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Playscripts, Inc.
P.O. Box 237060
New York, NY 10023

Phone/fax: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: questions@playscripts.com
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Cast of Characters

SAMUEL B. SHOSTAKOVITZ, labor historian

MIKE FREEMAN, Federal Aviation Administration supervisor

EMILY GARDENER, air traffic controller, sometime Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization activist

BILL MARKS, air traffic controller

LOUISE MARKS (ROCKFORD), Bill's wife

Place

A dingy apartment in Queens, New York.

Time

1980s

(More specifically: the action in and around the air traffic control tower takes place during 1980-81, but the character Shostakovitz is looking at those events from the historical perspective of 1987.)

Acknowledgments

Jimmy Carter was a Democrat premiered in New York City at P.S. 122 on March 28, 2002 and was subsequently transferred to The Kitchen by Bob Boyett Theatricals. The cast was as follows:

SAMUEL B. SHOSTAKOVITZ.....Steven Rattazzi
MIKE FREEMANPeter Ackerman
EMILY GARDENERCarla Harting
BILL MARKS Daniel Stewart
LOUISE Molly Powell

The role of Mike was also played by Jeremy Shamos and Tim McGeever.

Directed by Michael Sexton
Lights by Heather Carson
Set by Laura Hyman
Costumes by Elizabeth Niemczyk
Sound Design by Jill duBoff
Original music by Richard Maxwell

All production groups performing this play are required to include the following credits on the title page of every program:

Jimmy Carter was a Democrat premiered in New York City at P.S. 122 on March 28, 2001 and was subsequently transferred to The Kitchen by Bob Boyett Theatricals.

JIMMY CARTER WAS A DEMOCRAT

by Rinne Groff

Prologue

(Samuel B. Shostakovitz's home: a dingy, one-room apartment. All the events of this play, even those which literally take place during 1980-81 in various locations, are played out in the space of Sammy's apartment.)

(Sammy's furniture [his chairs, couch, bed, TV, refrigerator, etc.] serves the needs of all the other characters in their homes and at work. Sammy performs whatever rearranging of the furniture is necessary to make the scenes run. He has a microphone and various costume pieces [hats and masks] which he uses when he is playing different roles.)

(There are Daily News front pages taped to Sammy's wall [chronicling Reagan's election, the hostage release, and the Air Traffic Controller strike] which he references for emphasis at points throughout the play.)

(SAMUEL B. SHOSTAKOVITZ enters. He is preparing for something. He wears dress slacks, a dress shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and a tie.)

(He adjusts papers and reviews notecards. He checks that his flight captain's hats with various insignias and his Reagan and Carter masks are ready to go. He tests a microphone which he has set up.)

(Samuel has a Brooklyn accent. He says each of the following words as if they are pregnant with self-evident meaning.)

SAMUEL. Air. *(Pause.)* Traffic. *(Pause.)* Control.

Scene 1

(EMILY and BILL enter.)

(They are in the Coffee Lounge of TRACON [Terminal Radar Approach Control], the air traffic control headquarters for LaGuardia, JFK, and Westchester airports.)

EMILY. What the fuck is that supposed to mean? I said, what the fuck...

BILL. It means my wife is picking me up from work today.

EMILY. What are you saying?

BILL. That's what I'm saying.

EMILY. Why?

BILL. Buick's in the shop.

EMILY. Oh my god.

BILL. It's fine.

EMILY. Oh my god, last night?

BILL. I'm fine.

EMILY. Are you okay?

BILL. I'm here.

EMILY. How'd you get here?

BILL. Joe.

EMILY. He lives near you?

BILL. He picked me up.

EMILY. I would have picked you up.

BILL. Yeah.

EMILY. I could drop you home tonight.

BILL. I'm overtime.

EMILY. Don't say that.

BILL. What?

EMILY. Overtime is when you make time and a half.

BILL. I'm working late.

EMILY. Louise doesn't hate me.

BILL. Yeah.

EMILY. She likes me.

BILL. She doesn't like you.

EMILY. What'd I ever do to her?

BILL. Cut it out.

EMILY. It's not my fucking fault that you totaled your car.
Maybe she hates *you*.

BILL. Maybe.

EMILY. I told you you were too drunk to drive.

BILL. What was I gonna do? I had to get home.

EMILY. You should drink less.

BILL. You should drink less.

EMILY. We should drink less.

