing at a poster on the wall.)*

The poster reads "Raytheon Missile Systems™ Freedom Strikes with Precision."

Lighting a cigarette, the two men stare at it. Smoke billowing above their heads, blocking the lettering and skewing the light.

PRICK ONE Wow.

PRICK TWO I'd love to have them as a client, wouldn't you? *(Blowing smoke through his nostrils.)*

PRICK ONE I guess. *(Shrugging his shoulders.)*

PRICK TWO Who's to say someone's not gonna come flying through that door, tie you up, fuck your wife, fuck your sister and stick you in the trunk?! Life's fragile. Very fragile... you gotta take the opportunities while you can.

PRICK ONE Well? *(Pause.)* Yeah. *(Cough.)*

PRICK TWO So yeah anyway... I know you'd love that, ya sick fuck. *(Inhaling deeply.)* Bound and gagged. *(Long pause.)* So the whole firm's in one place, huh. *(Stubbs out his cigarette on the nearest office plant.)*

WOMAN ONE *(Standing on a chair, she turns to face the crowd.)* Good morning all! I'm not sure how much all of you know about why you're here today — but we will begin shortly.

WOMAN TWO In a moment, you shall be boarding a fully operational model of a Boeing 747. Our simulation today takes place on board a flight from Los Angeles to London. Our estimated flight time is eleven hours and fifteen minutes

PRICK TWO Eleven hours?

WOMAN ONE You. *(Pointing at PRICK TWO.)* Concentrate.

WOMAN ONE and TWO begin distributing identical black briefcases to each participant from behind the reception desk.

PRICK TWO *(Uttering under his breath.)* Bitch.

PRICK ONE *(Uttering under his breath.)* Slut.

WOMAN TWO *(Readdressing the entire room.)* Yes. Please do not open these suitcases until you are instructed to do so, once onboard.

PRICK TWO *(Whispering into the ear of PRICK ONE.)* I bet she begs for scraps.

WOMAN ONE They contain information regarding your survival, so keep them safe, as they will keep you safe and help to save your miserable lives. We will be flying over water. Buckle your seat belts. Remember at all times, that this is a safe environment.

WOMAN TWO Please. If you'd like to follow me this way *(directing the crowd.)* we will begin boarding.

Passengers begin exiting through the jetway ramp, centre-stage, filing out one at a time.

ACT 2 / SCENE 2 FIRST CLASS

Lights in the cabin are dimmed, focussing only on the vessel's entrance, highlighting 'First Class'.

Chance of Rain: 30%

Precipitation: 0.4 in

Pressure: 29.92 inHg

Visibility: 10 mi

The passengers begin handing their tickets to the stewardesses (WOMAN ONE and TWO). Passengers proceed by entering the vessel one at a time. Heads bowing awkwardly to try find their seats under such low light.

WOMAN TWO *(Projecting her voice down the aisle.)* We ask that you take off your jackets and place them either underneath your seat or on the back of your chair.

WOMAN ONE We also ask that you temporarily place your briefcase on your lap.

NOBODY ONE I've never been seated in first class before!

PRICK ONE *(Out of earshot.)* Ha. You hear that shit?

PRICK TWO I bet this is the furthest she's made it out of the city.

PRICK ONE At least these seats are real. *(Flicking the seat in front.)* Wanna blow?

PRICK TWO Where?

PRICK ONE In the bathroom? Well, I hope there's a bathroom.
(Clicking his fingers in the air.)
Oi! Is there a bathroom?

WOMAN ONE Yes. But please stay in your seat, sir.

PRICK TWO Aww, fuck it. *(Quiet voice, shielding his mouth with his hand.)* Off the case. No one's looking.

PRICK ONE Yeah. But be quick dipshit. *(Pause.)* Gimme your credit card. *(Palm stretched out.)*

PRICK TWO Why mine?

PRICK ONE Because my wallet's in my pocket and I need to cut the blow on the case, I don't want it spilling onto my suit. I wonder what's in these cases anyway? *(As PRICK TWO manoeuvres in his seat to find his wallet.)*

PRICK ONE begins pouring the cocaine onto the leather surface and separating the powder into lines.

