

# 120 Lives a Minute

by

Gustavo Ott

Translation: Heather L. McKay

GUSTAVO OTT

11738 Batley Pl

Woodbridge, VA 22192

[gustavott@yahoo.com](mailto:gustavott@yahoo.com)

© ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, 2006

Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, 2006

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention and the Universal Copyright Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound taping, and the rights of translation into foreign languages, are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is laid upon the question of public readings, permission for which must be secured in writing. All inquiries regarding performance rights should be addressed to the author ([gustavott@yahoo.com](mailto:gustavott@yahoo.com)) or his agent, Sociedad General de Autores de España.

*All this happened.  
All this is happening...  
And everyone sleeping so calmly...  
Fulfilling their charge,  
waiting for the soul to emerge.  
The soul, neophyte, wet, blind, ignorant.*

*J. M. Coetzee*

*No one heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning:  
I was much further out than you thought  
And not waving but drowning.*

*Stevie Smith*

## **Characters:**

*EMILY: Girl  
ACTRESS 1: DIANA, RITA,  
ACTOR 2: ALFONSO, MANUEL, PILOT  
ACTOR 3: OSCAR, I, COPILOT  
SOTO*

*The play takes place inside an airplane about to land.*

*1*

*I am*

*We hear airplane noises.  
Theme music.  
On stage, Soto.*

SOTO: The hexagon is no failed action.  
It is the most genuinely human shape, in that it  
is a pure creation of man.

The hexagon and geometric shapes in general are  
a pure invention of the human spirit, they are a  
sheer intellectual invention and what interests  
me about them is that they have no specific size.  
A house or a tree has a more or less determined  
size, while a geometric shape can be infinitely  
small or infinitely large. It has no limitations,  
it's God, it's beauty.

Now, color. Color is the flipside of beauty,  
God's other side. A God on his back, turned over.

The traces of my crayons are in Ciudad  
Bolivar. In my childhood, Ciudad Bolivar was  
a town of yesteryear. At one time, before I  
was born, it had been a small Manaos. I was  
told they once had grand shows there that  
left the city with a theater.

**(TO ONE SIDE, SEVERAL ROWS OF AIRPLANE SEATS  
APPEAR. DIANA AND ALFONSO ARE SEATED THERE.  
ALFONSO READS THE NEWSPAPER. DIANA TAKES PILLS.  
SHE IS VERY NERVOUS)**

My mother, always willing to whitewash the  
drawings I scrawled across the walls. One day she  
said something so beautiful: "If I could, I'd  
clean those walls to see the traces of your  
crayons again."

I remember, at ten or eleven, I read the Divine Comedy and as I turned the pages, I felt a growing fear as Dante went from circle to circle. I was afraid of finding a God in human form. An anthropomorphic God.

But when God appears as a blinding light I was filled with such joy.

With relief.

That was the God I wanted at the end of the book of circles.

A metaphysical and abstract God. A beautiful, geometric God.

EMILY: Ladies and gentlemen, the captain has turned on the Fasten Seatbelt sign. We will begin our descent shortly. Please return your seatback to its full upright position, stow and lock your tray tables, and turn off all electronic devices. The time at Maiquetia Airport is 8 p.m. and the temperature is 84 degrees. Thank you for flying with us and we hope to see you again soon.

ALFONSO: (READING) "The plastic artist died Wednesday, in Paris, at the age of 82, from a cancer he had had for some time." Fuck, cancer. It says here he died today. You remember Soto? (DIANA SHAKES HER HEAD) In school? Art class?

(PILOT'S VOICE)

PILOT: *Good evening, this is Captain Martinez again. We will begin our descent shortly and we see clear skies ahead and a smooth landing. Thank you for flying with us and we hope to see you again soon.*

DIANA: I have to tell you something you don't know. (ALFONSO LOOKS AT HER, SURPRISED BY HER TONE) I want to start by saying I love you. These seasons, these Aprils, these afternoons with you have been the ultimate; I always imagined a life together and I love you, I love you like a first love. Actually, I think you are my first love.

ALFONSO: I love you too, Diana, bu...

DIANA: Even if talking about first love, at my age, sounds unbelievable, audacious, an illusion. But I adore you and I want you to know that I know you love me too, though not the way I love you.

ALFONSO: You don't know that.

DIANA: Yes, I do.

ALFONSO: (LAUGHING) And how do you know?

DIANA: Because I love you to the death, Alfonso, until death itself, and after death. I love you even more maybe, because death, with all its definitive vastness, isn't like what I feel for you.

ALFONSO: Honey, we're flying at 30,000 feet, maybe this isn't the best time to be bringing up death.

DIANA: Like the fear of death, that's how I love you, with that catastrophic monstrosity.

**(TO ONE SIDE, EMILY AND "I")**

I: What...what...uh, what's your name?

EMILY: I'm Emily

I: Emily, nice to meet you, a pleasure. How are you?

**(EMILY IS GOING TO ANSWER, BUT IS PAYING ATTENTION TO A CONVERSATION ON THE OTHER SIDE)**

I: So what do you do, Emily?

EMILY: I...huh? I'm a flight attendant.

I: Sure, you're a flight attendant. You work here. You ever do anything else?

EMILY: Just a flight attendant.

**(AIRPLANE ENGINE. ALFONSO AND DIANA LOOK AT EACH OTHER PASSIONATELY)**

ALFONSO: Now, tell me what you were going to say.

DIANA: Fine. This is the truth.

**(THE AIRPLANE ENGINE GROWS LOUDER)**

DIANA: My real name isn't Diana, it's Maria Elisa.

ALFONSO: Maria Elisa?

DIANA: And I receive orders from the CIA.

ALFONSO: What?

DIANA: I don't do it for the money, I do it out of loyalty to the country. This country, not theirs, mine, ours. That's what you have to understand, because I'm here on a mission and I'm doing it for our country.

ALFONSO: For our country, sure, I believe you, but...

DIANA: Because, sure, the money's good and at the exchange rate, well I do fine. But even so, I want to make it clear that matters of money are matters of money and matters of passion, well...

ALFONSO: Are matters of passion.

DIANA: That's what I wanted to talk about, Alfonso, because the mission is the mission and my problems are my problems.

ALFONSO: Like money and passion.

DIANA: Two separate things.

ALFONSO: And your problems are?

DIANA: The trouble started when I felt, yes, it was a feeling, I felt, the need to write. To write about what was happening to me. Like a voice telling me first things that happened or events that were going to happen. Then, when I wrote them down, I could see strange things in what I wrote, like silhouettes between the words, in the blank spaces, especially in the margins of sentences, like dotted lines you could trace,

into geometric shapes, like squares or pure hexagons, beautiful, and then out of them comes this imperfect, sometimes terrifying shape.

ALFONSO: It's called hypography.

DIANA: At the CIA they called it paranoia. Writing isn't smiled on by the Agency, of course, you can't even make grocery lists, or jot down thoughts or dreams, which I really like to write, you can't, they don't let you, you can't even write your favorite names in your address book.  
(NERVOUS, A BIT LOUDLY) If I'm telling you it's because I'm in a corner!

ALFONSO: (LOOKING ALL AROUND) Please!

DIANA: What I want from you, sweetheart, is first, don't hate me. Don't be bitter because I had to lie to you all this time, not just about my real activities and my intentions, but about my name too, that's what's most important to you. Right?

ALFONSO: Diana.

DIANA: Maria Elisa.

ALFONSO: Like a sonata.

DIANA: Or a movie.

