

# **THE WHITE AIRPLANE**

A Play For Stage

**By**

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Page Count: 104

Approx. run time: 110 minutes

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## **THE WHITE AIRPLANE**

(Snapshot)

A Pittsburgh man finds himself in the body of a Japanese typist, whose wife has been reported missing. What are the links between this strange occurrence and the crash of a white airplane on the English countryside? A dream-like story of life and circumstance, told as human drama, mixed with absurd comedy, plus jabs of sex and violence.

### Author's Notes

Each of the acts has three males and one female character. It is the writer's intention that the same four actors are cast in all acts. It is the director's discretion on which roles are assigned except, obviously, the female, as there's only one female role per act.

The play can be performed in either of these sequences: Act I, Act II, Act III, then Act IV, or; Act III, Act I, Act II, then Act IV. An intermission is recommended between each set of two acts.

The following notes may be published in the program under the title: **The Secrets of The White Airplane.**

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Why does Roy recoil at the site of Tom's blood?

These people never help

What is Haru wearing?

Whose view of women?

Theories regarding clocks

What is the difference between a surgeon and a doctor?

Who is the first person to have seen a white airplane?

Blood and nakedness can be very effective

Whose is the only death of consequence?

## Cast of Characters

Act I takes place in a Japanese apartment. There is a door, a table, chairs, and a mirror.

HARU NUMATA (pron. HAR-ROO NU-MAH-TAH), a man  
INSPECTOR HORRI, a man  
KORIN GODA (pron. CORE-IN GO-DAH), a man  
FUSAE (pron. FOO-SAY) GODA, a woman

Act II takes place in a low-rent Pittsburgh apartment. There is a door and a beat-up comfy chair.

TOM PADDECK, a man  
ROY AMSTERDAM, a man  
VICTOR FISHSTEIN, a man  
WENDY, a woman

Act III takes place on a green field in England. There is a small incline.

ASHER, a man  
BARTLEBY, a man  
MR. FIGGIS, a man  
MADELINE, a woman

Act IV takes place in the completely white interior of an airplane.

MORIN BOUCHER (pron. MOR-AN BOO-SHAY), a man  
MAX, a man  
MARCUS ADDERLY, a man  
ZHARA (pron. ZAR-RAH), a woman

ACT I

SCENE 1

Lights rise.

HARU NUMATA stands in the middle of his apartment. His eyes are closed, his face raised to the ceiling, arms dangling. He wears a white suit and bright red necktie.

After a long moment, he looks down to the audience. He turns to the apartment and surveys, picking up objects and placing them back again.

NUMATA finds the mirror and examines his face, stretching the skin.

There is a knock on the door.

Hesitantly, he answers to find a man in a raincoat standing expectant.

INSP. HORRI

Mr. Numata?

The man bows. It is not returned.

Long pause.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

You are Mr. Numata. Am I wrong?

NUMATA

I'm not sure.

INSP. HORRI

You called me. Inspector Horri.

NUMATA

I did?

INSP. HORRI

About your wife.

HORRI stands a moment more. He takes out a notepad.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

Ten-fifteen this morning. You called the bureau. It's been three days. Has she come back?

NUMATA looks to the apartment.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

A no.

(Pause)

Why don't you invite me in? I've got a few facts. They might help. And some questions. You knew there would be some of those.

NUMATA parts and allows HORRI to enter. HORRI removes his shoes then his coat, which he drapes on a chair.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

The rain. It's the devil. Bad weather slows down an investigation. Makes things harder to follow. It's not true, of course, but it feels like the rain might wash away the scent. I've always thought that with missing persons. Like dogs, lost.

(Pause)

Oh, I don't mean to say she's lost.

NUMATA steadies himself.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

A few days can seem like forever in this city. I can tell you that. Millions of people to disappear between. But there's hope.

(Pause)

Do you want to hear it straight out?

NUMATA

Yes. Please.

INSP. HORRI

(Consulting notes)

She left the market at three p.m. Sunday. Your guess was right. Those cucumbers were fresh. I'm assuming she came back here, straightened some things, and waited for you to come home. You say you were at the office?

(No answer)

Well that checks out. I've spoken with the guard at Pletua. He showed me your signature. Doesn't remember you *exactly*, but generally. You don't come in on weekends much, I gather.

NUMATA

Is it rare?

INSP. HORRI

You know that better than I. They work you like a mule I suppose. Pletua. I had a case last year with them, since it's in the district. Missing documents that time. No human hair or bones. Just paper. Nothing violent.

(Pause)

You didn't keep any of your typed pages did you? That might be helpful for your alibi, if you could show that you --

NUMATA

Alibi?

INSP. HORRI

(Hands out)

Naturally.

NUMATA

(Nervous)

Is that really necessary?

INSP. HORRI

Don't worry. I'll show you my notes. There's a trail. She went to the market, then home, then out again. I found the other one of her sandals -- the match to the one left here in the apartment. It was in a bush. Down the street. She probably took it off to leave faster.

NUMATA

Why would she leave one sandal behind?

INSP. HORRI

Ah, ah. Question is a good one. I don't have an answer.

NUMATA falls exhausted into the chair.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

Are you all right, Mr. Numata?

NUMATA

I'm *not* all right. I think I'm sick.

INSP. HORRI

Shame. But do you understand what I'm saying?

NUMATA

I suppose. My wife's been missing for three days...since Sunday. That means it's Wednesday. She went to the market and I...type. Do I have it so far?

INSP. HORRI

(Leading)

Yes.

NUMATA

Do you-- Let me see your notebook.

HORRI slowly hands it over.

NUMATA (Continued)

I can't read this.

HORRI snatches it back.

INSP. HORRI

Not my best study. Scratch of a chicken. It says that you're having a dinner party tonight. A Mr. Korin Goda and his wife will be joining you for...beef. Although...

(Sniffs)

You had better get started. They're due to arrive in an hour and I don't smell anything cooking.

NUMATA stands from chair,  
suddenly.

NUMATA

I can't cook.

INSP. HORRI

Oh, was that your wife's duty? You'll have to do without her this time.

NUMATA paces.

NUMATA

I can't have guests. I'm in no condition.

HORRI races forward to NUMATA.

INSP. HORRI

Oh, but you *must*. You must, you must. My whole plan depends on this. See -- the notes? I must be allowed

(MORE)

INSP. HORRI (Continued)  
to do interviews with them. But I can't when they're  
at the office. Too *sober* an environment. It cost me  
a pocketful of yen to learn of your dinner.

NUMATA  
Why didn't you just come and ask me?

INSP. HORRI  
Pssst. Who can I trust, who can I trust?

NUMATA  
I hope *me*. You just said I had nothing to do with my  
wife's disappearance. The alibi? Didn't you? Look,  
I hardly care. I'm in no condition to... A dinner  
party? It's absurd.

INSP. HORRI  
I'll help you with the beef. The ingredients are in  
your icebox, second shelf --

NUMATA  
How do you know that?

HORRI is shy about answering.

NUMATA (Continued)  
The plan. Tell me more of the plan.

INSP. HORRI  
Mr. Goda, you see. He has *no* alibi. And his wife.  
She's been in trouble before. I've found a file. I  
have suspicions. I need to do interviews, confirm  
facts. This is the perfect setting. You'll feed them  
and drink with them. I recommend at a ratio of 4 to  
1. By...three hours, they'll be wilted. I'll knock--

HORRI bangs the table.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)  
It's the element of surprise.

NUMATA

You want to ask them questions when they're drunk. I see. It makes sense. But can't it be...tomorrow, or next week? That's all I'm saying, I--

INSP. HORRI

Mr. Numata! Your wife has been missing *three days*. We may not have a *second* to lose. Every moment she's on the Tokyo streets is a gone moment. My job, the thing I am paid to do, is, of course, to serve you in this matter, but also I'm accountable to the entire district. I have other cases, you know. A top official's daughter. A -- a judge, his sister. You're just a typist, Mr. Numata, but I've found myself attached to the results. I want to find your wife. You cannot scrutinize or question the tactics of my investigation. Understand?

At last, NUMATA nods agreement.

NUMATA

What do I have to do?

INSP. HORRI

Be yourself.

NUMATA

Ha. Do I know these people?

INSP. HORRI

(With a look)

They're your friends. Why else would you invite them? Yes, I believe *good* friends.

NUMATA

Pletua. Where does that fit in?

INSP. HORRI

You're joking?

NUMATA

What do your notes say?

INSP. HORRI

Pletua is nothing. It's just a shophouse. Papers papers papers. White a mile high. I'm surprised you can stomach it. At least your friends aren't suffering the same fate, aye?

NUMATA

What fate's that?

INSP. HORRI

Oh now.

(Exasperated)

Mr. Numata. You--. Never mind. I'm a good cook. Where's the kitchen?

NUMATA

You already know, don't you? You've been in my apartment while I've been gone.

INSP. HORRI

Yes, Mr. Numata. I'm a very good inspector. You should be sensing that.

NUMATA

I don't know what I'm sensing.

INSP. HORRI

Your wife would just be a name on bureau list if I hadn't answered the telephone. You should be more respectful. Follow the plan, Mr. Numata. Follow the plan.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 2

Lights rise.

HARU NUMATA sits completely still in his chair, almost mummified.

At a knock in the door, he barely moves. Finally, he rises and answers.

Enter KORIN GODA and his wife FUSAE GODA, wearing raincoats, carrying a bottle.

KORIN, friendly, bows, hangs his and his wife's coats on the rack, and then hands the bottle to NUMATA.

KORIN

For our host!

NUMATA

Thank you.

KORIN

(Sniffing)

I love the smell of beef. Fusae, please give the man our box.

The guests remove their shoes. FUSAE hands NUMATA a wrapped package.

KORIN (Continued)

Open it.

NUMATA slowly opens the package.

Inside, there is a framed  
photograph.

KORIN (Continued)

(Pointing)

Me, you, Fusae, and, of course, your lovely Eko.

NUMATA

(Pleased)

That's her?

KORIN

Yes. She's a fantastic beauty, isn't she?

NUMATA

When was this taken? And where?

KORIN

You don't remember? Oh, too much to drink that night.  
You can tell it in our eyes, can't you? Blurry, us  
more than the photograph. This was after that last  
rally. We had just put away our signs and streamers.  
I had an extraordinary time.

NUMATA

(To FUSAE)

Did *you* have fun?

FUSAE doesn't answer, but smiles  
awkwardly.

KORIN

She always has fun. She cannot help it.

KORIN takes the bottle back from  
NUMATA and opens it. He helps  
himself to saké glasses as he  
speaks.

KORIN (Continued)

Where is she? The beauty? Not still cooking I hope. We made this dinner late for my schedule and I say eat. Rare is better suited to my taste. And Fusae's.

NUMATA

My wife. She's missing.

KORIN

Missing the night, yes. Call her.

(Shouting)

Come. Eko!

(To NUMATA)

Slave. You have her chained. I don't doubt it.

(Shouting)

Lovely be-a-u-ty! Come celebrate my advancement to head of the Surgical Ward!

NUMATA

You're a doctor!

