

AIRPORT ENCOUNTERS

By Scott Mullen

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SYNOPSIS: You never know who might run into an airport waiting area, from your long-lost crush, to an angry mother-in-law, to a man dressed up as the airport therapy dog, to a mystery man who has been living there for months and a woman with her pet in a takeout container.

DURATION: 12 scenes, 8-10 minutes/scene

SETTINGS: A large unspecified airport waiting lounge, somewhere in the Midwest United States.

TIME: Present day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3-23 females, 2-12 males, 1-6 either gender)

VACATION

DIANE (f) (30s-50s). An energetic woman.
(52 lines)

HARRY (m) (30s-50s). Her husband.
(53 lines)

STEVE (m) (20s-40s). A traveler. Might
 have muscles. *(12 lines)*

MONA (f) (20s-40s). Another traveler.
 Lonely. *(20 lines)*

MAMA (f) (50s-70s). Mona's mother.
(18 lines)

PA ANNOUNCER (m/f) *(1 line)*

A CAMEL MIGHT STEP ON YOUR HEAD

ALLIE (f) (20s). Likable and determined.
(62 lines)

TESS (f) (20s). Realizing that she really
 hates her job. *(64 lines)*

THE LIZARD

- ANNIE (f) (20s-30s). A hyper, energetic woman. *(66 lines)*
- GWEN (f)..... (20s-30s). Her older sister. More restrained. *(68 lines)*
- PETER (m)..... (20s-30s). A pleasant-looking man. *(13 lines)*
- PA ANNOUNCER (m/f)..... *(1 line)*

STUCK

- PALMER (m) (20s). A young man. *(40 lines)*
- ZOE (f) (early 20s). A young woman. *(45 lines)*

THERAPY DOG

- MILES (m) (20s-40s). A businessman in a suit. *(33 lines)*
- JEN (f)..... (20s-50s). A nervous woman. *(13 lines)*
- THEO (m) (20s-40s). A man in a furry dog hat. *(27 lines)*
- GWEN (f)..... (20s-40s). An outgoing woman. *(24 lines)*
- PA ANNOUNCER (m/f)..... *(3 lines)*

GOING HOME

- DEB (f)..... (50s-70s) is a grumpy woman, still grieving her husband. *(60 lines)*
- MATT (m)..... (30s-40s) is her loving son. *(11 lines)*
- JULIE (f) (30s-40s) is her daughter-in-law. *(48 lines)*
- PA ANNOUNCER (m/f)..... *(1 line)*

SPILL

- DAVID (m) (20s-40s). Self-absorbed.
(3 lines)
- GRACE (f) (20s-40s). Married to David.
Meek with him, but not so much
with Sam. (52 lines)
- SAM (m) (20s-40s). Meek. Married to
Bethany. (52 lines)
- BETHANY (f)..... (20s-40s). Demanding. (9 lines)

NINJAS

- HANNAH (f)..... (20s-40s). Energetic and
talkative. (62 lines)
- KATE (f) (20s-40s). Shy, a bit awkward.
The two characters should be
roughly the same age. (60 lines)

MY CELL PHONE SAYS YOU'RE MY SOULMATE

- MAX (m)..... (20s-40s). An enthusiastic man.
(62 lines)
- CELESTE (f)..... (20s-40s). Careful, doubting.
(66 lines)
- JANE (f)..... (20s-40s). Celeste's sister. The
wild one. The actors should all
be roughly the same age.
(26 lines)

INSURANCE

- HENRY (m) (20s-40s). A meek businessman.
(37 lines)
- LAUREN (f)..... (20s-40s). An energetic female
insurance salesman. (55 lines)
- RITA (f) (20s-40s). A cynical fellow
traveler. (40 lines)
- PA ANNOUNCER (m/f)..... (1 line)

TWENTY MILLION MILES

DANIEL (m) (50s-80s) is a weary traveler.
(53 lines)

VIOLET (f) (40s-80s) is an airport employee.
(57 lines)

BAGGAGE

JANE (f) (20s-50s) is frazzled and
baggage-laden. (56 lines)

MORGAN (m/f) (20s-60s) is a tough, no-
nonsense airport employee. (38
lines)

PAT (f) (20s-60s) is another airport
employee, friendly but
common-sense. (38 lines)

CAST NOTE: MORGAN and/or PAT can also do the PA ANNOUNCER voice throughout.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This collection has twelve plays, but you absolutely do not have to do all twelve. The collection was curated with flexibility in terms of providing casting possibilities for a wide range of ages. Pick the plays you like, to create an evening of theatre.

All the plays take place in the waiting area of a large unnamed airport somewhere in the Midwest United States. The set is adaptable to any size set—basically there are a few rows of chairs, like an airport waiting area, with an open space in the middle. Other set decoration and signage could enhance this. Some productions have also utilized a row of seats facing upstage behind the first row of seats, to give extra room for sitting and staging.

There might be an employee area in the back (particularly if “Baggage” is being done), where the PA announcements can also be made from, if the theatre has that capability.

This collection is written in a way that one play flows into the next, as characters come and go from the waiting area. The plays are written to get the characters in that specific play offstage by the end of their play. But when the characters enter is much more flexible. If the set is big enough, characters can be in the waiting area for a few plays previous to theirs if you want, particularly in the case of characters like Palmer in “Stuck”. Though if characters enter early, they should enter in a transition (or at the start of the evening) and not in the middle of the play, and should not do anything to attract attention during the plays they don’t have lines in. But have fun with it.

Likewise, the characters of Morgan or Pat could be behind the employee desk onstage throughout the play, making PA announcements, even though the only play they are in is “Baggage”.

DIRECTOR’S NOTES

As mentioned in the production notes, given that this is an airport waiting area, there’s no reason that the characters in the particular play being performed have to be the only ones onstage. Use the fact that people are coming into this waiting area to populate the stage at times with characters whose plays haven’t come on yet; they can always sit in the back or sides, then move to the main staging area as seats open up. Just make sure that the entrances and characters aren’t distracting from the plays that are actually going on.

Most of the characters are wearing comfortable traveling clothes. The exceptions are Morgan and Pat (who should wear something that suggests “airport employee uniform”) and barista Zoe in “Stuck”, who can also be wearing something besides the name tag that suggests she’s working. In “Spill”, Bethany and Sam should both be dressed nicely—except for Sam’s sneakers.

PROPS

Most of the characters will have carry-on bags. The women will likely have purses.

VACATION:

- ☐ iPad

A CAMEL MIGHT STEP ON YOUR HEAD:

- ☐ Book
- ☐ Briefcase
- ☐ candy bar
- ☐ mounted photos

THE LIZARD:

- ☐ 2 take-out containers
- ☐ Magazine
- ☐ Headphones

STUCK:

- ☐ a name tag
- ☐ optional book (for Palmer)

THERAPY DOG:

- ☐ two dog hats

GOING HOME:

- ☐ bag of food

SPILL:

- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ take-out coffee cup
- ☐ pill bottle
- ☐ few dozen pills

NINJAS:

- ☐ a green scrunchie

MY CELLPHONE SAYS YOU'RE MY SOULMATE:

- ☐ three cell phones

INSURANCE:

- ☐ Book
- ☐ Magazine
- ☐ a thick document

TWENTY MILLION MILES:

- ☐ a party noisemaker

BAGGAGE:

- ☐ a large suitcase
- ☐ dresses and other clothes
- ☐ an inflatable flamingo
- ☐ Tupperware container
- ☐ bowling ball
- ☐ toaster
- ☐ stuffed animal
- ☐ assorted random props
- ☐ empty carry-on bag

VACATION

AT START: *STEVE is already seated on one side of the stage; MONA is seated on the other, reading. HARRY and DIANE enter with carry-on bags, and move to two seats in the middle. HARRY pulls an iPad from his bag.*

DIANE: It's so nice to finally be on vacation. I know we're not there yet, but it feels like it's already started, even in the airport! There should be people giving us leis here!

HARRY taps on his iPad, barely listening.

HARRY: That's Hawaii.

DIANE: I know.

HARRY: We're going to Bermuda.

DIANE: It doesn't matter! They should give you leis when you arrive at the airport, no matter where you're going! (*Notices HARRY.*) What are you doing?

HARRY: Playing a game.

DIANE: We're on vacation!

HARRY: It's literally one of the reasons they have games on iPads, for when you are stuck in a waiting area.

DIANE: We're not stuck. We're on vacation! We should be talking!

HARRY: No.

DIANE: No!?!?

HARRY: We're going to be together for two weeks. It's going to be hard enough to find things to talk about for two hours. You want to waste them all in the airport waiting area? That's why I bought this iPad. I loaded it with games, books—

DIANE: Books! Remember when all you wanted was to be with me? Look into my eyes.

HARRY looks into her eyes.

DIANE: Isn't that nice?

HARRY: It hurts my neck.

HARRY goes back to his iPad.

DIANE: Harry—

HARRY: This is relaxing.