ALFONSO: Like a first love.

DIANA: That you found late

ALFONSO: That you bumped into

DIANA: And didn't recognize.

ALFONSO: Like the phone call

DIANA: You never received

ALFONSO: Because you'd already shut the door.

DIANA: And they'll call back.

ALFONSO: But they didn't.

DIANA: They never did.

**(AIRPLANE NOISE. THEY TAKE EACH OTHER'S HAND)**

DIANA: (NERVOUS) Look out the window. You'll see why.

ALFONSO: (LOOKING) I don't see anything.

DIANA: They're coming for me.

ALFONSO: I only see stars.

DIANA: (LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW TOO) Yes, there they are. Of course they are. It's them.

ALFONSO: What do you mean? It's them?

**(DIANA NODS)**

DIANA: They're coming for me, sweetheart. I wanted to tell you, I wanted you to hear it from me. And that I had to do it to protect you because if they do anything to you, if they find out how I feel about you, then you could be in danger. And if anything happens to you because of me, I think I'm capable of blowing up the world. I could blow up the world, of course I could. And that's not a metaphor. Believe me. I know how to do it. Without you, everyone can go!

**(SHE HANDS HIM A BOOK, A BEAUTIFUL ADOLESCENT BOOK)**

ALFONSO: This?

DIANA: Take care of it, like it was a promise.

ALFONSO: What's going to happen now?

DIANA: I know this changes everything and from now on our relationship will have to be different, maybe not worse, but at least different. Maybe new. Maybe we have to get to know each other all over again, get to know me mainly, because I know you and I know who you are, while me, I'm a stranger to you.



ALFONSO: You want our relationship to change? What do you want me to be to you? What do you mean? What's this all about?

DIANA: You decide, when you find out why I'm working for the CIA and my mission here.

ALFONSO: What is your mission?

**(DIANA TURNS AROUND QUICKLY. SHE LOOKS AT THE ROOF OF THE PLANE. WHEN SHE'S ABOUT TO SPEAK, EMILY PASSES BY AGAIN, CARRYING A TRAY AND CHECKING THAT EVERYTHING IS OK. DIANA SWALLOWS HER WORDS. EMILY HAS NOT LEFT THE STAGE AND IS CLOSE ENOUGH TO OVERHEAR)**

DIANA: The mission...

My mission is to prove the existence of God.

**(EMILY, LOOKING THE OTHER WAY, SHOUTS AND DROPS THE TRAY)**

EMILY: What is that?! For God's sake, don't hurt us! Don't hurt us!

**(WE HEAR A CONTROL TOWER IN THE DISTANCE)**

TOWER: 1234, do you copy? 1234, what's happening? Over. The tower has detected a course change, 1234. Please, you must resume your flight plan. Do you copy, 1234?

**(WHITE NOISE)**

2

*1*

*Theme music*

SOTO: And no, I'm not going to talk about politics, if that's what you're waiting for. Art is about art as science is about science and politics is about politics. Why should art serve politics rather than politics serving art? Why? Are they better than us? Have they proven they're better than us?

I'll tell you about me instead. Well, that's what you came here for on a Tuesday, isn't it?

When I finished school, I left for Europe. I took nothing. I didn't have a cent when I got there. But I'm not the only artist to go to Paris without a cent. There are thousands and thousands of them, that was very clear to me. I said: "I'll survive this, and if I don't, no big deal."

Paris seemed so outdated to me. The Museum of Modern Art had one or two small Picasso's and the rest was work that didn't interest me, by figurative artists.

Artists of failed actions.

I felt let down.

Then a friend wanted to go to Holland and Belgium, and I asked him to take me along. I knew there was a small museum in Holland where Van Gogh's last paintings were, but especially the great Dutch movement of that period was there. I went in search of the abstract art I didn't find in Paris. It was in the young painting that didn't make it to the museums.

I never had a bad time.

Because creating is a pleasure.

Like the pleasure of loving. Like the pleasure of being here with you today.

It's the part where man has no obligation, but a profound responsibility that shakes him.

A responsibility that gives him meaning.  
That defines him and at the same time tells him  
it's worthwhile to go on living.

*Theme music stops.*

*On stage, I.*

*By his side, Emily, the flight attendant.*

I: I got used to traveling, I think I'm a piece of baggage, I know you have to try to help others, I've seen how other people do it and I've always wanted to do it and I think sometime I did or I would. I'm American, South American, from the Caribbean, Southern Caribbean, but I'm living in Mexico and I'm a carnivore, but I've got high blood pressure and can't eat what I want.

I'm from the Southern Caribbean, but not the Caribbean that's black or white, indigenous or mestizo, or English or French or Dutch or German, there's no German Caribbean or there is, because there's a tourist Caribbean, but there is a Chinese Caribbean and an Indian Caribbean, I've seen them, they're from here.

I'm an achiever and believer, that's what I like to tell myself and I'm from Maracaibo and Seville, Bogota and Salamandra, you see I'm adopted and I'm a Shell Club member. I'm an athlete, though I don't play much, I mean I follow sports on the radio and TV. I like watching TV because it's entertaining and I don't like watching TV because it's so bad.

I've gained a lot of weight and a little, a lot really and I've seen countries, I've made money, I've got the latest cell phone with a camera, video and all that and I've got a laptop and I've got a good car, I've got two good cars and I don't and I do. I was born, one day I was born, I was born from me, I mean, from my mother, of course, I was born and I have an older brother

and I have a sister and my mother and my father and my mother's living and my father's not living and my sister I don't know, I haven't seen her in a while, married, gone, far away. I love my wife, I love her and she loves me but not much and I don't love her much either, I'm separated, I'm divorced, married, but separated, we live together for the kids, but separated, and I'm like that.

I'm very sensitive and sentimental.

I had a son, two sons, one by Cesarean, well, my wife had him, but it's like I had him because I suffered just as much or more than her, and that's why I know what it's like to have a baby by C-section, I know it, I think I know it and I don't know it as much as I knew I knew it, but still I know it or I think I know it. I don't know.

Me, me myself, I like to talk and meet people. I don't bring a book, I don't listen to music or read magazines on the plane, I don't have pictures of my ex-wife or my ex-kids, I don't have candies, I don't have any left even for me, me, what I like is to share, not shut myself up in myself because you're nothing without other people, without the people around you.

And this plane is going fast and that's why me, I like to try to get to know people. The problem is the people, people here are like that, they don't listen, people don't deserve to get to know you, people, people are like that, all of them are like that, people, people don't listen and people don't respond and they don't know what they want and people are failures and they envy people, they envy me especially, people envy me so much and I don't envy me at all, instead I know myself and I understand myself and I'm so easy to talk to and know all about things and I'm interested and I hear everyone who talks to me, but people don't, people don't do that and they don't know what to do and they sit there not listening to you and not looking you in the eyes like they weren't interested in your life, they're not interested in your life, or music, or politics,

but they're interested in themselves and that's how people are, people are like that.

Me, I like my country, but without the people.

I see, I like, I wish, I want an empty country without people, well, maybe me and you and other people, just about everyone on this plane, of course, they're all so nice. But nobody else, just us, because people, people no. People do and undo and they don't help, they don't try to help, they don't clean the street, they don't let you by, they don't vote and when they do vote, they do it wrong and they make you do it wrong like it's happened to me so many times, thousands of times. And they borrow and then they don't want to pay you back and I pay, me, I like to pay, I don't have debts, I have money, I have lots of money and I'm doing great and I can do just about anything I want and when I see something I like I buy it because I'm like that, impulsive and fun-loving and fascinating and I like to live life and get to know people, like you.