PRICK ONE OK. OK. Here. *(Nodding downwards towards the lines of powder.)*

PRICK TWO continues to roll a \$50 bill into a straw and inserts it into his left nostril, lowering his head into PRICK ONE's lap.

PRICK TWO *(Sniffing.)* Urrrhhhh. *(Cough, sniff, cough.)*

He hands the straw to PRICK ONE

PRICK ONE *(Sniffing.)* Cool. *(Cough, cough and dabbing his finger into the remaining powder and rubbing it on his gums.)*

NOBODY TWO Hey. Uh —

PRICK ONE What? *(Looking up.)*

NOBODY TWO I think you're in my seat.

PRICK ONE Do ya think I fucking care, or that it matters?

NOBODY TWO *(Interrupting.)* Listen...

PRICK ONE No you listen... I'm sitting here with my buddy. There's plenty of fuckin' seats down there with the rest of your kind.

NOBODY TWO Fuck you!

PRICK ONE Fuck You!

NOBODY TWO Fuck you! *(Starts to walk away.)*

PRICK ONE Fuck You!

PRICK ONE & PRICK TWO *(In tandem.)* Bitch!

PRICK ONE *(Opens up the briefcase, imprinting the remaining cocaine onto the seat in front.)* You're shitting me — look. I thought this was heavy. It's a brick. What are we meant to do? Build a wall?

PRICK TWO I bet Head Office is paying a lot for this. *(Clapping his hands.)* They *(Pointing to the seats in front.)* think it's useful as a "new counter-terror exercise." *(Quote, unquote finger gestures with both hands in the air.)* They, at the back, *(Thumb pointed backwards.)* think the data in the briefings haven't been good enough, they think it might be

their ticket up. *(Thumb switching to index finger pointed up.)* Myself, on the other hand couldn't give a shit. Terrorist attack, promotion, redundancy, same fucking thing — every man for himself. Wouldn't you say?

PRICK ONE I mean, what would you *(Pointing at PRICK TWO.)* do in a real plane crash? The two of us... drifting out to sea, if we survived the impact and only if we were both still conscious. *(Chuckling.)* Nothin' but bloodied briefcases to use as flotation.

PRICK TWO You'd drown me. Stamp on my fucking head.

PRICK ONE Fuckin' A I would. *(Wink.)* But gawd, I wish I wasn't here today.

PRICK TWO Where are the Partners? Even Partner's can't escape terrorism, right? No one's bullet proof. *(Pause.)* Pricks!

PRICK ONE There's no phone signal in this place either. What am I meant to do? Drop it all? I'm meant to be working on the Basra Free Zone client. It's a billion dollar deal. It's on a knife edge. *(Pause.)* Literally. If some guy forgets to check his messages; makes a bad move with the worker's union; the deal's dog shit. You just gotta wait, manoeuvre yourself to be in the right position, one step at a time... right? Infrastructure can't hold it up forever. Somebody's gotta make some dollar out of this and I want it to be us. Well... me.

PRICK TWO Oh look. He is here. *(Nodding towards the Managing Partner.)*

PRICK ONE Fire me, whatever. I hate these games, we should be making money. The world doesn't stop.

A heavy splash is heard against the side of the plane. Coinciding with the waves of water, the vessel slowly starts to tip on its axis; back and forth.

Mixed looks of confusion and excitement spread among passengers.

First Class fades to black.

ACT 2 / SCENE 3
BUSINESS CLASS

Lights focus on Business Class only.

Chance of Rain: 30%
Precipitation: 0.4 in
Pressure: 29.92 inHg
Visibility: 10 mi

People still settling into their seats. The sound of arduous chatter fills the space. Some passengers begin to unpack their paperwork.

PASSIVE ONE Hello.

PASSIVE TWO Hello. *(Shaking hands.)*

PASSIVE ONE I wonder what that was?

PASSIVE TWO I'm sure it will all make sense in due course. Nothing to worry about. *(Putting on his glasses.)*

PASSIVE ONE I'm sure you're right, although it sounded a bit... *(Jerking her head.)* I've never been on one of these before.