KORIN

I've corrected you before and I'll do it again, Haru. You know it.

FUSAE passes by NUMATA's ear.

FUSAE

(Quietly)

Surgeon. Remember how he gets.

KORIN stops pouring saké and slams the bottle down on the table.

KORIN

(Irritated)

Eko Numata, I must see you at once.

NUMATA

She's *missing*. I wasn't joking. She really is missing.

FUSAE

Missing?

NUMATA

Since Sunday. Haven't I told you?

Both KORIN and his wife look saddened and stunned. However, KORIN snaps out of it with a laugh.

KORIN

Good one. You know I've been traveling by jetliner. The conference started on Friday.

NUMATA

Then you have an alibi!

KORIN

What are you--? Here.

KORIN crosses to NUMATA and forces saké into his hand.

KORIN (Continued)

Are you implying that I--?

NUMATA

You've been at a conference.

KORIN

You *know* this, Haru. You're missing more than your wife, you are.

FUSAE

Please. Korin. He's upset. Can't you tell?

KORIN

(To NUMATA)

Are you?

NUMATA

I'm very upset.

KORIN

About Eko?

NUMATA

(Emotional)

About everything.

KORIN

Have a chair, my friend. A chair, a chair.

NUMATA is ushered to sit.

KORIN (Continued)

Tell me. Tell us. What happened on Sunday?

NUMATA

I wish I knew. I wasn't here, you see--

KORIN

Working on Sundays, I warned you.

NUMATA

No, not that. Eko. My wife. Apparently she went to the market and then came back. Then, with only one shoe on, she left, and vanished. There's already the police--

KORIN

The police? Oh this *is* serious.

NUMATA

That's what I've been trying to tell you. She's not *here*.

FUSAE starts to rub NUMATA's hair and coo.

FUSAE

Oh my sad little baby.

Without warning, she slinks into  
NUMATA's lap and begins to kiss  
his neck. KORIN pulls her away.

KORIN  
Not now, not now. Can't you see this is no time for  
it?

NUMATA is confused. He drinks  
down his saké, choking.

KORIN (Continued)  
Easy, Haru.  
(Pause)  
Tell me about the police.

NUMATA  
It's nothing.

KORIN  
But they've called on you.

NUMATA  
Apparently *I* telephoned *them*.

KORIN  
As you should have. Reports have to be filed.

FUSAE  
Politicians love white paper.

KORIN  
(Low, to FUSAE)  
Please, Fusae. We're talking to a typist.  
(Louder)  
Tell us more.

NUMATA  
(Cautious)  
I don't know if I should.

KORIN  
I'm a surgeon.

NUMATA

What's that got to do with it?

KORIN

Just that I'm good at cutting to the heart of it.

NUMATA

His name is Inspector Horri. I. I don't really trust him. You see?

FUSAE

Can he find Eko?

NUMATA

Maybe. He seems to think so. I don't know. Honestly, he suspects the two of you. He'll be here tonight to ask you questions. He wanted me to get you drunk.

Pause.

KORIN

Why are you telling us all this, Haru?

NUMATA

Aren't you supposed to be my friends?

FUSAE

We are. We are.

KORIN paces.

KORIN

What do you think happened to Eko? You must have theories. It's been three days!

NUMATA

Not to me. Not three days. I don't know anything.

KORIN

How could she vanish? Into thin air? She must have  
(MORE)

KORIN (Continued)

run off with someone. She got a phone call. She's left a clue. Women drop things. Fusae, she forgets all the time. To telephone me. To arrange meetings. To book my surgeries. To make love. To celebrate my birthday. But there's always a clue. A hint. A bit of her that I know still is *present*.

FUSAE

It's true, Haru. I never vanish completely.

NUMATA

Apparently my wife *has*.

KORIN refills NUMATA's saké.

KORIN

Then it's understandable why you're upset. I knew when I entered the room tonight that you were not yourself.

NUMATA rises from his chair. He drinks the saké. He starts to speak but stops, until finally...

NUMATA

You're a doctor, right?

KORIN

Surgeon. Surgeon!

NUMATA

Sorry. I...

(Holds his head, blinks)

It's just. I think I'm sick. Tell me what's wrong.

KORIN

Fusae? Would you please go into the kitchen? I think Haru needs a private consultation.

FUSAE obeys and exits with a bow.

NUMATA

What I mean to say is, I need your diagnosis.  
Something's gone really, really wrong tonight. And  
I'm frightened.

KORIN

Is it murder?

NUMATA

No. No. I have to tell you something. I'm not...  
I'm not this man. I'm not this Haru Numata.

(Exploding, quickly)

I'm not even Japanese!

(Pause)

Up until a few hours ago, I sold cars. My name is Tom  
Paddeck. I'm from Pittsburgh! And suddenly, without  
so much as a snap of the fingers, I'm here, living  
this life.

(Flabbergasted)

I can't *spea*k Japanese, but I am! Look, you said, you  
said you saw that I'm not myself. How? What do you  
see? It's not because I'm sad about this woman --  
Eko. I don't even know her. I've tried to play  
along, and that policeman was very forceful, but,  
well, I don't want to play anymore. I'm Tom. Tom  
Paddeck.

(Pause, then quickly)

I've never even been to Japan!

The room is quiet.

FUSAE pokes out from the kitchen.

KORIN

What's the matter, darling? Have the lights gone out  
in the kitchen? It's all black. Or did you hear our  
friend's excited mumbles through the door.

FUSAE shakes. KORIN crosses and  
hugs her. She begins to weep.

KORIN (Continued)

Look what you've done. You've upset her.

NUMATA

You're the one who sent her away.

After a time, KORIN lets go of his wife. He finds his raincoat on the rack and fishes out keys. He hands them to FUSAE.

KORIN

(To FUSAE)

Take the apartment keys. Go home. Here. Here's yen for a taxi. I need to speak with Haru alone. Don't worry, I won't be very late.

She starts to exit.

KORIN (Continued)

Oh. May she take her supper home? I don't want her starving. Box it up?

NUMATA

Um. Of course, yes.

NUMATA exits to the kitchen.

KORIN

(Quietly)

He's ill. Probably psychosomatic. The shock. His wife. It wouldn't be a good supper anyhow. I won't be late. I just need to counsel him.

FUSAE

You're not that kind of doctor.

KORIN

I'm his friend.

Are you?

FUSAE

KORIN and FUSAE exchange looks.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 3

Lights rise on NUMATA and KORIN,  
in the apartment, facing each  
other in chairs.

KORIN

Roy Amsterdam. From Pittsburgh.

NUMATA

So it happened to you, too?

KORIN

Ten years ago. Somehow I moved from that place, to  
this one. In a snap...

(Snaps fingers)

I became Korin Goda. He was slightly better off than  
me. Slightly better looking, though...*Japanese*. More  
respected. As Roy Amsterdam, I robbed people on  
trains. Not very nice, but you should see how I was  
raised. I was a very good pickpocket. Sometimes, as  
this body is a surgeon's, I've wondered if I've been  
swapped for skills. Something with the hands. Do you  
get that sense about your experience?

NUMATA

I sold cars. Now I type. I don't see anything in  
that.

KORIN

Hmmm. No. Oh well, just a theory.

NUMATA

Do you think it has anything to do with Pittsburgh?

KORIN

If it did, it would be the first time something had to  
do with Pittsburgh.

Pause.

NUMATA

Could there be others?

KORIN

I don't doubt it. Why not? What's stopping it? It happens, why not happen more than every ten years? I haven't met anyone, if that's what you're asking. You're the first. And you've handled yourself differently than I did. I didn't have a missing wife. Maybe that's the crux. I inherited normality. Utter complacency. The only thing exciting in this Korin Goda's life is the fact that his wife is a racehorse. You know she and Haru were having an open affair, don't you? You could tell. The energy. I'd sometimes leave the room and return to find them kissing. Once he had her top off and he was fondling and caressing. *That* was awkward. It got so she did it in front of me. They both did.

NUMATA

Didn't you object? That would have made me furious.

KORIN

I got used to it. There are worse things.

NUMATA

You seem very blasé about it.

KORIN

What choice do I have?

NUMATA

Divorce her.

KORIN

You don't know much about Japan.

NUMATA

Well...then--

KORIN

And I wouldn't harm a hair on her head. I'm remaining friends with Haru, too. That should say something.

NUMATA

What about my wife?

KORIN

Your wife?

NUMATA

You know what I mean.

KORIN

I think she must have been sad about it. She approached me on occasion. We had sex twice. It was fairly standard.

(Pause)

So you see, Tom. I'm not ready to leave Mr. Goda's body yet. And, I'd hate to see anything happen to it. If you're right, I'm a suspect in Eko's disappearance. That Inspector Horri believes it to be so.

NUMATA

Yes.

KORIN

What do you think is the truth?

NUMATA

Did you kill the girl?

KORIN

Na. No. Honest Injun. I have no earthly idea where she may have flown off to. But the police. They might never believe me. Will you help me, Tom? If you help me throw Horri off the scent, there may be something in it for you.

NUMATA

Like what?

KORIN

Escape. If you want it. You may not.

NUMATA

I'm in as much danger as you, I should think.

KORIN

Ah, you're a suspect, but he's not said it.

KORIN extends his hand.

KORIN (Continued)

Do I have your word? Partners, then.

NUMATA

Do you think that the original Haru Numata is living my life?

KORIN

Do you think he'd be satisfied with it?

NUMATA

If I were him, I'd want a refund.

The two shake hands.

Just then, there is a knock at the door.

On answering, enter INSPECTOR HORRI.

INSP. HORRI

My apologies to you both. Am I interrupting?

NUMATA

No. I've told Mr. Goda the situation.

KORIN

Yes, I'm very sorry to hear about my friend's wife. Missing since Sunday, is it? I am waiting anxiously to hear that she is all right, and that this is all some misunderstanding.

HORRI, suspicious, removes his raincoat and shoes, hands them to NUMATA.

INSP. HORRI

(Sniffing)

So sorry to put a foul spin on your dinner. Have you got any left? Never mind. Rude of me. I wish, Mr.

(MORE)

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

Numata, that you hadn't mentioned my investigation. It's clear that you both expected my arrival, and have probably anticipated most of my questions. You've even let Mr. Goda's wife leave the premises.

KORIN

Are you implying that we've rehearsed?

INSP. HORRI

No. No, no. No. Not rehearsed. No. Say, is there anymore saké? I'm off duty now. Though I'm on. It's complicated. A drink?

NUMATA pours the Inspector a glass.

KORIN

Oh, Inspector Horri? Have you ever been to America?

INSP. HORRI

Why?

KORIN

Have you ever been to Pittsburgh?

INSP. HORRI

Why?

NUMATA

It that 'yes'?

INSP. HORRI

I'm not saying yes or no, I'm just asking why.

KORIN

(Wagging finger)

Technique.

INSP. HORRI

That's it. On target. Technique. I don't have to give the answers tonight. Has either of you...ever been to America?

The two men look at each other.

NUMATA | KORIN

No.

INSP. HORRI

Desires to go? Desires to...beep beep beep...flee Tokyo?

