

Cooper

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A full-length play

By Jacques Manjarrez

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#### **RACHEL SHUSTER**

Rachel is a junior in high school and a self-proclaimed social introvert. In addition, she is the president and founder of her high school's mortuary club. She tends to be a beacon of reason and knowledge of all things dead to her close group of friends, who share her interest in dead matter. Her main source of inspiration comes from her mortician uncle, who passed away shortly before the group's planned journey to uncover the remains of D.B. Cooper. Her uncle's sudden death has made her visibly uneasy and in constant doubt of her character, and some of her friends have become suspicious as to her dedication to the club's purpose as a result.

#### **DAN COOPER**

The real identity of the infamous plane hijacker of 1971, Dan Cooper was born, lived, and planned to die in a small, rural community outside of Portland. Only when his suspected that his betrothed was cheating on him, that he would even consider leaving the sanctity of his own home. He has paranoid tendencies, and rarely smokes.

#### **DEBBIE**

Polar opposite to Dan, Debbie is an individual who loves crossing the line. She loves the exhilarating sensation of taking absolute control over a situation, and can tend to be wieldy impulsive. Her tendency to chain smoke has had doctors diagnose her with lung cancer, giving her, as she sees it, an excuse to travel the world.

#### **JACOB**

Jacob is one of Rachel's closest friends and the vice president of their high school's mortuary club. He is prone to engage in long-winded debates and has an idealistic perspective on how the world, and to a smaller extent their club, should work.

#### **STUNT**

A born rebel and social outcast, Stunt found sanctuary at the only club on campus that shared her morbid interests. Her disdain for people have made her to not to be the most conversable person on the planet, making it especially difficult for her when she's engaged in a conversation that does not relate directly to her interests. She often wears punk attire, despite the freezing temperatures of their hometown.

#### **VAUDE**

A native of Portland, Oregon, that wears a large, multi-colored coat and has a badly-kept haircut. Seeking escape and isolation from the city, his family moved out to the countryside where he was enrolled in the same school as Rachel and the gang. He befriended them not long after and took to their interest in cadavers.

#### **FLORENCE**

A flight attendant for Northwest Orient Airlines flight 305. She attends Dan Cooper throughout his flight. She herself is also a frequent smoker and can tend to get easily aggravated without her cigarettes.

#### **RACHEL'S UNCLE**

A mortician who, near the end of his life, had a sudden realization of the value of the bodies he worked on. He is a huge influence on Rachel's character as well as her major aspiration.

#### **PILOT**

The captain of flight 305 between Portland, Oregon and Seattle, Washington. Worn with experience, he has no problem following protocol in any harrowing situation.

**CO-PILOT**

A youthful innocent, the co-pilot of flight 305 often likes to interject in conversations with a clever quip or whatnot. He, the pilot, and Florence make up the crew of flight 305 to Seattle.

## ACT 1, SCENE 1

Curtains open to reveal the outskirts of a rural northern town in an unspecified location. A thick layer of snow blankets the ground and the trees surrounding. A lone telephone pole stands downstage left. Leaning against it rests an individual, face obscured by a large winter jacket and hat.

Enter from upstage right a group of four teenagers: RACHEL, a girl with short-cut hair in her junior year carries a large map in front of her. She is followed closely by JACOB, a boy of the same age that follows her anxiously. Following him excitedly is VAUDE, a tall senior boy sporting colorful winter clothes. Lastly following depressingly is STUNT, a junior girl dresses in classic punk attire. As they enter, they remain unaware of the presence of the stranger downstage. The character Vaude seems to be having a mobile argument with Jacob as they walk.

VAUDE

(condescendingly)

So it goes, like, fresh, bloat, active decay, advanced decay, and then dry remains, right? Am I missing anything? Yeah - I don't think I'm missing anything, am I?

STUNT

Rigor mortis. You're missing rigor mortis.

JACOB

(frustrated)

Vaude, dude, did I ever contradict the standard progress of decay? No, no I didn't. I just said that environmental conditions can severely impact the rate of decay according to the process of autolyses.

VAUDE

Yeah, you see - that's not what you told me. You said that... That depending on the environmental conditions... You - you...

STUNT

(interrupting)

You wanted to cut out advanced decay altogether.

VAUDE

Exactly! You wanted to cut out advanced decay altogether. As if that's just something you can, like, do. Forget about an essential part of the decay process why don't you, you know? Yeah?

JACOB

Okay, shut up. Did you see the same photographs as I did?

VAUDE

Of, like, what? The cadaver?

JACOB

(sarcastically)

No, my yearbook head shots... Yes the cadaver!

STUNT

I did.

JACOB

Can you describe the manner in which this corpse was decomposing?

VAUDE

In accordance with, like, the natural stages of decomposition.

JACOB

Was or was not the corpse in question hanging freely from a branch?

VAUDE

Yo, what's your point?

STUNT

Yeah, he was.

JACOB

He was, right? So if the corpse was hanging freely by some ropes, it won't be in the dirt when it's decomposing, so the CDI won't show soil nitrogen in the composition nutrients.

Thus, in - in his conditions, advanced decomposition is irrelevant to the overall decomposition process. Right, Rachel?

RACHEL

(half-attentive)

Uh... Advanced decomposition is just an arbitrary way to describe a certain period of time wherein the body is lacking of cadaveric material. It'll happen regardless of where the corpse is due to an internal process. It'll decay wether it's on dirt ground or on a metal table.

STUNT

Like your uncle? How long was it before he started decaying?

VAUDE

Yeah, Rachel! You actually saw a guy dead on an isolated metal table! How long was it before he started going into the bloat phase?

RACHEL

(calmly)

I don't know. I wasn't really paying that much attention.

The group keeps walking forward, silently.

JACOB

(to Rachel, sincerely)

Are you all right with that, by the way? I mean, it's been a month - are you still okay.. I mean, have you been okay - or are you okay now..?

RACHEL

(interrupting)

I'm fine. Let's just focus on the task at hand...

The group walks silently until Rachel holds up her hand.

RACHEL

Hold up!

The characters stop behind Rachel downstage left, as she studies the map intently.

RACHEL

(without raising head)

Can anybody see what's the name of the road ahead of us?

STUNT

We can lift our heads if that's what you're asking.

VAUDE

(looking up)

Uh... Buxton. Buxton Avenue. Is that on the map?

RACHEL

(searching map)

Wait... Buxton? Buxton... Buxton...

JACOB

Rachel, don't tell me we're lost.

RACHEL

(jokingly)

...Okay, we're not lost.

JACOB

(annoyed)

Damn it, Rachel! You told us you knew where we were going!

RACHEL

I did, past tense. Now I have no idea where we are.

VAUDE

Wait, are we, like, lost? How did we get lost if we have a map?

RACHEL

Calm down, everybody. We just need re-coordinate ourselves, is all.

As Rachel, Vaude, and Jacob discuss Rachel's competency with the map, Stunt gazes across the stage at the mysterious stranger.

STUNT

(gazing at stranger)

We could ask him.

Rachel and the gang share Stunt's gaze.

JACOB

Ask him? Yeah, okay.

(imitating likely exchange)

Excuse me sir, would you happen to know where we might be able to find the corpse of a long-dead plane hijacker that was never identified? I believe that it should be strung up one the local trees here...

RACHEL

(to Jacob)

I'm sorry Jacob, do you have a better idea? We can just ask him, 'have you seen a corpse-like-thing around here?' It's a simple question!

A moment of silence is shared amongst the group.

VAUDE

(to Rachel)

Yeah so, can you, like, ask him?

JACOB

Yeah, Rachel. You have to ask him.

RACHEL

Wait - Why me exactly?

JACOB

Well, you got us lost, now you got to get us... un-lost.

STUNT

Do it, Rach.

Rachel sighs and hands Jacob the map. She stretches her arms behind her back and cracks her neck. She then takes a deep breath, facing the strange individual. She quickly turns towards the group with a comedic anxiety.

RACHEL

(whispering)

I'm not very good with people.

VAUDE

Yeah, we know.

STUNT

That's why you're president of the Metropolis High Mortuary Club.

Rachel takes one last deep breath before approaching the lone figure.

RACHEL

(nervously)

Uh... Sir? Excuse me, sir? Hi, sorry to interrupt you in whatever you were doing.

The figure remains unresponsive.

RACHEL

Uh... Me and my friends... Well, my friends and I, we were just wondering if you...

The figure remains unresponsive.

RACHEL

I mean, If you had happened to come across a... Um...

Rachel looks back to her friends for support while the figure doesn't even recognise her presence. Her friends shrug. Rachel takes another deep breath.

RACHEL

Do you know where we can find the corpse of D.B. Cooper?

At this, Rachel's friends audibly cringe. The figure slowly raises their arm and points in the direction further left.

RACHEL

Uh... Thank you! Thank you very much!

Rachel runs back to her group.

VAUDE

Real smooth.

RACHEL

Hey, at least now we know where we're going!  
(pointing)



We've journeyed for many hours, have gone farther from town than some of us have ever gone before, and now our treasure is just in sight. Onward, fellow members of the Metropolis High Mortuary club! We're going to find us D.B. Cooper! We're going to find a corpse!

JACOB

You really don't have to be so theatrical. It's really unnecessary.

STUNT

(to Jacob)

Your existence is unnecessary.

Rachel confidently leads the group in front of the lone stranger and exits stage left. As she exits, the lone stranger watches them before exiting in the opposite direction.

The stage darkens.

## ACT 1, SCENE 2

Lights come up to reveal a stage empty, save a small table center stage. The voice of an upbeat radio speaker can be heard over the audience.

RADIO

Good morning, Portland! How's everyone doing this wonderful eve of thanksgiving, 1971? Me personally, I plan spending my pilgrim-day surrounded by friends and family, indulging in a succulent turkey complete with gravy and a bottomless bottle of Jack.

From stage right, enter DAN COOPER, a short man with a timely black suit and tie, complete with greased-back hair. He carries with him an aura of inner rage and worry. In addition, he is carrying with him a suitcase which he promptly slams on the table center stage, opening it as he does so. He then quickly exits stage right to retrieve additional clothing for packing.

RADIO

Now my relatives just came in the other day all the way from Charleston, bless them, and they couldn't stop telling me about the traffic at the airport, with the amount of people coming in and out from all over the country to celebrate thanksgiving with their loved ones.

So just keep that in mind, ladies and gents, airplanes today are going to be stuffed like a can of sardines.