(EMILY sits in a chair near BILL.)

(SAMUEL rises.)

SAMUEL. Thank you. Good afternoon. Good evening. My name is Dr. Samuel B. Shostakovitz. PhD.

(He locates an index card and reads a prepared speech, referencing his notes as needed, at times digressing.)

Who has failed to be fascinated by the glass booth atop the tall tower out at the local airport, and by the tiny silhouettes of tiny figures inside, diminutive shadows handling giant responsibilities? Perhaps none of us who concern ourselves with Labor and its disputes—and should we not all consider ourselves in that noble camp—were prepared for the devastating

shock of the fiasco that was the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization strike begun in August, 1981.

(SAMUEL points to the appropriate Daily News headline.)

Everybody knew that it was illegal for government employees to strike. Even though the Postal Workers got away with it in 1970, and that was before they started spraying machine gun bullets to make their point about desperation, about the real madness that comes when there's one story and it's written by IBM. Everybody knew that some firings and even a temporary decertification of PATCO were a real possibility; but were we not all incredulous when President Reagan's ruthless intervention led to the instant firing of 11,345 air traffic controllers, 11,345 men and women, American citizens, employed by the U.S. government, the entire union, except for a few jack-offs who crumbled and crossed the line back to work.

Incredulous, yes; and perhaps even more flummoxing was the public pillorying, in the media and on the streets. We're talking about the death of a union. Its death.

(He puts the index card in his pocket.)

SAMUEL. Uh, we're gonna begin in late summer, 1980.

If we move along swiftly, we'll make it to November, when the votes tallied Reagan and the tide turned, through to January, you get the hostage release and a new round of labor negotiation, and by August, Reagan's screwing the controllers in the ass if you'll pardon my French candor.

You know, my parents raised me in an America that believed that strike-busting, the use of scab labor, and harsh, punitive treatment of striking employees was wrong. They raised me, God bless their souls, for the America they thought they were building. Sadly, the concrete never hardened; the city of dreams was never erect, erected. And I ask you if this could be, if this is what is, do you really think the metaphorical Skies can ever be metaphorically Safe again?

Scene 2

(New York TRACON.)

(BILL and EMILY are at their control terminals.)

(The plain text dialogue is delivered to someone in the room and the italicized dialogue is going out over headsets.)

(Emily is Bill's hand-off man in this scene. She is dealing with air traffic of her own, only stopping periodically to interact with Bill.)

BILL. *United nine forty-three, LaGuardia Departure Radar Contact, turn right heading three six zero, intercept Deer Park three zero eight on course, climb, maintain one four thousand.*

(SAMUEL quickly dons a United Airlines cap before he responds over the microphone.)

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Okay, three sixty on the heading three oh eight and up to one four thousand.*

(BILL squints at his monitor.)

BILL. *Uh, United nine forty-three, strike that, maintain eight thousand.*

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Maintain eight, United nine forty three.*

BILL. *Affirmative, LaGuardia Departure.*

(SAMUEL switches hats. He does this throughout the play as required by the role he is presenting.)

LEAR JET/SAMUEL. *LaGuardia Departure, Lear one six three alpha, passing five point eight for eight thousand.*

BILL. *What? Stop departures. Stop departures.*

EMILY. *Tower's getting one more in the air.*

BILL. *I'm not seeing this guy.¹ Stop departures.*

¹ The Lear Jet is flying out of Westchester, but Bill thinks that it's out of LaGuardia, which is why he's not looking for it in the proper place on his radar.

EMILY. They're gonna clear the Cessna off the runway. Cessna's getting airborne.

BILL. *Uh, Lear one six three alpha, roger.*

(EMILY turns to BILL.)

EMILY. The Lear's out of Westchester. You want me to hand him?

BILL. Roger. Right. No.

EMILY. You got him?

BILL. I got him. *United nine forty-three, turn right zero four zero.*

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Zero four zero, United nine forty-three.*

BILL. *One sixty-three alpha, right to two seventy.*

LEAR JET/SAMUEL. *Six three alpha, right to two seven zero.*

BILL. *And maintain present altitude.*

LEAR JET/SAMUEL. *We're at seven point four, six three alpha.²*

BILL. *United nine forty-three, turn left now to two seven zero to intercept the two seventy to, uh, intercept Deer Park three zero eight on course.*

EMILY. *(Not turning around:)* Your Lear is still climbing.