(Winks)

I joke. Now let me look to my notes...

(Reading)

Eko Numata was last seen on Sunday buying cucumbers from the market. She came home and left suddenly, forgetting one of her sandals. I found the second sandal around the corner, in the direction of north.

(To KORIN)

Do you have any idea what lies north?

KORIN

(Shrugs)

The park?

INSP. HORRI

I've checked that. The man who runs the boats doesn't remember her exactly, but...and this is odd, he remembers seeing two people get into an argument, one quite severe, which ended with them both going off in separate directions.

KORIN

Did he get a good look at the man?

INSP. HORRI

Who said it was a man? I said it was two *people*.

Pause.

NUMATA

Well, was it a man?

INSP. HORRI

He couldn't tell. He was at a disadvantage because he  
(MORE)

INSP. HORRI (Continued)  
was fixing the rudder of a boat. He only saw them in  
the water's reflection, over his shoulder, and their  
voices were quite faint.

KORIN  
What makes you think that was Eko?

INSP. HORRI  
Maybe it's not. What else is north?  
(Pause)  
Your apartment is north of here, isn't it, Mr. Goda?

KORIN  
That's true.  
(Pause)  
But it's far. She would have had to take a taxi.  
And, she didn't. I didn't know she was missing until  
I arrived here tonight and Mr. Numata told me the  
news.

HORRI taps his pencil.

INSP. HORRI  
I'll have to make a note of that.

HORRI begins to write.

KORIN crosses and looks over  
HORRI's shoulder.

KORIN  
That's not a clue. What are you writing?

INSP. HORRI  
None of your business! These are *my* notes.

KORIN  
Let me see them.

Pause.

INSP. HORRI  
All right...

HORRI hesitantly extends his hand,  
but snatches it back at the last  
moment.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)  
No. Think not. Handwriting. So bad even Mr. Numata  
had troubles. Why don't I just read it to you?

KORIN wrestles the notebook from  
HORRI.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)  
You can't take my notebook! It's mine! I'll report  
you.

KORIN  
(Aggressive)  
Go ahead. You suspect us. I have rights. I'll call  
the bureau and sic internal ethics on you. Drinking  
on duty for one. Not scheduling a proper interview.  
Interrupting our dinner. What kind of policeman are  
you?

HORRI is quiet as KORIN tries to  
read the notebook pages.

KORIN (Continued)  
(Resigned)  
No kind at all.

KORIN holds the notebook out to  
HORRI.

KORIN (Continued)  
This is gibberish! Hen pecks. These aren't notes.

HORRI collapses in the chair and starts to weep melodramatically.

NUMATA and KORIN hover.

NUMATA

There, there. Now, now.

KORIN

(Frustrated)

It's no use, no use.

NUMATA

What's all *this* about?

INSP. HORRI

(Weeping)

I haven't *any* idea where your wife has gone, Mr. Numata. I'm lost. You should report me as missing as well, because I'm going to run off. They'll have my commission for this. I have *no* clues, *no* suspects. I haven't solved a real case in half-a-year! And this was a *juicy* one, I can tell you that. Real ripe with possibilities. I almost had the whole of Tokyo taped off. Now look. Look!

HORRI rises and grabs back his notebook.

INSP. HORRI (Continued)

I've been writing things down. When I write them, they're words. The next time I look, they're smudge. Baby speak. Lines and follicles. Yesterday I filled six pages -- good stuff, too -- Mr. Goda's hours in surgery, the tools he kept in his case, you, Mr. Numata, a diagram of your apartment. Now...look! Look! Birds and feathers!

KORIN

Calm down.

INSP. HORRI

Do you have a surgery for me? Maybe I've got a tumor?

KORIN

I'm not a neurosurgeon. I operate on stomachs.

INSP. HORRI

Gastrics. I should have guessed.

KORIN

(Offended)

What's *that* supposed to mean?

INSP. HORRI

Nothing--

NUMATA

We're getting nowhere.

(Pause)

I...need some sleep. Why don't you both come back tomorrow?

INSP. HORRI

(Pensive)

Tomorrow?

NUMATA

Yes. Late afternoon. I'm sleeping all I can.

INSP. HORRI

But your job at Pletua. I had in my notes that your check-in was seven.

(Soft)

Though you can't read that now.

(Pause)

Has that time changed? Should I make a new note?

NUMATA

Call me ill. I can't take it anymore. Thank you, both of you, gentlemen. You have been trying to help. Where's my bed?

(Noticing)

Oh, through there. I'm going to it. Let me show you out.

NUMATA leads them to the door.

INSP. HORRI

(Unsure)  
Tomorrow?

NUMATA

Late tomorrow. Let me sleep.

INSP. HORRI

Don't run off.

KORIN

He won't.

NUMATA

Roy will make sure of it.

INSP. HORRI

"Roy?"

NUMATA

I -- I mean Mr. Goda. Goodnight.

After a pause, the two exit and stand on the other side of the apartment door. KORIN holds it open a moment more.

KORIN

(Low)  
I'll check in after my surgery, Tom.

NUMATA nods and closes the door on them.

A millisecond later, there is knocking.

NUMATA, irritated, opens the door again, his hand never having left the doorknob.

FUSAE stands there, alone.

NUMATA  
Fusae? Where are the--

FUSAE  
Aren't you happy to see me?

NUMATA  
Didn't you see your husband? And another man? I just  
left them in the corridor.

FUSAE  
Another man?

NUMATA  
A policeman.

FUSAE  
(Excited)  
Was there news?

NUMATA  
No, it's-- Nothing.

FUSAE  
Can I come inside?

NUMATA  
Your husband just left. I was going to bed.

FUSAE enters, uninvited.

FUSAE  
That sounds like fun.

NUMATA checks the corridor and  
then shuts the apartment door.

NUMATA  
You can't stay. Your husband. He's on his way home.  
Won't he be sad if you're not there?

FUSAE

Maybe I am there.

NUMATA

I don't understand.

FUSAE

Maybe I have a mechanism. A doll's head...on a pillow...operated by wires.

FUSAE slinks onto the chair,  
opening her legs.

FUSAE (Continued)

(Sexy)

We haven't met like this in a long time, Haru. Weeks.

NUMATA

Is there a reason for that?

FUSAE

I never believed your lies about reconciling with Eko. Birds don't change feathers. You've been sleeping with someone else.

NUMATA

Have I?

FUSAE

Or maybe several people? You are insatiable.

(Smoldering)

I'll be your concubine. But you prefer some variety, don't you, Haru?

NUMATA

I don't know what I prefer. Honestly. You should go. I'm very tired. I can't think.

FUSAE

Do you want me to undress?

NUMATA

No. No. I want to sleep. I have the feeling tomorrow will be a long day. And it...it's nearly...quarter past. Oh, this is no good. This clock must have not been wound.

FUSAE

Don't worry. It's still early. Take off your neck...tie. Relax. I'll give you a massage. Here, lay on the floor. It will help you sleep.

NUMATA, finally agreeing, lies down on the mat. FUSAE uses her bare feet to press into his shoulder blades.

FUSAE (Continued)

Don't you like? Much better. Much, much better.

(Pause)

Your back. It is so strong. I remember standing behind you. In the racks of the shopping plaza. I undid your belt. We didn't even buy that shirt you soiled. Did we?

(Moans)

I told you once. Anything you want from me you can have. Why would Eko be so stingy when she had a man such as you, Haru, in her bed? You need to be treated right. Have I treated you right?

NUMATA

(Muffled by mat)

I suppose.

FUSAE

Is there anything more I could have done?

(Pause)

I have friends, you know, who might be excited about coming over tonight. You want me to phone them? Two girls in the neighborhood. I met them at shrine. I told them about you and they're *quite* interested.

NUMATA

No thank you.

FUSAE kneels and starts to rub  
NUMATA with her hands.

FUSAE

Why *not*?

NUMATA

I don't feel right about it, that's all.

(Pause)

How old are they?

FUSAE

Young. Soft. Willing.

NUMATA

No. No.

(Considering possibilities, not as sure)

No.

FUSAE

Are you afraid she'll return in the middle of it?

NUMATA

Eko? Yes, that's it. She might leave me again if she  
sees I'm up to no good.

NUMATA turns over and props on his  
elbows. FUSAE momentarily stops  
massaging.

NUMATA (Continued)

Is that why she left? Because of affairs?

FUSAE

Maybe she didn't leave, Haru. Missing connotes more  
than running away.

NUMATA

Do you think she's been harmed?

FUSAE

Would it matter?

NUMATA

Yes it *matters*. I don't want anyone hurt, even if it's someone I don't really know.

FUSAE

You don't know?

(Pause)

I suppose it's refreshing to hear you say you don't love her. That was always your excuse.

FUSAE begins to mount NUMATA on the floor.

FUSAE (Continued)

Now, should we get started with you having your way?

They kiss. NUMATA struggles to his feet and breaks.

NUMATA

I don't *want* my way! What is *my* way, anyhow? If I had my way, I'd be back in Pittsburgh.

On the floor, FUSAE's mouth drops open. She breathes heavily.

FUSAE

What did you say?

NUMATA

I said-- Nothing, forget it.

FUSAE

You said... "*Pitts-burgh*."

NUMATA

I don't know why.

FUSAE rises, straightens her clothes, and drops her sexy act.

FUSAE

No one says "Pittsburgh" and doesn't know why.

(Pause)

You *have* changed. I knew it the moment Korin and I entered your apartment. People don't become another. Not that fast. Unless. And you say you don't love Eko. It's because you don't *know* her.

(Pause)

How long have you been inside Haru?

NUMATA

I--

FUSAE

How long? Just tonight?

NUMATA

Just tonight.

FUSAE

*That's* why the two of you spoke alone. He doesn't want me to know everything that's going on. I was hoping to have our usual. I wanted you to play between my legs during courses of dinner, see what was the appeal, but a rendezvous, that was all I could have. Can I tell you what I think?

NUMATA

Of course.

FUSAE

I think Korin Goda has changed again. Tonight as well, just like you. He's not the Korin Goda from last week. Something's shifted. You've been moved and that proves it.

NUMATA

What the hell is going on?

FUSAE

It's the white airplane.

NUMATA

(Frightened)

The white what?

FUSAE

You're involved with it. You *must* be. That's the only explanation. Fusae and Haru are lovers, it's true. But *I* loved Roy Amsterdam. I switched to follow him to wherever he went, whomever he went into. There's more going on than you think. What are the reasons I am who I am? Don't answer me. Whether it's Roy or you, you're all the same. But he's no longer in my husband. I think the original has returned somehow. He's run away a second time. I don't like this one as much. Zoom zoom zoom, all over the globe, like he's using some sort of international airport.

NUMATA

People can't switch.

FUSAE

Hardly meaningful words from *you*. What's your real name?

(Pause)

I asked:

NUMATA

What's my real name?

(Confessing)

Tom.

FUSAE

Tom. Funny name. What's your *real* name?

NUMATA

Tom Paddeck. It is. Honestly.

(Pause)

Why? What's *yours*?