DIANE: Are you serious?

HARRY: I'm on vacation.

DIANE: Should I do what relaxes me?

HARRY: Absolutely.

DIANE: Anything?

HARRY: Go for it.

DIANE: Even if it's making mad, passionate love to a stranger?

HARRY: *(Not listening.)* Sounds great.

DIANE: I'm serious!

HARRY: Yes, dear.

DIANE looks around. She spies STEVE.

DIANE: Here's a handsome man!

DIANE waits for HARRY to react. HARRY doesn't. DIANE stands moving over toward STEVE. She looks back. HARRY is paying no attention at all. Frustrated, DIANE sits on the chair next to STEVE. Reaches out. Pretends to touch his hair.

DIANE: I'm touching his hair!

No response. STEVE eyes DIANE.

DIANE: *(Loud whisper.)* Is he watching?

STEVE: *(Loud whisper.)* Not at all.

DIANE: Ugh. Play along. *(Loud.)* I'm touching his face now!

DIANE pretends to touch STEVE'S face.

STEVE: He's totally not looking.

DIANE: I'm touching his chest now!

DIANE touches STEVE'S chest for real.

STEVE: You're really doing this.

DIANE: He has muscles! (*To STEVE.*) You really do.

STEVE: I know.

DIANE: It's really very attractive.

STEVE: This is very strange.

DIANE: I'm sitting in his lap now!

DIANE climbs onto STEVE'S lap, facing away from HARRY, who's still not looking.

DIANE: (*Loud whisper.*) Put your hands on me.

STEVE: Where?

DIANE: Someplace sexy. But not too sexy.

STEVE does.

DIANE: His hands are all over me!

HARRY: That's nice dear.

DIANE: Doesn't this bother you?

HARRY: You're not going to do anything.

DIANE: Maybe I won't go to Bermuda. Maybe I'll go with...

STEVE: Steve.

DIANE: Steve, to...

STEVE: Los Angeles.

DIANE: Los Angeles!

HARRY: Leave the poor guy alone.

DIANE: I'm going to kiss him now!

HARRY: No you're not.

DIANE: Do you seriously not care if I stick my tongue down his throat?

HARRY: Any second now, he'll ask you to leave.

STEVE: I'm actually not hating this!

This gets HARRY'S attention. He jumps up, putting down his iPad.

HARRY: Take your hands off her!

STEVE lifts up his hands.

DIANE: Put your hands back!

STEVE does.

HARRY: What are you doing with my wife?

STEVE: Nothing she doesn't want.

HARRY: Get off him, Diane!

DIANE: Oh, now you care. Now that he's showing actual interest in me—

HARRY: Diane!

DIANE: I'm on vacation.

HARRY: Fine. Fine! I'm on vacation too!

He looks around, and sees MONA, who hasn't been paying attention to anything. HARRY sits next to her. She looks at him, startled.

HARRY: *(Whispering.)* Play along.

MONA: What?

HARRY laughs, as if MONA said something adorable.

HARRY: *(To DIANE.)* Look. She likes me! Not so nice when the shoe is on the other foot, is it?

DIANE: Leave the poor woman alone, you're scaring her.

HARRY: She's not scared. Maybe she wants to get on my lap!
(Whispering to MONA.) Maybe?

MONA happily climbs on HARRY'S lap.

HARRY: Whoa. Careful.

MONA: You like me?

HARRY: *(For DIANE'S benefit, loud.)* Yes! You're very attractive!

MONA: I think you are very attractive too!

HARRY: (*Whispering.*) Is she watching?

MONA: Don't worry about her. I'm all you need.

DIANE: (*To STEVE.*) What's going on?

STEVE: She's all over him.

DIANE: What? (*Tries to look.*) You okay over there, Harry?

HARRY: Everything's great!

MONA: Yes, it is.

DIANE: Everything's fine over here, too!

DIANE turns, trying to see what HARRY is doing. HARRY turns, trying to see what DIANE is doing. MONA turns his head back to her.

MONA: Shhh. Look into my eyes. Yes. Now kiss my face!

DIANE: What?

HARRY tries to wriggle out from under MONA, very unsuccessfully.

HARRY: I think I need to go now.

MONA: You're so adorable.

Entering is Mona's MAMA.

MONA: Mama! I've found him! The man I'm going to marry!

HARRY: What!?!

DIANE slides off STEVE'S lap. They watch the following, increasingly amused, not interfering. STEVE films it with his cell phone.

MAMA: He's handsome! But is that a ring?

MONA: He's married. But his wife is leaving him, for the man over there!

HARRY: Diane!

MAMA: So he's rebounding.

MONA: Not any more. I caught him! It's me he wants!

MAMA: And why wouldn't he. You're beautiful! Does he have a job?

MONA: His shoes are nice.

HARRY: Diane!

MAMA: Why is he yelling?

MONA: He's still heartbroken. I'll make him forget her.

MAMA: Is he on our plane?

MONA: I don't think so.

MAMA: I'll give him my ticket. (*To HARRY.*) You'll like it up in Maine.
If you don't mind the cold.

MONA: I'll keep him warm.

HARRY tries to wriggle out again.

HARRY: Okay. Listen. I'm not sure how we got to this place, but I'm
not leaving my wife.

MAMA: He's not over her.

MONA: It takes time.

HARRY: I'm not going to Maine with you!

MAMA gets in HARRY'S face.

MAMA: Are you toying with the affections of my daughter?

HARRY: No!

MONA: He asked me to sit on his lap.

MAMA: Is that true?

HARRY: ...Yes.

MAMA: That's a commitment.

MONA: I'm not moving until they call our flight.

HARRY: Diane!

DIANE: You did ask her to sit on your lap.

HARRY: This isn't funny.

DIANE: I think you two make a cute couple.

HARRY: Diane! Save me!

MAMA: (*To DIANE.*) Are you releasing this man?

HARRY: No, she's not!

MAMA: It's not up to you. (*To DIANE.*) Do you give up any claim on
him?

DIANE: Hmmmm.

HARRY: Get me out of this!

DIANE: They seem to have a legitimate complaint.

MONA: Go away. He's mine.

MAMA: I am not so sure he has feelings for you, Mona.

HARRY: I don't!

MONA: Possession is nine-tenths of the law.

MAMA: Still, there will be hurt feelings. Perhaps, if there was a way to ease her sadness—

DIANE: Harry?

HARRY: Anything!

DIANE picks up HARRY'S iPad. She gives it to MAMA.

DIANE: I'll trade this for him. It's full of books. And games.

MAMA: It's pretty.

DIANE: Plus, your daughter doesn't want him. He's—

DIANE whispers the rest in MAMA'S ear, unheard to the audience. MAMA makes a face.

MAMA: Really?

DIANE: It's unfortunate.

HARRY: Wait, what's unfortunate?

PA ANNOUNCER: Flight 282 to Bangor, Maine is now boarding at Gate 12.

MAMA: That's us. C'mon baby. He's not right for you.

MONA: Awwwww. Please Mama.

MAMA: You'll thank me. And look, I got us a toy.

MONA pouts, but climbs off HARRY. Glares at DIANE. And then MONA and MAMA are gone.

STEVE: This video is going to go viral...

HARRY makes a move at him. STEVE bolts. HARRY looks at DIANE.

HARRY: What did you tell her?

DIANE: Never you mind.

HARRY: Not about the—

DIANE: This is where you thank me. And look into my eyes.

DIANE sits in her original seat. HARRY sits back in his original seat. They look into each other's eyes.

HARRY: Thanks.

DIANE: Now it's just us.

HARRY: On vacation.

DIANE: No distractions.

HARRY: My neck still hurts.

She rubs his neck. He leans into it.

HARRY: I love you.

DIANE: You better. Buy me some snacks.

HARRY: All the snacks you want.

They exit.

END OF PLAY

A CAMEL MIGHT STEP ON YOUR HEAD

AT START: *ALLIE enters (if she isn't onstage already), and sits on the end of a row of three chairs, large carry-on bag next to her. She reads a book about Africa. TESS enters with a briefcase. She sits next to ALLIE and eyes her.*

TESS: Africa, huh?

ALLIE: I'm flying there today.

TESS: Vacation?

ALLIE: I'm going there to work. I hope.

TESS: You don't know?

ALLIE: A friend gave me the name of a woman who might know someone.

TESS: That seems a little iffy. You couldn't join the Peace Corps?

ALLIE: I didn't want them to say no. I just wanted to go. I don't need to get paid—all I need is a place to sleep and a little food, and I'm fine.

TESS: Wow.

ALLIE: I want to help people. Dig wells for villages. Bring medicine. Build schools.

TESS: Just like that.

ALLIE: I want to do something with my life. Make a difference while I'm here on this Earth.

TESS: You're an idiot.

ALLIE: Hey!

TESS: Bugs, crime, disease—have you had your shots? I guarantee your body's not ready for the food. And your place to sleep is going to be a thin blanket on a patch of rocky ground. If you're lucky. If you're not lucky, in the middle of the night—camel steps on your head.