(AIRPLANE NOISES. PAUSE)

What...what...uh, what's your name?

EMILY: I'm Emily

I: Emily, nice to meet you, a pleasure. How are you?

**(EMILY IS GOING TO ANSWER, BUT IS PAYING ATTENTION TO A CONVERSATION ON THE OTHER SIDE)** So what do you do, Emily?

EMILY: I...huh? I'm a flight attendant.

I: Sure, you're a flight attendant. You work here. You ever do anything else?

EMILY: Just a flight attendant.

I: You...  
Are you listening to me?

**(TO ONE SIDE, DIANA AND ALFONSO, AS IN SCENE 1)**

ALFONSO: Now, tell me what you were going to say.

DIANA: Fine. This is the truth. My real name isn't Diana, it's Maria Elisa.

ALFONSO: Maria Elisa?

DIANA: And I receive orders from the CIA.

**(EMILY TUGS DOWN HER SKIRT)**

EMILY: (LISTENING TO THE OTHER CONVERSATION) I think that couple is fighting, they're breaking up.

I: You, you, have... have... have... someone. You're married, you have a boyfriend, I don't know.

EMILY: I think she said she has a different name. Maria Luisa, she's Maria Luisa and he's Adolfo and they both work for Sears.

I: Like me, me, I... We all break up but I have a lot of chances and I'd like to meet someone, and have them get to know me.  
(SEEING SHE ISN'T PAYING MUCH ATTENTION)  
What?

EMILY: I think she said she has a very important extreme unction and that it would change things because he has a lover or something to do with feelings. A nun, I think.

I: If you want, take my card and call me. If you don't have anything to do, I have lots to do and today is Tuesday and Tuesdays don't know they're Tuesdays or real Tuesdays. Ok? Ok? Hah? Ok?

**(A BEEP TO ALERT CREW THAT THE PLANE WILL BE LANDING SHORTLY)**

EMILY: Time for me to work. **(TAKES THE INTERCOM PHONE)**  
Ladies and gentlemen, the captain has turned on the Fasten Seatbelt sign. We will begin our descent shortly. Please return your seatback to to its full upright position, stow and lock your tray tables, and turn off all electronic devices. The time at Maiquetia Airport is 8 p.m. and the temperature is 84 degrees. Thank you for flying with us and we hope to see you again soon.

I: It was very nice of you to stay with me, very nice, really, thanks, thanks, very nice.

EMILY: Next time, let the airline know you have a nervous condition. We can help you.

I: Me, I, I don't have a nervous condition, I don't have a condition. I'm not nervous. I just get edgy confused shaky excitable fidgety fibrous when I fly and these planes, but me nervous, nervous as they say and I don't, cause to me, I'm not. I'm a lot of things, but nervous that's not me.

EMILY: Can I bring you a sedative for the landing?

**(JUST THEN MANUEL GOES BY)**

MANUEL: Miss, excuse me. Have you served coffee in first class?

EMILY: It's at your seat.

MANUEL: You didn't see if my wife put sugar in my coffee?

EMILY: I didn't see anything, sir.

MANUEL: Thank you.

EMILY: You're welcome.

**(MANUEL EXITS)**

EMILY: (TO I) Don't worry, we're almost there.

I: One last thing.

EMILY: Yes?

I: Your heels. Your heels are so high. Don't you get vertigo? Don't you feel dizzy? Aren't you afraid of heights?

EMILY: They make us wear them.

I: And one other thing.

EMILY: Yes?

I: Don't you think this plane is flying really fast?

EMILY: Don't worry, everything's fine.

**(“I” TRIES TO FASTEN HIS SEATBELT, BUT CAN'T.  
EMILY HELPS HIM. AT SOME POINT “I” CHANGES AND WE  
SEE HE IS GETTING SICK PLEASURE FROM HER PUTTING  
ON HIS SEATBELT)**

**(WE HEAR THE CONTROL TOWER AGAIN)**

TOWER: 1234, I repeat, tower has detected excess speed.  
We advise, reduce speed, I repeat, you must  
reduce speed. Emergency procedures in 7 minutes  
if you do not reduce speed to 300 km per hour.  
Over. 1234. Do you copy?



3  
*Coffee*

*Theme music*

SOTO: The Universe is filled with a powerful vibration and using very simple elements I try to make people feel immersed in it.

The Penetrable urges us to understand the plenitude of space, exchanging our idea of the vacuum for a fluidity that shapes the behavior of everything in existence.

Some day man's habitat will be like a vast penetrable, where all his sensory abilities can grow daily, to give him back a bit of the happiness taken away by the misuse of depersonalized elements.

And it will also let him gradually enter into essential reality.

To give him back the happiness usurped by so many and such costly failed actions throughout his existence and especially in the existence of everything around him.

*End theme music.*

*On stage, seated, Rita.*

*She prepares a cup of coffee.*

*Manuel comes and sits beside her.*

RITA: You want coffee?

**(MANUEL BRUSHES IT OFF)**

RITA: Don't brush it off like that.

MANUEL: I'd rather not drink it.

RITA: Why?

MANUEL: Why? What?

RITA: You don't want to drink it. The coffee? Is there...is something in it?

**(MANUEL GESTURES HE'S TIRED OF THE CONVERSATION)**

RITA: You rejected it like there was something in it, you pushed it away like you were against the idea of drinking coffee or of me giving it to you or both. Why'd you turn down the coffee I offered? Maybe you think I put poison in it? That I put poison in it while you were in the bathroom? Is that what you think? That I ride in these planes, in first class, with my vial of cyanide or arsenic stashed away? Hah? With poison disguised in a bottle of heart pills? Hah? Is that what you think?

MANUEL: Of course not. I don't want coffee. That's all. I don't want coffee, we're almost there and I don't want coffee.

RITA: You can't take a joke, huh?

MANUEL: I haven't been able to take a joke for fifteen years and you know it. I don't like jokes. They don't make me laugh, I can almost never tell when it's a joke or not.

RITA: So you mean that you think it's possible.

MANUEL: What the fuck?

RITA: That I put poison in your coffee while you were in the bathroom.

MANUEL: My God, please, for God's sake, can you let me be? Hah? Can't you let me be? Don't you know I'm terrified of planes? Hah? That I'm scared to death of heights? That even stairs make me dizzy? Do you have to fuck with me right when we're landing?

RITA: We're not landing yet, Manuel.

MANUEL: But we will be soon.

RITA: How do you know?

MANUEL: Because we have to land some day!

RITA: I just want to have a civilized conversation with my husband, that's all.

MANUEL: Well, you're not having one!

RITA: With my husband of twenty five years. If I can't have a conversation with my husband of twenty five years of marriage, I don't know, I'll have to talk to the flight attendant, like the man back there who asked her to sit with him because he was nervous. Or like that guy talking to the little girl. Talking. A pervert is what he is, perverts are what they all are, God help us.

MANUEL: I'm not a pervert, if that's what you're insinuating.

RITA: Of course not, silly. You're my husband. Don't take everything so seriously, it was a joke and a saying.

MANUEL: A joke?

RITA: The poisoned coffee

MANUEL: A saying?

RITA: All men are perverts

MANUEL: That's a saying?

RITA: Other men, not you.

MANUEL: Because I'm your husband.

RITA: And because you're you.

MANUEL: So it was a joke and a saying and not a civilized conversation?

RITA: A joke is always civilized.