Lights down.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Lights rise on TOM PADDECK's apartment. Unlike HARU NUMATA's, this one is disheveled, with dirty laundry and dishes.

TOM stumbles to the drawer beside his chair and pulls out a liquor bottle. As he uncaps, there is a pounding on his door.

TOM crosses...

TOM

All right, all ready. All right!

TOM answers to find a MAN with a heavy mustache, hat, and coat.

TOM (Continued)

Come in.

The MAN enters and TOM closes the door.

TOM (Continued)

Take off that ridiculous hat.

The MAN removes his hat.

TOM (Continued)

And that.

TOM points to the mustache. The man peels it off.

Anything else? TOM (Continued)

The MAN removes a wig, false eyebrows, and a sock from his trousers.

Nice. TOM (Continued)  
(Appraising)  
Now *that's* the Roy Amsterdam I know.

ROY  
I nabbed a hundred twenty.

ROY removes cash from his pocket and lays it on the table.

TOM  
Pretty slim.

ROY  
I've got to get more then.

TOM  
Why be so anxious to leave, anyway? You shouldn't be in such a hurry. Here isn't so bad. As far as I can tell, I stay drunk all the time. Occasionally I sell a car. I have to consider my circumstance. True, I hate the weather, but this might be a spell.

ROY  
Doesn't it matter to you who you are? Where you are?

TOM  
I'm always where I should be. It's not like something's stopped.

ROY

It hasn't? I'm stopped like a clock.

(Sniffs)

Roy Amsterdam smells funny to my nose. I'm not used to it. He's eaten too much cheese. I spend the better part of my day on the toilet. I used to be important. I could control my bowels.

TOM

You were a cuckold.

ROY pulls the liquor bottle from  
TOM and swigs.

ROY

What were you, then?

TOM

(Dismissive)

You're no judge.

ROY

How long before I have enough for a ticket?

TOM

A month at the rate you're going.

ROY

I could kill you and take what you've got.

TOM sits.

TOM

As I said, you shouldn't be in such a hurry.

(Pause)

You've been followed.

(Pause)

That's right. There's a man outside in the stairs. I saw him come in when I looked out the window. He crossed from the bushes when he saw you. Footsteps stopped. Just at my floor. I bet he's up to the next

(MORE)

TOM (Continued)

landing, waiting for you to leave. Wring *my* neck and he'll know. He may know who we are and that's trouble.

ROY

The police?

TOM

Could be. Might be.

(Pause)

Want to know my plan?

ROY

Plan for what?

TOM

You want escape, don't ya?

ROY

Okay, sure.

TOM

I've made a call. A girl will be here any minute.

ROY

That was stupid. You don't know who she is.

TOM

I know *exactly* who she is.

(Pause)

Uh! She's here now.

TOM moves from the chair to the door.

Quickly, as if to startle, he opens it.

A GIRL stands outside, hand raised to knock. She is dressed in high skirt and half-shirt with a heavy overcoat.

This is WENDY.

WENDY  
I didn't even knock.

TOM  
You came fast.

WENDY  
Let's hope *you* don't.

WENDY struts into the room.

TOM  
What's your name, Sweetheart?

WENDY  
Wendy.

ROY  
You a hooker?

WENDY  
Why? Are you hooked?

ROY  
A hooker with humor. Get a load.

TOM  
A chair for the lady?

WENDY sits.

WENDY  
I didn't expect two. That's double. Not like I have to say.

TOM  
My friend here's got a hundred twenty cash, what will that get us?

WENDY  
Maybe thirty minutes.

TOM  
That's plenty. Give her the cash.

ROY  
No! I need this--

TOM  
(To ROY)  
You want something, you gotta pay for it.

ROY  
You *know* what I want.

TOM  
Forget your ticket. Forget it. Right now, it's getting out of the building. Think short *term*. Set *goals*. See. Things. Through.

TOM kneels beside WENDY.

TOM (Continued)  
Hello, Kiddo.  
(Pointing)  
Tom. Roy. Nice to meet ya.

WENDY smiles nervously, knowing they are up to something.

TOM (Continued)  
Here's the plan, Sweets. I want you to undress. Down to nothin'. Then I'm giving you a good sock in the mouth. I'm not going to break your teeth or nothin', just split the lip. We need the blood for effect and I'm all out of ketchup. Then you start screamin'.

WENDY tries to stand, but TOM pulls her back into the chair.

TOM (Continued)  
No leavies! Not 'til I say.

WENDY

I'm not into that rough stuff.

TOM

Neither are we. I'll come clean. We've got a visitor on the stairs outside. He's been following me and Roy. I saw him staking us out earlier and now he's moved into my shorts. We can't take him by surprise without a little help from you. I'll sock you, draw blood, you scream, and a guarantee he'll come running. Once he's in the apartment, you can go. Take your clothes and go.

WENDY

(Considering)

Why do I have to take my clothes off?

TOM

Nothing makes a man stand dumb like a naked girl covered in blood. Blood and nakedness can be very effective.

WENDY

You're not paying me enough.

TOM rises and paces.

TOM

(Whimsically)

I don't really have to pay you anything.

WENDY

Yes you do.

TOM

Why? Tell me why.

WENDY

Because if you punch me without paying, you'll have a visitor an hour later. He's not too far down the street. Keepin' tabs on his percentage.

ROY

Maybe that's him! The guy on the stairs.

TOM

(Dismissive)

No, that guy's different. He's no protector. He's more *important* than that. He's wearing a suit and he's a doughy sort. But we've got to catch him with his guard down. Might have some fast legs or muscle.

(Pause)

Whadduya say, there, Wendy? Help a coupla guys out of a jam?

Pause.

WENDY

How 'bout down to my undergarments? It's cold. And I want to split fast. What if he's the police?

TOM

Fine. Bra, panties.

WENDY takes her clothes off down to bra and panties. When finished, she puts her hands out as if to say, "I'm waiting."

TOM makes a fist and moves forward.

TOM (Continued)

Okay, then, here we go. Turn your face. Want to catch the sweet spot.

TOM cocks his arm.

Just as he's about to release, the lights flicker.

WENDY stabs out a punch and pops TOM in the mouth. Blood pours down TOM's shirt; he reels.

WENDY screams, acting.

ROY covers his ears.

WENDY grabs her clothes and the cash and races to the door, opening it, still screaming.

TOM is back on his feet.

A MAN races inside, prepared to defend...

WENDY

Ha! Blood and *nakedness*!

The MAN turns to see her as she flees through the slamming door.

TOM

(To ROY, through blood)

Grab him!

ROY grabs the MAN, who wrestles but is finally pinned to the floor.

TOM (Continued)

(To the door)

I bet she was *great* in the sack.

TOM locks the door and returns to the others.

TOM (Continued)

Who are you? I said who are you?

ROY

Yeah, what's your name? Out with it.

The man struggles, but then goes limp, sighing. Surrendering.

This man is VICTOR FISHSTEIN. He wears an ill-fitting suit.

VICTOR  
You probably shouldn't have let her go, gentlemen.

TOM  
Gentlemen? We've got you pinned to the damn floor.

VICTOR  
I want you to know I'm not judging you. Yet.

TOM  
Tell me your NAME!

VICTOR  
(Hurt)  
I'm Victor. Fishstein. Why didn't you keep her here?

TOM  
The girl?

VICTOR  
She's with you, isn't she? Why else would she come here?

ROY  
She ain't with us.

VICTOR  
She's not? But she's a pilot.  
(Pause)  
I said *she's a pilot!*

TOM and ROY loosen their holds.

ROY  
Pilot?

TOM  
She's with--

VICTOR  
Yes. Don't you know this?

It is clear they don't.

VICTOR (Continued)  
Let me up. I'll explain everything.

Slowly, all three men rise to their feet, dusting themselves off and coughing.

VICTOR (Continued)  
She's been missing, and when I saw her enter, I thought--

ROY  
Is it too late to get her?

TOM  
She's gone. I know her type. Fast on heels.

ROY  
(To TOM)  
You're bleeding.

TOM  
Yeah, quick, wasn't she?

ROY  
Get a towel. I can't look at you.

TOM takes off his shirt and wipes his face.

TOM  
Better?  
(To VICTOR)  
Pilot, huh? And how would you know this, Buster?

VICTOR

I'm Victor Fishstein.

TOM

I know. You said.

VICTOR

I'm with ticketing. Remember? You don't know the face, but you should know the name. I'm your *travel agent*.

Lights fade.

ACT III

SCENE 2

Lights rise.

VICTOR sits in the center of the apartment. When he speaks, VICTOR is kinetic and full of physical mannerisms that don't jive.

TOM and ROY have their backs turned, as if the conversation has been going for some time.

VICTOR

What does it matter about *place*? Tourists get so wrapped up in *place*. Borneo. Paris. Bombay. Johannesburg. Seattle. It's not the *place* that matters, but the *people*. Who are the most like me? Who are the most different?

(Wagging finger)

Missing planes...they're not that common. Small planes...could be. Big planes? Almost never. Not in the jet age. The black boxes. Radar. Ship to signal beacons and Klieg lights. We seldom lose anybody. But I'm sure you've heard the news. That's what's got you worried. Isn't it? That we've screwed up and screwed up good. All your tickets read the same. "Issued by Victor Fishstein." Or don't you read the fine print?

ROY

Someone owes us big time.

VICTOR

Correctly said.

(Pause)

"Pilot error" is a phrase used too easily. It's a dulling excuse. "Travel Agent Error" is more like it. After all, if the agency had put you on another plane, you'd dodge the trouble. You should blame the agent more than the pilot. It's *us* who have choices. Flight times; airports; routes. The pilot really has none. The jet flies like the jet flies, what it's

(MORE)

VICTOR (Continued)

meant to do. What it's naturally *designed* to do. If something breaks, then there's not much to be done. There's no *choice*. Not in any real sense. A fuzzy choice, maybe, to ditch or to pull up. That's about it. Not as many options as *I* have.

TOM

It's good to see you owning up to this.

VICTOR

Not all of it. I didn't invite the pilot to my apartment, strip her naked, then have her punch me.

TOM

(Rubbing lip)

It was supposed to be the other way around.

VICTOR

You the naked one? I certainly wouldn't have tried to rescue *that*. But when a pilot shows up at this Tom Paddeck's apartment, wild suppositions start going in my mind. How deep is this trench? I sometimes wonder if there's any person involved in this world that isn't breaking rules on the side. I'm relieved that her being here was just a coincidence...or, so you say...

(Pause)

Look. I've attempted to make the right choices for the customer. Safe travel is our slogan. Middle name. Touchstone. Fight song. Goal and mission. Don't -- don't go thinking we don't care--

TOM

What *are* you babbling about?

VICTOR

Babbling?

ROY

You've gone on for ten minutes. All we *want* are more tickets.

VICTOR

(Low)

Sorry. Not possible.

TOM

We could raise the money. But facts is facts, we're due a refund!

VICTOR

I hardly think you're in a position to--

(Pause)

Let's just say you're right. We file the paperwork. Explain the situation. You'll have to tell *everything*. Crooked scheme included. Possibly: my name. They'll see a pattern. Start to ask questions. You have no idea what I've been doing to... accommodate...your...situation. There are borders, you know. We've crossed into *police* territory. Or have you forgotten?