ALLIE: I don't think they have camels in Africa.

TESS: They definitely have camels in Africa. With feet. Big feet. Stepping on your head.

ALLIE: I need to do something. I need an adventure. Might as well be Africa. So I'm going. Thanks.

ALLIE reaches into her bag, and pulls out a candy bar. TESS reaches over and takes it.

ALLIE: Hey!

TESS: If you really need this candy bar, you won't make it three days out there.

ALLIE: Give it back!

TESS: There's bad stuff out there. Go home. You have a boyfriend?

ALLIE: He's an idiot.

TESS: Ah.

ALLIE: I'm done with him.

TESS: Don't rebound from a guy into some crazy adventure. Take a breath. Close your eyes. Seriously. Shut out the world. Tap into the core of you. Breathe. Eyes closed.

ALLIE breathes. Eyes closed.

TESS: Relaxed?

ALLIE: Yes.

TESS: What do you want? What do you really want?

ALLIE: I want to go to Africa, and help people.

TESS: No! You're overreacting, Allie. You can't make rash decisions—

ALLIE: *(Interrupting.)* How do you know my name?

TESS: Oops.

ALLIE: Did Gary send you?

TESS: Let me explain.

ALLIE: Are you a friend of his?

TESS: He hired me.

ALLIE: What?

TESS: I'm a deprogrammer.

ALLIE: A deprogrammer?!?

TESS: I had this whole plan worked out. Me and three other guys were going to grab you outside the airport, take you to a warehouse and tie you to a chair. There was also a fire hose.

ALLIE: A fire hose!

TESS: But Gary only paid for me. No extra guys, no warehouse, no fire hose. The discount package.

ALLIE: Discount package!?!

TESS: Can you stop repeating after me?

ALLIE: He paid for the discount package?

TESS: He also had a coupon.

ALLIE: That cheap jerk!

TESS: Let's forget I said anything.

ALLIE: So he sent you here to what—pull me out of the cult of wanting to go to Africa and help people?

TESS: When you say it like that, it doesn't sound so good.

ALLIE: I haven't been brainwashed! I actually want to help people!

TESS: But why now? Because it's time? Or because you just want to get away from him?

ALLIE: I am away from him! I'm already gone!

TESS: He doesn't think so.

ALLIE: Argh. Can you like, sit somewhere else?

TESS: No.

ALLIE: What do you mean, no?

TESS: I really need this job.

ALLIE: I don't care!

TESS: I have to try Plan B now.

ALLIE: No Plan B! Leave me alone!

TESS: I need to finish the pitch, or I might get fired. Anyone here could be watching me. *(They look around.)* We haven't even gotten to the personal photos yet.

ALLIE: What photos?

TESS reaches into her briefcase. She pulls out a small device, and turns it on. It starts playing romantic music.

ALLIE: Seriously?

TESS: It's your song.

ALLIE: That's not our song!

TESS: Pretend.

ALLIE: Give me my candy bar back, and I'll give you two minutes.

TESS hands ALLIE the candy bar, which ALLIE doesn't open. TESS pulls out a stack of photos, blown up and mounted on cardboard.

TESS: Pretend I didn't tell you about the coupon.

TESS holds up the first photo, facing ALLIE and the audience, while reading from the back. The photo shows GARY and ALLIE, holding each other, scenic view in the back.

TESS: Gary wants you to remember all the amazing times you had together. That trip to the mountains—

ALLIE: I twisted my ankle, and he made me limp down. Three and a half miles. He didn't even find me a stick to use as a crutch.

Next photo—a selfie at the beach.

TESS: That day at the beach—

ALLIE: I got bitten by a jellyfish.

TESS: Seriously?

Next photo—a restaurant.

TESS: Your one-year dating anniversary.

ALLIE: Food poisoning.

TESS: That can't be true.

ALLIE: I threw up for hours. He didn't even hold my hair.

Next photo—people dancing at a club.

TESS: Romantic nights out together. Come on. This is sweet.

ALLIE: I'm pretty sure that's not me.

TESS checks it, and goes to the next photo. GARY with puppy-dog eyes.

TESS: He wants you to know he has always been faithful to you.

ALLIE: Liar.

Next photo. Close up of GARY. Those eyes.

TESS: He has always loved you.

ALLIE: Lies.

Next photo. Just the eyes.

ALLIE: Yeah, I get it, he's got great eyes. We did have some good times. I wanted him to be a great guy. He's not.

Next photo. ALLIE and GARY. Upside down.

ALLIE: That's upside down.

TESS: Oops.

She flips the photo.

TESS: You're really an adorable couple. Give him another chance.

ALLIE: No.

TESS: He did seem like a good guy.

ALLIE: No.

TESS: Can you pretend I said something funny? Maybe laugh?

ALLIE: Seriously?

TESS: I really need this job.

ALLIE laughs.

TESS: That was good.

ALLIE: Why is this your job?

TESS: So I can pay my bills.

ALLIE: But you don't like it?

TESS: A lot of people hate their jobs. Do you like your job?

ALLIE: No.

TESS: See?

ALLIE: That's another reason I'm going to Africa!

TESS: Oh.

ALLIE: Why did you choose this job?

TESS: I thought I was going to be saving people from cults! Danger and action and being a hero and the smile on someone's face when they realize they really don't have to be the fourth wife of some old guy in a commune! But turns out it's not that at all—it's mostly just whiny guys trying to get their girlfriends back. I hate this. You're right. Your boyfriend is a jerk.

ALLIE: What's your name?

TESS: Tess.

ALLIE: Tess, I'm tired of being safe, of knowing the rules. Out there, anything is possible. I should have hired someone like you to deprogram me about Gary a year ago. But Africa. Bringing some good to the world. I feel like I at least need to give it a shot. So I'm sorry if I'm risking your job, or if you have to give Gary his money back. Can I give you some advice?

TESS: If you give me the candy bar.

ALLIE hands it over.

ALLIE: If you aren't happy with your life, walk away. Do something else. Anything else. So that when you are at the end of your life, the movie of your day playing in your brain, you can say yes, that's the life I wanted. Or at least it's the best try at a life that you could make. No regrets.

ALLIE stands up.

ALLIE: I hope you get a chance to rescue someone from a cult. But if you see Gary, tell him he's an idiot.

ALLIE starts heading away.

TESS: Wait.

ALLIE looks back.

TESS: Can I come with you?

ALLIE: What?

TESS: I hate my job, I hate my life. I still live in the room I grew up in. My boyfriend is awful—probably better than Gary, but no, he isn't, not really. I don't think he'd pay to have me deprogrammed, even with a coupon. I don't know what I'm passionate about—but I'm willing to try new things.

ALLIE: A camel might step on your head.

TESS: I think I can risk that.

ALLIE: I could use a friend down there.

TESS: Yeah?

ALLIE: All I can promise is a place to sleep, and a little food.

TESS: You hope.

ALLIE: I hope.

TESS: I'm getting a ticket. To Africa! Where they have camels!

They both get up. ALLIE follows TESS.

ALLIE: Can I have my candy bar back now?

TESS: I think we should save it. We might need it.

And they exit.

END OF PLAY

THE LIZARD

AT START: *If they aren't already onstage, GWEN enters; she looks around, impatient, then sits. PETER enters and takes a seat; he reads a magazine, headphones on. ANNIE enters, big purse in one hand, small cardboard takeout container in the other. She puts her purse on a chair next to GWEN.*

GWEN: Thank goodness! The plane's going to board in ten minutes.

ANNIE: I got hung up in security. Because of this.

ANNIE holds up the takeout container.

ANNIE: But I'm here.

GWEN: There's food on the plane.

ANNIE: That's good, I'm starving.

GWEN: You didn't have to bring your leftovers.

ANNIE: These aren't my leftovers. (*Off GWEN'S look.*) It's Larry.

GWEN: Larry.

ANNIE: My emotional support lizard.

GWEN: That's not a thing!

ANNIE: That's what the guys at security said! Until I showed them the note from my therapist.

GWEN: You can't bring a lizard to Mom and Dad's for Thanksgiving!

ANNIE: Sure I can. I poked airholes.

GWEN: Did Mom and Dad say it's okay?

ANNIE: It's my lizard.

GWEN: Did they?

ANNIE: I'm not a child.

GWEN: Are you on your meds?

ANNIE: Yes, I'm on my meds!

GWEN: You don't seem like you're on your meds.

ANNIE: This is me, on my meds. This is what you get when Annie takes her pills. It's as normal as I get.

GWEN: You can try to be more normal.

ANNIE: Can I?

GWEN: Fine. Don't.

ANNIE looks away. Spots PETER.

ANNIE: Oooo, there's a cute guy. You think he's on our plane?

GWEN: Probably.

ANNIE: I get dibs.

GWEN: You don't get dibs.

ANNIE: I have the aisle seat. Maybe he'll be sitting across the aisle.