MANUEL: And a saying.

RITA: Is civilized too.

MANUEL: But with you they always seem barbaric.

**(FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S VOICE REMINDING THEM OF THE LANDING. WE HEAR THE GIRL'S VOICE FROM THE SEAT BESIDE THEM)**

GIRL: *ANIMATION! CARTOONS! REALLY!  
YOU DO A KIDS' SHOW!  
WHICH ONE? WHICH? WHICH? WHICH?*

RITA: (LAUGHING) You hear that?

MANUEL: Maybe it's his daughter.

RITA: His daughter? And she doesn't know what he does? Ha! That's the oldest one in the book. Creeps. How could you think I'd put poison in your coffee?

MANUEL: Jesus Christ crucified, I better take a Dramamine. Do you have Dramamine?

RITA: If you thought it, darling, it's because you've been thinking about it.

MANUEL: The Dramamine, sweetheart, please, I'm already getting motion sick...

RITA: You think I want to kill you?

MANUEL: Forget it. Maybe the stewardess has Dramamine. (LOUD) Miss, do you have Dramamine?

RITA: You think I'd put something in your coffee?

MANUEL: You're being oversensitive. Forget it. I'll drink the coffee and that's that. Go on, give me the coffee.

**(RITA GIVES HIM THE COFFEE. MANUEL IS GOING TO DRINK IT. WE HEAR THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT'S VOICE REMINDING PASSENGERS TO TURN OFF CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND REMAIN SEATED. WHEN SHE FINISHES, "I" PASSES BY, APOLOGIZING)**

MANUEL: How disgusting! That man, the nervous guy, he comes from the back and he's going to use the first class bathroom. They should send him back

or put up a door so we don't mix, so it's not so easy. Did you see how he walked past? It's not for nothing, but these tickets are expensive. And it's not that I care about the privilege, but when I went to the bathroom, it was spotless, like it should be in first class. With perfume, cold air, a warm toilet seat. It made you want to stay there, never come out, because the first class bathroom is like a library, like a club, like a place to be alone with yourself. You with yourself. But if they let everybody use it, then it's not you with yourself, but with everyone and like that it doesn't make you want to pay more, or be different and, honestly, it doesn't even make you feel like living much.

That's what's wrong with flying our airlines, because if it was one of the others, no way. They wouldn't let them. But we are how we are. What can we do about him!

**(GOES TO DRINK THE COFFEE. OSCAR'S VOICE, IN THE DISTANCE)**

OSCAR: *...that one of us has had some kind of success. A tremendous success, I'd say. A great success, let's be frank, exceptional, unprecedented, an apotheosis, practically supernatural, if we're going to say it like it is.*

**(RITA AND MANUEL LAUGH AT WHAT THEY HEAR)**

OSCAR: Pardon me, are you laughing at me?

RITA: Excuse us, sir. It wasn't you.

MANUEL: Go on with your story.

RITA: (BETWEEN THEMSELVES) Nuts

MANUEL: Beyond nuts.

RITA: Pervert. That's what he is.

**(THEY MUFFLE THEIR LAUGHS. THEN THEY STOP LAUGHING. THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER. MANUEL IS ABOUT TO DRINK THE COFFEE)**

RITA: How'd you find out?

MANUEL: What?

RITA: About the poison

MANUEL: What poison?

RITA: The poison in the coffee

MANUEL: Are you joking?

RITA: (TAKES A BOTTLE FROM HER PURSE, GIVES IT TO HIM)  
You weren't going to feel a thing.

MANUEL: You were going to poison me!

RITA: It would be quick and you weren't going to feel it.

MANUEL: But, are you crazy? Why? I what? Did I do something to you? Why do you want to poison me?

RITA: Well, the letter bomb didn't work.

MANUEL: The letter... what? What letter?

RITA: The one I sent you last week.

MANUEL: The letter full of smoke!

RITA: It was a bomb. It was supposed to blow up in your face and decapitate you.

MANUEL: But... you're trying to kill me?

RITA: For two months now. You always get away.

MANUEL: No, no, I didn't know. I never found out. I never would have suspected!

RITA: A month ago, when you were walking down the street, I shot at you out the window. But I didn't hit you on the first try. The second hit a newspaper vendor.

MANUEL: He fell at my feet!

RITA: I had already tried running you over with the car. And once I injected you with air.

MANUEL: That was an antibiotic.

RITA: I put air in it.

MANUEL: But nothing happened to me.

RITA: Yeah, it was really strange.

MANUEL: It even got rid of my fever!

RITA: I've thrown sharp objects at you, put cyanide in your toothpaste, I left you in a closed room with the gas on all night.

MANUEL: Yeah, I remember the gas smell in the morning..

RITA: Remember when you came back from vacation and the people from the zoo had cordoned off our street?

MANUEL: Yeah, they said some animal had escaped..

RITA: (AS THOUGH REMEMBERING FONDLY)It was a Malaysian tiger I had rented, very expensive, and I locked him in the house for five days without food. Then, when you'd get home, refreshed and energetic, the kitty would have you for breakfast.

MANUEL: And he devoured the mailman!

RITA: No, that was the guy from the electric company. We never get letters at our house.

MANUEL: My God! Now I remember it perfectly. But, why? Why all this? God! God! **(ALMOST CRIES LIKE A CHILD. SUDDENLY SERIOUS)** Of course. You found out?  
You know?  
Huh?  
You finally found out?

RITA: Your thing?

MANUEL: Let me explain, Rita, I...

RITA: I've knows about that for fifteen years.

MANUEL: You knew?

RITA: Of course.

MANUEL: The Ministry... remember, and...It wasn't all that much money.

RITA: Two hundred and fifty nine thousand.

MANUEL: Maybe a bit more. You knew?

RITA: You deserved it, darling. It was like it belonged to you.

MANUEL: That's what I always figured.

RITA: Everyone had his hand in there. And since no one checked.

MANUEL: They took their part too!

RITA: That's how it is, it's always been that way.

MANUEL: And if I didn't say anything, it was because...

RITA: Drop it, Manuel. I found out, I understood, and that's that.

MANUEL: But... so then? Why? Why do you want to kill me?

EMILY: Ladies and gentlemen, the captain has turned on the Fasten Seatbelt sign. We will begin our descent shortly. Please return your seatback to to its full upright position, stow and lock your tray tables, and turn off all electronic devices. The time at Maiquetia Airport is 8 p.m. and the temperature is 84 degrees. Thank you for flying with us and we hope to see you again soon.

**(AIRPLANE ENGINE. PAUSE)**

RITA: Paris.



MANUEL: Paris? What have I done in Paris? I haven't done anything in Paris. I haven't even been to Paris in years and years!

RITA: In the Picasso Museum, in the former Hotel Salé, number 5, Rue de Thorigny.  
When you met Soto.

MANUEL: Soto? What Soto? Soto the painter?

RITA: You met him on the Rue de Thorigny.

MANUEL: I was working at the embassy, Cultural Attaché. I was young. What the hell? What the hell?

RITA: You met Soto.

MANUEL: Yes, I've told everyone that. A weird, hairy, half idiot, really. Always asking for something. I helped him. I didn't steal anything from him. I don't have his paintings. I don't understand or know what the hell he does. What about him? You want to kill me over Soto? Huh? What the hell does Soto have to do with us?

RITA: Nothing. Soto's got nothing to do with it. It's Paris.

MANUEL: I don't understand!