(Pause)

Again, why are we discussing it? You're lucky I can keep shut and, yes, I even sought you out this time. But why bother? You two are up to no good. I shouldn't be even seen talking to you. And what you want is impossible.

ROY

What do you mean "impossible"? It's always been *possible*. What's different now?

VICTOR looks to his feet.

VICTOR

We've had a crash...you see.

(Pause)

The whole airline's been shut down.

TOM

A crash?

VICTOR

In England. In a field. Killed four people on the ground, plus all on board. Flights have been suspended pending an investigation.

TOM

By who? Not--

VICTOR  
No. By us. Our men.

ROY  
I feel sick.

TOM  
A delay, huh? How long?

VICTOR  
I'm afraid I don't--

ROY  
I really feel sick.

TOM  
Was it sabotage?

ROY begins to exit, holding his  
stomach.

VICTOR  
(Finger out to ROY)  
Is he all right?

TOM  
He'll be fine.

VICTOR  
He looks quite pale.

ROY  
Bathroom?

VICTOR pulls an airsick bag from  
his raincoat.

VICTOR  
I have this.

VICTOR hands the bag to ROY, who opens it and holds it over his mouth. He heaves. Twice.

Seconds pass.

ROY  
I think...I think I feel better.

ROY soon lets the bag drop.

ROY (Continued)  
False alarm.

TOM  
(To VICTOR)  
You haven't answered my questions.

VICTOR  
I don't *have* any answers. I'm just the travel agent.

ROY  
You're making me feel like there's no escaping this.

TOM  
He means, look, we've been using these services of yours... We had a plan, you see? Poor Roy here, he's got a lot on his mind and, and you sit here going on and on and, and, we'll...it's getting us all tied up.  
(Direct)  
It's making me mad, see? Mad as hell.

The lights go out.

The men wait in the dark.

After a full minute, the lights return.

TOM  
Pittsburgh Electric.

VICTOR

See? We don't control anything! Someone at the switch is hemorrhaging. We may as well just *wait it out*.

ROY

We can't wait!

TOM

We gotta have two more tickets.

The telephone rings.

TOM slowly answers.

A Japanese voice is heard through the line.

TOM (Continued)

(Pause, then confused)

What?

(Long pause)

What?

(Long pause)

What? Look. Look. Stop talking.

TOM hangs up.

TOM (Continued)

Point is, you're our travel agent and you have to keep things moving. You can't be a spy, an accomplice, and a prisoner without being an agent first. You're the glue. The GLUE!

VICTOR

You're your own worst enemies. Berating the one person that's in a position to help -- *when* the ban is lifted -- certainly doesn't make me want to take your side. To stay in *Pittsburgh*. I'm on duty. Fish to fry. There are three or four trouble spots that I'm trying to smooth over, snuff out. Extinguish. This -- this *whole thing* -- well, it's a bloody disaster, I can tell you that.

TOM

(To ROY)

Enough. Help me get him on the floor.

ROY

The floor?

TOM moves forward and takes one of Victor's arms, to lift him from the chair.

TOM

A hand.

ROY comes forward and, with trepidation, takes VICTOR's other arm.

TOM (Continued)

One...two...three...

On "three," they lift VICTOR to his feet.

TOM (Continued)

Lay him on his back.

VICTOR is limp, tired, not resisting, a rag doll.

ROY

What are we doing?

TOM

Gonna put some of your surgery skills to the test.

VICTOR is laid flat on the floor of the apartment.

TOM (Continued)

(To ROY)

Go to the kitchen. Find a sharp knife.

ROY

What!

TOM

We're gonna send a message to the company.

ROY

(Finger to VICTOR)

How does *he* feel about it?

VICTOR

(Sighing)

Do what you like. It's your dime.

TOM

Oh, not scared?

VICTOR

What's there to be frightened of?

ROY

Well, the pain for one. Being dead for another.

VICTOR

(Smiles slyly)

Okay. Those.

TOM

Get the knife!

TOM points offstage.

ROY exits sheepishly.

TOM looks down on VICTOR, tilting his head.

TOM  
Still smiling, huh?

VICTOR  
Yes.

TOM  
Makes me think: what does he know that I don't?

VICTOR  
Does it?

TOM  
Wipe that smile.

VICTOR doesn't change.

TOM grabs VICTOR by his cheek.

VICTOR  
All right...

TOM lets go. Mechanically, VICTOR  
lets his smile fade.

TOM  
Any last words?  
(Pause)  
Come on, Fishstein. I'm sure you have somethin'  
rehearsed. Somethin' from...way back. You're waiting  
to spring it.  
(Sweetly)  
Come ahhhhhn, Fish-stein. Fishy fish. You're too  
clever to go through this mute.

VICTOR  
There is one thing, I suppose.

ROY returns with an imposing  
butcher knife. He slows on  
entering.

VICTOR (Continued)

I have a little story. Before you leave me in pieces, maybe you'll find it helpful to understanding your situation. It might be lost on you, Tom; but it may be valuable to you...Roy. Don't think of what I say as a riddle. Think of it as a noose. Inspect the trees or you'll miss the forest.

(Pause)

There is this dream I keep having. And I'm not sure if it's a film or a record album. Sometimes it's just a record with a sleeve and some artwork inside. But sometimes the pictures move and a whole story comes out of it. It's very confusing. It's a three-sided album with a gray cover. The first side has five songs and they're all very catchy. Very happy. You could hum them.

(Melody of Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

La la la la la...la la la...la la...

(Again, speaking)

The last song on the side is my favorite. It's sort of transitional. There's a coda at the end that's quite sad with...with violins and a woman, pretty voice, buzzing in one speaker. I...can't make out the lyrics.

(Pause)

I take the record off the post and flip to the second side.

(Pause)

This music's stranger. *Experimental*. There's more distortion on the instruments. If there are choruses, they're not catchy. Interesting, but almost hard to listen to. It's here, in the second song on the second side, which features mechanical drilling, that I start to get a little frightened. And, also here, the record becomes a film. I'm on a darkening hillside at sunset and really, really far in the distance, there are lights from a fire. A force approaches, but I'm not sure if it's made of men. An army is massing. But I sit on the hill, and I listen to the music, and my heart is racing, and I suddenly feel this incredible sense of *déjà vu*. It's really quite prevalent and my mind says, "This has happened hundreds of times before. It's that same record-slash-film you've known throughout time, dating back to the Protozoa Era. Relax, I think. It'll work out

(MORE)

VICTOR (Continued)

in the end.

(Pause)

The needle lifts and the third side begins. This side, I didn't start playing. The record put itself back in the sleeve and the second platter, blank and black on one side, shows a film on a white sheet on the opposite wall. These are the darkest, most terrible images I've ever seen. I'm a patient at a hospital guarded by human-sized hammers that stomp through the corridors. Occasionally, I'm visited by severed arms that consult with each other by flapping their fingers. And, although no one tells me, I get the impression this hospital -- with its dirty white paint and severed arm-prints dotting the floors -- has a siege going on outside...and we're about to be overrun by enemies.

(Long pause)

That's my record album.

TOM

(A little shaken)

Quite the riddle, Fishy-fish.

VICTOR

Not a riddle. Remember? A noose. And my last words.

(Smiling)

Now. Pardon me while I smile... and see if you have any words of your own. Something from...way back. Come on, now, gentlemen. What are yours?

Silence.

ROY raises the butcher knife to strike. He brings it down, pauses, raises again, and strikes at VICTOR.

RED LIGHTS, a scalding blare of jazz horns mixed with car horns.

Blackout.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Lights rise on a green field on a sunny day.

Enter MADELINE and ASHER, dressed academically, checking over their shoulders.

ASHER

I don't think they saw us.

MADELINE

No, I suppose not.

A pause, then they embrace, passionately kissing, fumbling, fondling.

MADELINE continues to look over ASHER's shoulder, down the hill.

ASHER

Forget them, forget them.

They kiss more; she remains distracted.

ASHER (Continued)

(Chastising)

Maddy... They didn't see us leave.

MADELINE

How are you sure?

ASHER

Bartleby. Figgis. *Totally* preoccupied with the picnic.

ASHER starts to undo his belt.

ASHER (Continued)  
Come on; let's have a go.

MADELINE  
(Embarrassed)  
Asher! No!

ASHER  
Come on. The green, green grass. Right under the  
blue sky. God and everybody.

MADELINE  
It's foolish. We'll be caught!

ASHER  
Lift your skirt. I'm ready to explode.

MADELINE struggles, playfully.

MADELINE  
We'll be seen.

ASHER  
(Eyes up)  
By whom? Aeroplanes?

MADELINE  
The picnic's not far. Someone could wander off like  
we did. We're *vulnerable*.

ASHER  
Isn't that what love is? Vulnerability?

Pause. MADELINE shows surprise.

MADELINE  
Love? We're in love?

ASHER

Well you bloody know I am. How can you not see it?

MADELINE

Having me thrice weekly sometimes doesn't equate to--

ASHER

Love, yes. Here it does. I love you, Madeline. Now, be a good girl and help me off with my trousers. I've caught my thumb in my belt.

MADELINE hesitates, moves forward and begins to assist, then starts to laugh.

MADELINE

You really have caught your thumb!

ASHER

(Playfully laughing)

I wasn't *joking*.

MADELINE bends on her knees and struggles with his waistline, finally freeing him, allowing his trousers to fall and his boxers to be exposed.

She rises and bids him over towards a small incline. ASHER comes forward with quicksteps, his pants around his ankles, arms out.

ASHER (Continued)

Come to me, my love. You dirty, dirty girl.

MADELINE opens her legs and lifts her skirt. ASHER falls into her, between her legs, and begins to ravish her. She moans with his kisses.

After a moment, she spots something in the distance.

MADELINE

Ash. Asher!

He continues to kiss.

MADELINE (Continued)

I think someone's coming.

ASHER

(Moans)

For certain, darling.

MADELINE

No. Through the *trees*.

ASHER, suddenly panicked, bolts upright and redresses. MADELINE rises and straightens her skirt.

They finish just in time to be presentable to...

BARTLEBY and FIGGIS entering the clearing. They, too, are dressed for academia.

BARTLEBY

Ah! Asher. Stolen off with my wife, aye?

ASHER

Just keeping her company.

FIGGIS

And a lovely day for it, if I do say. Summer is nearly here. Barely a cloud. A perfect university picnic.

MADELINE

(Nervously)

Perfect. Absolutely, Mr. Figgis. Couldn't agree more.

BARTLEBY takes his wife's hand and kisses it.

BARTLEBY

Asher isn't bogging you down with mathematics, now, is he, dear?

ASHER

Not me, no.

MADELINE

I could bore him just as easily with my Japanese language primers. Or you, Mr. Figgis, with, with...

She can't remember; she looks to BARTLEBY, who chimes in.

BARTLEBY

Oh, the correlation between international trade and the steel industry.

FIGGIS nods.