While you're trapped next to the window, I'll be chatting him up.

GWEN: With your lizard.

ANNIE: Larry is a great icebreaker.

GWEN: Tell me you're kidding.

ANNIE: What do you think I should do, hide Larry in my purse?

GWEN: Yes!

ANNIE: Pretend he doesn't exist? That I'm a non-lizard person?

GWEN: Absolutely!

ANNIE: No.

GWEN: Then you can have all the dibs you want. But as soon as you tell that guy you have a lizard in your takeout container, his eyes are going to glaze over, and he's going to make up an excuse, and he's never going to talk to you again.

ANNIE: I think he'd like my lizard. Larry's a very nice lizard.

GWEN: No lizard is that nice.

ANNIE: I want you to look at him.

ANNIE opens the top of that container.

GWEN: I don't want to look at your lizard!

ANNIE looks inside.

ANNIE: Don't listen to her, Larry. She doesn't mean it.

GWEN: I mean it.

ANNIE moves toward her.

ANNIE: I think you'll be good friends. Just say hi to him.

GWEN: Keep it away from me.

ANNIE: Just scratch his little head.

GWEN: I don't want to. No—

GWEN swings her arms, and accidentally hits the takeout container, which flies out of ANNIE'S hands and lands on the floor. ANNIE dives after it.

ANNIE: Gwen!

GWEN: I didn't mean to do that!

ANNIE: If he's hurt—

GWEN: I'm sure he's fine.

ANNIE picks up the container. Looks inside.

ANNIE: He's gone!

GWEN: What?

ANNIE: Help me find him! Larry, where are you? Larry!

ANNIE frantically crawls under the chairs. GWEN looks around, standing. PETER takes his headphones off.

PETER: Everything okay?

GWEN: Everything's fine. She just lost an earring.

PETER: If you need some help, I'd be happy to.

GWEN: Really?

PETER: Absolutely.

GWEN: That's sweet. But we've got it. Really.

PETER smiles. Sits. Puts his headphones back on.

GWEN: He's so nice. I felt a connection. Dibs.

ANNIE: He could have helped us!

GWEN: He doesn't need to know you have a lizard!

ANNIE keeps crawling around, searching.

ANNIE: I don't want to be with a guy who doesn't like my lizard!

GWEN: That's not the way you find a man!

ANNIE: So I should hide all my weirdness.

GWEN: Yes!

ANNIE: So that a man will date me. Even though he's wrong for me.

GWEN: That's how it works.

ANNIE: How's it working for you?

GWEN: I'm not hiding weirdness.

ANNIE: Really. When was the last time you did your weird snort-laugh in front of a guy?

GWEN: That's just common sense.

ANNIE: The fact that you shave your mustache every other day—

GWEN: No one needs to know that!

ANNIE: The fact that you fart every time you sneeze—

GWEN: Annie!

ANNIE: Did John ever figure that out?

GWEN: I never sneezed around John.

ANNIE: For four months.

GWEN: I was careful.

ANNIE: The fact that you pee in the shower—

GWEN: It saves water. It's good for the environment.

ANNIE: So you told John you pee in the shower.

GWEN: No.

ANNIE: See. If he knew all this up front, maybe you wouldn't have wasted four months on him.

GWEN: That's not the way it works!

ANNIE freezes.

ANNIE: Crap. There's Larry.

GWEN: Where?

ANNIE: Under that guy's chair.

GWEN: Oh no.

ANNIE: I'm going in.

GWEN: No!

ANNIE: I need to save Larry!

GWEN: I don't want him to know about the lizard!

ANNIE: In case you wind up dating him.

GWEN: Yes!

ANNIE: Because it might hurt your chances if he knew your sister was carrying a lizard on a plane.

GWEN: Yes!

ANNIE: I'm not leaving Larry here.

GWEN: Maybe we can lure Larry over. Larry—

ANNIE: Larry—

GWEN: Larry—

ANNIE: Larry—

GWEN: Does he know his name?

ANNIE: He's a lizard.

GWEN: Don't ruin this for me.

ANNIE: Fine. How about this. You lure the guy over here. Talk to him.

Don't laugh or fart or let him see your mustache hair—

GWEN: I don't have mustache hair!

ANNIE: You talk to him. You flirt with him. I'll get Larry, and get out of there before he notices.

GWEN: You'd do that for me?

ANNIE: Why not. Go.

GWEN: How'm I going to get his attention?

ANNIE: I'd jump up and down and wave, but that's just me.

ANNIE casually walks upstage, circling around. GWEN looks at PETER, casually moves closer to him, and then pretends to twist her ankle, falling to the floor. PETER sees her, takes off his headphones, and moves toward her—revealing a takeout container sitting on the chair next to him.

PETER: Are you okay?

GWEN: I'm fine. I'm fine. Thank you.

GWEN stands, letting PETER help her up, keeping him turned away from ANNIE, who drops to the floor and pulls LARRY out from under PETER'S seat, cupping him in her hands. ANNIE stands up, does a double-take at the container, then retreats upstage. GWEN tests her ankle, and puts weight on it.

GWEN: I think I'll be fine...

PETER: Peter.

GWEN: Gwen. Hopefully I'll see you on the plane. Where are you sitting?

PETER: 18C.

GWEN: I'll definitely see you on the plane.

PETER: I'd like that.

They smile, and he retreats to his chair. GWEN joins ANNIE, who tucks LARRY back in his container. GWEN checks PETER. He smiles at her, then puts his headphones back on.

GWEN: Dibs on the aisle seat. He's sitting right across from us.

ANNIE: He has a takeout container, just like mine.

GWEN: What?

ANNIE: On the seat next to him. I couldn't see if it had air holes.

GWEN: It's his leftovers.

ANNIE: But what if it's not.

GWEN: It's not a lizard.

ANNIE: But what if it is.

GWEN: You are the only person in the whole world who has a lizard in a takeout container in an airport!

ANNIE: But what if I'm not.

ANNIE hands the container to GWEN.

GWEN: Don't—

ANNIE: I have to know.

ANNIE walks up to PETER, who sees her coming. He removes his headphones.

PETER: Did you find your earring?

ANNIE: What's in your takeout container?

PETER: What?

ANNIE: I need to know.

PETER: Oh. Just some chicken dumplings. Leftover from lunch.

ANNIE: Okay. Thank you.

PA ANNOUNCER: Flight 354, now boarding for Cincinnati, gate 11.

ANNIE: That's us.

ANNIE heads away.

PETER: Wait. I can't lie about this.

ANNIE turns.

PETER: It's not dumplings. It's my lizard. Linda.

ANNIE: I have a lizard too!

PETER: That's amazing.

ANNIE moves to PETER, and kisses him.

GWEN: Oh, come on!

ANNIE and PETER grab their things and exit through the gate. GWEN just watches them go, then grabs her things and heads after them.

END OF PLAY

STUCK

AT START: *PALMER has either been onstage for a while, or he enters and sits down. ZOE enters, watching him. She abruptly moves toward him, then slows... then sits next to him.*

ZOE: Can I ask you a question?

PALMER just looks at her.

ZOE: I work in the coffee shop over there. And every day, I see an incredibly wide range of people coming through this airport. You name it—I've seen it. Couple of months ago this guy walked by, really frizzy hair, half was dyed orange, the other half green. Maybe it was team colors, I don't know, but it looked really crazy permanent. Another day, last year, a woman gave birth to twins. Oh! Ryan Seacrest came through here six months ago. Sat in that chair right over there. Nicest guy. Signed autographs for almost two hours. Every day it's something new. Except for you.

PALMER doesn't respond.

ZOE: You're here every single day. And people have noticed. We've been comparing notes. Gina thinks you work for the airport, spying on us, but I don't think so. Because I've been watching you. I hope that doesn't sound creepy, I really don't want to be creepy, I'm so not creepy... But I've seen you get on planes. Every time I hear them calling for the passengers for the plane to Phoenix, there you are, moving to the gate. Getting on the plane. But a half hour later, I look over again, and you're sitting in your chair.

ZOE reaches over, and touches his arm. Pulls back.

ZOE: Heidi thought you might be a ghost. She's a little weird. But it's been two months... and you're always here. Why are you here?

PALMER: You've been watching me?

ZOE: Well, business is slow. And if someone's looking at the board, trying to figure out what to order, sometimes I'll take a quick peek over, to see if you're there. Not that I like you or something, I mean, I don't know you, but you interest me. You're an interesting person. You're a mystery. That I want to solve.

PALMER: By asking me.

ZOE: Seemed like the easiest way.

PALMER: You talk a lot.

ZOE: I know. It's this thing. When I'm nervous. Or excited, I ramble. Especially when there are silences. You're giving me a lot of silences.

PALMER: Why are you excited?

ZOE: Well, there's a mystery that's about to be solved, right? You are going to tell me, right? ...Please? ... Tell me what's going on? It's driving me crazy.

PALMER: Look. You seem like a nice girl. But I'm not going to tell you.

ZOE: What?