BILL. *(Shutting her up:)* I gave him maintain.

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Okay, two seventy, three oh eight on course.*

BILL. *And United nine forty-three, continue climb to one four thousand.*

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Okay, United nine forty-three to one four thousand.*

² The Lear Jet thinks Bill's asking for an altitude reading from them, but doesn't hear that Bill has told them to keep their present altitude.

BILL. *November one zero eight niner lima, Departure Radar Contact, turn right heading three six zero, intercept Deer Park three zero eight on course, climb, expect six as final.*

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Uh, we got a close one right here on our nose.*

BILL. *What? He's a thousand feet below you, sir.*

LEAR JET/SAMUEL. *Negative, sir, we're at eight thousand feet, that's where we were cleared.*

(Pause. EMILY looks at BILL's monitor.)

BILL. *United nine forty-three, climb and maintain one four thousand.*

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *That Lear came out of nowhere. He nearly knocked us out of the box.*

BILL. *United nine forty-three, climb and maintain one four thousand.*

UNITED AIRLINES/SAMUEL. *Climbing to one four thousand, United nine forty-three.*

BILL. *Damn it.*

EMILY. *Nothing happened.*

BILL. *Damn.*

EMILY. *You got a Beechcraft wanting hand-off on landline. Should I tell them to fuck off?*

BILL. *Where is he? What's the speed? (Looking at his monitor:) No, I got him. Tell go ahead contact.*

Scene Three

(The Coffee Lounge.)

(EMILY takes a sip of coffee as MIKE enters with a file.)

MIKE. *You read and initial?*

EMILY. *Who are you?*

MIKE. Mike Freeman. I'm the new...

EMILY. Oh yeah, FAA. You're gonna clean up our act?

(He holds the file out to her. She doesn't take it.)

EMILY. I'm signed. E.G.

(He looks at the folder.)

MIKE. You're the only one I've got, EG.

EMILY. Emily.

MIKE. I know.

EMILY. You know?

MIKE. Figured none of the guys around was Emily.

EMILY. I'm not afraid of your lists; proud to be active with PATCO.

SAMUEL. Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization.
(He mouths "PATCO.")

MIKE. Mazel tov.

EMILY. *(Re: the file:)* Want to know the reason nobody bothers to initial?

MIKE. Everybody on deck is required to sign off on the equipment.

EMILY. They figure who gives a fuck: nobody's gonna bother to fix 'em.

MIKE. We got a lot of down screens?

EMILY. *You* got a lot of down screens; you're the one supposed to be in charge. How much money do you make?

MIKE. Excuse me?

EMILY. A shitload more than when you were actually doing something.

MIKE. The government pays supervisors on a higher scale than controllers if that's what you're asking.

EMILY. Yeah, I guess that's what I'm asking, Mike. When did you quit operating?

MIKE. I was military.

EMILY. Straight to supervisory?

MIKE. I paid my dues to Uncle Sam.

EMILY. By spacing out a couple of jets making test runs?

MIKE. I know the conditions involved in maintaining commercial air traffic.

EMILY. You don't know New York. New York sucks.

MIKE. I'm going to get this R&I done.

EMILY. You could ask Joe to sign off. He's in the john. JOE!

MIKE. I'll wait.

EMILY. He's not shitting; he's puking. JOE, NEW BOSS MAN WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.

MIKE. He's using the bathroom.

EMILY. He always upchucks first thing in the morning. Says it steadies his nerves. JOE.

MIKE. Stop it!

EMILY. Squeamish?

MIKE. I don't appreciate being made a fool of.

EMILY. I wasn't fooling.

MIKE. A man named Joe is throwing up right now in the bathroom?

EMILY. If today's Monday.

MIKE. Is he all right?

EMILY. Or Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Saturdays he's not on the boards 'til four and pukes before he comes in.

MIKE. Every day?

EMILY. Our contract is up come next year. You could help us out, try to get Joe out of the bathroom.

MIKE. You think a \$10,000 raise will settle Joe's stomach?

EMILY. No, a lifetime supply of Pepto Bismal.

MIKE. Congress's not gonna approve those budget increases.

EMILY. We're talking safety, ours and theirs.

MIKE. Whose theirs?

EMILY. Souls on board.

MIKE. There's no evidence that you getting a 30-hour work week will make airline passengers feel safer.

EMILY. So you're gonna let some vomit-covered nut-case send them to hell?