RITA: When you met me, you said you'd take me to Paris one day, to the Rue de Thorigny, with your embassy friends and the Ambassador's parties, your walks through the Louvre, your love of Saint Denis and Montparnasse. You said you'd show me the Picasso Museum. That right next door they sell delicious pastries, the best you'd ever had. And when we got married you promised we'd go there for a few days. And then, when the kids got married, one day you decided to spend whatever we wanted and go to Paris, in first class, you said, First class, because now you'll only fly First class.

And we never went.

MANUEL: But...but... That's why? That's why you want to kill me?

RITA: It's just...lately I don't like you.

**(WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A COMING ANNOUNCEMENT)**

EMILY: **(INTERCOM PHONE IN HAND)** Good evening, passengers, the pilot has just informed us we will begin our descent shortly. Due to bad weather at Maiquetia we may have to land at another airport nearby.

**(PEOPLES VOICES OF DISMAY)**

We'll keep you informed. For now, sit back, relax and keep your seat belts fastened.

Thank you.

**(RITA HANDS MANUEL A BOX OF PILLS)**

RITA: Your Dramamine. For the nausea.  
I'm afraid we're in for a long landing.

**(MANUEL TAKES THE BOX, TERRIFIED)**

# 4

*oscar*

*Theme music*

SOTO: The laboratory they call the "workshop" each day reveals endless possibilities.

The artist need only filter and think which value he'll make use of in the time he has for creation just then and not lose himself in the entire range of possibilities. And I think that is one of the rare instances where he must take care.

The work consists of having the clarity to synthesize as you go.

The charm lies in finding yourself in a new situation every day. A situation that, unfortunately, is not perceived by the people close to you. Because the small variations that can be understood in a sprinter are of no use to an artist. Art, in principle, is immeasurable. There's a difference I've always thought about. Science and art are two related categories, but one is measurable now and the other will be measurable later.

That's the perceptible state of the Universe, in the measurable state of the Universe.

*End theme music.*

*On stage, Oscar.*

*Beside him, an almost adolescent girl.*

OSCAR: I won an Oscar, but no one believes me. And I've even shown them the photos, the letters, the recognitions, a video and my wonderful interviews with the press, but, no, they don't believe me. I've even shown them the gold statue; that gets their attention because it's heavier than it looks, just like Meryl Streep said so many times, and still they're suspicious. There's my name

engraved on it, no scratches, no one could have changed it. But it's like showing them a clear sky; they take out their umbrellas just the same.

GIRL: Where's the sky? Where's the earth? Do you know where it is? Can you let me see out the window? Do you have it there? Do you have it?

OSCAR: What?

GIRL: The Oscar, silly.

OSCAR: Of course, I have the statue with me, though I usually keep it in my family room at home, lit up, in plain sight of everyone who comes by. Not to show off, although it certainly deserves no less, because I'm the only one in the country who has one. And I do it for me too, to remind myself that I've done something important in my life, that the years haven't just slid by in vain and if someday I have a family, I don't know, a son or a nephew maybe, I could tell him that I lived my life doing what I wanted and that's why I made it as far as anyone can get in life: winning an Oscar.

GIRL: Aren't you afraid someone might steal it? A friend of mine had a brand-new Barbie purse she got in Miami and someone stole it when she got here. I'm going to kill all the thieves when I grow up.

OSCAR: I bet.

GIRL: Maybe someone wants to steal it like to blackmail you, and then, when you pay up, they'll kill you and keep the statue and sell it and then they'll kill the new buyer too, and maybe she'll be a woman he likes, but he'll have to kill her anyways 'cause that's his destiny written like a thousand years ago when he was a gargoyle living in hiding from humans. I've seen it in thousands of hundreds of movies. It happens all the time.

OSCAR: It happened to Dustin Hoffman once.

GIRL: Dustin? The one in... Dustin, who? Dusty Hotpan?

OSCAR: Hoffman. Dustin Hoffman. He's won a lot of Oscars.

GIRL: Did he thank his mom?

OSCAR: He always says thanks

GIRL: When I win, I'm not gonna thank my mom, I'll thank my dad and my friend Helen, who's super cool. (IN OSCAR-RECEIVING POSE) "I don't want to thank my mom, I hope she gets eaten by dogs, but thanks Daddy and Helen and I want to say to my teacher I hate you and you stink. Thank you."

OSCAR: Dustin Hoffman, who I met by the way on Oscar night, there in the Kodak Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, is a great guy. He shook my hand, you know, I've got the picture.

GIRL: You have to really wash your hands when you meet people at parties because everyone's got germs and bits of drugs on their fingers. And then you go to innocently blow your nose, and BAM! That's it. You're one of them. A narcotics anonymous.

OSCAR: They stole it from him once and then he got it back. I guess the Academy itself sent it to him, a replacement, of course, because the other one never turned up. Maybe they come with a replacement. I have to reread the warranty.

GIRL: If I steal it I won't give it back to you.

OSCAR: What would you do with it?

GIRL: I'd melt it down to make bullets. Gold bullets to kill werewolves.

OSCAR: Silver. For werewolves it's silver.

GIRL: That's for vampires. Gold is for werewolves. Vampires are so out now, anyway. You know about the vampires who give transfusions? They're not bad, they're good. Instead of sucking your blood, they give it to you. They're skinny and they use them in hospitals for emergencies. People love 'em and they take their kids so they can bite them. I know all about it, I've seen it millions of thousands of times on TV. So aren't you scared?

OSCAR: Of what? Vampires? Werewolves? Monsters?

GIRL: No, this country.

OSCAR: This country.

GIRL: With all the stealing, kidnapping, blackmail and Express murders?

OSCAR: Of course, we're landing in our lawless Latin America and here everything's for sale, everything can be bought, and what's most normal, everything is stolen and stolen again. They could be deciding on a price right now, even as we speak.

GIRL: But is it fake or really real?

OSCAR: Really real, but they don't believe it, maybe, because I live in Caracas, I'm hungry and I've never made a movie.

GIRL: You never made a movie?

OSCAR: Well, of course not.

GIRL: And you have an Oscar. So? I don't get it at all.

OSCAR: Oscars, little girl, are awarded to all kinds of people, not just actors. I didn't say I won for Best Actor, or Best Director, or even as a writer. They gave me an Oscar for a minor role, for helping, for being there, for taking part in the invention of a new technique for telling stories through animation.

GIRL: ANIMATION! CARTOONS! REALLY!!  
YOU DO KIDS' SHOWS!!!  
WHICH ONE? WHICH? WHICH? WHICH?  
Will reporters be waiting for you? Will you be on TV? Will you be on TV? I bet they're waiting to give you the red carpet treatment, you'll see. You can say I'm your daughter and you're gonna put me in your next movie 'cause I'm so talented. I want to be in soaps, you know.

OSCAR: No one will be waiting for me, sweetheart, not at the airport or anywhere else. There won't be one article in the newspapers here. I had to send them the story myself, with my photos, my documents,

and even the certificate of authenticity for my statue, certificates you can get anywhere, sure, computer printed certificates, but they're still certificates that I, most certainly, won the Oscar, that I'm the first to get one and I deserve not an article, not television, not honors, but recognition.

Something from my country.

But if Soto just died and they did nothing. What can I expect?!

GIRL: Photo? Who's Photo?

OSCAR: Soto. Jesus Soto, a kinetic artist who...

GIRL: Cinematic artist? Movies?

OSCAR: (DEFEATED)Yeah, movies.