Dan returns carrying with him a pile of clothing which he aggressively stuffs into his suitcase.

#### RADIO

Now I just want to say that I couldn't be more grateful of my wife, ladies and gents, who is, as I speak, working tirelessly making sure we don't disappoint with our world-famous bird. There's a certain expectation of taste in our family, you see. So gents, make sure to use this thanksgiving as an opportunity to thank that special doll in your life for putting up with you and all your-

A frustrated Dan walks downstage, and turns off the invisible radio with a quick hand gesture, interrupting and silencing the radio broadcaster. He sighs and returns back to packing. He stands behind his suitcase, staring pensively into its contents. Upon seeing its contents he begins to choke up, gasping for air in between pauses of despair.

Dan closes the suitcase before furiously saunters off stage right, returning with a jacket he is in the midst of putting on. He then begins to move downstage left, leaving the suitcase.

Dan stops in his tracks and looks behind him at his suitcase, still resting atop the table. He cautiously approaches it, as if the action of picking it up carries more weight than initially appears.

He picks up the suitcase and the set of his room disappears behind him as he walks downstage.

Upon approaching the edge of the stage, he gazes down stage right and raises his hand as if calling a cab. He chases an invisible cab down stage right, where a spotlight is shown on a pair of chairs from the front row of the cab.

Sitting in the driver's seat is a salty, worn CAB DRIVER smoking a cigarette. Dan sits himself next to the cab driver, who solemnly looks up at Dan.

Yeah - where to?  
CAB DRIVER

Dan pauses for a second, as if deeply contemplating his future.

Ay! Zoot-suit Newman! Where to?  
CAB DRIVER

\_\_\_ airport.  
DAN  
(dryly)

Yeah - Domestic or International?  
CAB DRIVER

...Domestic.  
DAN

Yeah.  
CAB DRIVER

The cab driver puts the cab in gear and begins driving. A brief pause is shared between Dan and the cab driver.

Where you headed?  
CAB DRIVER

Domestic.  
DAN

You're going domestic?  
CAB DRIVER

Uh-huh.  
DAN

I mean which state? Which city?  
CAB DRIVER

... Seattle.

DAN

Seattle? What's in Seattle?

CAB DRIVER

My fiance.

DAN

Your fiance?

CAB DRIVER

Dan nods.

CAB DRIVER

All right, lucky guy. When's the wedding?

DAN  
(inattentive)

We haven't set a date.

CAB DRIVER

Yeah - You enjoying your last days of bachelorhood?

Dan ignores the driver and looks anxiously out the cab window.

CAB DRIVER

I was married once. It was a god-damn miserable experience... Yeah.

The ride is silent for the rest of the way until the cab finally arrives at it's destination. Dan gets out his wallet and pays the cab driver, who counts the bills as Dan retrieves his suitcase from the boot.

CAB DRIVER  
(to Dan)

Hey! You call this a tip?

Dan reaches into his pocket and pulls out a couple more crumpled bills and hands them to the cab-driver.

## CAB DRIVER

Look -- you seem nice. My advice kid? Get out while you still can. Sure the wedding's fun, but it's all downhill from there. The moment you settle down is the moment you sign your own death warrant - you got me? It's like an avalanche that never ends. Yeah, the rocks just keep on pilin' and pilin' ... Anyway, have a nice trip!

Dan nods and leaves the cab. The cab drives away as stage right goes dark.

Dan sighs and enters the airport reception area, and gets in line for a boarding class behind two other customers whom are lined up in front of the front desk. They each purchase a boarding ticket from the RECEPTIONIST behind the front desk. Once each of the passengers purchase their tickets, Dan stands in front of the desk, the receptionist looking to Dan in a kindly fashion.

DAN

(whispering)

One ticket to Seattle, Washington.

RECEPTIONIST

Return or one-way?

DAN

One-way.

RECEPTIONIST

Name?

DAN

Dan.

RECEPTIONIST

Dan..?

DAN

Cooper. Dan Cooper.

The receptionist writes the name and some notes behind the desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Dan Cooper... Smoking or non-smoking?

DAN  
Do... Do they sell cigarettes at the gate?

RECEPTIONIST  
Yes sir.

DAN  
Smoking, then.

RECEPTIONIST  
Excess luggage?

DAN  
(raising briefcase)  
This is all.

RECEPTIONIST  
(acknowledgement)  
That's all...

The receptionist writes down some additional details before handing Dan a ticket. Dan tries a futile attempt at starting a conversation, but is ignored by the receptionist.

DAN  
This is my first...

RECEPTIONIST  
(handing over ticket)  
Gate 21, seat 18 c. Have a pleasant flight!

Dan awkwardly fidgets the ticket in his hands.

DAN  
Do... Do you know where I can find the pay phones?

RECEPTIONIST  
Around the corner, to you left - adjacent to the rest rooms.

Dan nods before walking across the stage to a pay-phone, shown upon by a single spotlight.

He approaches the pay-phone and hesitantly removes the telephone from the hook and inserts coins into the register. He waits anxiously, phone at his ear, for somebody to answer. Finally, the voice of Veronica can be heard on the other end.

VERONICA

Hello?

(no answer)

Hello? Is anybody there?

DAN

Hi, Veronica.

VERONICA

Hi. Who is this..?

DAN

It's Dan. Dan Cooper.

There is a short pause.

VERONICA

Dan?

DAN

Do you... Do you love me?

VERONICA

What kind of question is that?

DAN

(internally suffering)

I don't know. I don't know. I'm just wondering how you're enjoying your, uh, vacation.

VERONICA

It's nice.

DAN

(bluntly)

Yeah? And how about this Pete guy I keep hearing about? Is he enjoying it? 'Cause from what I hear, you both seem to be having a swell time with each other!

There is a short pause before Veronica hangs up the phone, leaving Dan to quell any feeling of indecisiveness he might have about his journey. The lights dim. As a voice from the boarding gate is emitted over the stage.

BOARDING ANNOUNCER

Your attention please. Northwest Orient Airlines flight 305 to Seattle, Washington, is now boarding. I repeat: Northwest Orient Airlines flight 305 to Seattle, Washington, is now boarding. All passengers please report to gate 21...

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Interior of the plane. Two rows of adjacent seats are present facing downstage. As passengers begin to board the aircraft, Dan Cooper takes up the aisle seat of one of the more visible pair of seats. As the other passengers are getting comfortable, he slides his suitcase underneath his chair and then reclines backwards, awaiting departure.

After the passengers have settled in, a young female flight attendant, FLORENCE, walks down the middle path addressing the passengers with an overly-excited attitude.

FLORENCE

(excitedly)

Good afternoon, passengers! My name is Florence Shaffner and I'll be your attendant this flight. Our pilots right now are just preparing for takeoff, so I'm just going to go over a few safety guidelines before we start making our way to the Queen City, Seattle! Please store your carry-on luggage under your seat and make sure you and your loved ones buckled in prior to take-off.

Dan begins to take a cigarette out of his pocket and a match along with it. Florence quickly walks over to him and removes it from his mouth before he has a chance to light it.

FLORENCE

...And please refrain from smoking 'till we are in the air, thank you.



Dan sighs and sits back in his chair. The pilot's voice can be heard over the intercom as Florence walks offstage and unknown to Dan, smoking the cigarette that she stole from him. The intercom audibly turns on over the passengers, and the voice of PILOT 1 echoes throughout the stage.

PILOT 1

(not realizing intercom is on)

No... No... It's (beat) Damn it, Max! It's complicated aerodynamics, you wouldn't understand. Well then how the hell do bees fly? You know how small their wings are compared to their fat bodies? (beat) What's on?

(realizing the intercom is on)

Oh. Sorry - This is your pilot speaking. Please fasten your seat belts - we are cleared for takeoff.

Dan quickly manages to fasten his seat belt, and grips the arms of his chair in fearful anticipation.

The passengers in the plane lurch backwards, as the plane is propelled forwards. Dan closes his eyes in agony. Shortly after, the plane achieves a cruising altitude, and Dan exhales a breath he had been holding the entirety of the flight. He immediately reaches for a cigarette and lights it.

While Dan is distracted, the head of a young woman with scraggly hair pops out from under the window seat adjacent to him. The woman, DEBBIE, then turns her head to look towards Dan, obviously distracted with his thoughts and cigarette respectively, facing the opposite direction as a result.

Debbie quickly scrambles from under the chair to sit on the chair adjacent to Dan. Dan doesn't seem to notice, initially. Once he glances over, Debbie playfully coughs and salutes at him. She speaks with a rough, polluted voice.

DEBBIE

(coughing, croaked voice)

Spare a cigarette?

Upon listening to her, Dan, maintaining eye-contact all the while, slowly reaches upwards to press the button that summons the flight attendant. Both passengers then patiently await the arrival of Florence to their row.

FLORENCE

How can I help you?

As Dan opens his mouth to speak, Debbie quickly leans across him and interrupts his potential exchange.

DEBBIE

We - my husband and I - we're just wanting to order some drinks if that's at all a possibility.

Debbie puts her hand over the shoulder of a stunned Dan.

FLORENCE

(perplexed)

Drinks?

DEBBIE

(coughing)

Yes - I'll just have some water with a little crushed ice in a plastic cup and my husband here will be having...

(to Dan)

What will you be having, dear?

Dan's expression remains one of stunned disbelief.

DEBBIE

He'll have the bourbon and soda. On the rocks, please and thank you.

Florence nods confusedly before heading off to fetch the drinks. Debbie pats Dan on the shoulder before leaning back in her chair - completely at ease.

Dan proceeds to slowly turn his head towards a relaxed Debbie sitting next to him. Debbie coughs and faces him.

DEBBIE

So about that cigarette?

Dan reluctantly gives her a cigarette, which she lights with his lighter.

DEBBIE

It's Debbie, by the way. In case you forgot your wife's name.

DAN

(putting away lighter)

I'm not married. Just engaged.

DEBBIE

(croaking)

Lucky you.

Debbie inhales a whiff from the cigarette, holds it for a second, and then exhales before responding in a rasped voice.

DEBBIE

(coughing)

I'm married myself. Wed to lung cancer.

Before Dan can respond, Florence comes over to the two of them with their respected drinks.

FLORENCE

(handing Dan drink)

For you sir, a bourbon and soda on the rocks. And...

(handing Debbie drink)

Water in a plastic cup.

Dan accepts his drink in silent resignation. As Florence walks off stage, Debbie carefully inspects her water.