PALMER: I don't want to jinx it.

ZOE: Oh no. No. That's not fair. Please. You need to. If you do, I'll... bring you a coffee every day. Two, if you want it. If you don't, I'll just keep watching you. Not that I want to be annoying or anything, but—I need to know.

PALMER sighs. Looks around, then looks at her.

PALMER: Zoe—

ZOE: How'd you know my name?

He points at her name tag.

ZOE: Oh. Name tag. Sorry. Keep going.

PALMER: Listen. From now on, you only get one sentence at a time, okay?

ZOE: I'll try. But—

He raises a finger. She wants to say more, but doesn't.

PALMER: My name is Palmer.

ZOE: Hi, Palmer.

PALMER: Three months ago, I got back from Afghanistan. I was there for three years.

ZOE: A soldier.

PALMER: Yes.

ZOE: Wow. Was it...?

PALMER: I don't want to talk about that.

ZOE: I'm sorry.

PALMER: I came back to the small town I grew up in, Connecticut. I stayed with my mom, and hung out with the guys I knew from high school. But they were all just wasting their lives, drinking and complaining. And I got tired of that really quickly. I couldn't find a job. I couldn't find... a life. I wasn't happy.

ZOE: Yeah.

PALMER: But then my friend Tommy, from my unit, called and said he could get me a job in a factory down in Phoenix, where they make machine parts. He said I could crash on his couch. So I spent my last cash on a plane ticket to Phoenix. Except I had to transfer planes here, and when I got on the new plane they announced they were overbooked. They said if anyone gave up their seat, they'd give them a seat on a later plane, plus five hundred bucks. Five hundred bucks. I mean, who could say no to that?

ZOE: Wow.

PALMER: So I raised my hand, I took the deal, I got off the plane, and let my duffel bag go ahead to Phoenix without me. I called Tommy and told him I wasn't sure when I was going to get there, but I'd give him a call when I did. So the later flight comes that afternoon, and again they're overbooked, and again I take the deal. Five hundred bucks, a ticket on the flight the next day. I slept in the terminal that night—which is fine, in Afghanistan I slept in a lot worse places and at least it's warm here. And then I get on the plane the next day—overbooked. Second flight—overbooked. Again, and again, and again. For the past fifty-nine days I have taken the money and been bounced from the plane. One hundred and eighteen different times. Fifty-nine thousand dollars. Can you

believe that? I've started a bank account, through that ATM over there.

ZOE: That's amazing.

PALMER: And every day, I tell myself that this is the day that I don't take the deal. This is the day I go to Phoenix. But there is nothing for me in Phoenix except for a crappy job and an old couch to sleep on. Here I'm making a thousand dollars a day for doing nothing but reading all the books I've ever wanted to read. And I could go to a motel to sleep, or even skip a day here, but I'm afraid I'd lose the magic. And then the next time I get on the plane they wouldn't make the offer, and suddenly I'm in Phoenix and... that's something else. Something unknown. So that's why I'm here. And now you know. And you can tell Gina that I'm not spying on her, and you can tell Heidi that I'm not a ghost. But don't tell them the real story, because I don't want to jinx it, okay? I probably shouldn't have told you.

ZOE: I'm glad you did.

PALMER: It's probably pretty pathetic.

ZOE: No! I mean... can I string some sentences together now?

PALMER: Go for it.

ZOE: I wouldn't want to live in an airport, but you're saving money. And someday you'll be able to choose where you want to go. What do you want to do? What's your passion? What do you want to spend your life doing?

PALMER: I don't know.

ZOE: But you have time now. You can figure it out.

PALMER: I guess. What would you do if you were me?

ZOE: Me? I'm totally the wrong person to ask. I've never even been on a plane. Since I was born, I've lived in a house a half-mile that way. Listening to the planes flying overhead, wondering where they're going. I walk to the airport, walk home. In my whole life, I don't think I've been more than twenty miles from this spot, right here. Sad, huh?

PALMER: No.

ZOE: It is, though.

PALMER: You're young. You'll go places.

ZOE: I don't think so. I didn't go to college. My job isn't that good. I don't have a car—can't afford a car. My mother charges me rent.

And every day, I see people, going places. Going somewhere new, or coming back from somewhere exciting, and even when they're tired, they have this glow, you know? Of moving around, of living a life that I can only imagine. But I'm stuck, right here. So maybe it's good I came over, because it's nice to have this weird connection with someone. Not that you're stuck, but you're here, like me, day after day, and I'd take your stuck any night of the week. Because someday you'll get unstuck. And then you'll be gone.

She gives him a wistful look. Notices the clock. She gets up.

ZOE: Shoot, I need to get back. My break's over. Thanks for letting me ramble, and for telling me your story. I guess maybe I'll see you later... Until I don't. But I'll keep looking.

She takes a step... then turns back.

ZOE: No. You should go. Get out of here. Find a life. Next flight, when they offer you five hundred dollars? Maybe just let someone else have the deal. Let the plane take you to Phoenix. You don't have to stay there—you can go wherever you want. And you need to. *(Beat.)* There's no good reason ever to be stuck anywhere.

She heads away. He gets up.

PALMER: Zoe.

She stops.

PALMER: I want you to take the ticket.

ZOE: What?

PALMER: Let me sign it over to you. Or whatever I have to do to put it in your name.

ZOE: I can't.

PALMER: Sure you can.

ZOE: I have a job.

PALMER: They must owe you vacation time.

ZOE: What would I do in Phoenix?

PALMER: It doesn't matter. The point is, you'll be somewhere else. You'll be on a plane, then you'll be out of town, and suddenly you're already a different girl. A girl with choices, who can do whatever she wants.

ZOE: I can't... I don't.

PALMER: I'll give you five thousand dollars.

ZOE: What?!?

PALMER: Then you'll really have choices. So you can do whatever you want. Go wherever you want—and stay. Maybe not Phoenix—I think it gets really hot in Phoenix. But anywhere. Ten thousand dollars.

ZOE: Stop. You need that money.

PALMER: I've spent barely anything in two months. Underwear and t-shirts and a change of pants and a lot of fast food. Ten thousand dollars. Plus a plane ticket out of here. Where would you go? What would you do?

ZOE: I don't know.

PALMER: It's exciting, isn't it? I'm excited. It's making me ramble. Look, I'm rambling.

ZOE: What are you going to do? I mean, you give me your ticket—you're unstuck now. You don't have a choice.

PALMER: I don't. And I have no idea what to do. It really is exciting. Tell me it's amazing.

ZOE thinks about it. Smiles.

ZOE: It is.

PALMER: Tell me what you want to do.

ZOE: I want to see the ocean. I've always wanted to see the ocean. Take my shoes off, toes in the sand. Toes in the surf.

PALMER: East coast, or west coast?

ZOE: West coast. California.

PALMER: That's awesome. That's a plan.

ZOE: Oh my gosh. I'm really going to do this.

PALMER: I'm jealous.

ZOE: You could come.

PALMER: What?

ZOE: Do you want to see the ocean?

PALMER: I don't know how to swim.

ZOE: Neither do I.

They look at each other. Smile.

PALMER: Maybe it's time to learn.

He heads off. ZOE hesitates, and then he looks back at her. Deep breath, and then she follows him. They exit together.

END OF PLAY

DO NOT COPY

THERAPY DOG

AT START: *MILES and JEN sit, empty seat between them. Stressed, JEN rocks slightly.*

MILES: Afraid of flying?

JEN: It's silly, I know.

MILES: I'm terrified.

JEN: Really?

MILES: Flew for the first time when I was four, and as soon as turbulence hit I threw up on the guy next to me—who wasn't my father. Now every time I fly, I'm that little kid again. I can do most meetings over Skype, and once I even drove 1200 miles. But sometimes I have no choice. And I'm in the air.

JEN: It just feels unnatural. I don't understand what's keeping us in the air.

MILES: I guess it's a little bit of faith and a lot of science. But I barely passed science.

JEN: I was hoping they'd have a therapy dog here. A lot of airports have them now. You pet a dog, it calms you down.

MILES: Huh. That's interesting.

JEN: I guess it helps if you're a dog person.

MILES: I don't mind dogs.

JEN: Oh! There it is now!

Entering is a man, THEO. He wears a furry dog hat, and he's on all fours.

JEN: Come here, boy!

THEO ambles over to her, playful. She pets him, then scratches his head.

JEN: *(To THEO.)* Oh, that's a good boy! What a good boy! *(To MILES.)* Scratch him. It feels great.

THEO gives MILES a happy doggy look.

MILES: He's all yours.

JEN: Let me get your belly!

She leans over and scratches THEO'S belly. He rolls onto his back, arms and legs in the air.

JEN: Yes! Yes! You like that, don't you? He's such a good boy! Aren't you! Aren't you a good boy! Roll over!

THEO rolls over.

JEN: Did you see that? He did a trick! What a good boy!

MILES: You realize that's just a man in a dog costume, right? Not even a costume. It's a hat.