PASSIVE TWO An airplane? *(Looking down, turning the page of his document.)*

PASSIVE ONE No, one of these team-bonding things. Morale-boosters.

PASSIVE TWO They're unnecessary in my opinion — time is better spent in the office. *(Takes out a red pen from his breast pocket.)* But it's company policy now. Everyone needs to be trained to the same level.

PASSIVE ONE So, this is training?

PASSIVE TWO Yes, of course. *(Underlining various lines of text on the paper.)*

PASSIVE ONE Because I heard...

PASSIVE TWO What did you hear? *(Taking off his glasses and holding them in one hand.)*

PASSIVE ONE That it's possibly part of that associate that went missing? Possibly.

PASSIVE TWO Hmm-mmm. *(Putting his glasses back on and returning to his paperwork.)*

PASSIVE ONE What do you do at the firm?

PASSIVE TWO I'm a Senior Associate. *(Turns page.)* You?

PASSIVE ONE HR Assistant.

PASSIVE TWO Right. *(Pushing a headphone bud into one ear.)*

PASSIVE ONE Do you know how long this thing lasts? *(Looking at her watch.)*

PASSIVE TWO *(Looking at his watch.)* Eleven Hours. *(Breaths deeply.)*

PASSIVE ONE Oh I like airplanes!

PASSIVE TWO Hmm. *(Pushing a second earbud into the ear.)*

PASSIVE ONE Do you? *(Heard as muffled noises, blocked by headphones.)*

PASSIVE TWO Hmm-mmm.

PASSIVE ONE I love going on holiday!

PASSIVE TWO Hmm-mmm. *(Toggling the volume on his phone.)*

PASSIVE ONE Do you have any children?

PASSIVE TWO No. *(Tipping his head back.)*

PASSIVE ONE Because I don't. Maybe one day though...
you know, when I have a husband... *(Pause.)*
and a house and a dog and a car...

PASSIVE TWO *(Begins snoring.)*

A heavy clang is heard, followed by a further splash. Passengers begin to stir further.

Business Class fades to black.

ACT 2 / SCENE 4 ECONOMY CLASS

Chance of Rain: 20%
Precipitation: 0.2 in
Pressure: 29.92 inHg
Visibility: 10 mi

TANNOY Dear passengers, unfortunately nothing is operational on today's flight. Wifi and entertainment is therefore suspended and we are sorry for the inconvenience caused.

TANNOY *(Following on.)* But — you can stay refreshed with Coca-Cola and Starbucks beverages available throughout your flight today.

WOMAN ONE *(Hanging up the intercom phone set.)* This is so fucking demeaning. *(Pulling her tights up underneath her skirt.)*

WOMAN TWO I mean, air stewardesses haven't worn mini skirts since like... *(Pause.)* the sixties. Or did they even then? *(Looking down at her legs.)*

WOMAN ONE And stilettos. *(Lifting her foot into the air.)*

WOMAN TWO It's abuse. Like... *(Pause.)* for Human Rights.

WOMAN ONE Typical. The peanuts are in the bottom drawer.

WOMAN TWO Get ready to bend over! You never know, you might bag some rich babe in First Class. *(Posing with her finger in between her teeth.)*

WOMAN ONE Bottoms up! *(Wink and kiss.)* And you know they're filming this.

WOMAN TWO What? This place is so fucked. What for?

WOMAN ONE I saw those two guys fitting cameras in the ceiling last month.

WOMAN TWO Are they selling it?

WOMAN ONE The tech guy said it was for company management. Something to do with performance review. Like who's "willing to take one for the team".
(In a mock jock accent.)

WOMAN TWO *(Rolling the trolley through the aisle.)*
Hi. Anything from the trolley?

SEAT 27C Yes. Coffee, please.

SEAT 27D Please.

WOMAN TWO Cream and sugar?

SEAT 27C & 27D Yes. *(Nodding.)*

SEAT 27A *(Violently coughing.)* ... Well, you know about the calculus of negligence? *(Clears throat, gurgling loudly with mucous.)*

SEAT 27B Uh-huh?