GIRL: And they didn't give him a medal? Is that what you want? A medal? You want a medal? They give me medals at school when I'm good and when I tell on the kids who are bad. And I'm always telling on someone, even if they didn't do anything. And I get tons of medals. Medals are like stars. I can give one to Jesus Photo.

OSCAR: It's Soto. And no, not a medal, I'm not asking for that much, but at least a little admiration, recognition. Though, once you win the Oscar, what greater recognition is there? Not so much for me, but for others, to encourage young people, so my fellow countrymen know that one of us, one of us, of our very own who can't seem to do what seems so easy or all the things we're supposed to be able to do; that one of us has had some kind of success. A tremendous success, I'd say. A great success, let's be frank, exceptional, unprecedented, an apotheosis, practically supernatural, if we're going to say it like it is.

**(LAUGHTER FROM THE SEATS IN FRONT)**

OSCAR: Pardon me, are you laughing at me?

RITA: Excuse us, sir. It wasn't you.

MANUEL: Go on with your story.

RITA: (BETWEEN THEM) Nuts.

MANUEL: Beyond nuts.

RITA: Pervert. That's what he is.

**(OSCAR TAKES OUT HIS OSCAR. THE GIRL LOOKS AT IT ADMIRINGLY)**

GIRL: Wow!

OSCAR: When they laugh at me, I take it out. I take it out to convince myself it's all true. Pretty, huh?

GIRL: It looks real.

OSCAR: It is real.

GIRL: Can I touch it?

**(HANDING IT TO HER)**

OSCAR: Be careful.

GIRL: It's heavy...

**(AS SHE TAKES IT THE HEAD COMES OFF AND CANDY FALLS OUT OF IT)**

Candy!!

OSCAR: It's just, like I said, I dropped it and it broke in half and then, I filled it with candy to...  
(LOUDER LAUGHTER FROM RITA AND MANUEL) ACH!

No, I'm not nuts.

But no doubt, I will be.

EMILY: Ladies and gentlemen, the captain has turned on the Fasten Seatbelt sign. We will begin our descent shortly. Please return your seatback to its full upright position, stow and lock your tray tables, and turn off all electronic devices.



The time at Maiquetia Airport is 8 p.m. and the temperature is 84 degrees. Thank you for flying with us and we hope to see you again soon.

**(HE PUTS ON HIS HEADPHONES AS THE GIRL EATS THE CANDY. OSCAR HEARS SOMETHING ON HIS HEADPHONES)**

**OSCAR:** You can hear the pilots talking. That can't be good because...  
(CONTINUES LISTENING)  
They're arguing.  
Someone's speaking Arabic.  
Someone's armed.  
God.  
My God.  
What's going on?

# 5

## *Emily*

*Theme music.*

*On stage, Soto.*

*Beside him, Emily, who doesn't see him.*

SOTO: For me, more than God, it's the idea of God I like.

What God inspires.

I heard that once, in the theater, in a play, it said that maybe God doesn't exist, but he should. For the idea, more than anything else.

Now, if God existed before everything, he would have been the saddest being in the Universe.

A being without principles.  
Without knowing why to do things.

That's why I think the best idea about God is, like in art, choosing and discarding. Differences and repetitions. There's a lot to discard in art and a lot to discard in God. For example, you have to discard the possibility that God preceded the Universe, that he came before our reality.

Because our reality is physical and metaphysical; that's it, I believe the metaphysical is the physical that hasn't been proven yet.

But before ideas, there's nothing. As can be clearly demonstrated right now, in this situation and in this country.

*Theme music continues while Emily speaks.*

**(EMILY TRIES TO WALK, BUT CAN'T. SHE CONTINUES TO LOOK AT THE PASSENGERS WITH HER SMILE, UNTIL SHE CAN NO LONGER MAINTAIN IT)**

EMILY: My feet hurt because they make us wear heels, or else they screw you.

The granite tray was heavy, the passenger in 3F in first class just asked for another whiskey and I'm already sleepwalking tired, I'm ready to throw myself from 30,000 feet up in the air or to fall asleep stock still, right here, because this tray's sharp and heavy, my feet hurt and mistakes aren't long, not in coming at this point, but in serving as my only excuse to rest, by shutting myself in the bathroom, the cockpit, cut to bits by the stainless steel boxes on the food cart.

Oh, for someone to feel sorry for me, someone to want to stop looking at me, someone to not call me, someone to fall asleep, someone to look out the window and his soul lights up, that's right, his soul, any soul, whatever soul, *the neophyte, blind, ignorant soul*, or whatever kind of soul, for him to be moved to it or invent it while looking out at the clouds, it's night, but the clouds are still there, for someone to see the invisible clouds, invisible friends, and the night lights up for that passenger and then, from the wonder of seeing what can't be seen through the half-open window, from seeing the stars so close and definitively just as cardinal far, waiting for the sun to swell or blossom, and at this height the sun always seems tired, on the same side, and suddenly, as if the sun had a memory and knew it all or instead it's an amnesiac sun that only repeats itself because it doesn't remember if it had one life or many, it didn't have one, it didn't have any, not even this one, like the guy whose leg was amputated and he thinks he felt it but he doesn't feel it anymore.

That strip mall passenger sees me seeing him and looks at my legs (LAUGHS) my legs! And he doesn't think they're paltry, these two stainless steel posts broken by more than one hundred twenty collisions and flight hours, and the acrid passenger sees my legs riddled with bullet holes in his miserable fantasy of a badblood passenger with strange eyes who no longer looks out the

window at the clouds, the night, and the stars, but also comes and looks at my shapeless legs, these parallelepiped legs, if he knew how they hurt, if he knew the colors they spill, the lines cutting them.

And he looks at these legs that no one has looked at in 200 years and that don't work besides and that fall asleep walking and where I've thought that not even blood flows, instead, in my acrophobic legs, battery water circulates, or oil for the hinges on the gate holding back the refuse, filthy gate and filthy liquid to keep these invalid legs from squeaking, with their invalid personality, because, with everything, really, they squeal, they squeal like an oil drill and that prepackaged passenger so ready and served, who never stops thinking that I'm here on the wall, stamped on the fly valet, that I'm put here, hung, like a sample, inflatable, electronic, penetrable, at his service, pushed, a stop light, screwed in, welded to the emergency door, because that's what I am, the emergency door, I am the emergency, the emergency opens the door and colors his world, reads magazines and serves him dinner, his breakfast, his whisky, his life jacket, his emergency door with a wider or narrower buckle, whatever you please, as you wish.

A made-to order stewardess, by mail, a leisure, flexible emergency stewardess who decorates his visa, his boarding pass, his handicapped headphones, me, the same Cheez filled me, the one who slips away in people's pockets. Me, the one who hangs with her pleated skirt, the one who is always checked and re-checked with her turbo heavy tray and her one without the other feet, with her feet on the tray or sometimes the tray at her feet, because they make us wear heels, or else they screw you.

He looks at my legs, calls me over, asks for his whiskey, calls me honey and he doesn't even know who I am.

He doesn't know who I am and he doesn't know that this is his last Whiskey and this my last flight.

**(FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT SIGN SOUNDS. IN THE DISTANCE, PASSENGERS' VOICES)**

SOTO: How is it possible that God, with his intelligence, didn't create an intelligence outside of man? Hmm?

One can talk around it infinitely to demonstrate it and it will all be a way of proving how man wants to copy himself, he wants to show how He comes from something like Himself, and he's gone so far as to presume to build a God in his own likeness.

Choosing and discarding what he likes best from the truth. That's Art. That's creation and that's, excuse me for saying so, God. A work of art.