MIKE. You're advising me to fire Joe?

EMILY. Don't be an asshole.

MIKE. Do you ever censor yourself?

EMILY. I was censoring myself, Mike.

MIKE. I can reassure you that the FAA is seriously considering the controller complaints, and everybody's got every hope that contract negotiations will proceed fairly and without incident. What you guys need to understand is that every job has its stresses and as a federal employee... well, it's just not an option to hold the country hostage to your labor demands.

EMILY. Hostage: ouch. Don't you ever censor yourself?

SAMUEL. Everyone caught that, yes? Very interesting. And the reference to Congress there, who ultimately can decide, could still decide to approve not just higher salaries as per the job stresses etc. but also shortened work weeks, both of which are, uh, of course, as Mike said, budgetary considerations. Good. Great. Let's move on.

Scene Four

(Emily's Bedroom.)

(EMILY and BILL lie side by side in bed.)

(After a long despondent silence...)

BILL. This is to notify you that you are officially reprimanded...

EMILY. Fuck off.

BILL. ...for Improper Performance of Duty. I can't drink like I used to.

EMILY. Right.

BILL. Can't do much like I used to.

EMILY. Would you relax; I can get laid any time I want. *(Pause.)* They gave you a warning about the Lear incident?

BILL. I should have seen him climbing.

EMILY. You were high scorer that day; I don't know what their problem is.

BILL. It's not a video game.

EMILY. Sure, it is. Look at the screen: all those Atari bleeps and pings. You see it any other way... that's your ulcer right there.

BILL. What do you think, maybe 300, 350 souls on a carrier that size?

EMILY. And every last one of them where they want to be right now—on vacation, cuddling grandkids, seeing the sights—all because of you, and on time because you didn't spin them when things got a little fucked-up.

BILL. I'm some kind of artist.

EMILY. You keep the people happy. *(Beat.)* Did you get your strike survey?

BILL. Those PATCO cowboys are crazy.

(BILL *sits up.*)

EMILY. You voted for them.

BILL. I didn't vote.

EMILY. That's what it means to be in a union.

BILL. I give over too much of my paycheck every month is what it means to be in a union.

EMILY. That money keeps you from kissing FAA ass every day.

BILL. It doesn't seem to be helping you much.

EMILY. What the fuck is that?

(*Pause.*)

BILL. You can date whoever you want.

EMILY. That is correct.

(*Pause.*)

BILL. No way any of the guys I know are gonna strike. Half of them are former Air Force for crying out loud: you don't disobey the Commander-in-Chief.

EMILY. But Reagan is on our side, and as soon as he gets the Presidency...

BILL. He's not gonna get the Presidency.

EMILY. The words fourteen point eight mean anything to you?

BILL. You been watching *Sixty Minutes* again?

EMILY. Fourteen point eight percent unemployment and my tax dollars keeping all those losers fat on Twinkies.

BILL. And Reagan is on your side?

EMILY. Our side. Did you see the thing he wrote? He sent a letter to PATCO.

(BILL *looks at EMILY incredulously.*)

(SAMUEL pulls a piece of paper from his file and reads it on mic, holding a Reagan mask in front of his face.)

REAGAN/SAMUEL. You can rest assured that if I am elected President, I will take whatever steps are necessary to provide our air traffic controllers with the most modern equipment available, and to adjust the staff levels and workdays so they are commensurate with achieving the maximum degree of public safety.

I pledge to you that my administration will work very closely with you to bring about a spirit of cooperation between the President and the air traffic controllers. Such harmony can and must exist if we are to restore the people's confidence in the government.

Sincerely,
Ronald Reagan

BILL. Horseshit.

EMILY. You think everything's horseshit.

BILL. Not everything. Lies.

EMILY. How much money do you make?

BILL. You know what tier I'm in.

EMILY. You are in the middle class; say it with me. What the fuck is Carter gonna do for you?

BILL. You are in the middle class.

EMILY. You are in the middle class.

BILL. We are in the middle class.

(They kiss passionately.)

(But then slowly, BILL disentangles himself from EMILY's body.)

EMILY. Don't.

BILL. Em, it's past ten.

EMILY. Like two minutes past.

BILL. I've got to go.

EMILY. You're smashed.

BILL. I'm not.

EMILY. Then get smashed. Stay and get smashed.

(EMILY *kisses* BILL.)