DAN

I don't know if it is even my place as to inquire what the hell you were doing under that chair.

Ignoring Dan, Debbie presses the button on the ceiling that summons the flight attendant.

A few moments later, Florence returns to their row of seats.

FLORENCE

Can I help you?

DEBBIE

Yeah, I specifically asked for water in a plastic cup...

FLORENCE

For yourself, sir?

DEBBIE

No - for me. Now could you be a dear and find some way to get the contents from this glass cup into one of a plastic material? Thanks.

FLORENCE

In a plastic cup?

DEBBIE

(condescendingly)

Yeah. I'd like that. I'd like that very much.

Florence nods and, taking back the plastic water cup, walks off stage. Debbie continues to recline in her chair and smoke her cigarette.

DAN

You have lung cancer?

Debbie crosses her legs and nods.

DEBBIE

Doctors gave me three years on my own. Said they could raise it to twenty for two-hundred thousand. Makes you wonder how much a year of your life is worth, right? That's twenty years. Two-hundred thousand for twenty years, so ten thousand per year. As if you could ever put a price on one year of life. What would you do with a year that you paid for? Me, I'd probably waste it. Watching television, falling in love, baking, falling out of love...

DAN

(gesturing to cigarette)

Maybe you should stop doing that, then. Unless you want to further shorten your life expectancy.

DEBBIE

Yeah? Then what else would I be doing? Life's not worth living without Camel.

Dan takes a drag from his own cigarette, before coughing loudly and disrupting the flow of conversation.

DAN

(coughing, covering mouth)

Sorry.

DEBBIE

You don't do this very often, do you?

Dan ignores her.

DEBBIE

I thought so. You look like the kind of person who only smokes when he needs to. (beat)  
What happened, Dan?

DAN

How do you know my name?

DEBBIE

It says so on your trousers, Dan Cooper.

DAN

Trousers? You went through my suitcase?

Dan quickly pulls out his suitcase from under him. Seeing that it is open and unorganized, he quickly closes it and slides it back under the chair.

DEBBIE

You practically threw it in front of my face. I took it as an invitation.

DAN

(frustrated)

I put it under my chair, as I was my duty as an airline passenger. I wasn't made aware of the presence of a stowaway hiding under the row!

At that moment, Florence comes along with a new glass of water, flooded with crushed ice. She seems slightly peeved as she hands the drink to Debbie.

FLORENCE

(peeved)

Water in a plastic cup.

Florence offers the glass of water to Debbie with a little bar napkin.

Debbie hands her cigarette to Dan with little regard, and takes a sip of water from the cup as the flight attendant waits impatiently. Debbie immediately enters a coughing fit.

A mildly concerned Florence offers the check to a coughing Debbie, who gestures over to Dan, who takes it reluctantly. He reaches for his wallet and hands Florence her money.

DEBBIE

(recovering herself)

Wait.

Debbie reaches into her own jacket pocket and pulls from it a folded note, which she hands to the waitress. The waitress takes it hesitantly.

DEBBIE

Miss Florence, I suggest you share that with our friends in the cockpit. Please and thank you.

Florence nods slowly and in a concerned fashion before taking the folded paper and exiting stage right. Debbie refocuses her attention on Dan.

DEBBIE

I am very good a reading people. I'm what they call "people literate". You understand?

DAN

No.

DEBBIE

I know people. I know people, and I can read them like a book. It's like a kind of high-powered perception, yeah? With one look I can see somebody's motivations, internal conflicts, perceptions on life. One look and I pick out an entire character.

DAN

(inattentive)

Is that so?

Debbie leans over to the face of the inattentive Dan.

DEBBIE

(breaking Dan's distraction)

Hey!

(ominously)

I can read you. I can see that you're hurt. Somebody hurt you Dan, didn't they? They really did a number on you. And how dare they? With your vulnerable character they'd have a better time justifying throwing a kitten off a bridge than to cause you pain. (beat) I can see now that you're just an innocent caught in the crossfire. You're like a little baby bear.

Dan looks over to Debbie with minor confusion. Debbie looks down at her drink in a ponderous fashion.

DEBBIE

I'm going to change you today, Dan. I'm going to fix you.

DAN

Fix me?

DEBBIE

(under her breath)

I'm going to open your eyes, Dan. You've been living in a hole your entire life. Never having gotten a glimpse of the outside.

The intercom turns on, with the pilot's voice overhead

PILOT

(sounding panicked)

Ladies and gentlemen, you may notice that we are experiencing a slight change in course.

Please remain in your seat, there is no reason to panic. Who's panicking? I'm not panicking.

(sighing)

God damn it - we're all screwed. What's still on?

Dan looks up concerned as the rest of the passengers on board begin to look forward worried.

DEBBIE

(seemingly inattentive)

Rise and shine, Dan. It's the first day of the rest of your life.

Stage goes dark.

#### ACT 1, SCENE 4

In the plane's cockpit. Two dressed captains, the PILOT and CO-PILOT, are seated adjacent to each other, controlling the plane.

PILOT

(facing other pilot)

Okay, so air of low pressure goes around the top part of the wing, right? And air with higher pressure goes down.

CO-PILOT

Yeah - I get that. Why though?

PILOT

Because science, all right? You wouldn't understand. Now this makes it easier for the plane to move upwards, right? Because the lower pressure on the top forces the plane to move up. Now that's called lift.

CO-PILOT

Oh...

Suddenly, Florence bursts into the cockpit, holding the note that Debbie gave her in one hand.

The pilot turns his head around to see Florence panting against the door, frightened out of her wits.



PILOT

Ms. Sheryl! Is that tobacco I smell on you? An here I was thinking you'd be off that.

Florence ignores him.

FLORENCE

My name is Florence.

(agitated)

We have a nut in seat 17B.

Florence passes the pilot the note, who takes it to read.

PILOT

Oh my God...

CO-PILOT

(concerned)

What does it say?

PILOT

(reading)

He... He has a bomb. The passenger has a bomb in his suitcase and that he's holding the whole plane hostage.

(the pilot scans the rest of the note)

He wants two-hundred thousand dollars in "negotiable American currency" else he'll blow us all to eternity.

There is a silence in the cabin.

CO-PILOT

(exclaiming)

Two-hundred thousand dollars? Where are we going to get that kind of money?

The pilot and Florence ignore the co-pilot. The pilot folds the paper in his hands. Florence bites her knuckle. There is an atmosphere of anxiety contained within the cabin.

PILOT

(to Florence, audibly nervous)

What does protocol call for us to do in these situations?

FLORENCE

(panicking)

I don't know - this wasn't in training. None of this was in training!

PILOT

We'll have to do an emergency landing at the nearest airport and contact the police. I mean - we contact them now, and hopefully they'll have a better idea of what to do then we do. What's the nearest airport, Jake?

CO-PILOT

I reckon from here it's probably Tacoma. About half-an-hour North... off course.

PILOT

Call them in. Tell them to contact the - uh - authorities.

Florence ponders silently while the co-pilot tries to get in contact with Tacoma airport.

FLORENCE

(to pilot)

We should also consider the possibility that he might be lying.

PILOT

(steering plane)

You didn't see a bomb?

FLORENCE

Nope.

PILOT

Then that's a possibility.

FLORENCE

And he's crazy. Crazy people tend to overexaggerate.

PILOT

What exactly leads you to conclude that he's crazy?

FLORENCE

He was talking to himself, cap. Acted as if there was some woman sitting next to him. Ordered two drinks for one person, took one for himself and dropped the other all over the seat.

The pilot nods pensively.

PILOT

(to Florence)

Yeah - that's pretty weird. Regardless, we're turning. Can't have a crazy on board - he's a risk to the passengers. But you might as well check with him in the most discreet manner possible.

FLORENCE

What? You want me to go back there? Talk to a maniac with a charged explosive?

PILOT

You think you're safe up here? If he blows whatever he might have, we're all going to get a wreath at the airport - regardless of where we are on the plane.

FLORENCE

I'm not going back there. I am not talking to that madman!

PILOT

Not another word, Sheryl. Go back, and find out what you can. Don't want to scare anybody, just check to see whether or not he's really lying. Wait for us to turn and then ask him. Worst case scenario, we have a lunatic aboard a 727 with a 170 souls onboard carrying an explosive device.

FLORENCE

(frustrated)

It's Florence...

PILOT

What did I say?

Florence exhales slowly and puts on a comedic fake smile before disappearing behind the pilots.

CO-PILOT

I just talked with Tacoma. They're sending in guys trained for this kind of thing. They told us to just keep calm and meet his demands best we can.

(audibly stressed)

Everything's going to be fine.

PILOT

Let's just make sure to handle this like professionals.

The pilot pulls out the radio used for the intercom and begins speaking to the passengers.

PILOT

(sounding panicked)

Ladies and gentlemen, you may notice that we are experiencing a slight change in course. Please remain in your seat, there is no reason to panic. Who's panicking? I'm not panicking-

Stage goes to black.

CO-PILOT

Smooth, sir.

PILOT

Shut up.

ACT 1, SCENE 5

Scene opens with Stunt and Vaude, not far into their journey, crouching towards the tundra ground, closely investigating a dead bird center stage. Neither Rachel nor Jacob are currently on stage.

VAUDE

So? Can you identify it?

STUNT

(poking it)

It's definitely dead.

VAUDE

I meant its genus.

STUNT

(coldly)

Do I look like a ornithologist?

VAUDE

Granted, but you don't look much like a mortician either.

STUNT

Yeah? Pray tell how exactly is a mortician supposed to look like?

VAUDE

I imagine a guy with, like, a hump.

STUNT

A hump.

VAUDE

Yeah. And crazy eyes. Maybe they're missing some teeth, and they have really pale skin - kind of vampiric, you know?

STUNT

So all morticians are vampires with humps?

RACHEL

(offstage right)

Is my scoliosis really that bad?

Enter Rachel and Jacob stage right. Both look distraught.

VAUDE

(to Rachel)

What's up? Can we keep going?

RACHEL

(irritated)

Yeah, funny story: So the guy I talked to about Cooper told me that we'd find his body hanging from an oak tree where the water flows like a thousand fire flies with the colors of a field of daises - and at first I thought he was being cryptic, but...

JACOB

There's a nuclear plant that's dumping stuff downstream - he was being literal... What're y'all looking at?

STUNT

Dead bird.

Jacob rushes over to look.

JACOB

(intrigued)

Ooh... Looks like a American Goldfinch.