I: Stewardess, some service please. Honey, can you bring me another whisky?

EMILY: And that's what you remembered, that it's your last Whiskey. But not that it's my last flight, that this is as far as I go and that the plane is finally landing for me.

This is my last flight because I am what I am.

I could have been a florist or receptionist, a secretary, a salesgirl in a bookstore or a warehouse, or anywhere.

I thought about it when I was twenty, on the weekends and even on Thursdays, at the beach, with the windsurfing, kite surfing, mountain climbing, parasailing, bungee jumping, in the discos, with the boys and their broken glass smiles.

Then I started to have rapid-fire fainting fits, I'd faint full of holes at 3 in the morning, revive and then faint off again at 3:30, more or

less every day, after my thirteenth beer and the fourth snort of whatever.

Then, I'd fall flat out, long and lean, wherever the attack would hit me and there was always some feral friend willing to take me to his house, to strip me so I wouldn't sleep in my clothes, to sleep with me so I'd feel warm, passed from man to man, maybe not even that, because all it took was for someone to slide up to me between the lights and the canned music and then pick me up off the floor and take me, without much pretense, or even hiding it, like someone picking up change, because they understood, I don't know how or in what language, that a woman's groan for help or a twenty-year-old gagging is, of course, an invitation for sex.

It couldn't be disgust. Or contempt.

I stopped going out with my panther friends and they forgot about me the next day. And I thought: "No one knows me, no one cares about me. I could go ahead and kill myself today and nothing would happen."

Then, retching Saturday became Good-morning Monday and I'd already made up my mind: I'm going to look for a life in 24 hours, and if I don't find anything, then I'll kill myself this very night and that's that. It didn't take more than 12 hours.

And it wasn't a saying, because the day you're going to kill yourself lasts just as long as every other day.

But what luck I have, there was no suicide that Mondy. At 4 p.m. I signed up for flight attendant training. It wasn't a job, but at least it was an idea, the idea of flying

By then I wasn't killing myself that night.

And anyway, in my present condition, if the plane crashes, I was already on the ground. If it hurtled toward earth, who better than me to explain to the passengers the position to assume

when it's time for us to die, to feel like crash site debris, to burn in flames when you're cut to bits?

Who if not me? Hmm?

Besides, I saw the flight attendant's uniform and I loved it. "As good as I look in blue." Beautiful. Right?

Though my only problem is I'm terrified of heights.

A small thing, if you want to be a flight attendant.

Phobic me, terrified at any height. Me, with a fear so intense, I feel it even working "ground crew." That terror that eats me up even walking in very high heels, because they still make us wear heels, or else they screw you. And with my fear of heights and everything, I took the course and they liked me and I liked it. I became a star pupil, everyone knew my full name, which with everything else I didn't know myself until then.

I didn't want to kill myself and that was progress. I think. Right?

In a year I was already Cockpit Attendant on domestic flights. And in 18 months they gave me my first international flight.

I wasn't happy, but I was flying. A waitress, but in the heavens. And I was good at it.

Until a couple months ago I started feeling symptoms of my illness again, the same one airline doctors diagnosed me with yesterday, the same one I talked to my anal flight chief about this morning. She called me aside, thanks, and said with this illness on my shoulders, this would be my last flight, my last flight through the heavens. Because of this illness that doesn't keep me from working, but it's not acceptable to the company, because I'm a danger.

A disease is a danger. Where's the idiocy in that statement?

Here, in this company, where they save on fuel and we all fly with that gun to our heads. Here, where they cut back on turbine maintenance checks to save dough. Here, where they don't check the runway, don't inspect the landing gear, don't change the tires 'til they blow. Here where they don't comply with pilot breaks, don't change the wiring when it expires, here where they give away tickets to their friends without asking for ID, without reminding them that it's better to be polite than an animal.

Here, in this world, of flaming airlines, I'm the danger.

Because of my illness.

And even though I can control it with medication, they've said flying, flying no.

**(A BEEP TO ALERT CREW THAT THE PLANE WILL BE LANDING SHORTLY))**

I have apotemnophilia.  
The desire to be an amputee.

**(TAKES THE INTERCOM PHONE, CHANGES TONE)**

Ladies and gentlemen, the captain has turned on the Fasten Seatbelt sign. We will begin our descent shortly. Please return your seatback to its full upright position, stow and lock your tray tables, and turn off all electronic devices. The time at Maiquetia Airport is 8 p.m. and the temperature is 84 degrees. Thank you for flying with us and we hope to see you again soon.

And I couldn't stop thinking:  
"Will this be the last time I say that? This is as far as Emily goes in the heavens."

Then, a man comes up to me and says:

I: Honey...



EMILY: (TO THE AUDIENCE) *Honey*, don't talk to me like that, I know your moods, your fantasies and your foul mouth.

I: I, I'd forgotten, I forgot, I didn't tell you I wanted, before we land, before everything, I'd like, I want, you to do me a favor. I want, I want you to tell the pilot that I'm armed and I'm planning to blow this piece of shit to smithereens.

**(LOUD AIRPLANE NOISE)**

EMILY: And I swear the tray didn't seem all that heavy anymore and still I dropped it.

And it wasn't a gunshot.  
It was my legs, they gave out.

**(EMILY TAKES OFF A LEG AND FALLS DOWN)**

# 6

*failed*

## **TORRENTIAL RAIN**

**ALL CHARACTERS ON STAGE, SURROUNDED BY SUITCASES. TWO HAVE BLANKETS ON THEIR SHOULDERS. AND THEY ARE DRINKING COFFEE. ANOTHER SEARCHES AMONG THE SUITCASES. EMILY IS CARRYING A LIFE VEST.**

ACTOR 3: My suitcase looks just like that.

EMILY: I can't find my things.

ACTRESS 1: Mine has a colored ribbon.

ACTOR 2: But this one has your name on it!

ACTRESS 1: Mine has a colored ribbon!

ACTOR 2: Ok, maybe the ribbon... slipped off during the tragedy!

ACTRESS 1: There's no tragedy. At least no one died.

EMILY: And we're all fine.

ACTOR 3: I only got a little hit on the head, by something falling.

ACTOR 2: My back hurts, but it's from how fast I ran.

ACTRESS 1: All that spinning made me sick to my stomach.

EMILY: My feet hurt, from these heels.

ACTOR 3: Maybe you could take them off already!

ACTOR 3: (TO EMILY) I don't even want to think about what would have happened to us if you hadn't told us what to do in those minutes. You were our angel.

EMILY: It was an accident and we're all fine.

ACTRESS 1: An accident? More like a horrible experience.

ACTOR 2: Or a tragedy.

ACTOR 1: I thought it was a bomb.

ACTOR 2: I thought we had trouble landing.

ACTRESS 1: I heard screams.

ACTOR 3: I heard the pilot trying to radio the control tower.

ACTOR 2: (LAUGHING) I thought we were being hijacked.

ACTRESS 1: And I thought I was sitting next to a criminal who spoke Arabic!

(EVERYONE LAUGHS)

ACTOR 3: The way things are these days.

ACTRESS 1: Terrorist attacks and threats.

ACTOR 2: And so much terror we won't be able to fly anymore.

ACTRESS 3: We'll have to learn to live with bombs.

ACTOR 2: And fear.

ACTRESS 1: Fear is a bomb.

ACTOR 3: A time bomb.

ACTRESS 1: I wasn't afraid before, but from now on, I will be.