MADELINE

Or you, darling, with the plots of all the American crime and Camus novels you cherish, then foist upon your poor students.

BARTLEBY

We could all bore each other with talk of grading papers. White a mile high.

ASHER

I should have followed my plan to become a simple typist.

The others give a slight,  
appreciative laugh.

MADELINE

We came to look at the jets. In the sky.

All eyes up.

FIGGIS

I can't...oh, wait, there's one now.

MADELINE

Yes. So many these days.

FIGGIS

It's becoming a preferred choice. I still like  
trains. Call me old fashioned.

BARTLEBY

Or just old.

MADELINE

You've never flown, Mr. Figgis?

FIGGIS

No I *haven't*.

MADELINE

You sound proud of it.

BARTELBY

Not proud. Stubborn.

FIGGIS

My father was a man of rails. I have loyalty there.  
Easiest way to get from place to place. Safest, too.

ASHER

Unless you count the continent. A train would drown  
in the channel.

FIGGIS

Why the devil would you want to leave England? Good gracious. Stomach that. It puts gas into my intestines just to think about elsewhere.

BARTELBY

(Low)

A bit of a localist.

ASHER

I like England, too, Mr. Figgis.

FIGGIS slaps ASHER's back.

FIGGIS

A young man after my own heart. We've spent too much time being intercontinental. Time to stay in our own business. The empire is over. Replaced by, by the jetliner.

All eyes up.

ASHER

(Awkwardly)

Oh, there's another.

Pause. Their eyes follow a plane.

Sound: A jet passing.

As they watch, ASHER rubs MADELINE's buttock. She slaps him away and smiles just as the others look down.

FIGGIS puts his hooked arm out to the lady.

FIGGIS

Shall I return our university's prettiest teacher to the picnic?

MADELINE looks to the men, and  
then finally takes FIGGIS's arm.

MADELINE

Why not...

The two begin an exit.

FIGGIS

(To BARTLEBY)

Coming?

BARTLEBY

Think I'll have a cigarette. Chat with old Asher here  
a moment. I know how clouds of smoke bother the  
board.

FIGGIS

(Stern)

Sets a bad example.

BARTLEBY

Right, right. Must quit.

FIGGIS

Well don't be long.

BARTLEBY

Just one.

Exit FIGGIS and MADELINE.

BARTLEBY takes a packet of  
cigarettes from his inner pocket.  
He offers up the pack to ASHER,  
who waves it away graciously.  
BARTLEBY pulls a cigarette and  
puts it between his lips then  
returns the pack to his pocket.  
He pads for a match.

BARTLEBY (Continued)  
Neglected my matches. Don't suppose --

ASHER  
No. Sorry.

BARTLEBY keeps the cigarette in his lips and sits on the incline where ASHER and MADELINE had been.

ASHER remains standing.

BARTLEBY  
How old are you, Ash?

ASHER  
Thirty-nine.

BARTLEBY  
Oh. We're not that far apart then. I took you for younger.

ASHER  
Forty in August.

BARTLEBY  
(Pointing in)  
Forty-three.

ASHER  
Well. Cheers.

BARTLEBY  
Do you know Madeline's age?

ASHER  
Um. No.

BARTLEBY  
Hazard a guess?

ASHER  
Isn't it unwise to comment on a woman's age?

BARTLEBY

I'm sure she'd be flattered by your answer.

ASHER

Oh? You're going to share it with her, then? Well, s'pose I better think on it. Um. She's been a teacher here since after the war. And, well, I know you celebrated your anniversary last December -- ten years, wasn't it?

BARTLEBY

You've got a good memory. Ten it was. Thanks for the potted plant.

ASHER

Nothing says marriage like a rhubarb.

(Pause)

Well, putting those clues together...she's thirty-five.

BARTLEBY

(Impressed)

Very good. Are you always so keen at deduction? Are you some sort of inspector on the side?

ASHER

No, that's not me. Just a guess.

BARTLEBY

I think not.

(Pause)

Would you like to have a seat?

BARTLEBY pats the incline.

ASHER

Is...is the grass damp?

BARTLEBY

What do you care?

ASHER

I wouldn't want to --

BARTLEBY

It's too late. You've soiled your knees already.

ASHER looks down. He notices his knees are wet with dew.

Panicked, ASHER composes himself and starts to swat at his trouser legs.

ASHER

Bloody hell. Daft of me. I forgot. I dropped my...ring. In the grass. On the way up. I had to bend to get it.

ASHER flashes his ring.

ASHER (Continued)

Have it now.

BARTLEBY

Not a wedding ring.

ASHER

No, no. Not yet.

ASHER comes forward and shows BARTLEBY the ring, still on his finger.

ASHER (Continued)

Class of '53. My--

BARTLEBY takes ASHER's hand and pulls him to sit on the incline. It's a surprising gesture.

ASHER (Continued)

Guess I'll have a sit. Sure. For certain. Lovely day...

BARTLEBY

(Through his gritted teeth)

Sure you don't have a light?

ASHER shakes his head.

BARTLEBY removes the cigarette from his lips and flings it far.

ASHER

Are you...are you...upset about something?

(Long pause)

It's just --

(Pause)

Maybe I could be of some...assistance.

BARTLEBY pulls a knife from his jacket and stabs ASHER to death on the hillside.

When finished, BARTLEBY rolls ASHER over on his face. He drops the knife and begins to weep into his sleeve.

Unnoticed, MADELINE enters.

It doesn't take her long to assess.

She races for ASHER's body.

MADELINE

No! No, no, no! What have you done? Bartleby! What have you done! No! Please. He's not dead. He's not dead. Say he's not dead. Oh, you've killed him, Bar -- he's not *breathing*.

BARTLEBY stands and runs his  
bloody hand through his hair.

BARTLEBY  
He was taking you away, Maddy.

MADELINE falls on ASHER's body,  
crying.

MADELINE  
(Weeping)  
You didn't have to kill him.

BARTLEBY  
Would you stay?

MADELINE  
Why did you have to kill him?

BARTLEBY  
I love you, Madeline. I love you. I'd do anything  
for you. I'd go *anywhere*...to find you. To make sure  
you're safe and mine. To...to...

MADELINE isn't paying attention.  
She's still holding ASHER and  
tending to his body.

BARTLEBY looks to the air.

BARTLEBY (Continued)  
Madeline?

No answer.

BARTLEBY grips his head with both  
hands.

BARTLEBY (Continued)

(In pain)  
Christ. My head.

He feels his neck, his body.  
Lastly, his hands.

BARTLEBY (Continued)

Maddy?

She continues to shake, holding  
ASHER's dead body. There is  
something in BARTLEBY's eyes. He  
knows he's lost. At last, he  
looks to the sky.

BARTLEBY (Continued)

Madeline. Look. The sky.

(Pause)

I see a white airplane.

(Pause)

Madeline? Look. I see a white airplane.

MADELINE

(Muffled in ASHER's shirt)

What are you talking about?

BARTLEBY

My father. Remember? Before he died last year. The  
nurses had wheeled him outside. He'd keep looking up,  
up...up. That fountain of useless information; all  
his babbles. You remember? That day. I. I. I  
can't stop thinking about it.

BARTLEBY grips his head and winces.  
He sees the dead body, and his  
wife. He forces himself to look  
to the sky.

BARTLEBY (Continued)

He tells us: It's illegal to paint planes all white. They blend with the clouds and are considered dangerous. Whenever the bottom of a plane -- any plane -- jet or prop...whenever it'd match with the sky perfectly, blend with the clouds, my father would say, "I see a white airplane." I'd look up and see nothing. Like I do now. And suddenly...

(Pointing)

Oh, look, there it is again. The edges. See?

MADELINE twists her body to face her husband.

MADELINE

Why did you have to kill him?

BARTLEBY keeps his head raised.

BARTLEBY

What was it like? Being with him.

MADELINE thinks before answering.

MADELINE

(Defiant)

It was lovely.

BARTLEBY finally looks to her. He picks up the knife from the ground and crosses to his wife, holding the weapon above her.

MADELINE (Continued)

(Softly)

Go ahead! Go ahead, you coward!

BARTLEBY continues to hold.

BARTLEBY

(Panicked, not certain)

Scream.

(Pause)

Please. Scream. Call them all over.

(Pleading)

Please. You need reinforcements, Maddy.

MADELINE

(Whispering)

Go ahead you coward.

BARTLEBY raises the knife higher,  
slices down halfway, but then  
brings it back up again.

MADELINE (Continued)

I'd rather be dead.

BARTLEBY

I'm not in my right mind. I'll do it. I'll regret it  
but I'll do it.

MADELINE only mouths the word:  
"Coward."

BARTLEBY (Continued)

(Calling)

Mr. Figgis! Mr. Figgis! Would you please come up the  
hill!

(Pause)

Figgis!

(Pause)

Figgis!

(Long pause)

Figgis!

(Pause)

Figgis!

(Pause)

Mr. Figgis!

(Pause)

Figgis! Figgis! Figgy! Figgy! Fig --

FIGGIS enters.

FIGGIS

(Cranky)

What the *hell* do you want! Don't go calling me like a *dog*, Bartleby!

FIGGIS notices the knife, the situation.

FIGGIS (Continued)

(Nervously)

My God. My God, Bartleby, what have you done?

MADELINE

He's killed him.

FIGGIS

Killed? Get up, there, Ash, if you know what's good for you. Can't have staff *lying* about.

(Pause)

Killed him?

FIGGIS comes closer.

BARTLEBY

What should I do, Mr. Figgis? You're in charge. You know.

FIGGIS

Put down the knife. It can't be any clearer.

BARTLEBY

I can't. The clock has stopped. I'm stuck.

FIGGIS

Stuck? Don't be a fool.

BARTLEBY

Please help me, Mr. Figgis.

FIGGIS

You want me to...to take the...the knife?

FIGGIS reaches up, tentatively.

BARTELBY

I want you to help me out of this. It's your authority.

FIGGIS

I will I will. But first put down the knife.

BARTLEBY

I told you I *can't*.

FIGGIS

Then hand it to me. Please. Bartleby? Bartle-beeee?

BARTLEBY

I wish something would stop all this. Let me escape. Tomorrow I'll pray the whole thing to be wiped away.

FIGGIS

Tomorrow's a long way off, Bartleby. Let's worry about what's happening right now. Shall we?

(To MADELINE)

Come, girl. Come around to me.

MADELINE holds ASHER's bloody hand in both of hers, firmly. She's not moving.

BARTLEBY

You're right, Mr. Figgis. Tomorrow is too far. And you can't help me, can you? You're as empty as your trains. Tell me something, Mr. Figgis...

FIGGIS

Anything, anything.

BARTLEBY

What do you see in the sky?

The scene changes, lights darken.

FIGGIS slowly looks up.

FIGGIS

Nothing.

BARTLEBY

Nothing at all?

FIGGIS

Nothing. Clouds. I see clouds.

BARTLEBY

Do you see the white airplane?

FIGGIS ponders.

FIGGIS

White airplane? Am I looking in the right spot?