JEN taps the seat between them. MILES slides away from THEO as he jumps up onto the seat. JEN scratches him again.

JEN: Come on, rub his head. He's not going to bite, are you boy. No you're not. No you're not.

JEN rubs THEO'S head. She's enjoying it a lot. So is THEO.

PA ANNOUNCER: Flight 342 to Seattle, now boarding on Gate 12A.

JEN: Oh, that's me. Sorry boy, I need to go now. *(To MILES.)* It was nice meeting you. And you should pet the dog. He's really great.

JEN heads off toward the gate. THEO looks at MILES, and moves his head over to be petted. MILES holds his hands up, staying away.

MILES: No.

THEO sits down on the chair, like a person. He looks at MILES.

THEO: You're kind of a buzzkill, aren't you?

MILES: What is this?

THEO: (*Happy.*) I'm a therapy dog.

MILES: You're a freak.

THEO: Did you see the smile on her face when she left here?

MILES looks around.

THEO: What are you looking for?

MILES: Security. They're never around when you need them.

THEO: Ha! I work here. They pay me. And pretty well, too. Of course, they have to. No one ever thinks of tipping the dog.

MILES: You're not a dog.

THEO: They had real dogs here for a while, but then one bit a kid. Kid probably deserved it, but there was blood, and no one wants that. I don't bite kids. Kids love me. I'm providing a service, bringing calm to everyone. Who doesn't love a dog? Pet my head.

MILES: No.

THEO: Come on. Pet my head. It's incredibly soft—once you touch it, you can't stop touching it. It's half the illusion right there. Of course, I also work out, so when they rub my belly, they're feeling these tight abs. Women find that pretty relaxing, too. Come on. Pet my head.

MILES: No!

THEO: Seriously? Come on. It's the 21st century. Dudes can pet other dudes.

MILES: No.

THEO: I'd send the girl dog over, but there are no girl dogs. Just me. Seriously? It's that weird for you?

MILES: I'm not much of a toucher.

THEO takes the dog hat off. Holds it out to MILES.

THEO: Just take it. Stroke it.

MILES reaches over, and takes it.

THEO: Feel.

MILES: It is soft.

THEO: Right?

MILES strokes it.

MILES: I can see where people find this relaxing.

THEO: Physical contact is a very powerful thing. Even when you're wearing it. Put it on.

MILES: What? No.

THEO: Put it on.

MILES puts the hat on.

MILES: I feel ridiculous.

THEO: Let me rub your head.

MILES: No!

THEO: Fine. Then let her do it.

He points to GWEN, who is seated nearby.

MILES: She's going to call security.

THEO: Trust me. Women love this. C'mon. I'm risking my job to give you this experience.

THEO coughs, loudly. GWEN looks over. Her face lights up.

GWEN: Puppy! Come here, puppy!

MILES: *(Low, to THEO.)* Whoa.

THEO: I know, right?

MILES: It really feels good?

THEO: It feels amazing. But you need to get into character. You're a dog. Think dog. You exist to make her happy.

MILES: I can do that.

THEO: She can touch you, but don't touch her. No talking. Keep the illusion.

MILES: Okay.

THEO: Go.

MILES gets down on all fours. He crawls towards GWEN, who smiles.

GWEN: Come here!

MILES moves to her. She scratches his head. THEO watches from afar.

GWEN: Oh, yeah, that's nice. You don't know how much I needed this.

MILES enjoys it too. A lot. GWEN taps the empty seat next to her, and MILES climbs up. GWEN rubs his head harder.

GWEN: Such a good boy. Oh, yes. You feel so good. Let me rub your belly.

GWEN rubs MILES' belly. His leg jiggles, uncontrollably.

GWEN: You like that, huh? Yeah, you like that. You are exactly what I needed today. You are—whoa.

GWEN looks down at MILES' crotch.

GWEN: You're a very happy doggie, aren't you?

THEO reacts. He moves quickly to them.

THEO: Okay, it's time for him to move on now. There are other passengers who need a visit.

GWEN eyes MILES, who shakes his head.

GWEN: He's doing fine.

THEO: Miss—

GWEN: Get your own dog.

She rubs MILES harder. He closes his eyes, blissed out. He snuggles closer to her.

GWEN: Such a good dog.

THEO storms off. MILES puts his head on GWEN'S lap. She strokes it.

GWEN: How'd you like to come home with me?

MILES snuggles closer. She keeps petting and rubbing.

GWEN: There's no reason we can't keep this going forever. You'd like that, wouldn't you?

MILES looks up at her. Gives her a big doggie grin. THEO comes back in, in another dog hat. He drops to all fours, and approaches.

GWEN: Oh! You've got a friend. Are you a good dog?

MILES sees THEO, and growls.

GWEN: Hey, hey! Good dog. Behave!

GWEN smiles at THEO. She pats the seat next to her.

GWEN: You're a good dog too, aren't you? Come on up.

THEO jumps up next to her. He turns around, finds a comfortable position, and settles in. She scratches them both at the same time.

GWEN: This is why the good lord gave me two hands.

THEO tries to put his head on GWEN'S lap, but MILES' head is already there. They push their heads against each other, trying to gain dominance.

GWEN: Whoa boys! There's enough of me for both of you.

THEO pushes MILES' head off GWEN'S lap. MILES gives THEO a doggy glare, then starts licking the side of GWEN'S head.

GWEN: Oh, are you jealous, baby? I'm sorry baby. Gwen loves you the most.

She pushes THEO onto the floor, then grabs MILES' head in both her hands.

GWEN: We're going to make each other very happy.

PA ANNOUNCER: Flight 397 to Tampa, now boarding at gate 19.

GWEN: Oh, that's us. Come on, boy. I'll get you on the plane—the pilot's a friend. You'll like the house.

GWEN stands up. MILES jumps down, but then THEO is on him. They roll around the floor, snapping at each other.

GWEN: Stop it! Stop it!

THEO finally bites MILES' ankle—and this breaks MILES' trance. The dogs stop fighting.

GWEN: (To MILES.) Come on boy.

MILES just sits down.

GWEN: C'mon. We need to go.

MILES looks away. GWEN looks disappointed, then looks at THEO.

GWEN: How about you?

But THEO looks away too.

GWEN: You're bad dogs! Bad dogs!

She storms off. MILES and THEO watch her, then slowly stand and take seats.

MILES: You... saved me.

THEO: I did.

MILES: It's like, she started scratching me, and I was gone.

THEO: It's happened to me before. One minute you're getting scratched in an airport, the next minute you're fenced in a backyard in Tampa. That's why it's good to have a spotter. It was nice, though, right?

MILES: It was. Too nice. I don't know how you do it every day.

THEO: It takes control. I meditate. Plus I have a chip in my neck, so my roommate can find me if I disappear.

PA ANNOUNCER: Flight 182 to Los Angeles, now boarding at gate 6C.

MILES: That's me.

THEO: You feeling better about the flight?

MILES: It's crazy, but... yeah. I really am.

MILES takes off the hat, and hands it to THEO. Then MILES reaches out... and scratches THEO'S head.

MILES: Thanks.

MILES heads off. He slows, looks back a little yearningly, and then he's gone. THEO heads off, on all fours, second hat in his mouth.

END OF PLAY

GOING HOME

AT START: *MATT, DEB and JULIE enter. MATT is very caring towards his mother; he carries her bag, leads her to a seat. JULIE sits a couple of seats away. DEB glares at her, then moves to a seat on the other side of the stage. MATT follows, and puts her bag down.*

MATT: Okay, you're all settled. Your bag is here, with everything you need in it. The flight won't be boarding for thirty minutes.

DEB: Where are you going?

MATT: I wanted to get you some tea. And anything else you want.

DEB: Why can't she get it?

MATT: Mom—

DEB: You're right. She'd probably screw it up.

MATT: Mom—

DEB: Spill it on me. Or herself—

MATT: Do you want a sandwich?

DEB: Tuna. White bread. Just a little mayo.

MATT: I'll see what I can do.

DEB: And some chips. Low salt, if they have them. You know what I like.

MATT: I do.

DEB: But be fast. Don't leave me with her too long.

JULIE rolls her eyes. Bites her tongue.

MATT: I think Julie wants to talk to you anyway.

DEB: Are you getting a divorce?

MATT: Mom! No!

DEB: Then we have nothing to talk about.

MATT gives JULIE a helpless face. JULIE waves him away.

MATT: Let me get that tea. And the sandwich.

DEB: Don't forget the chips!

MATT: And the chips.

MATT leaves. JULIE looks over at DEB. Sighs. And moves over. Sits close to her.

DEB: Go away.

JULIE: Matt wanted to me to talk with you.

DEB: I'm not listening to a word you're saying.

JULIE: We need to have this conversation.

DEB: No, we really don't.

JULIE: Deb—

DEB: You can call me Mrs. Stevens.

JULIE: Seriously?

DEB: I'm not moving in with you.