(noticing the looks of suspicion)

Oh what, you're find with studying decomposing matter, but you'll draw the line at bird-watching. I see how it is.

Rachel joins the group crowded around the bird.

RACHEL

It's really beautiful.

VAUDE

Yup...

A short moment of silence is shared among the group.

STUNT

I call autopsy.

Stunt throws her bag around her shoulder, and begins to take out surgical tools.

VAUDE

You wanna give somebody else a turn this time, Stunt?

STUNT

Vaude, no offense, but you're hands are about as steady as a Parkinson's patient going through shock therapy.

JACOB

(to Vaude)

She's got you there.

Stunt retrieves the last of her tools from her bag: a pair of tweezers, a scalpel, and some cotton balls. She leans over to start working on the bird, picking through it, constantly analyzing every detail revealed under the bloodied pile of feathers.

As she works, a look of discomfort sets on Rachel's face.

STUNT

(picking through)

Subject in rigor mortis, primal Bloat. Blood coloration is at seventy percent, and CDI estimated twelve percent. Vaude, can you move your head? You're blocking the sun.

VAUDE

(moving head slightly)

I'd say, like, four hours with this kind of terrain. What's the cause of death?

STUNT

Something violent.

JACOB

(noticing Rachel's discomfort)

Yo, Rach! You all right? You're usually all over this.

RACHEL

(obviously uncomfortable)

I don't know. Just something came over me.

STUNT

(picking apart bird)

Here we go...

Stunt uses the tweezers to pull from the bird a small white stone.

STUNT

(gazing into stone)

Ladies and gentlemen, we have our culprit.

Stunt hands the stone off to Vaude, who gazes at it under a ray of sunlight.

VAUDE

It's like a white stone. How did this get into the bird?

Jacob takes the stone from Vaude.

JACOB

I'm thinking a local kid wanted to test his new slingshot on a target a bit more mobile than empty beer cans.

Jacob tosses the stone to Rachel, who catches it clumsily. She looks faint.

RACHEL

(faintly)

This thing... It...

JACOB

Rachel, you all right?

Rachel walks steadily downstage as Jacob, Vaude, and Stunt remain frozen in place. She continues to walk forward, the stage behind her darkens, and she steps into a memory of the past.

After a bit an old man, UNCLE, dressed in a white lab-coat enters stage right and approaches Rachel. He brings with him a rolling operating table with a still humanoid laying under a white blanket atop the table.

Upon reaching Rachel, he stands on the side of the operating table opposite to the audience, looking down ponderously at the body.

UNCLE

(reaching hand out to Rachel)

Scalpel.

Rachel looks towards her uncle confusedly.

UNCLE

The scalpel, Rachel.

Rachel nods and hands her uncle the white stone she was carrying. The uncle then begins to closely inspect the body.

RACHEL

Uncle...

UNCLE

Yes?

RACHEL

Will this kill him?

UNCLE

He's already dead, dear. He can't feel anything. (beat) You're mother spoke to me this morning, did you know that?



Rachel nods.

UNCLE

We spoke quite a lot about you. She says that you want to grow up to be like me. Do what I do - whatever it is you think I do... She's pretty worried.

The uncle leans over the table to look at Rachel.

UNCLE

Should she be?

Rachel shakes her head. The uncle sighs.

UNCLE

(gazing down at rock)

Rachel... This isn't the kind of career you should... When you're this young...

(recollects thoughts)

It's not healthy. It's not good for the brain. In fact, it's pretty damn harmful at times. Do you know what I really do? Do you? Well, I'm like a doctor. I'm like a doctor that studies dead things. You probably don't even understand what death is. (beat) When a person dies, they don't exist anymore. They don't think, they don't move, they don't act. The problem with that - with doing what I do - Is that you sometimes lose sight of who you're dealing with. Or whom. It's not.... It's not human. Do you understand?

Rachel nods slowly.

UNCLE

(pointing at body)

His name was and is Alexander - and he was a nice man. He had hobbies, he had friends, he had a character.

(handing rock back to Rachel)

Would you like to meet him?

Rachel nods.

The uncle then takes the operating table offstage right. She does not follow, but stays behind, returning to her initial scene.

RACHEL

All we want to find is a skeleton... Does anybody even know who we're searching for?

VAUDE

What, you mean like the cadaver? We were all there for the briefing.

RACHEL

Then who are we searching for?

VAUDE

(correcting)

‘Whom’... Whom are we searching for.

STUNT

D.B. Cooper. Presumably.

RACHEL

Who was D.B. Cooper?

JACOB

D.B. Cooper. He hijacked a Boeing 727 in 1971. Got two-hundred thousand dollars in ransom money from local authorities before jumping at a high altitude into an unknown tundra wilderness below. He was never properly identified so authorities just refer to him with the name he gave them while on the aircraft.

Rachel paces in a circle.

RACHEL

You see, that tells me what he did - not who he was. (beat) People try too hard to emulate a celebrity or something by going to the same schools or buying the same clothes and driving the same cars as said celebrity, right? But that doesn't explain how they got to studying in that school, buying those clothes, or buying that car. I've know enough of what Cooper did. We all do. We've studied every known aspect that's known about his hijacking - now I want to know why. Why did he rob the plane? What drove him - what were his motivations? His conflicts? His innermost thoughts? Who was D.B. Cooper?

Rachel looks up to a confused group of friends.

STUNT

That's irrelevant.

RACHEL

Why Stunt? Why exactly is that irrelevant?

STUNT

We're here to see a corpse, not staple a character onto dead matter.

JACOB

Yeah, Rachel. What's gotten into you?

RACHEL

What's gotten into me? Do you realize what we're even dealing with here? Do any of you have the slightest sense of the amount of influence this corpse has had on the American public? D.B. Cooper single-handedly pulled off the greatest theft in American history, and all you guys care about is the decaying flesh!

VAUDE

Rach...

RACHEL

(frustrated)

Do you realize that most of the people that know about him think he's still alive? The police never found his body, right? We belong to a very exclusive club of knowledge. Knowledge of the final resting place of the greatest American robber there ever was. But to you guys, it's just another body-

JACOB

Well to be fair, Rachel, we are all members of an organization that dedicates itself to the study of dead things. We're not part some fan club for a dead thief. If we put a name on every corpse we ever saw, we could fill out an encyclopedia of characters.

RACHEL

(irritated)

You guys just don't get it - this is so much bigger than us. What about the mystery? The name he gave the check-in counter was Dan, and the name he had in the cabin was D.B. He was nervous at the check in counter, but calm and collected once he was on the plane. A lone guy with an inconsistent character and a suitcase of explosives manages to pull off one of the greatest heists in American history.

JACOB

Don't turn this into some cheap detective story. What we know for sure is that there is a dead human specimen resting within these woods. Now this Human may have been the infamous hijacker D.B. Cooper. He may have stolen two-hundred thousand dollars in American currency and then may have jumped, possibly only to have his parachute fault mid-jump, potentially resulting in his demise amongst the tree branches below. Now rumor has it that this unfortunate parachutist happens to be D.B. Cooper. But that's all it is, rumors. All we know for sure is that there is a dead body around here, and due to some kind of morbid curiosity, we like to see dead bodies.

STUNT

We should get going.

Rachel shakes her head and, sighing as she does so, and beings to hike offstage left. Her group grabs their gear and follows her.

VAUDE

(sniffing)

Does anybody know how toxic waste smells like?

The four students exit stage left.

## ACT 1, SCENE 6

Debbie and Dan are sitting in the same row of chairs they were sitting at in their last scene. They've changed their sitting positions, indicating the passage of time. Debbie pats her lap impatiently before leaning over to talk to Dan.

DEBBIE

(pensively)

When I was a little girl, my family and I lived on a small, peaceful farm just north of Kansas City. We had some chickens. We had some horses. We had a big, red barn and vast field of wheat. Now the farm itself was isolated in a deep valley, only accessible by a narrow dirt road. It was surrounded by a field of heather and blanketed in a bright blue sky. (beat) It was... the most boring place on earth. Everyday we followed the same routine of work and sleep, work and sleep. (beat) One night, my two older cousins invite me to go out adventuring the empty plain under the full moon. We must have walked miles aimlessly. Eventually, we make our way up a hill and look outwards. In the far off distance - past the treeline, past the fields of heather, past everything - I could see a dim streak of light painted across the horizon. The city scape in all it's glory, beckoning me to join it's mass metropolis.

Debbie punches the shoulder of an inattentive Dan.

DAN

Go on, I'm listening.

DEBBIE

While I was mesmerized by the sight of the city scape, my cousins thought it'd be funny to leave without telling me. They ended up abandoning me, a nine-year old farm girl, alone in the wilderness. I spent the night sleeping under a log. Morning came and I found my way home.

Sisters apologized for leaving me out there, but I couldn't accept any kind of apology. They had led me to discover the most beautiful treasure in the whole valley: The outside. I needed to see it again. The next day, I collected a bucket of pebbles from the garden and painted them all a bright white. Before night fell, I made my way back to the hill. On my way there, I laid a trail of these white pebbles down my path and that night I must have spent hours staring into the siren lights of the city. When I needed to get home, I just followed the pebbles. They reflected the moonlight, you see. A path of tiny little lanterns. I would go back and forth night after night to see the city lights in the distance. (beat) Those pebbles helped me find my way home and, eventually, my way out.

Debbie reaches into her jacket pocket and pulls from it a small, painted white stone. She stares at it intently.

DEBBIE

When I got told of my... condition... (beat) When I decided to leave home, I decided to take no memories of that boring old barn with the exception of a white stone that once lit my path to the outside... and seven-hundred in US dollars from my father's safe.

Dan lets out a small chuckle at that. Debbie clears her throat.

DEBBIE

Do you know how many planes crash on takeoff? (beat) Do you know why we didn't?

Debbie lifts the stone to show Dan.

DAN

The rock?

DEBBIE

Yup. This kept us safe. This is going to keep guiding my path 'till the day my cough finally catches up with me. But not before I travel the world with my white-colored rock.

DAN

You must be the most optimistic cancer patient I have ever met.

DEBBIE

Cancer was the best thing that ever happened to me. It opened my eyes to new frontiers. It gave me reason to get out of the cage I had lived in my entire life and would have probably died in. I've got nobody to thank but cancer.

Huh...  
DAN

Dan leans back in his chair as Debbie fidgets with the rock in her hand.