BARTLEBY

It's in the very toppest top. You'll think it's part of everything. Only if you look really closely. You'll see. The faint outline. The shape of it. As it crosses. Do you see it?

FIGGIS looks down at the two others.

FIGGIS

Bartleby, you're mad! Mad as mad! Now put down the knife and--

BARTLEBY

(Screaming)

DO YOU SEE THE WHITE AIRPLANE?

FIGGIS, shaking his head, looks up again.

The growing sound of a jetliner engine can be heard. Over time, it is louder and louder.

FIGGIS

(Realizing)

Yes. Why. Yessss. I see something.

BARTLBY

Where is the airplane now?

FIGGIS

Oh, it's very high. I almost didn't see it, I--

BARTLEBY

North to south? Or East to West?

FIGGIS

Oh, it's hard to tell. I suppose it's heading over the university. It's...it's descending.

The engine sound grows, beginning to become annoying.

FIGGIS (Continued)

It's coming down fast.

MADELINE covers her ears.

The sound makes FIGGIS's words hard to hear.

FIGGIS (Continued)

Something's wrong. I don't like the look of this. Bartleby, we should...we should...

BARTLEBY

Madeline! Maddy! Look up! Do you see the white airplane!

MADELINE, ears covered, glances up quickly and then backs down again.

MADELINE

Yes. Yes, I do.

FIGGIS covers his ears.

FIGGIS

It's heading straight for us!

BARTLEBY

Oh thank God.

The sound rocks the field.

BARTLEBY brings down the knife, in an arc.

Sudden blackout, silence.

ACT IV

SCENE 1

Lights rise on the interior cabin of a white airplane.

Three passengers are at various points: MAX, reading; ZHARA, sleeping; and MORIN BOUCHER, exiting the toilet.

There is an audible hum throughout the plane.

MORIN approaches MAX and taps him on the shoulder.

MORIN

When do we get there?

MAX

What am I, the pilot?

MORIN

You look like a man who knows things.

MAX

(Bored)

Not that.

MORIN wanders off and takes his seat, near ZHARA.

Impatient, MORIN wakes ZHARA.

MORIN

When do we land?

ZHARA looks to her watch, taps it.

ZHARA

My watch stopped.

MORIN

Doesn't matter. How long's the flight?

ZHARA

What do I look like, the--

MORIN

Pilot. I know. Can't you take a guess?

ZHARA

I can't understand what you're saying.

MORIN

(Slowly)

Listen to my voice. Will you guess?

ZHARA

That's better. Sure, I'll guess.

(Slowly)

But I'll be wrong.

MORIN

That's fine. I won't grade you.

ZHARA looks confused.

MORIN (Continued)

Like a test. Like in school.

ZHARA

Oh. I'm a teacher. Did you know that?

MORIN

I don't *care*.

ZHARA

At an abandoned schoolhouse. One day, the children stopped showing up. No one told me what to do. I just kept teaching, drawing things with chalk. I handed out assignments and gave detentions. A week

(MORE)

ZHARA (Continued)

passed. I phoned all the parents and scheduled conferences for the first Monday of the month. No one appeared.

MORIN

(Irritated)

I don't CARE.

ZHARA

But don't you think that's strange?

MORIN

Lady, the whole world's strange.

(Pause, finger to MAX)

He didn't know either.

(Pause)

When we'd land.

ZHARA

I don't think that's the policy.

MORIN

To land? It better be. I've got an appointment.

ZHARA

Didn't you read the back of your ticket?

MORIN takes his ticket from his pocket.

MORIN

Yeah, but it's just a bunch of chicken scratches. I thought it was words when I bought it. But now. Look.

MORIN holds up the ticket for ZHARA to read.

ZHARA

Wait, let me get my glasses.

ZHARA reaches under her seat and takes out her purse. She finds a severe set of eyeglasses, takes MORIN's ticket, and puts her eyeglasses on.

ZHARA (Continued)

It says 'No Refunds.'

MORIN takes the ticket back, reading.

MORIN

There're more than two words here.

ZHARA

It's not a literal translation.

MORIN

You can read that?

ZHARA

You forget, I'm a teacher.

MORIN

What's that got to do with it?

ZHARA

Nothing, I suppose. Talk to your travel agent if you don't believe me.

MORIN pockets his ticket.

MORIN

Thanks, I will.

(Long pause)

Say, you're kind of sexy in those glasses.

ZHARA is confused.

ZHARA

Slower.

MORIN

You. Are. Sexy. In. Those. Eyeglasses.

ZHARA

No one's ever said that to me before.

MORIN

That you're sexy, or sexy in glasses?

ZHARA

That I should talk to my travel agent. I seem to say that to everybody, though. It's become a mantra. "Talk to your travel agent, talk to your travel agent, talk to your travel agent." I say it so often that I'd expect someone to say it back to me sometime.

MORIN

Why? Do you travel much?

ZHARA

Ew, no. I have this terrible fear of flying.

MORIN

Don't be scared, honey. The odds.

ZHARA

I know. The magazine in the pocket of my seat has a pullout article on jetliner safety. They're trying to educate us. Do you think they planted that there to quell fear?

MORIN

Yes, why not.

ZHARA

Or is it just coincidence?

MORIN

I don't believe in coincidence.

ZHARA

No?

MORIN

Lady, I'm on an airplane that's entirely *white*. Don't you think I've given up guessing in my life by now?

MAX

(Across the aisle, to the air)

Shut up shut up shut AAAAHHHHHHHHPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPP!

MORIN

(To MAX)

Oh, I'm sorry, are we bothering you?

MAX

Yes.

MORIN

(To ZHARA)

What's his problem?

ZHARA

He's just jealous.

MAX

(Shouting, face-forward)

I'm not *jealous*.

ZHARA

Sure he is.

MORIN

Why, you two married?

ZHARA

We had sex in the toilet a while ago.

MORIN

(Intrigued)

Ohhh? Where was I?

ZHARA

Sleeping, I think. But you weren't my first choice.

MORIN

What? I'm better looking than *him*.

ZHARA

Max is all right.

MORIN

Oh. *Maaaax*. You even got a name.

ZHARA

And yours is Morin Boucher. From Canada.

(Pause)

It's on your ticket.

MORIN

Hey, well. I'm here if you need me.

ZHARA

Very generous of you.

MORIN

Never had sex on a plane.

ZHARA

See, I told you I hate flying.

MORIN

Well at least you make good use of the time.

Pause.

MORIN (Continued)

Say, is there a meal on this flight?

ZHARA

They just cleared our trays.

MORIN

I know. I'm still hungry. And what was that anyway?

ZHARA

Didn't you read the package?

MORIN

I couldn't. Just like the ticket. Wanna translate for me?

MAX

(Shouting)

It said "Human hair and bones!"

MORIN

(To ZHARA)

He's kidding, right?

ZHARA gives a look.

MORIN (Continued)

Please. Confirm or deny.

ZHARA

Those were pretty far down the list. I doubt you could taste them.

Pause.

MORIN

You're both messing with me, right?

ZHARA | MAX

Yes.

MORIN stands.

MORIN

I knew it! You two are in this together, aren't you? Some kind of collusion. A man who knows things plus the schoolteacher who reads labels.

MAX turns.

MAX

(To MORIN)

I fail to see your logic.

MORIN

Nothing to miss. You're banging in the toilet while I'm asleep. No doubt, you've cooked up a plan to mess with my head. That's all. As a matter of fact, ten-to-one, there was no sex in the toilet. Come to think of it, that thing's a closet and

(To MAX)

YOU'RE fat.

ZHARA

I like large men.

MAX

I beg your pardon. I'm not fat. I have broad shoulders.

MORIN sits back down.

MORIN

You like the fatties, huh?

MAX

(Screaming)

I'm not FAAAAAAAAAAT!

MORIN waves him off.

MORIN

(To ZHARA)

So, should I just call you Fats-A-Holic, or do you have a name?

ZHARA

My name's Zhara.

MORIN

Sarah?

ZHARA

ZZZZZZZZZZhara.

MORIN

Oh, sorry. Damn airplane noise. They really should build these things better. I used to live by an airport. Every ten minutes you'd hear a prop or a jet. Very annoying. Cash I shelled for that place. You think they'd a' soundproofed. There's materials for that, right? Some scientist's perfected something somewhere.

(Looking around)

Hell, if they can build these planes white and have them do what they do, why not--

MAX rises and huffs to MORIN, cupping MORIN's mouth with his hand. MORIN, eyes angry, tries to pry the fingers, but can't. At last, MORIN gives up and shrugs. He gestures to ZHARA to help him out. Five fingers stifle him.

MAX

(Lecturing MORIN)

I'm *reading*, can't you see that? I *like* reading. Especially on planes. It's *relaxing*. Try and put yourself in *my* shoes. Let's just get through this flight in silence. When we land -- whenever we land -- you can talk your damn head off!

MAX uncups MORIN's mouth. Satisfied that he will stay quiet, he returns to his seat, straightening his clothes before sitting.

Long pause.

MORIN

Whatever you say, Fats.

MAX lunges at MORIN.

They struggle for only a second  
before another man, MARCUS  
ADDERLY, enters from the cockpit.  
He wears a uniform.

MARCUS

Return to your seats!

Sheepishly, the two fighting men  
break apart and take their seats.

MARCUS takes a position at the  
front of the cabin and stands  
authoritatively.

MARCUS (Continued)

Attention all passengers!

MORIN, MAX, and ZHARA look at each  
other.

MARCUS (Continued)

I've just been radioed some rather distressing news.  
One of the passengers, it seems, is a wanted saboteur.  
Therefore, we're being recalled to our point of origin  
so that the proper authorities may question that  
person. I apologize for any inconvenience this may  
cause your travel plans. Your ticketing agent should  
be able to assist you in the paperwork relating to a  
full refund. Good day.

MARCUS starts to return to the  
cabin.

MAX

(To MARCUS)

Hold on hold on. There are only three of us. If you  
know the name of the person, why not arrest him or her  
in the air, strap the saboteur to a chair?

MARCUS

We don't know the name. It could be any one of the passengers.

MAX

You talk like there are a hundred of us. There are only *three*.

(Pause)

Do you know if it's a man or a woman?

MARCUS

We don't have any details, aside from the facts I've stated.

ZHARA

Do we really have to go back? Can't you radio them and ask for a description? They must know a bit or two.

MARCUS

(Sternly)

We are going *back*. I'm sorry, but that is that.

MARCUS exits.

When he's gone, the three look at each other.

MAX

We should protest.

(Pause)

There must be some --

ZHARA

Aren't we nearly there anyway? Why turn around now? Won't we run out of fuel?

MAX

Yeah. You're right. I'm going to ask them that.

MAX rises to approach the cabin.

MORIN stops him with a raised hand.

MAX (Continued)

What?

MORIN

Oh, I can *speak* now?

(Pause)

This plane doesn't run on fuel. It runs on something else.

MAX

Oh, *really*? Are you an expert?

MORIN

On that.

MAX

Researching planes, are we?

ZHARA

*He's* the saboteur!

MORIN

Just because I'm French-Canadian doesn't mean I'm a  
(Emphasizing French pronunciation)  
SAB-O-TUER.