ACTOR 2: I always was afraid this would turn out bad.

ACTOR 3: Although this story ended well.

ACTRESS 1: Though the emergency slides didn't inflate.

ACTOR 2: Even though I had to jump and I almost broke my leg.

ACTRESS 1: Even though I had to walk on the wing.

ACTOR 2: Even though we couldn't.

ACTOR 3: They said not on the wing.

EMILY: That's where the fuel was.

ACTOR 2: Just the same, I've never seen them rescue anybody with those slides.

ACTRESS 1: Or that they turn into rafts.

EMILY: They say the pilot had a nervous breakdown.

ACTRESS 2: I'm having a nervous breakdown!

ACTOR 3: Me too!

ACTRESS 1: I've never been so glad to set foot in this country.

ACTOR 2: Or I to come back

ACTOR 3: This is my happy homecoming.

**(WHITE LIGHTS. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A PLANE NOSE-DIVING)**

EMILY: I saw myself, like an angel, falling through the air, surrounded by fireballs. I saw my life unreeling before me, I saw it take off and take leave and then I saw it return, torn, shattered, but becoming whole, with my leg amputated and the leg I feel is there but isn't mine. And both were fine. Safe and sound.

ACTOR 2: (AIRPLANE NOSE DIVING, IN CRESCENDO) I've always thought that turbulence is like this country. That's there's turbulence you don't feel or hardly feel but before the terror, we notice that turbulence.  
As if you could see things coming.

ACTOR 3 (AIRPLANE NOSE DIVING, IN CRESCENDO) And I think that turbulence is a powerful vibration produced by the Universe. The Universe is turbulence and the vibrations are flying, the same thing as flying. Flying is turbulence. Because flying, like we do, isn't normal. We believe it, but it's not. It can't be normal.

ACTRESS 1: (AIRPLANE NOSE DIVING, IN CRESCENDO) Then the plane started shaking and people were screaming. The oxygen masks came down and the plane shook even more. The pilot said landing would be difficult, that things were a bit shaky. And then, the plane started to nosedive.

**(AIRPLANE NOSE DIVING, IN CRESCENDO)**

ACTOR 2: We felt like we were in a nosedive that wasn't normal

ACTOR 3: We fell, 120 passengers

ACTRESS 1: We fell at 6000 feet

ACTOR 2: Every 60 seconds

EMILY: One hundred twenty lives a minute

ACTOR 3: And gaining speed, until, suddenly..

EMILY: It was over.

**(THE NOISE OF NOSE-DIVING STOPS. SOUND OF LANDING)**

ACTOR 2: We landed

ACTRESS 1: Smoothly

**(EVERYONE HAPPY, EMBRACING)**

ACTOR 3: How nice you're here!

ACTOR 2: It's wonderful to see you!

ACTRESS 1: I always land on my feet!

ACTOR 3: I don't even get bitten by mosquitoes!

ACTOR 2: I'm protected by the Gods!

EMILY: And everyone else said

ACTRESS 1: Good thing I wasn't there!

ACTRESS 1: It won't be my dreams cut short!

ACTOR 2: My family is whole!

ACTRESS 1: It happened to them, not me!

ACTOR 2: They must have been doing something!

ACTOR 3: That never happens to me.

ACTOR 2: Let's have a party to celebrate!

ACTRESS1: Give me a rum and let's toast!

ACTOR 2: Thank God

ACTOR 1: Amen.

**(END MUSIC BEGINS)**

EMILY: And as I was falling, I wondered  
What must heaven be like?

**(THE WHOLE STAGE GOES WHITE.  
IN THE DISTANCE WE HEAR A COCKPIT TRANSMISSION WE  
CAN JUST MAKE OUT. SOTO APPEARS. THE FOUR ACTORS  
NOW FACE THE AUDIENCE)**

SOTO: The problem is beauty. Beauty, which has no  
models.

EMILY: And I said, "Heaven is like this country, a  
failed action."

ACTOR 2: A failed action, like the shoe left in one place  
and its mate traveling forever alone.

ACTOR 3: Like the bombs that didn't explode in the subway

ACTRESS 1: Like the phone call never answered.

SOTO: Like people who die in the hospital due to a lack of oxygen.

ACTOR 2: Like the man who tries to sleep with his wife and can't.

ACTOR 3: Like the same phone call you answer just when the caller hangs up.

EMILY: Like calling the waitress over and she thinks you're waving

ACTOR 3: Like running into the love of your life and not knowing it.

SOTO: Like a stray bullet.

ACTOR 2: Like arriving 32 seconds late

ACTRESS 1: Like the hostess who throws a kid's party and isn't any good at that kind of thing.

ACTOR 2: Like the blind man who has an operation and now can't close his eyes.

ACTRESS 1: Like the woman who has work done and ends up in a coma.

ACTOR 3: Like the man who wins, but can't make anyone believe it.

SOTO: A failed action, like a five-sided Hexagon.

EMILY: A failed action, like trying to revive what you love most.

ACTOR 2: Braking too late.

ACTOR 3: Not hearing the crying.

ACTRESS 1: Hearing it without understanding it.

SOTO: Having it all.

ACTOR 3: And always saying it.

ACTRESS 1: But never doing anything.

ACTOR 2: And knowing you don't understand it.

SOTO: And leaving it like that.

ACTRESS 1: Without the slightest regret.

**(AGAIN WE HEAR THE AIRPLANE ENGINE. THEY PICK UP THEIR SUITCASES AND LINE UP FACING THE AUDIENCE)**

SOTO: That's the truth of the problem: beauty. Beauty like poetry. There are no parameters for beauty, until after it's made. Beauty is not indifferent, it can't be, it never has been.

EMILY: The remains of the 120 passengers and crew members who died in the accident this Tuesday have been removed from the crash site.

ACTOR 2: (AS COPILOT) Captain: We're running out of fuel! We're running out of fuel!

ACTOR 3: (AS PILOT) What do you mean we're out of fuel? They were full only three hours ago! You said they were full!

ACTOR 2: (AS COPILOT) That's what they told me! That we were full! But we're out of fuel and we're going down, we're going down!

EMILY: All passengers have been identified and there is no hope for survivors. Pope Benedict XVI has sent his condolences.

ACTOR 3: (AS PILOT) I told you to check everything! I put you in charge of everything!

ACTOR 2: (AS COPILOT) It wasn't my fault, it wasn't my fault!

ACTOR 3: (AS PILOT) Calling Control Tower. This is 1234. We are going to attempt a controlled emergency landing with our engines shut down. We have no fuel, I repeat, we have no fuel. Do you copy, Tower? Do you read me, Caracas?



SOTO: Beauty, like imposing an idea on a sublime state  
of man's intellectual capability. That's where  
models are created.  
In beauty.  
Beauty that is not indifferent to this crushingly  
irremediable loss, before this catastrophic  
waste.

ACTOR 2: A country tries to land nervously

ACTOR 3: And it doesn't know why.

ACTRESS 1: It was a Tuesday that didn't know it was  
Tuesday.

ACTOR 2: It was a mission never accomplished.

ACTOR 3: A handy excuse.

ACTRESS 1: A mistake and no one responsible.

EMILY: And when I looked out the window  
there were the mountains and the country.  
And to one side, the empty runway.  
But the strip seemed to be up, on its back,  
turned over,  
because the emergency landing  
this time and for the last time  
would be in the center of beauty,  
beauty that is the product of the soul  
in the penetrable pathways of the heavens.

**(MUSIC ENDS)**

**END**