While both characters sit silently, Florence enters the scene from stage left. She looks anxiously at the two characters sitting. Recovering herself, she takes a deep breath and approaches the duo.

Hello...  
FLORENCE  
(anxiously)

Hi.  
DAN

Florence stares silently at the duo before Dan breaks the silence.

I'm sorry, can I help you with something?  
DAN

Yes, actually - sorry. I was curious to know if it would be at all possible that...  
FLORENCE

Yes?  
DAN

Florence takes a deep breath and carefully chooses her next words.

Well, sir... We need... (beat) We need to confirm that you have it... Sir.  
FLORENCE

Have what?  
DAN

The... You gave me the note, sir.  
FLORENCE

I'm sorry, I don't understand.  
DAN

FLORENCE  
Can I please see your suitcase, sir?

DAN  
My suitcase?

FLORENCE  
Yes sir.

DAN  
Why? What's in my suitcase?

FLORENCE  
We just need to confirm, sir... For the captain. Only if you'd be willing.

DAN  
Well I don't have anything to hide, if that's what you're implying.

Dan reaches under his seat and pulls out his suitcase. He pats the lid and smiles at a terrified Florence. Dan sighs and opens the lid, facing the suitcase towards Florence without looking in himself.

At seeing the contents inside the suitcase, she gasps in fear. She remains stunned - facing a concerned and confused Dan - before addressing him in an uneasy manner.

FLORENCE  
Can I get you anything to drink sir, while your here?

DAN  
Oh - I've already paid my tab.

Dan closes the suitcase without looking inside of it.

FLORENCE  
On the house... sir.

DAN  
I'm fine, thank you.

Florence stares shivering at a curious Dan.

DAN

Is everything all right?

FLORENCE

(louder)

Yes! Everything is fine, sir! We will be arriving at the airport soon! We are completely and totally willing to cooperate!

DAN

(confusedly)

All right then...

Florence walks quickly offstage, back to the cockpit.

DAN

Well that was weird. (beat) What the hell was she on?

Dan looks over to Debbie, who shrugs innocently.

Out of curiosity, Dan turns the suitcase over to face him and looks inside. Upon seeing the contents of the suitcase, Dan's face turns to one of complete terror as he immediately closes the suitcase in front of him.

Dan remains stunned in fear, suitcase closed on his lap. Debbie looks over to him and waves her hand in front of his face. He is not responsive.

Debbie then reaches into Dan's front pocket to pull out a carton of cigarettes. She takes one and places it into her mouth while her other hand goes to grab a lighter from his front pocket. Upon grabbing it, she lights her cigarette and takes a drag from it before setting the lighter down next to her.

DAN

Debbie...

DEBBIE

(rasped voice)

Yeah, Dan?



DAN  
Do you know how a bundle of dynamite looks like?

DEBBIE  
Isn't it just some red logs?

DAN  
Yeah. Yeah, just some red logs.

DEBBIE  
Huh.

Debbie takes another drag of her cigarette.

DAN  
Debbie...

DEBBIE  
Yeah, Dan?

DAN  
Do you know what I saw in my suitcase?

DEBBIE  
Some red logs?

DAN  
A bundle of red logs.

DEBBIE  
Ah.

Debbie takes another drag from her cigarette.  
Dan slowly tilts his head over to face her.

DEBBIE  
(noticing Dan staring at her)  
What are you looking at me for?

DAN  
Debbie.

DEBBIE  
Yeah, Dan?

DAN

While you were under my chair...

DEBBIE

Yes?

DAN

Did you put a live explosive in my suitcase?

Debbie takes another drag from her cigarette before responding.

DEBBIE

Maybe.

DAN

(stuttering in confusion)

Maybe? So... W... Why?

Debbie calmly sets down her cigarette.

DEBBIE

Remember when I said that cancer was the best thing to have ever happened to me? It was also the worst. This kind of sickness gave me a new appreciation for life, and with that, a will to keep moving forward. It's the cruelest gift in the world.

Debbie coughs into her arm.

DEBBIE

(chuckling)

I'm addicted, Dan. Addicted to life. Now I find out that for a nominal price of two-hundred thousand dollars, I can stall my demise, if you will.

(looking deep into Dan's eyes)

I need that money Dan. My life's counting on it.

DAN

So you're going to blow up an airliner?

DEBBIE

A lot of people on this plane, Dan. A lot of families that would pay a high price for the life of their loved one. Present company excluded, I'm sure they can empathize with my cause.

DAN

You're... You're going to hold the passengers on this plane for... ransom?

DEBBIE

That's the plan.

Dan begins to shiver with restrained rage.

DAN

Are... You.. Insane?

DEBBIE

(shrugging)

Eh.

DAN

And that note you passed to the flight attendant...

DEBBIE

My demands being conveyed to the pilots.

DAN

But... But when she came back... She didn't talk to you, she talked to me.

DEBBIE

That's certainly what it sounded like.

DAN

(aghast)

Oh my God... She thinks I'm the one with the bomb.

DEBBIE

Well, it is your suitcase.

DAN

(enraged, shaking case)

You... You put a live bomb in my suitcase!

DEBBIE

Yeah, a live bomb that will go off if you keep shaking it like that.

Dan immediately stops shaking and looks down in terror.

DAN

(frustrated)

This isn't me! I don't have a bomb! I'm just going to see my fiance - she's in Seattle! I'm going to Seattle to visit my fiance!

DEBBIE

She's not your fiance, Dan! She's not your lover, she's not your companion. She's nothing. You're still clinging to bars of your cage, man!

DAN

(disoriented)

What? What are you talking about? We're together! What do you know?

DEBBIE

Nothing more than you do - and that's enough.

(Debbie takes another drag from her  
cigarette)

You can hold onto the case for now. I got a remote detonator in my pocket. The bomb will go off whenever I want it to or once it leaves twenty feet of me.

Dan looks down at the suitcase before cautiously placing it on the ground in front of him.

DAN

What do you want?

DEBBIE

I already told you: two hundred thousand dollars in American currency.

DAN

From me. What do you want from me? Is it a coincidence that you happened to sit next to me? Why stuff the bomb in my suitcase? What do you want, Debbie?

Debbie chuckles to herself, reclining deeper into her chair.

DEBBIE

Oh Dan... I just want to show you the world, man! I want you to breath fresh, crisp air. I want you to swim in vast oceans of discovery. You've been asleep all your life - I want to be there when you finally wake up.

DAN

... I have no idea what you're saying.

DEBBIE

Yeah you do.

DAN

No, I seriously don't. You...

Dan takes a deep inhale to collect his thoughts.

DAN

You keep talking as though I'm in some kind of cage. Like I'm in some kind of invisible, magical cage and you're my savior. Like I'm the Insane one without the bomb, yeah? You're going to pull me out of this hole I've dug myself into, right? Like this is how you help me, right? Let me get one thing clear, Debbie: You don't know me and I could care less about you or any so-called help that you're offering. I was perfectly content with where I was going and who I was before you squirmed out from under that chair. After we land and you get your money, I'm going to go with the rest of the passengers. I'm going to see my first and only love who I'm going to spend the rest of my life with and I'll never lend a single thought to your existence ever again!

Dan, frustrated and anxious, throws himself against the chair arm opposite to Debbie.

DEBBIE

Ouch. That hurt, Dan. But that's fine - I don't expect you to understand. See I'm not concerned about how contempt you are in whatever you're doing in your life. I don't care. What I do care about is whether or not I am contempt - and I am contempt only when you see the reality of your unfortunate situation...

Debbie reaches down and picks up the suitcase containing the bomb and places it into Dan's lap.

DEBBIE

And I'm not referring to the bomb in your lap.

DAN

Why on Earth do you have to be so cryptic?

Dan quickly reaches down to take the suitcase off of his lap. Debbie reaches and presses the suitcase against him.

DEBBIE

(condescendingly)

Keep it - I insist.

Dan lays his hands softly onto the briefcase. He begins to sob.

DAN

(choking)

You're mad. You're mad and you're evil.

DEBBIE

(assuring)

Mad and evil.

DAN

You're the devil.

DEBBIE

Where would you find the devil, Dan?

Dan wipes his eyes on his jacket sleeve.

DAN

(sniffing)

What happens now?

DEBBIE

I guess we take command. Reassure the passengers, explain to them our situation.

DAN

You. Not we, only you.

DEBBIE

Right - time for me to take command.

Debbie sets down her cigarette, clears her throat, and takes a deep breath before elevating herself above her chair, projecting her voice to the entire cabin.

DEBBIE

(shouting to other passengers)

Hey! Howdy, everyone! The name's Debbie and this here is Dan Cooper. Do not be alarmed and please, please do not panic. We have unlawfully brought a live bomb on board of this here aircraft and we are planning to hold the entire plane and each of it's passengers for a relatively large sum of money.

We've relayed instructions to the cockpit to land at the nearest airport so that we may get in touch with the authorities responsible for delivering your ransom.

(harsher)

You all have one simple job for the rest of the flight. That job is to just sit still and stay calm. Please don't try to resist, as we've probably already thought of everything y'all could do to stop us.

(upbeat)

The flight attendant will be around shortly to offer drinks on me for whatever inconvenience we've caused. Thank you all and have a pleasant flight.

Dan looks up at Debbie, stunned, as Debbie sits back down in her chair. She grabs her cigarette as the concerned voices of passengers picks up through the cabin. She takes a drag from her cigarette before turning to Dan.

DEBBIE

(innocently)

Oops. Did I say we?

Dan continues to stare blankly at Debbie, mouth open in utter shock at what he just heard. The concerned voice get louder at the stage darkens and the scene ends.

## ACT 1, SCENE 6

Stage lights up with the four students seated on sward in the deep forest eating lunches adjacent to a cooler. The audience enters in the middle of one of Vaude's anecdotes.

RACHEL

(chewing food)

So? What did he say?

VAUDE

Okay, so I entered his office and there were like, pictures of his dogs on the walls and stuff. Just dogs everywhere. So I walked up to him and he was all like:

(Impersonating psychiatrist)

'Hi - I'm doctor so-and-so and together, we're going to get to understand the real Vaude, how does that sound? So I want to know: who's the real Vaude?'

JACOB

Typical.

VAUDE

Yeah, right? So I was all like: ‘You want to know the real me? Why don’t you ask the ten psychologist I went through before you?’

RACHEL

(chuckling)

Yeah, that’s pretty good.