SEAT 27A There's a hypothesis that a barge, not sufficiently moored, floats across the harbour. It's hulk, then smashing into a series of other ships — *(Gesturing with both fists smashing together.)* a domino effect — ending ultimately in the sinking of the asset, as well as death.

SEAT 27B Yeah. Uh-huh.

SEAT 27A It's the owner's duty, as in other similar situations, to provide against resulting injuries... and is a function of three variables: 1: The probability that she will break away; 2: The gravity of the resulting injury... and only if she does; 3: The burden of adequate precautions.

SEAT 27B Yeah, yeah... really... erm, fascinating.

SEAT 27A Take this situation for instance. An aircraft in a disaster simulation centre. The atmospheric and environmental variables...

SEAT 27B Hey. Sorry. I can't right now, I'm trying to read through this report.

Long silence.

SEAT 27A *(Trying to rearrange his legs underneath the flip-down table, he kicks SEAT 27B and knocking the coffee cup over with his elbow.)* Ah.

SEAT 27B FUUUUUCKKKKK. It's hot, It's hot. Fuck, it's hot. *(Shaking his hand and wrist.)*

SEAT 27A Oh! Hooey! I'm so sorry. So sorry. *(Hands in the air.)*

SEAT 27B Seriously?!

SEAT 27A These seats are so damned tight.

SEAT 27B limps to the toilet with a wet crotch.

PRICK ONE *(Heard shouting into the aisle.)* That guy's pissed himself! *(Laughing and pointing.)*

SEAT 27A

(Draining the coffee from a sheaf of papers onto the floor. He reads aloud.) Dear all... Following the unfortunate events that befell some of our colleagues in the *(Beeb.)*... Da-da-da-da... We have decided to instigate a programme of practical education in counteracting the threats that many of you face, with immediate effect. We hope that this exercise will encourage you to collaborate with your colleagues, blah-blah, innovative, blah-blah, threats that we increasingly face. As well as this... In light of these events... Vacancies have become available. Remember that *(Beeb.)* Ingenuity, passion, dedication and the willing to go that extra mile will always be rewarded...

Three smashing sounds are heard outside the plane in regular succession; clang — clang — clang.

Economy Class fades to black.

ACT 3

FLYING

ACT 3 FLYING

Chance of Rain: 40%
Precipitation: 0.7 in
Pressure: 29.92 inHg
Visibility: 10 mi

PASSIVE ONE Now that did sound really bad.

PASSIVE TWO Well nobody's mentioning it. It's fine.

PASSIVE ONE I wonder what's going on?

PRICK ONE How long do we have to be on this fucking sideshow rickshaw?

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PASSIVE ONE Huh?

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PASSIVE ONE This is the end?

PASSIVE TWO Thank the Lord.

PASSIVE ONE But nothing's happened.

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PRICK TWO Will it shut the fuck up, I have a headache.

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PRICK ONE *(Punching the overhead panel.)* SHUT THE FUCK UP!

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PRICK ONE *(Finger pointing at the speaker.)* SHUT UP. SHUT UP. WILL YOU SHUT... SHUT, SHUT, SHUT, SHUT, SHUT. THE. FUCK. UP!

PRICK TWO Oh my God! What is wrong with this piece of shit?

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PASSIVE ONE Shut up! And you over there, *(Motioning across the aircraft.)* can you stop shouting?

PRICK ONE Shut the fuck up lady, I didn't ask you a goddamn thing.

Long silence.

TANNOY "Your satisfaction today is important to us and we look forward to hearing from you."

PRICK ONE For the love of... GOD.

PRICK TWO I know what you can do with my satisfaction.

TANNOY "Stay refreshed with Coca-Cola beverages and Starbucks products."

PASSIVE ONE Ahhhhhhhhhhhh — hhhhhhh — hhhhh!

PASSIVE TWO Be quiet.

TANNOY "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for sharing your journey with us today."

PRICK TWO Oh man, I can't take this fucking shit any longer, are they serious?

PASSIVE TWO Excuse me. Who is in charge here?

PRICK ONE Yeah! Which piece of shit is in charge? *(Punching the window with his fist.)*

PASSIVE TWO No one? No one? *(Looking around.)* Why are you all keeping so silent?