EMILY. Is that horseshit?

BILL. That is more complicated than horseshit. (*Beat.*) I'm gonna take a shower.

EMILY. Don't.

BILL. Em.

EMILY. I mean it. Do not.

BILL. What are you ragging over?

EMILY. You are not permitted to use my shower.

BILL. You're the one smashed.

EMILY. As soon as the water hits you; you're married to Louise again.

BILL. I'm married to her now.

EMILY. No. Walk through your front door as my boyfriend. You can scrub it off you there.

Scene Five

(LOUISE *enters.*)

SAMUEL. Louise asked to add a brief little something at this point by way of explanation, if you will. This is Louise Rockford, Bill's wife at the time, whom you'll meet more in a moment. Louise is currently living in Bayonne, New Jersey with her children and her second husband.

Go ahead, Louise.

LOUISE. Do you want to know what the controllers were like, really like, before the Strike? Before they got murdered? Well, I'll tell you: they were like gods. They were like Marlboro Cowboys. They were like real men, macho, crazy, eager, proud, dedicated. They loved the job, the same crazy job that was killing them most of the time, the same job that drove them up a wall, but that also made life exciting and dangerous and real, the way they liked it. They felt like heroes, like men in charge. Nothing fazed them. Nothing could rattle them. And nothing was allowed to get in their way, nothing—not family, children, illness, wife—nothing. They were like... gods. They had to be very self-confident, very self-centered. They had to feel on top of things. They were, you know, they were almost like gods.

Thank you.

(LOUISE exits.)

(EMILY sits up on the bed, pretty naked. She shouts offstage.)

EMILY. Tell me about Johnny Carson.

(Pause.)

I want to know about Johnny Carson. *(Pause.)* I want to know about the Johnny...

(MIKE enters wearing a towel.)

MIKE. What do you want me to say?

EMILY. I want you to say something about Johnny Carson.

MIKE. I like that shtick where he looks into the future.

EMILY. You know what I mean.

MIKE. No, you know what you mean.

EMILY. It's 1969. Johnny Carson invites F. Lee Bailey to appear on his show... Go on.

MIKE. I don't appreciate you going through my briefcase.

EMILY. Don't I have rights?

MIKE. What do you want from me, Emily?

EMILY. Perspective. That unique Federal Aviation Administration Perspective.

MIKE. If you looked at my papers, you already know my perspective.

EMILY. It's sexier when it comes out of your mouth. Tell me about the Johnny Carson strike.

MIKE. It wasn't a Strike; it was a Job Action.

(MIKE grabs his briefcase from under the bed. He shoves a few scattered papers back inside.)

EMILY. Why don't you want to talk about it?

MIKE. Because it's ancient history.

EMILY. Why don't you want to talk about history?

(MIKE continues to hide his papers away. Sulking.)

SAMUEL. I think that's a very fine question that Emily poses there. Now does everybody get this reference? The Job Action? *(To MIKE and EMILY:)* Can you hold for a moment please? *(To audience:)* June 17, 1969. Johnny Carson invited acting PATCO president F. Lee Bailey to appear on his show and chat and "alert the public to the air control problem." So PATCO decides that this makes for a great opportunity to get some real attention. The word is spread that when Bailey utters the phrase, "It's Going to Be a Long Hot Summer;" that's the cue for controllers nationwide to call in sick and refuse to come to work, bringing our country's airports to a standstill. It was a really dumb idea.

EMILY. *(To MIKE:)* I'm sorry I went in your briefcase. I was looking for cigarettes.

SAMUEL. Just one moment, Emily. The East Coast didn't get Johnny Carson because of some late-breaking campaign coverage on the network. Elsewhere, controllers got the show, but everything was so last minute that there was confusion about the wording to listen for. Only in Denver and Kansas City did

controllers claim to hear, “It’s Going to Be a Long Hot Summer,” come out of Bailey’s mouth. They called in “sick,” not knowing they were all alone, and the FAA, characteristically, threatened to fire every last poor, isolated Midwestern shmuck.

EMILY. You don’t have to get hostile.

SAMUEL. And that episode of Johnny Carson, you can’t find it anywhere. It’s disappeared from the archives. I’m not joking.

EMILY. Do you think that government employees should be allowed to strike to get livable working conditions?

MIKE. What do you pull in? Thirty-eight a year? I don’t know what you’re complaining about.

EMILY. Do you think that government employees should be...