VAUDE

I know, right? And we talked for like an hour and I couldn’t give two shits about whatever he was on about, right? So eventually, he tells me: ‘You’d rather waste my time and your money?’ And I’m like: ‘My mother’s money, your time. Seems like a risk-free venture.’

The group chuckles briefly.

VAUDE

And I mean, with all the pictures of dogs he had hanging around, it honestly should have been him in that chair and me doing the psychoanalysis, you know what I’m saying?

JACOB

Nice.

STUNT

(ominously)

I had a psychologist once.

The group waits in anticipation for Stunt to continue her story. When she does not deliver, they resume chewing their food silently.

RACHEL

(suddenly)

What time is it?

Jacob sets down his food as he reaches for his phone in his pocket.

JACOB

(struggling to get phone out)

I promised my parents I would be home by eight. Family thing.



STUNT

How unfortunate.

JACOB

(looking down at phone)

Six thirty.

RACHEL

(exclaiming)

We've been hiking for three hours?

JACOB

(angered)

Rachel! You said that this would take an hour and a half, tops!

RACHEL

(confused)

The guy who found him first said...

JACOB

Whatever he said, he was wrong. He was wrong, and now we've all got to bite the bullet.

(sighing)

We're not going to be able to make it back before dark. It's just not do-able.

Vaude gets up from his chair.

VAUDE

We can't be out here when it gets dark, bro. That's my one condition.

JACOB

I mean... Maybe if we start heading back now...

RACHEL

(interrupting)

What?! No-

JACOB

Listen to me: we all want to see the skeleton, Rachel. But we won't be able to coordinate ourselves in the dark - and the last thing we want is to get lost in these woods.

VAUDE

There's no way to find ourselves out, man. Once it gets dark, everything's going to disappear.

STUNT

(completely unaware of the conversation)

She had large, round glasses...

VAUDE

We don't even have flashlights. We're going to get lost and end up as the headline for next week's paper: "manhunt for local teens lost in woods comes up empty".

STUNT

(still completely unaware of the conversation)

And many freckles.

RACHEL

Okay, hold on...

Rachel reaches into her bag and pulls from it a small flashlight.

RACHEL

I also have two fully-charged batteries, a compass, and a flare for when things really go down. Come on guys.

What about the countless hours we put into making this thing happen? The effort it took to get the location of Cooper's corpse and the hardships of coordinating a thing like this to fit all of our schedules? I just barely have time for something like this! We worked this hard to get here - are you all going to just chicken out because your afraid we'll run into D.B. Cooper in the dark? Is that it?

(taunting)

I don't know if any of you are aware of this, but once he's dead, there's not much he can do to you!

JACOB

Okay, Rachel - you've made your point loud and clear to all of us, thanks for that. But some of us still value our lives and well-being to some extent and don't want to get trapped out in an unfamiliar forest at night. So... I have an idea: why don't we put it to a vote?

RACHEL

A vote?

JACOB

Yeah, a vote. A democratic vote. All in favor of leaving now, before it gets dark?

Both Jacob and Vaude immediately raise their hand. Rachel glares at Stunt as Stunt slowly joins them.

RACHEL  
(confused)

Stunt? You too?

STUNT  
Rachel, whatever the body in question was in it's past life has disappeared. All that's left is a body. I've seen countless of bodies - some more dead than others. This one doesn't stand out to me at all. Plus, I can't be late home. I have certain responsibilities that need taking care of.

RACHEL  
(disbelief)  
Responsibilities? What responsibilities?

STUNT  
(straight-faced)  
I have several responsibilities.

JACOB  
Come on, Rach. We'll always find some other time to get together and do this. And hey, if we don't, there are plenty of other dead things in the world for us to gawk at.

Rachel stares blankly at Jacob, pondering her decision. She then sighs, nodding slowly.

RACHEL  
(defeated)  
Fine.

At that, the rest of the group proceeds to pick themselves up and begin packing up the campsite. As Rachel reaches downwards to grab her backpack, she comes across a white rock. She picks it up and, holding it up to the light, notices it's apparent similarity with the rock she found earlier. Taking the other rock out of her pocket and holding them side by side affirms her suspicions.

Suddenly, enter stage left Rachel's uncle, dressed in the same lab coat he wore during their first encounter. They both exchange a stare as Rachel has a sudden epiphany. Then, as the uncle retreats backstage, Rachel turns to face the rest of her group.

RACHEL  
(handling rock)

I'm not going.

VAUDE  
(frustrated)

Rachel...

RACHEL  
(calmly)

I saw my uncle.

The group halts their packing, looking over to Rachel concertedly.

VAUDE

Damn it, dude...

JACOB

Yeah, I knew there something off about her today.

Jacob quickly approaches Rachel and tightly grasps her shoulders.

RACHEL

I saw him, Jacob... I saw him...

JACOB

No, Rachel. You did not. You're not well, we need to get you home right now.

RACHEL

I saw my uncle, Jacob.

JACOB

No you didn't Rachel. Come on, let's take you home.

Rachel holds up the white stone.

RACHEL

He gave me a scalpel.

JACOB

(calmly)

No he didn't.

STUNT

She's lost it.

JACOB

Rachel, your uncle is dead, okay? He's not here anymore. Now we all respected him very much. Hell, he inspired you to start the club which we all enjoy being a part of - But he's not here anymore.

RACHEL

Years ago, I went to visit him in at his work, my uncle. He tried to tell me something that day - something important - but I was so young... He tried to teach me humanity. He tried to teach me what a person is really worth.

STUNT

What's a person worth?

RACHEL

...D.B. Cooper is just a name. (beat) He's just a name and his actions that we associate with that name. To us, he's not worth anything else. To the rest of the world, he's not worth anything else. But he's so much more. He's so much more and nobody knows it. (beat) I always had a fascinating with death. I loved seeing dead things decay and become reborn as natural organic matter. But it was only when my uncle died when I first learned the true value a body carries. What a character is worth. (beat) My uncle was an inspiration, and Cooper was the most amazing man to have never been known. I want to know him. I'm staying.

Rachel's group groans.

VAUDE

Rach, you're not well.

RACHEL

(outraged)

I'm not well? I'm not well, Vaude? No - I'm just a human. You all on the other hand...

JACOB

Alright Rachel, that's enough.

RACHEL

You... You all make a big point of being uniquely eccentric and curious. But when given the opportunity to expand your horizons and practice what you claim to be so passionate about, you all just scamper away - like rats. You're all just as bad as everyone at school says you are.

At that, Jacob, Vaude and Stunt become stunned by Rachel's sudden aggression. Noticing their reaction, Rachel throws her own backpack onto her shoulders and proceeds to walk past her fellow students, exiting stage left - deeper into the forest.

Stage darkens.

ACT 1, SCENE 7

Curtains open to reveal the cockpit of the plane. The Pilot and Co-pilot are both nervously piloting the aircraft. Neither of the two seems to be at all inclined to talk. After a few moments, Florence busts through the cockpit door, closing it softly behind her. She too has a look of pure terror on her face as she slides her back down the door onto the cabin floor.

PILOT

(concerned)

What happened?

FLORENCE

(exasperated)

Nothing. Nothing yet.

CO-PILOT

What did he do?

FLORENCE

He just ordered drinks for everyone. Apologized to the cabin, being social with the other passengers.

PILOT

He ordered drinks?

FLORENCE

That's what I just said.

CO-PILOT

Who's paying?

PILOT

(to the co-pilot)

Who's paying? Committing a hostage-exchange with the US government... I don't think his drink check is his biggest concern right now.

FLORENCE

No... No, he's paying. He offered to pay the bill with the money he gets from the ransom.

CO-PILOT

(jokingly)

What - is he like a liquor Robin Hood now?

PILOT

This is nuts... This is just nuts. What's our arrival time?

CO-PILOT

Just under ten minutes.

PILOT

Ten more minutes...

FLORENCE

I'll get the passengers buckled up.

PILOT

(after Florence)

Make sure that above all else that they stay calm.

Just as Florence opens the door to leave, Cooper steps in, carrying the suitcase. Upon seeing this, Florence backpedals. Cooper grabs for the door and offers the exit to Florence with a sly smile, who gladly takes it.

All of this is still unknown to the pilot and co-pilot, who faces are focussed on the path ahead.

While both pilots mind their own business,  
Cooper closes the door to the cockpit slowly and  
proceeds to lean against it.

CO-PILOT

(nervously making conversation)

So... How's the wife and kids?

PILOT

(half-attentively)

I don't know.

Suddenly, the sound of static is heard from the  
radio connected to the control panel. The co-pilot,  
upon hearing this, reaches underneath him and  
grabs his radio headset complete with a  
microphone, which he then proceeds to put on.

CO-PILOT

(grasping headset)

It's the tower.

(into microphone)

Hello? Hello, this is flight 305, Co-pilot speaking. Yes sir. No, yes. We are approaching the  
airport now. Yes sir, if I could...

Cooper reaches down and lifts the headset off of  
the co-pilot's ears, only to put it on his own.  
Both the co-pilot and the pilot stare back in  
shock.

DAN

(into microphone)

Hello? Yeah, hi. Um...

(chuckling)

Sorry I'm not very good at introductions. (beat) Who is this? This is um... Me speaking for  
Debbie... I don't know her last name. Debbie, sir. No sir, I'm not the hijacker. (beat) Yes sir,  
I do have the bomb. (beat) No, sir. No, it's complicated. She can't speak well because of  
her condition. Yes, I'm well aware. Believe me, I'm just as scared as they are. I'm terrified,  
sir. (beat) What does Debbie want? I believe the deal was two-hundred thousand in  
negotiable American currency. (beat) Yes, I can talk for her. (beat) For her cancer treatment.  
It's very costly. (beat) Lung cancer. (beat) She does an awful lot of smoking. (beat) I don't  
sound scared? Well this is just how I uh... How I respond to fear. It's just a natural reaction.  
To being... hijacked. (beat) Well, I've never been hijacked before, so how am I expected to  
feel?



(beat) Well, I mean the thing is, if you wanted to ensure the safety of everybody aboard, you'd make really easy and give her the money. Yeah. Oh uh... Cooper. No, not Debbie Cooper. I don't know her last name, I already told you. I'm Cooper. (beat) Yeah. Well I guess we will. (beat) All right, a pleasure, officer.

Dan takes the headgear off and hands it off to the co-pilot.

DAN

(to the pilots)

Shouldn't you both be looking forward? We wouldn't want to crash now that we've gotten this far, would we?