The nose of the aircraft suddenly lurches upward. Passengers start screaming before the seatbelt signs light up, synchronised with the signature 'ding-dong' sound.

PASSIVE ONE It's not going down. It's going to be fine.

PRICK TWO Look around you, bitch!

The tail of the aircraft plunges into pool, thrusting the aircraft's nose into the air. Water begins to fill Economy Class as the nose lifts. Passengers remain seated as the windows begin to crack under pressure. Silence takes hold.

NOBODY ONE Listen. Can somebody answer our questions? Is this part of the exercise?

TANNOY "Stay refreshed with Coca-Cola beverages and Starbucks products."

SEAT 27B Fuck's sake.

OPERATOR ONE *(Heard from outside the plane in the relative silence.)* Yo, what happened?

PASSIVE TWO *(Putting his ear to the window.)* There are people outside.

PRICK ONE takes off his left shoe and proceeds to bang the window repeatedly.

Meanwhile a sheet of steel begins to close in on the water's surface, shutting the vessel underwater.

OPERATOR TWO Somethin'... I dunno, it just started sparkin'.

OPERATOR ONE I can see that. But why? Why's it buckling? We should abort the program.

OPERATOR TWO I tried that.

OPERATOR ONE The doors? We need to open the doors, abort it. NOW!

OPERATOR TWO Shit. We're gonna get fired. *(Slamming the emergency stop with his palm.)*

OPERATOR ONE Hide the drink man.

NOBODY ONE Where are we?

PRICK TWO Oi, you! *(waving at NOBODY ONE.)* No one cares what you have to say, be quiet and let us figure this out.

PRICK ONE *(Shouting.)* Let us out! Stop this thing!

OPERATOR ONE *(Shouting.)* What?

Industrial fans switch on – appearing as if the cabin pressure is dropping. Masks drop from the ceiling.

NOBODY TWO OK.

NOBODY ONE It's time to get out of this plane.

NOBODY ONE goes to the left entrance doorway, stepping over a stewardess passed out and unconscious.

NOBODY TWO Hello Lady! *(Gently tapping her cheeks.)*
How does this thing open? Lady! Lady!

NOBODY TWO Is she dead?

NOBODY ONE I'm not sure. *(Shaking her limp arm for several seconds.)*

NOBODY TWO Stop. Check her pulse.

NOBODY ONE She has blood on her head. *(Placing his two fingers on her neck.)*

NOBODY TWO Is she...?

The vessel lurches again, tipping the nose a further degree upwards, submerging the vessel further into the water tank.

NOBODY ONE *(Interrupting.)* I can't feel anything. I can't drown. Given the options, I'd rather be burnt alive.

WOMAN TWO Oh my God. What's happened to her? What did you do? *(Pointing at PRICK ONE and TWO.)*

PRICK ONE & TWO Us?

PRICK ONE Open this door!

WOMAN TWO I can't, it's locked tight. We can't open it from the inside.

PRICK TWO OPEN, THIS F—U—C—K—I—N—G DOOR.
(Long pause.) NOW!

PASSIVE ONE Wait. Did you see that?

SEAT 27B What?

PASSIVE ONE A tail. Are there are rats on board?

PRICK TWO *(Sat with his head between his legs and chanting.)*
I can't fucking die in here, I can't fucking die in here, I can't fucking die in here.

TANNOY "Your satisfaction today is important—to us—and—we—look—loooooook—look—look—forward—."

Fade to black.

ACT 4
DYING

ACT 4 DYING

ACT 4 / SCENE 1 THE DESCENT

Economy Class and half of Business Class is now fully submerged under water. The water level is continually rising and the aircraft is full of thick black smoke that is emanating from the nose. It is now difficult for the passengers to see one another.

The remaining conscious passengers have ascended vertically through the vessel and taken refuge in First Class.

WOMAN TWO flips open a side window, a window thats too small for a human escape, but big enough to divert the smoke.

Chance of Rain: 100%
Precipitation: N/A in
Pressure: 4.56 inHg
Visibility: 0.1 mi

WOMAN TWO Well, what does the manual script say?