MIKE. *(Interrupting:)* It’s not about what I think.

EMILY. I’m asking what you think.

MIKE. It’s the law.

EMILY. You’re not gonna tell me what you think.

MIKE. I think I’d rather not talk about work right now.

(EMILY moves towards him.)

EMILY. Boy oh boy, Emily Gardener, sleeping with the enemy.

MIKE. I’m not the enemy. We both work for air traffic safety.

EMILY. Who’s the enemy then?

MIKE. Nature. Forces of nature.

(They begin to kiss.)

EMILY. Fuck, then we really are screwed.

MIKE. We need to work together, that’s all. This political garbage just pulls people apart.

EMILY. I agree.

MIKE. You agree.

EMILY. We agree: you should let Bill off the hook.

(MIKE pushes himself away from her.)

MIKE. Bill?

EMILY. Transcript shows he told that Lear to maintain.

MIKE. He didn't get corroboration.

EMILY. He's got kids to feed.

MIKE. What are you asking me? It's out of my control now.

EMILY. Forces of nature. You're gonna throw him to the dogs, aren't you?

MIKE. Can we stop talking about Bill?

(Silence. They don't talk about Bill for a long time.)

(They look at each other.)

MIKE. I guess not.

Scene Six

(LOUISE on the couch.)

(She is watching TV in her nightgown. As she stares ahead at the screen, SAMUEL reads the transcript over the microphone, indicating the different voices of the interviewer and the interviewee.)

(LOUISE is transfixed by the program.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- We can hear in the background, on the loudspeakers, the crowds outside, yelling anti-American slogans and violent threats to the hostages, does that ever bother you?

- Uh, the first week we were here, uh, we were kept in places in the Embassy where the crowds were, tremendous crowds. They just shake the building, you know. We were afraid at first, but coming to find that they're not saying anything

against us. It was, they wanted the shah back and they were chanting, you know, their prayers and all this.

(BILL enters.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- How do you know they weren't saying anything against you?

(BILL kisses LOUISE on top of her head.)

BILL. How you doing, kiddo?

(LOUISE doesn't take her eyes off the TV screen.)

LOUISE. That poor man.

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Since I've been here, I've been learning Persian *(Little laugh)* quite a bit. So I understood.

BILL. I heard they got an interview. At least, we know they're alive.

LOUISE. He has such sensitive eyes. I think he's Hispanic.

BILL. I don't see how you can watch this shit all day long.

LOUISE. Separated from his family like that. It's terrible.

(BILL exits.)

(LOUISE doesn't look up from the TV.)

LOUISE. Rough night?

BILL. *(Entering with a beer:)* No hair-raisers.

(BILL sits down with LOUISE.)

BILL. Kids asleep?

LOUISE. It's past eleven.

BILL. Christ, I didn't realize. I stopped off with Joe.

LOUISE. *(Focusing on the TV:)* He's a Marine Corporal. His father has those same full lips. The terrorists let the hostages make phone calls last week, but that Marine, his parents

missed the call and now they're petrified to go anywhere even for a minute. His mother, her name's Theresa, she won't even shower any more unless her sister is in the house to catch the phone. It's awful.

BILL. That's crazy.

LOUISE. What if I was a hostage and I called and you couldn't hear 'cause the water was running? I'd be heart-broken.

BILL. Nobody wants me to shower anymore.

LOUISE. Wouldn't you?

BILL. *(Re: the TV:)* Your boyfriend's back.

LOUISE. Hush.

(BILL and LOUISE watch the TV.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Are you tied?

- Uh, yes, we are tied, uh, not uncomfortably. We are tied... our hands are this far apart. But anything we need, we ask for, they give it, they get it for us. Ummmm. Everything seem... pretty good right now.

LOUISE. *(Never taking her eyes off the screen:)* They brainwash them.

(BILL puts his arm around LOUISE.)

BILL. How do they do that?

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- You said "we." Are you kept alone?

LOUISE. It's awful.

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Oh, no, sir, there are many hostages together. I'd say at least thirty.

- Are they all together, or are they kept in separate little cubicles, or how do they live?

(BILL slips his hand inside LOUISE's nightgown.)

LOUISE. Bill.

BILL. What if you were a hostage?

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- We are kept in separate little cubicles. Uh, it's, uh, sectioned off.

LOUISE. Bill.

BILL. Call me Mohammad.