Both pilots turn slowly to face forwards. Dan leans over and grasps both of their shoulders.

DAN

Once we get to the airport, we're going to have to turn off all the lights in the cabin to avoid snipers. I'll ask you to take care of that, will you? Thanks.

Dan stands over both pilots and chuckles. He stalls momentarily before heading back through the cabin door.

PILOT

He's Insane.

Lights dim.

## ACT 1, SCENE 8

Open to the row of seats that Dan and Debbie initially occupied. Debbie sits alone by the window seat, gazing longingly out to the free world. A few moments pass before she enters a coughing fit and heaves forward. Just then, Dan enters the scene to take his seat next to Debbie. Upon seeing her condition, he sighs and offers her a handkerchief from his pocket, which she uses to wipe her mouth.

DAN

How are the passengers?

Debbie nods as she continues to cough into the napkin.

DEBBIE  
(coughing)

They liked the free drinks.

DAN  
(nervously)

Pilots said we should be arriving soon.

DEBBIE  
(wiping mouth)

Scared of landing?

DAN  
(defensive)

What?

DEBBIE  
Don't be. It's a few bumps and then you're down. Sometimes, if the pilot's good, you don't feel anything.

DAN  
(chuckling nervously)

I'm not scared of landing.

Dan vigorously rubs his hands together.

DAN  
Why is it so cold in here?

DEBBIE  
Hey.

Debbie puts her hand on Dan's shoulder.

DEBBIE  
We've gotten this far.

Dan looks over to Debbie and smiles calmly. As he faces Debbie, his smile turns to one of concern and then anger.

He pulls himself away from Debbie retracts, panicking, to the far edge of his seat.

DAN  
(panting)

What did you do to me?

Debbie faces Dan with a more empathic smile.

DAN  
(anxious)

That wasn't me back there. Debbie? Debbie, that wasn't me.

DEBBIE  
Yeah, Dan - It was. It was all you and nobody else.

DAN  
I am not responsible for this.

DEBBIE  
Well, you are carrying the bomb.

DAN  
(infuriated)  
Only because you told me to!

Debbie sighs and hands Dan her cigarette. Dan takes it reluctantly. He takes deep drag from it with ease before handing it back to Debbie.

DEBBIE  
(taking drag from cigarette)  
Are you having fun?

DAN  
Am I having fun? Why would I be having fun? I'm sitting next to a psychopath with a bomb on a plane to visit my fiance who I just recently just found out has been cheating on me for god-knows how long. On top of that, everyone on the plane thinks that I'm the real hijacker - as if I were ever capable of doing something like this.

DEBBIE  
You absolutely are, Dan - but you still haven't answered my question. Are you having fun?

Dan ponders quietly.

DAN

(chuckling)

You know what? Kind of, yeah. This has been the most excitement I've had in years.

DEBBIE

That's good. As long as you're happy, I'm happy.

DAN

What about the money for your cancer treatment?

DEBBIE

(chuckling)

Yeah, that would also make me pretty happy.

Both characters sit calmly smiling, until Dan turns over to see Debbie.

DAN

You know, I'm still getting off at the airport.

DEBBIE

(without turning)

That's a shame. I'd really appreciate your company.

DAN

Yeah, but my mother warned me against sharing the company of criminals.

Both passengers share a chuckle. Debbie gazes outside the window by her seat.

DEBBIE

(excitedly)

Dan! Look, Dan! Look!

Dan gets up from his seat and gazes out the same window.

DAN

Lights.

DEBBIE

They look like stars from up here. We're looking down at stars, Dan. We're gods. The sky is our domain and where mortals look up, we look down.

DAN

There's so many of them... And that must be the airport.

DEBBIE

Oh my God... Dan! Dan, do you see that?

DAN

The... Red, blue, white lights... Is... Is that for us?

DEBBIE

(astonished)

It is! My God, they must have brought out the entire military for us! What an honor!

DAN

(stern)

For you. They brought out the entire US military for you.

DEBBIE

Right. For you.

DAN

(exhausted)

No for... Forget it.

Both characters sit silently, watching the lights outside get closer and closer as the plane prepares to land.

DAN

Thanks by the way.

DEBBIE

For what?

DAN

... I don't know. For everything, I guess.

The cabin lights suddenly shut off, leaving the cabin in a state of complete darkness.

DAN

Looks like we're landing.

The sound of a plane landing and approaching police sirens can be heard resonating from the stage as the scene ends.

ACT 1, SCENE 9

Open to a wintery tundra wilderness at night. The howls of nocturnal animals emanate from the stage. Enter a terrified Rachel stage right. She is carrying with her a flashlight in one hand, while the other is wrapped tightly around her for warmth. She walks with an anxious step, wincing at the slightest sound. A few steps on stage and Rachel's flashlight flickers out of power. The stage goes dark.

RACHEL

(sarcastic)

Brilliant.

Rachel pockets the flashlight. And attempts to walk stage left clumsily in the dark of night. She trips.

RACHEL

(groaning, screaming at nothing)

God damn it! Anything else? No, seriously, get it out of your system now! Whatever else you can throw at me, don't let me stop you.

Rachel awaits anxiously on the ground. Suddenly, a twig cracking can be heard off of stage right. At this, Rachel quickly recovers herself, standing up from the ground, terrified.

RACHEL

(recovering self)

Hello? Who's there?

As Rachel stands facing stage right, enter her uncle in a full lab coat stage left. He stops unnoticed a few feet away from where Rachel is standing. A single, faint spotlight shrouds both characters.

As Rachel assures herself that nothing is following her, she turns around only to fall flat on her back at the sight of her uncle. Her terror becomes a kind of comfort at the sight of her uncle.

RACHEL

Oh, it's you. Hi, uncle. Fancy seeing you, a dead person, alone, deep in a dark forest.

Rachel stands up. Her uncle stares at her silently.

RACHEL

I actually have a confession to make, while you're here: I didn't go to your funeral... I uh... I mourned for you in my own way. (beat) I still made sure to see you on the same table where you told me about Alexander. I didn't do the autopsy myself, but I was there. I saw everything. (beat) You know, all those times you would dissect a person on that metal table - all the times I watched? I was so interested. It was a kind of morbid curiosity, and you - you were my inspiration. But the corpses... Well a body was just a body and nothing more. And... (beat) And it was only when I saw you on that table, that something... I don't know. I really don't know. I know you're trying to tell me something, and I haven't the faintest idea what that something is. But I'll understand once I find Cooper, won't I? That's what this is all about - not to see another corpse. Not to see another anonymous body decomposing into the Earth. It's about the people. It's about Cooper and I.

The uncle solemnly points downwards to the ground where a trail of white stones is carefully laid, leading off to stage left.

RACHEL

What...

(looks down)

Woah! Look at all these white rocks!

Rachel bends over to pick up one of the rocks in her hand, comparing it to the other two rocks of the same kind she has collected this journey.

RACHEL

(flabbergasted)

Yo - What is happening... Am I seeing thing? I knew there something in Stunt's Rice-Krispies.

(looking down path)

They kind of make a path through the forest. And you can kind of see them when the moonlight reflects against them!

(looking offstage left)

Oh my God, it just keeps going! Uncle, where does this lead?

(standing up)

Does it lead to Cooper?

Suddenly, the sound of a twig snapping can be heard loudly behind Rachel. Upon hearing this, a familiar face of terror sets on her face and she sprints off stage left, past her uncle, following the path of white rocks.

Lights dim.

ACT 1, SCENE 10

In airplane cockpit set. Both the pilot and co-pilot are piloting the aircraft, looking anxious as they do so.

Enter Florence from the cockpit door. She looks exasperated.

PILOT

(to Florence)

Well?

FLORENCE

Nothing. The bastard's still sitting there, talking to himself now with that bag of cash on his lap.

CO-PILOT

How much was it again?

FLORENCE

Two-hundred thousand dollars. I've never in my life seen so much money in one place.

PILOT

Did you offer him drinks?

FLORENCE

Drinks? Did I offer him drinks? He's not our passenger anymore - we're his hostage, God damn it!

PILOT

Calm down, Florence.

FLORENCE

(agitated)

Calm down? You want me to calm down? I'm plenty calm right now!



Oh yeah, plenty calm serving a bomb-carrying, plane-hijacking looney drinks on the house! And heaven forgive me if I serve him the wrong Brandy... (beat) I need a cigarette.

The co-pilot looks towards the pilot, who nods approvingly. The co-pilot then takes out a cigarette from his pocket, lighting it with his own lighter, and hands it to Florence, who takes it gleefully.

CO-PILOT

All things considered, everything worked out pretty well.

PILOT

What are you talking about?

CO-PILOT

Well nobody was hurt, for one. He got his money and everyone was freed.

FLORENCE

Except us.

CO-PILOT

Right - but that's just because we need to take him to wherever. The point is, a lot of things that could've gone wrong didn't go wrong.

There's a short silence in the cabin.

PILOT

(to co-pilot)

You know what? I think you're right on this one. The whole thing went pretty peaceful.

FLORENCE

So where are we taking him now?

PILOT

He demanded that we get him to Seattle - and I'm not about to argue with the guy holding the bomb.

CO-PILOT

He said that there was somebody he needed to say goodbye to - before he left to wherever he's going.

FLORENCE

Before he left? Where would a guy like him run off to? The whole world's going to be talking about him tomorrow. About what he did. Everybody and their grandmother from New Hampshire to New Mexico will know his face. And with that kind of money? He'll be the most popular guy in any town he saunters into. I say he'll be dead in a week. Laid to waste at the edge of a dirt road, Bonnie and Clyde style.

CO-PILOT

You think?

FLORENCE

They're all the same, these crooks. They pull off a massive heist like this - all elaborately planned and executed - thinking that they're the ones that will get away... And then they don't. The police will catch up with them and they will lose like they always have. And you'd think that, with all the trials and all the justice being broadcast publicly, that they would know better by now.

PILOT

As long as there's money, there's greed. And as long as there is greed, there's crooks.

FLORENCE

You know what I think? I don't think they're doing it for the money. Not at this scale.

CO-PILOT

No? Then why?

Florence takes a drag from her cigarette.

FLORENCE

It's all about the thrill, isn't it? It's almost like, you've lived your entire life a slave to the same system you've been taught to love - to cherish. Then, for a short, glorious second, you step your bounds. You cross the line. Now all of a sudden, you're in control. You're in control of the hierarchy, the system, the structure - and all eyes are on you. And in a world where everyone else is living day-to-day practically dead, stepping outside the constraints of authority makes you feel, well, alive.