WOMAN ONE *(Waking up in a daze and sat slouched on the floor.)* Where's it gone?

WOMAN TWO I hid it in the oven. *(Reaching towards the cooker.)*

WOMAN ONE In the oven?

WOMAN TWO No one was meant to find it. *(Crawling on hand knees and reaching for the oven door.)* It doesn't work does it?

Fanning fumes, they open the oven and carefully handle the cindered remains of the script.

WOMAN ONE Serve drinks... 'Safety announcement'... Instructions... Da-da-da... *(Skimming through.)* Yeah. *(Pause.)* There's no troubleshooting pages?

WOMAN TWO But, wait. Here. 'Release the rats?'

WOMAN ONE sneezes, projecting the burnt, frayed and fragile pages of the manual over the aircraft in a small plume of ash, spit and snot.

WOMAN TWO Excuse you!

PILOT This is not a drill, I repeat, not a drill, please find the lifejackets stowed underneath your seat and fit your own before helping others.

SEAT 27B This is bullshit.

NOBODY ONE Fuck.

PILOT Can I take this moment to remind that smoking is prohibited.

NOBODY ONE Fuck.

NOBODY TWO Fuck.

SEAT 27B Is this real or is this planned?

NOBODY ONE Fuck. *(Hands on his head.)*

PILOT I repeat: no smoking.

'No Smoking' sign switches on and off rapidly.

NOBODY ONE Fuck.

PILOT *(Intercom distorted.)* I'm afraid we don't have time carry out today's activities in full. Please make use of whatever you can find to escape the aircraft.

NOBODY ONE Fuck. *(Clenching his teeth.)*

PILOT *(Gurgling underwater.)* Please make use of whatever you can find to escape the aircraft.

Passengers check under their seats, scrabbling around looking for the strap to pull. Passengers in First and Business Class begin pulling packages out and untying the straps.

Remaining Economy Class passengers begin diving to find their life jackets.

SEAT 27A, SEAT 27B, PASSIVE ONE leading a mob to storm to the PILOT's quarters.

NOBODY TWO I've got a meeting tomorrow with Sheikh Maktoum! Let. Me. Out!

SEAT 27B I'll be fucking damned. Give me your life jacket now.

NOBODY TWO No.

SEAT 27B What?

SEAT 27B punches NOBODY TWO in the face.

SEAT 27A Oh holy shit, man. I think you just knocked out one of the Partners. *(Arms open.)*

SEAT 27B We were going to take his stallions out for a ride through the desert... *(Punches a nearby seat.)*

SEAT 27A What's he fucking talking about? *(Turns to PASSIVE ONE.)*

PASSIVE ONE Take his life jacket and make it to the cockpit.

SEAT 27B Yeah. Where is —. Ok... What the fuck?

SEAT 27A What?

SEAT 27B Looks more like a bomb! *(Pointing at the object.)*

PASSIVE TWO Ha-ha! So it was going to be a pretend-to-be-the-terrorist situation. That's hilarious. *(Takes a bite out of a soggy, wet sandwich he found on the meal trolley.)*

PASSIVE ONE I mean, it really looks like a bomb.

PASSIVE TWO *(Chewing and spitting.)*

SEAT 27A Shut up, dumb ass. It's a decoy. Why would there be a real bomb on a fake plane?

PRICK ONE Hey guys! Hey guys — listen! Let's just work...

SEAT 27B Work what?

PRICK ONE Work together. Pool our resources...

PRICK TWO Fuck this! Where's my secretary? Call Head Office now!

PASSIVE ONE There's no signal. We were told earlier. I'm going to find a window, a door, a hole — something — that can get me outta here.

PRICK TWO Well, find me a way out of here. Call the fucking management of this place.

PASSIVE ONE *(Standing on a seat.)* Where's the manager? The team leader?!

Long silence.

PILOT exits plane through cockpit's emergency exit, diving into the pool below. In the amassing wreckage outside of the plane, the PILOT grabs onto a thick mass of cabling that has fallen from the ceiling, in doing so inadvertently pulls the cable down. It teeters on the edge of the water, sparking and flailing.

A snapping is heard; the wrenching of metal. A hole is made in the side by dissenting, soaked passengers.