JULIE: You are literally about to get on a plane to our house.

DEB: For a visit! Just a visit!

JULIE: You can have Matt's office. It has a separate door, to the outside.

DEB: Are you deaf?

JULIE: No.

DEB: Stupid?

JULIE: Deb—

DEB: Mrs. Stevens.

JULIE: You know, I'm Mrs. Stevens too.

DEB: Don't remind me.

JULIE: Listen—

DEB: I'm not moving in with you!

JULIE: Matt's worried about you.

DEB: I've lived in my house for forty-seven years.

JULIE: Matt's concerned about you being alone.

DEB: He's worried?

JULIE: Yes.

DEB: He cares?

JULIE: Of course.

DEB: He didn't care when I told him not to marry you.

JULIE: Here we go...

DEB: He could have done better. But he thought he was right. Ha!

Well this time, I'm right.

JULIE: Hey... I'm just the messenger.

DEB: Matt thinks that now that his father is dead, I'm falling apart.

JULIE: He didn't say that.

DEB: Really.

JULIE: He's... concerned.

DEB: I'm not moving from my house. Tell him I'll be fine. Now move back over there. To the other seats.

JULIE doesn't move.

DEB: Go. You don't want me living with you anyway.

JULIE: Of course I do.

DEB gives her a long look.

DEB: Tell me the truth. That's all I want. Just the truth. Mrs. Stevens.

JULIE: You can call me Julie.

DEB: I don't want to call you Julie! I don't want to call you anything!
Tell me the truth!

JULIE: Of course I don't want you living with me!

DEB: I knew it!

JULIE: Are you kidding me? You're a terrible person! You say the meanest things to me! You boss everyone around!

DEB: Don't hold back now.

JULIE: You terrify me! Living with you would be horrible! The other day, I was thinking about it when I was driving, and I had a panic attack—I had to pull over to the side of the street, just so I could cry in the car! I wish you would live in your house forever! Matt's crazy to be worried, because Death's never going to come for you—even Death is scared of you!

DEB: Thank you for your honesty.

JULIE: You're welcome.

DEB: Now move back over there.

JULIE: I can't.

DEB: What do you mean you can't?

JULIE: Because Matt's right. You shouldn't be living alone.

DEB: I'm fine!

JULIE: You're not fine. Before he died, Matt's father told him all about your health.

DEB freezes. Caught out.

DEB: There's nothing wrong with my health.

JULIE: Matt knows everything.

DEB: I'm fine.

JULIE: You fell—

DEB: I'm not talking about this—

JULIE: Twice. And what you have... it's not going to get better.

DEB: I'm just going to take it day by day.

JULIE: Do you want to live in an old age home?

DEB: I knew you wanted to put me in a home!

JULIE: I don't! I'm just saying that you can't stay in your house alone, and if you don't want to go into a home—our place is all that's left.

DEB: I'm not going to come live with you. You and me—we'd be at each other's throats.

JULIE: Probably.

DEB: Getting in each other's way. I'm the boss of my kitchen. I've always been the boss of my kitchen.

JULIE: It's my kitchen—what I say goes.

DEB: You only have one bathroom. One bathroom! For the two of you, and your kids, and then me?

JULIE: It would be an absolute nightmare.

DEB: And I hate the way you're raising your kids!

JULIE: And you aren't shy about telling me that.

DEB: And when I'm sicker, and you have to care for me—

JULIE: I'll probably hate every minute of it.

DEB: So you should be on my side and help fight Matt on this.

JULIE: You're absolutely right.

DEB: You need to convince Matt that there's no way I should live with you.

JULIE: You're a terrible person. Living together would never work.

DEB: Perfect.

JULIE: But it's still going to happen—

DEB: No!

JULIE: Because I love my husband. And he loves you. And he wants this, so much. And deep down, I know he's right. And I think you do too.

DEB stares at her. JULIE stares right back.

DEB: You'll resent me.

JULIE: I already resent you.

DEB: You'll pity me.

JULIE: You're too mean to be pitied.

DEB: I don't want to be a burden!

JULIE: You never met my mother.

DEB: No.

JULIE: She died before I met Matt. But she was tough. She knew what she wanted, and she never stopped fighting until she got it. She always needed to be in control. She drove me absolutely crazy. And I miss her, every single day of my life. You? You are never, ever going to change. You are always going to be a huge pain in my neck. But you love your son, and you love your grandkids. And I want them to have that, for as long as they can. So if I have to make it work, if I have to zip my lip and put up with you, I'll do it, for them. Because that's the most important thing in the world to me. So. I'm kind of hoping that the fact that I'm really not thrilled about you being in my house will actually make you want to come live in my house.

DEB: That's a good point.

JULIE: And that you'll do it for them.

DEB: Yes. For them. Though I will still hate you. And you'll hate me being there.

JULIE: I really will. But I'll always have a smile on my face.

DEB eyes JULIE.

DEB: That just might work.

JULIE: Let's go home.

DEB: Okay.

JULIE leans over toward her. Takes her hand. Behind them, MATT comes in with the food. He stops, taking in what is happening. And then he smiles.

PA ANNOUNCER: Flight 646 to Milwaukee, now boarding, gate 3B.

DEB and JULIE separate. They see MATT. DEB moves away from JULIE with a scowl. They pick up their things and exit through the gate.

END OF PLAY

DO NOT COPY

SPILL

AT START: *DAVID sits on one side of the stage, headphones on, reading a newspaper. GRACE enters, with a take-out coffee cup. Moves to him nervously. Waves her hand in front of him. He takes off his headphone.*

GRACE: I found you a latte. But they didn't have any soy.

DAVID: Did you check everywhere?

GRACE: It's an airport. There's not much "everywhere".

DAVID: You could have tried harder.

GRACE: I got you half-and-half.

DAVID: *(It's not fine.)* It's fine.

He takes the drink. Sips, then puts it on the empty chair next to him. He puts his headphones on, puts up his newspaper, and reads. GRACE looks at the cup on the empty seat, and finally sits on the seat next to that. She stares straight ahead.

Entering are BETHANY and SAM. SAM wears perfectly-presentable sneakers.

BETHANY: I can't believe you wore those shoes.

SAM: They're comfortable.

BETHANY: Tell me you brought nicer shoes.

SAM: They're packed in my suitcase.

BETHANY: You need to buy shoes here. Quick. Before you get judged.

SAM: Who's going to judge me?

BETHANY: I will. And my parents. When they pick us up at the airport.

SAM: There's no place to buy shoes here.

BETHANY: Fine. When we land, I'll distract my parents, you grab your suitcase from baggage, go into the bathroom, and change your shoes. Before they see.

SAM: If your parents haven't made up their minds about me already—

BETHANY: You will do this.

SAM: Yes.

SAM goes to sit down next to her.

BETHANY: Don't sit next to me. It's not comfortable.

SAM puts his carry-on bag on the seat next to her. Starts poking through it.

BETHANY: I don't want your bag there, either.

BETHANY pushes it at SAM. The bottle of pills he was holding spins out of his hand. A large number of pills fly into the air, then spill across the stage, in the space between SAM and GRACE.

SAM: Oh, God.

BETHANY: That was your fault.

She puts on her headphones, scrolling through her phone. SAM sighs, gets on his hands and knees and starts picking up the pills. GRACE looks at DAVID, who isn't paying any attention to her, and then she joins SAM on the floor.

SAM: You don't have to—

GRACE: I've been here. It's better with four hands.

SAM: Thanks.

SAM looks at BETHANY. GRACE looks at DAVID. Neither are paying attention.

GRACE: Isn't it awful that we're checking?

SAM: What?

GRACE: Like there's something wrong with helping a man pick up his pills. I'm Grace.

SAM: Sam.

SAM starts blowing on pills, and putting them back in the bottle, which sits on the floor.

GRACE: You're saving them?

SAM: I need them. And it's a pain to get early refills.

GRACE: Do you mind if I blow on them too?

SAM: That would help. Thanks.

GRACE blows on one, another. Puts them in the bottle, picks up more, blows. They get into a rhythm.

GRACE: Five second rule.

SAM: Five minute rule, at this rate.

GRACE: I read that it's good to be exposed to germs, so our bodies learn to fight them off. Not that we still shouldn't blow the dust off. What's the worst thing you've eaten that fell on the floor? I ate a pickle once. It was the last one in the jar. I was pulling it out with two fingers, but it slipped. It bounced twice. Almost rolled under the refrigerator... but I scooped it up. I didn't even blow on it. Just ate it right down.

SAM: A pickle.

GRACE: It was a really good pickle.

They continue to pick up pills, blow on them, put them in the bottle.

GRACE: Your turn.

SAM: I don't think—

GRACE: Come on. Spill.

SAM peeks back at BETHANY again; she's not paying attention. He dives in.

SAM: I remember when I was a kid... every time I dropped a piece of bread on the floor, it would land butter side down.

GRACE: Yes! Or worse—peanut butter side down. Or jelly.

SAM: Must be physics.