A sudden rapid beeping from the control panel calls the attention of the crew.

FLORENCE

What in God's name is that?

CO-PILOT

(navigating control panel)

Uhh... I - I don't know.

PILOT  
(pointing to dial on control panel)

Here.

The co-pilot looks over to where the pilot is pointing on the panel in front of them. His face goes from one of utter confusion to understanding.

FLORENCE  
What? What is it?

CO-PILOT  
It's the cabin pressure. It's dropped significantly.

FLORENCE  
What? What does that mean?

PILOT  
It means that either there's a leak in the plane's hull, or...

CO-PILOT  
Or there's a door open.

A short silence is shared among the crew.

FLORENCE  
You don't think he...

PILOT  
Check.

Florence peaks through the cockpit door, and closes it rapidly.

FLORENCE  
The back exit is open. He's not in the cabin.

Another short moment of silence is shared among the crew members.

CO-PILOT  
I can't believe it - the bastard actually did it.

PILOT

Did he remember to take a parachute?

Florence goes through the cockpit door,  
returning after a short period of time.

FLORENCE

There's two parachutes missing.

CO-PILOT

Wait - two? Why two?

PILOT

Are we positive it was just him?

FLORENCE

He was alone, unless you count his imaginary friend he kept talking to. I think I heard him call her "Debbie".

PILOT

Debbie. Debbie Cooper...

CO-PILOT

(jokingly)

I guess he's really living now, isn't he?

#### ACT 1, SCENE 11

A crack of thunder can be heard over a dark stage. From stage left enters Rachel, gasping for breath after having sprinted a presumably long distance.

She pauses for a moment to have a drink of water from a bottle in her backpack, but is interrupted by another crack of thunder. Spooked, she hits her previously off flashlight to re-illuminate it, then raises it to reveal a full skeletonized corpse - tangled in a parachute on the branches of a tree. She looks stunned at the corpse.

RACHEL

(stuttering)

You... You're real. You're really here, and you're real.

(confident)

D... D.B. Cooper, I presume? My name is Rachel Shuster. I'm a big fan.

A slight smile sets on Rachel's face as she slowly approaches the corpse with a kind of caution.

Her light goes towards the base of the tree, where she finds a large pile of white stones, similar to the ones she found earlier on the trip.

RACHEL

Are these..?

(grabbing rock from pile)

So... Somebody... Somebody has been leaving these.

(addressing corpse)

Is it a friend? Who else comes here?

Upon looking at the corpse, Rachel takes on an inquisitive glare at the corpse as she straightens herself.

RACHEL

(suspicious)

Wait a minute... No, come on...

She goes into her backpack and pulls out a tape measurer, which she uses to measure the width of the corpse's pelvic region. Upon seeing the result, her breath shortens. She reaches again into her backpack to pull out another distinct tape-measurer which she uses to again measure the corpse's pelvic region, as well as it's leg, torso, and other arbitrary bone structures. Upon getting final confirmation from her measurements, she steps back in utter shock.

RACHEL

(stunned)

No way... It's a... It's a...

As Rachel remains startled by her discovery, a figure approaches her from stage right.

The silhouette of the mysterious stranger from scene one slowly makes his way over to her.

As he walks, his foot gets caught on a stick, forcing him to the ground with an audible grunt.

At this, Rachel's concentration is broken as she weaves around to catch a glimpse at the mysterious figure, struggling to get up.

The light catches the face of the mystery figure in a heavy coat, who is revealed to be an aged Dan Cooper.

Acting on instinct, she reaches into her pocket for a small can of pepper spray, aiming it at the stranger.

RACHEL

(aggravated)

I knew there was somebody following me! Who the hell are you?

DAN

(covering eyes defensively)

Okay, what you're doing right now, don't do that.

RACHEL

Hey... I recognise you! You're the guy from the cross roads! You're the guy we asked the directions from, with the ominous coat! What are you doing, following me?

Dan slowly stands up, raising both his hands in the air in surrender.

DAN

I was just trying to make sure you didn't get lost.

RACHEL

That's awfully kind of you. So your idea was just to follow a lone kid through the woods at night - for, what? Protection? Like I need a creepy old guy as my guardian angel?

DAN

Wasn't my idea.

RACHEL

Oh yeah? Then whose was it?

Dan gestures towards the corpse.

DAN

Hers.

Rachel glances back towards the corpse.

RACHEL

I thought it was female. Who is she?

DAN

She's my friend. Her name's Debbie.

RACHEL

Your friend? So you're the one that did the whole rock trail thing?

Dan nods. Rachel relaxes her arm.

RACHEL

Why... But where's... Where's D.B. Cooper?

DAN

(chuckling)

Ah - the illustrious hijacker. You're not the first kid to come asking. People tend to think that if it's strung up in a tree over the airspace where he supposedly jumped out of the plane, then it has to be Cooper. Who else could it be? Occasionally, some kids come looking for the two-hundred thousand dollars he kept with him, and I don't want to ruin the fantasy for anyone that's coming to check him out. I tell them what they want to hear. That this is his final resting place.

Dan stands up and stretches. Rachel backs up against Debbie's tree, sliding down it to sit at the base among the pile of rocks.

DAN

You weren't after money though, were you? You and your group? Debbie here thought it wise to follow you and uh... Make sure you guys were all right.

RACHEL

You talk to a corpse?

DAN

Years ago, she taught me a very valuable lesson about living. She brought me out of my cage. She stole me from my miserable existence that doomed me to an uncomfortable demise. It's because of her that I've gotten this far.

I like to come chat with her on the occasion. Helps remind me what my end-goal should be.  
(looking over at Rachel)

Are you all right?

RACHEL  
(depressed)

I... I thought...

DAN

What?

RACHEL  
Nothing. You wouldn't understand.

DAN  
Probably not. You want to try me anyway?

Rachel sighs.

RACHEL  
My uncle... He was a mortician, you see. I always looked up to him, he was what I aspired to be. I would go to his lab most everyday after school to watch him work. Watch him pick apart corpses like they were a bin of old shirts. Working with him, it was all so... Quantitative. All we did was analyze cadavers and not much else. I loved it, and I really respected him, but throughout all the time that I knew him, I never really got the chance to, well, know him. I don't know. When he died, I guess I kind of realized what I was missing.

DAN  
And that would be..?

RACHEL  
The journey. That it was all about the journey. Take D.B. Cooper, for example: the most famous thief in American history who, to this day, nobody knows who they really were. I guessed I kind of thought that I owed it to my uncle to see Cooper. Get to know him like I never knew my uncle.

DAN  
Is that so?

RACHEL  
Does that sound crazy? Cause thinking back on it, it probably sounds crazy.



Dan hesitates before biting his lip and nodding slowly.

DAN

Don't waste time trying to make sense of anything. What's your name?

RACHEL

Rachel. Rachel Shuster.

DAN

Hello, Rachel. My name's Dan.

Lights dim.

Curtains close.

End of play.

STUNT

You're giving me a fourth of the deal, right?

RACHEL

That was our agreement.

STUNT

You're also giving Vaude and Jared a fourth each.

RACHEL

This is also true, yes.

STUNT

And Earnie?

RACHEL

What about Earnie?

STUNT

He's also getting a fourth, remember?

RACHEL

What's your point?

JARED

Rachel, what are you getting out of this deal?

Rachel looks down at Jared in a condescending fashion.

RACHEL

Like, in terms of money? Nothing. Who needs money?



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VERONICA

I told you to stop calling me. I told you to stop calling me. Why are you calling me?

DAN

I'm sorry.

VERONICA

What do you want?

DAN

Just wanted to hear your voice. Wanted to know how things are going.

VERONICA

(frustrated)

They're going great. Really great. Rebecca is with me here.

DAN

(harshly)

Is she still sick?

VERONICA

What?

DAN

Is Rebecca still sick? I remember you saying that she was pretty sick and that's why you had to stay in Seattle for the last three weeks.

VERONICA

Oh right, yeah. She's still feeling pretty bad. Really bad, actually. She's coughing heaven out of her lungs and vomiting her guts onto the floor every night. Doctors say it might be serious.

DAN

(repeating)

Serious...

(sarcastically)

Must be hard - having to care for her... alone.

VERONICA

Oh it's no problem. I rather enjoy spending time with my sister. We barely get to see each other nowadays.

DAN

Thought I'd fly out there. Make sure you have some company. You know: while you... tend to your sister.

VERONICA

Yeah, I don't think that's a very good idea. She's very contagious, and...

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DEBBIE

For the record: I'm not a stowaway. I paid for my ticket - I just never got off.

DAN

You never... How long have you been on this plane?

DEBBIE

This is my 12th flight flying without leaving the actual plane, persay. Actually, that's not entirely true - I snuck out once for a brownie in the terminal, made my way back without anybody noticing.

DAN

Why?

Debbie takes a deep inhale from her cigarette and breaks into a coughing fit. Dan quickly passes her the napkin that came with his drink.

DEBBIE

(coughing)

No... I'm fine. I'm fine, thanks. You're very kind.

(recovering herself)

Let me ask you a question, Dan: If you were going to die in the next hour, what would be the thing you most regretted not doing? For me, it would be having spent my entire life trapped in a suburban town outside Kansas City. I grew up poor - poor with aspirations. I read a lot of books about far-off cities and people that lived in an entirely alien world. I wanted to see these places, meet these people. Upon hearing the doctor's inform me of my... dire condition... I eventually collected enough money from my friend's savings account for one plane ticket to Orlando, to see my sisters. When the plane landed I realized that this was probably the last opportunity I would have to see the country I call my home.

DAN

So you just hid from the flight attendants?

DEBBIE

...With crushed ice. Could you kindly be a dear and take this back to the fridge and bring it back with the ice crushed so thinly that they could've been between a rock and my husband's thick skull? My throat doesn't work well with the big cubes, and there's nothing I hate more than when the ice bumps against my lips when I'm trying to drink. You can bring the bill with my drink, thank you.

The ponderous look she has directed to the cup turns to a look of pure rage.

DEBBIE

(restrained rage)

They forgot the crushed ice.

DAN

What's wrong with the ice? Debbie? What's wrong with the ice?

Debbie looks at the cup. Her hand starts to rapidly with frustration as restrained rage starts to build up in her.

DAN

(concerned)

Debbie?