NOBODY ONE How... when everything else in this ship is made of rubber-coated aluminium... do the locks work so well?

Scrambling to the front of the plane. An unknown Economy Class passenger smashes a fellow passenger in the leg with a wrench he found in the kitchen area.

UNKNOWN PASSENGER I'm getting out of here alive! No one will stop me.

Clutching a briefcase to his chest, he leaps, missing the pool below; impaling his leg on a chevroned safety fence.

PRICK ONE is trapped. Upside down, trapped at the knees by the splintered armature of the aircraft and wrapped up in the curtain

that separates First Class and the cockpit. As his confined space fills up with water, he attempts to untangle himself, but this only serves to bind the curtain tighter.

PRICK ONE You motherfuckers! Come here, help me.

PRICK TWO Sorry, asshole. This thing's going down.

PRICK ONE I always imagined you'd drown me! At least with your own hands, but let me drown?

WOMAN ONE Every man for himself. *(Pushes drinks trolley into toilet door, trapping the handle and blocking any entry or exit.)*

PRICK TWO Try to escape from this one! *(Pulling the curtain tighter with his fists clenched.)*

PRICK ONE *(Muffled screaming; coughing, blubbing as the water fills his lungs.)*

Fireworks.

Silence.

Deafening white noise.

Fade to black.

ACT 4 / SCENE 2
THE ASCENT

Outside of the confines of the plane. Scrambling bodies fill the stage. A vast array of lights cascade from the ceiling, sparking and popping.

Chance of Rain: 80%
Precipitation: 17.3 in
Pressure: 29.92 inHg
Visibility: 0.5 mi

PASSIVE ONE '... And the stars of the sky fell to the earth, like unripe figs dropping from a tree, shaken by a great wind. The sky receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved from its place...'³

Long silence.

PRICK TWO Hey, you! Grab that fucking moon! *(Waving.)*

WOMAN TWO I think I'm trapped. I'm trapped! Hey! I'm trapped! *(Getting louder.)*

PRICK TWO It's on fire! Get to the edge. Find the edge. *(Pointing.)*

WOMAN TWO Someone's got my foot! *(Flicking her heel, to loosen her stilettos from grip.)*

PRICK TWO Shake it! Shake 'em off!

WOMAN TWO *(Freeing herself.)* Is this the end? The end of it all? I never imagined it to be like this.

PRICK TWO A total collapse?

WOMAN TWO I know. It's hard to imagine. But, look. Quite beautiful *(Staring into the distance.)* isn't it?

At this moment, the teetering electric tentacle slips into the pool, electrifying the water with 10,000 volts.

Screaming, gurgling and frying. Passengers begin to rise from darkness, bobbing gently on the water's surface; faced down and lifeless.

Flames still lick the structure, cracking and bursting as they engulf the metal.

A spotlit wreckage. There is nothing but silence.

Long pause.

The water's stillness begins to churn. A man in a suit emerges; clutching a black suitcase; his suit shredded. He climbs up the ladders on the pool's edge and smooths down his wet blazer and tie with his bloodied hand.

Walks to back of stage. Opens a door, piercing the darkness with bright sunlight, and walks out. The faint sound of a car door slamming and engine starting can be faintly heard in the distance; followed by the sound of him speeding away.

Fade to black.

END OF PLAY

1

A low-wing cantilever monoplane with a conventional tail unit featuring a single fin and rudder in which the seats are arranged around a central aisle.

2

“In its humanistic Renaissance meaning the word enterprise refers to an activity aimed at giving the world a human form. The ‘enterprise’ of the humanistic artist enterprise is the sign of humanity’s independence from fate and even divine will. For Machiavelli, enterprise is like politics in that it emancipates itself from fortune and realizes the republic, a space where different human wills test and compare their cunning and their ability to create.”

Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, The Soul at Work, Semiotext(e), p.77

3

Revelation 6:13

COLOPHON

Ilona Gaynor, 2017

Curator: Olivier Peyricot

Text: Ilona Gaynor and Oscar Gaynor

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THE ASCENT

  2017, Ilona Gaynor

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