MAX

Then how do you know about the fuel?

MORIN

It has to be. We've practically flown around the whole globe in this thing to get where we're going. There's no known plane on earth that could do that without refueling at least once.

(Pause)

Maybe it runs on, what, "human hair and bones?"

ZHARA

Don't try to be funny.

MAX

A plane that didn't use fuel...our ticket fee wouldn't come close to being profitable. Three passengers. Count them --

(Pointing)

one, two, three. Where's the industry?

MORIN

I'm beginning to think we've never left the ground. Listen. Hear that purr, that engine? That's the only proof we have that this thing is airborne. This plane doesn't have a single window. Except in the cockpit. And there we're not allowed.

ZHARA

It can't be *faked*.

MORIN

Well. It's a theory. Would it be funny to be blown sky high by a saboteur to realize we've never left the hanger?

ZHARA

Don't talk like that! No one's going to blow anything up.

MORIN

Why don't we confess right now? Which one of us is it? It'll kill the suspense, but when we quote unquote "land" the person's going to be turned over anyway. We're going to learn the identity. Is it Zhara, the schoolteacher for invisible children? Or maybe Maxie-Maxie-Two-By-Four? Or me. Mr. French-Canadian.

MAX

It must be you. I don't believe for a second you're French-Canadian. Where's your accent?

MORIN

You can't hear it because of the plane.

MAX

I'm not deaf!

MORIN

Zhara can't hear a word I say unless I

(Slowly)

speak real sloooow.

(Normal)

What makes you think you're any different? I can hear the two of you, but my vision is bad.

(MORE)

MORIN (Continued)

(To MAX)

Can you read the back of your ticket? The *fine* print?

MAX returns to his seat, grabs his ticket, holds it up.

MAX

(Reading)

"No refunds."

MORIN

You think I'm stupid, don't you?

MAX

That's what it says.

MORIN

(Dismissive)

You two are *ganging up* on me.

Pause.

ZHARA

Maybe it'd be good to be blown sky high.

(Pause)

Really. What's our destination, anyway? I don't mind arriving in pieces. I'm leaving that way.

Pause.

MORIN

(Suddenly aware)

Hey! They haven't turned the plane around.

MAX

Heh?

MORIN

Don't you think the pilot would have turned by now?  
He announced his intentions. I figured I'd feel a  
pull, a tug, the turn back.

ZHARA

(Lazy)

Maybe you're right; we are at an airport.

MORIN stands. He finds the exit  
on the wall of the airplane. His  
accent comes and goes.

MORIN

I wonder what would happen if I turned this handle.

MAX

(Bored)

We'd be sucked out. We'd die. Blah blah blah.

MORIN

Not if we're on the ground.

MAX

I thought you said this wasn't a normal kind of plane.  
Maybe it's turned and we never felt it. Be stupid of  
you to open the door now.

MORIN

Quiet, Fats, I'm thinkin'.

MAX

I have broad SHOULDERS!

MORIN

(Distracted)

Just keep tellin' yourself that.

(Focused)

So, I pull this handle and--

ZHARA

Don't!

MORIN

Why not?

ZHARA

We'll find out everything soon enough, won't we? Why go taking chances.

MORIN

I want an answer. Are we on the ground or are we in the air?

MAX

Things maybe, sometimes, I think, just aren't meant to make complete sense. There are no phantom lines connecting everything, like, like phone wires or telegraph cables.

ZHARA

I believe in complete order. Complete. Order. Order's what separates us from the animals.

MORIN

Some species are considered very organized. Like...monkey. I read once--

ZHARA

I don't mean an instinctual order. I mean a plan. A divine hand. A reason.

MORIN

What?

ZHARA

Are you having trouble hearing *me* now?

MORIN

Oh, I hear ya. I just think it's crap.

ZHARA

So you side with Max? I didn't expect--

MORIN

I side with experience. Everything's always connected. Everything always follows a plan. You may not see all the lines going off in every direction. There's always huge gaps missing in any story that's not, not, not...had a Hollywood hand in it. If the facts aren't known, some writer will just plug them in  
(MORE)

MORIN (Continued)

to make everyone feel they got their two bucks worth. But in real life, what do you really know? There are gaps, but ultimately it's because you're not privy to every damn detail.

MAX

Are you a writer?

MORIN

No. That's not the point anyway.

MAX

'Cos you sound kinda bitter.

MORIN

Ha ha. Fiction, yes, I read it -- the occasional crime novel. But, look, all I'm sayin--

ZHARA

Absurdity and randomness are very, very comforting. You treat it like a disease.

MORIN

Don't characterize *my* comments. And there's nothing comforting in not knowing all the facts. Like, are we on the ground or in the air? *That* was my question. Wasn't it? I'm starting to lose track.

MAX

Both of you are as distracting as flies. Maybe we should stop arguing.

MORIN

Arguing I like. Mystery is what gets my goat. I'm just trying to uncover what's happening to us.

ZHARA

Mystery is the only constant. You may know all the facts in movies, and you may know all the facts some of the times, and there may be occasions when all of the facts *could* be known, only you don't know then. But. What I'm saying, *Monsieur Boucher*, is that sometimes, probably one out of four, it doesn't add up to anything at all. Maybe what I'm doing here on this

(MORE)

ZHARA (Continued)

plane has nothing to do with car salesmen or typewriters or hookers getting punched or who's sleeping with whom.

MORIN

Why did you just say typewriters?

ZHARA

I don't know. It came into my head.

MORIN

I just had déjà vu. Right when you said that. "Typewriters."

MAX

So did I.

MORIN

You had déjà vu, too?

MAX

I did.

ZHARA

Well *I* didn't.

MORIN

It's incredible! Two people with déjà vu at the same moment.

(To MAX)

You're lying, aren't you?

MAX

On my grave, no. *I* had déjà vu.

MORIN steps from the door and paces. As he speaks, his accent comes and goes even more.

MORIN

Maybe we've been on this plane before. Maybe...maybe, maybe, we've given these speeches before --

(MORE)

MORIN (Continued)

connections, randomness, the things we don't know. I was going to open the door, but now I'm not. The desire is gone. We're in the air and I know it. How do I know it? I just do. I'm getting the pilot.

MORIN bangs on the door to the cockpit.

MAX

(Lightly)

No, don't disturb him. He's got to be allowed to concentrate.

MORIN

Open up!

MORIN continues to pound.

ZHARA

You're not doing anyone any good. There is no escape.

MORIN

Open up. I want to speak to someone in charge. There's a sexy girl in glasses who says--

The door opens a crack; MARCUS' face appears.

MARCUS

Marcus Adderly at your service.

MORIN

Let me in the cockpit.

MARCUS

(Politely)

That's impossible. You may be a saboteur.

MORIN

I'm not a saboteur, listen, two of us just had déjà vu at the same time. I need to see out the cockpit. I want to see the sky.

MARCUS

The sky? Well, it's there, all around us. White as white. No need to see it.

MAX

(Calling forward)

And what's the sky got to do with déjà vu?

MORIN

There are connections.

(Pointing to ZHARA)

She said it. There are connections between this flight and events on the ground.

ZHARA

I said there were *no* connections.

MORIN

But you implied the reverse. You listed things that have happened, will happen, or are happening now. If we return, we'll have solved nothing. How can you read your instruments? We're topsy-turvy, I bet. Let me up--

MORIN attempts to force his way in the door. MARCUS holds him back.

MARCUS

(Struggling)

That NOT *possible*.

ZHARA

What good are you doing, Morin?

MARCUS

Yes, listen to the saboteur.

The struggle slows then stops.

MORIN

The saboteur?

MAX

It's her?

(Pause)

Why didn't you tell us?

MARCUS

Would it have mattered? You're all up to no good, anyway. If I had my way, I'd turn you *all* over to the proper authorities.

MAX

Hey, we're your customers.

MARCUS

Are you? Really, are you? Or is it the other way around? You don't pay us; we pay YOU.

MARCUS shuts the door, hard.

There is silence in the cabin.

MARCUS (Continued)

(Over the plane's intercom)

Check your tickets if you don't believe me.

The three passengers drift a moment. Slowly, each finds his or her ticket, rubs eyes, reads the back printing. One by one, when finished, they linger.

MAX

He was right. It was there the whole time. Now I'm thoroughly depressed.

MORIN looks lost. He suddenly holds his head in pain, just as BARTLEBY had in ACT II.

ZHARA

(Noticing)

Are you okay?

MORIN shakes it off.

ZHARA

I know why the schoolhouse was abandoned. It's because I'm a criminal, or about to become one.

(Pause)

Is it wrong what I'm doing? What I've done?

MORIN falls into his seat.

The hum of the engine rises...

MORIN

No, not wrong. Just pointless.

ZHARA

(Not hearing)

What did you say?

MORIN

I said--. Never mind.

ZHARA

What?

MORIN

(To the air)

What's going on here!

MORIN grips his head again then becomes transfixed.

MORIN (Continued)

I'm stopped like a clock.

The hum of the plane intensifies.

MORIN

(To Madeline)

I know you can't hear me... Can you? Can you, Madeline.

MAX

Who's Madeline?

The hum grows even louder. ZHARA makes a last attempt to hear MORIN.

ZHARA

What did you say?

MORIN

I can't get out. You're right. I. I can't. I can't get out.

ZHARA

Should I put us into a dive?

MORIN

Of course. Sure! Hell if I care.

MORIN sits and fastens his belt, then unfastens it.

MORIN (Continued)

Hell if I care.

ZHARA

Oh, you'll care. We'll stop traffic for miles. No more in-betweens. No more white airplanes. No refunds for certain.

MORIN

(Panicked)

I don't want a refund. I want an exchange. I want to switch with someone else. That it never happens or happened or is going to happen or will happen again. Is it...is it wrong to want an exchange? I've picked the wrong destination, that's all.

The sound is unbearable now.

Mixed within the white noise is a collage of voices, the recitation of previous dialog:

*MADELINE: (Defiant) It was lovely.*

*FIGGIS: Put down the knife. It can't be any clearer.*

*NUMATA: No. No. I have to tell you something. I'm not... I'm not this man.*

*BARTLEBY: Stop all this. Let me escape.*

*TOM: Why be so anxious to leave, anyway? You shouldn't be in such a hurry. Here isn't so bad.*

*KORIN: Lovely be-a-u-ty!*

*INSP. HORRI: Oh, I don't mean to say she's lost.*

*KORIN: I am waiting anxiously to hear that she is all right, and that this is all some misunderstanding.*

*FUSAE: Hardly meaningful words from you. What's your real name?*

A spotlight falls on MORIN, white-knuckled in his seat.

*BARTLEBY: He was taking you away,  
Maddy. I love you, Madeline. I  
love you. I'd do anything for  
you. I'd go anywhere...to find  
you. To make sure you're safe and  
mine.*

ZHARA

(Firm, shouting above the din)

I BLAME...my TRAVEL...AGENT!

Sound: A crash, a cacophony, a  
brittle symphony of discordant  
notes.

Blackout.

Final curtain.