GRACE: I used to chew on pencils.

SAM: Me too. I also ate dirt. There are pictures.

GRACE: What'd that taste like?

SAM: I don't remember. Must have been good, though. It was all over my face.

Scoop, blow, bottle. GRACE eyes a pill.

GRACE: I recognize these.

SAM: It's nothing.

GRACE: I know that's not true. I take them too. Got a bottle in my purse, right over there.

SAM glances back at BETHANY.

GRACE: Anxiety problems are nothing to be ashamed of. How's it going?

SAM: Okay. Most days. But I really don't want to talk about it.

GRACE: Let me guess. She doesn't like you talking about it.

SAM: Shhh.

GRACE: They aren't listening.

SAM: Grace—

GRACE: She helping your anxiety? *(Off his look.)* I know. None of my business. I'm sorry. I came over here to help pick up pills, not to stress you out.

SAM: You heard us before?

GRACE: Hard not to.

SAM: Everything's fine.

GRACE: Of course it is. I'm fine too.

SAM: Good.

GRACE: No I'm not. David and I are going to see my in-laws. Long weekend from Hell.

SAM: Do they know about your...?

GRACE: They don't care. They certainly don't think they have to change their behavior.

SAM: Yeah.

GRACE: It's my job to pretend nothing bothers me. That everything is okay. So I'll do that. Might double-up on my pills—

SAM: You're not supposed to.

GRACE: I figure as long as I don't drink with them, it's okay. Because that's bad news. You ever do that?

SAM looks away.

GRACE: Sam—

SAM: Once.

GRACE: And?

SAM: That's all you get.

GRACE: At least these pills are better. They work. Whatever my mother had, whatever they gave her—it never helped. Sometimes I'd just hug her, try to cheer her up. She didn't like that.

SAM looks at GRACE. This is hard.

SAM: I crave touch.

GRACE: Oh. Yeah.

SAM: Bethany doesn't like to be touched.

GRACE: David's not a hugger.

Pill. Blow. Bottle.

GRACE: You ever going to leave her?

SAM: I... can't talk about this.

GRACE: It's hard.

SAM: I don't know you. Plus—

SAM tilts his head toward BETHANY.

GRACE: Look—if you can't tell someone your deepest secrets while you're on your hands and knees on the floor of an airport lounge, picking up pills, when can you?

SAM: I made a commitment.

GRACE: Yup. Me too.

SAM: There are good times.

GRACE: There always are.

SAM: She means well.

GRACE: Does she?

SAM: I'm broken. In a lot of ways. And she is too. But we've gone through a lot together. That face—you're judging.

GRACE: No.

SAM: So why don't you leave?

GRACE: I... can't. I don't even know what that would look like. Our lives are tied together. We'd have to go through a messy divorce, fight over the house. I can't even think about that without wanting to cry. Do you have kids?

SAM: No.

GRACE: We had a daughter. Billie. She... died. In the crib.

SAM: I'm so sorry.

GRACE: No one ever wants to talk about her. Except me. She was beautiful.

SAM: I bet she was.

GRACE: And I want to have another. So badly. But—Is he looking?

SAM: No.

GRACE: I don't want kids with him. So why am I with him? I don't know. This is so hard.

SAM: See. Easier not to talk about it.

GRACE: No. That's no excuse.

SAM looks back at BETHANY. She's oblivious. And he turns back to GRACE. Looks at her. And then he reaches out, and hugs GRACE. She leans into it. Hugs him back. And for ten long seconds, they just silently hold each other. They finally separate.

GRACE: Oh boy. I needed that.

SAM: That was... thank you.

GRACE: Where do you live?

SAM: California. You?

GRACE: Maryland.

SAM: Well that won't work.

GRACE: There's nothing to work.

SAM: No.

GRACE reaches out. Touches his face. Then she spots one last pill. She reaches up. Blows on it.

GRACE: Last pill.

SAM: Thanks.

GRACE hands it to SAM. Their faces close. But they don't kiss. SAM pulls away. Picks up the bottle.

GRACE: It was nice meeting you, Sam.

SAM: It was nice meeting you, Grace.

GRACE gets up, and returns to her seat. DAVID doesn't even acknowledge her.

SAM goes to her seat. Tucks the bottle of pills back in his bag. BETHANY doesn't look at him. SAM sits. Two seats away from her.

And GRACE and SAM just sit. Frozen. Staring straight ahead. Staring. Staring.

And then they both get up, at the same time, take each other's hand, and just run away together, exiting offstage.

DAVID and BETHANY don't even notice. Though sometime before the next play starts, they each react to being alone, grab their things, and exit.

END OF PLAY

NINJAS

AT START: *KATE enters if she hasn't already, and sits in a seat. HANNAH enters, walks by, then stops. Stares at KATE.*

HANNAH: Kate? Is that you? Kate Hughes?

KATE looks at her. Strange, deer-in-the-headlights look on KATE'S face.

HANNAH: Of course you're headed back to our reunion. Jupiter High! Go Tornados!

KATE: Do I know you?

HANNAH: It's me. Hannah. Hannah Grigsby.

KATE: Hannah. Sure. Hi.

HANNAH: Come on—I know you remember me.

KATE: Did you have braces?

HANNAH: No, I never had braces!

KATE: Was your hair bigger?

HANNAH: Really? Are we going to do this?

KATE: Do what?

HANNAH: Kate! You had a huge crush on me!

KATE: What? No.

HANNAH: You wrote me love notes, and slipped them into my locker!

KATE: Love notes.

HANNAH: Yes!

KATE: Was there poetry?

HANNAH: Yes!

KATE: That doesn't sound like me. Maybe someone was playing a trick on you. Did they sign the notes "Katie"? Because I've never been a Katie.

HANNAH: The notes were anonymous.

KATE: Well, there you go.

HANNAH: Well, not totally anonymous. You signed them Zorro.

KATE: Wow.

HANNAH: Except the last letter. When you revealed everything. Right before summer break.

KATE: So this anonymous person with a crush on you—Zorro—claimed to be me—and you believed that?

HANNAH: It was pretty specific.

KATE: And then what happened?

HANNAH: What do you mean?

KATE: Well, you'd been getting these anonymous love notes for what—a couple of months?

HANNAH: The whole school year.

KATE: And you must have been trying to figure it out, right? You were probably hoping it was Tommy McGee. Or Dave Miller.

HANNAH: Dave Miller didn't know what a poem was.

KATE: But a boy, right? And then apparently it's me. A girl.

HANNAH: Yes.

KATE: So what happened when we came back to school in the fall?

HANNAH hesitates.

KATE: Because I'll tell you what I remember. Hearing the whispers, the giggles. Because apparently everyone knew.

HANNAH: I didn't tell anyone.

KATE: Come on, Hannah.

HANNAH: So it was you.

KATE: Of course it was me! I was only thirteen years old! You were my first crush, and you were a girl! I had all of these strange feelings I was trying to process! I was terrified! I put my heart out there, and you stomped on it!

HANNAH: I was thirteen too! I mean, your letters were so sweet and romantic—I didn't know how to handle that! And not knowing who you were was killing me!

KATE: And then you found out.

HANNAH: Because you told me everything in the last letter. On the last day of school!

KATE: I figured I'd confess and run. Because I didn't have a plan for after. At all. And now here you are, all these years later. Making it hurt again. So thanks for that.

HANNAH: Why did you have a crush on me?

KATE: Why are you doing this?

HANNAH: Tell me.

KATE: You were cute, and so smart. And nice. I'd watch you during lunch. You were amazing. I guess I just wanted you to know that. I used to walk past your house—That makes me sound like a stalker. Your house was on the way home. Sort of. I didn't look in the windows or anything. I'd just stand across the street, and look at your house. It was a nice house.

HANNAH: I never saw you.

KATE: I was trying to be like a ninja. Super stealth.

HANNAH: A couple of times I came into English class and saw a quick little note to me on the blackboard, signed with a Z.

KATE: Yes.

HANNAH: The locked English class.

KATE: I used to climb in the window.

HANNAH: You didn't.

KATE: I was proud of my ninja skills! Though I wasn't a ninja when it counted. Not when it came to talking with girls I liked. I'm still not. But now here you are. Couldn't you have just recognized me and decided to walk on? It would have been so much easier. Kinder.

HANNAH: No.

KATE: No?!?

HANNAH: I've thought about you a lot, Kate. Whenever I had a low moment, I'd remember your letters. The fact that you once saw something in me, even though I was only thirteen. You believed in me. Which makes me feel badly. Because I believed in you—I should have let you know.

KATE: What do you mean, you believed in me?

HANNAH: After I got that last letter, I looked you up in the phone book and I snuck over to your house.

KATE: You did not.

HANNAH: I did. I saw your parents. Your little sister, who seemed nice. Your older brother, who seemed like kind of a jerk—

KATE: He could be.

HANNAH: And you, Kate. I saw you. In your room. Writing—

KATE: How could see in my room?

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