LOUISE. Bill, this is serious. Those poor people.

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Are you permitted to converse with each other?

- Uh, no, sir. Uh, the rule is silence is golden.

- Silence is golden?

- Yes, sir.

(BILL continues touching LOUISE under her nightgown.)

LOUISE. Bill, please.

BILL. (With authority:) Silence is golden.

(LOUISE defers. She keeps her eyes on the TV as BILL feels her up.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Uh, there's no speaking with the other hostages and not even with the students unless they come and talk to you first.

- And what happens if you do speak to someone else?

- Uh, that hasn't happened yet, so, uh, I couldn't say.

BILL. You want to know what happens?

(LOUISE looks at him. BILL grabs her hands and squeezes them together.)

Tied.

(LOUISE nods.)

(BILL flips her on to the floor. LOUISE stifles a gasp.)

You want to know what happens? You're allowed to talk if the students talk to you first.

LOUISE. I don't want to get in trouble.

BILL. Good girl.

(LOUISE reacts silently to what BILL does to her.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Do you know that there's a well-known psychological observation that a hostage very often assumes the, uh, the political feelings and is very often sympathetic towards his captors?

- Uh, yes, sir. I feel that way as a marine, uh... you know how I feel. I hope you know how I feel. I know my superiors know how I feel.

(LOUISE and BILL are having sex.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- Why are you here? I think that's a question a lot of...

- Why am I here, sir?

- Why are you the one singled out to do this interview?

- Uh, I don't know. There are many of us. I was called upon. They... I didn't know what was going on. The next thing I know they say, all right, look, you're coming with us.

- What if you'd said, no?

(BILL is climaxing.)

HOSTAGE INTERVIEW/SAMUEL.

- I, I thought about saying no, but I felt that... many of the people don't know what's going on, I think. I want them to know. I want them to, to, uh, to, hah, at least fight, you know, do something. I want President Carter to know that we're all right, you know, that nothing is happening to us. Not of yet. I want him to know that we all relying on his decision to let us go home.

(BILL collapses on top of LOUISE, spent.)

LOUISE. You did that for me?

BILL. Yeah. Did you like it?

LOUISE. Yeah.

Scene Seven

(TRACON. Late at night.)

(EMILY is alone.)

EMILY. *LaGuardia Departure Radar Contact. Go ahead.*

CESSNA/SAMUEL. *This is November two five Indigo Charlie. If you're not too busy tonight, can you give me a hand-off?*

EMILY. *November two five Indigo Charlie, they're never gonna take you at 3,000.*

CESSNA/SAMUEL. *Roger. If I climb to five?*

EMILY. *Roger, climb and maintain five. I'll see what I can do.*

(BILL enters.)

CESSNA/SAMUEL. *Thank you kindly. It's nice to hear a woman's voice at this time of night.*

EMILY. *Flirting's not gonna help.*

CESSNA/SAMUEL. *Standing by.*

EMILY. *Roger.*

(BILL leans over EMILY's chair.)

BILL. Hey.

EMILY. Hey, you scared me.

BILL. Boo.

EMILY. Whoa.

BILL. What?

EMILY. I smell that.

BILL. Joe and me had a few.

EMILY. A few?

BILL. We drink too much.

EMILY. I don't worry about Joe.

BILL. It was a celebration.

EMILY. Car's out of the shop?

BILL. No. They dropped my reprimand.

EMILY. I knew it wouldn't stick. You want some mouthwash?

BILL. You don't like buffalo wings?

EMILY. You know what I'm saying: Mike catches one whiff of that breath, you got...

BILL. *(Scary movie voice:)* Automatic suspension.

EMILY. I don't want to work here without you, Bill, okay? It's not a joke to me.

(BILL looks at EMILY's radar monitor.)

BILL. Clear night.

EMILY. We've got some hot pockets.

BILL. Love that Indian summer.

EMILY. Yeah, well, they're rising like lead. Give 'em plenty of runway.

(MIKE enters. He speaks from darkness.)

MIKE. Gardener, your screen clean enough to clear?

EMILY. Gonna hand-off this Cessna and I'm out of here.

BILL. I'll take over.

MIKE. *(Nodding hello:)* Bill. *(To EMILY:)* Check in with me before you go.

EMILY. 'Kay.

(MIKE leaves.)

BILL. I'll landline for the Cessna, Em.

EMILY. You trying to get rid of me?

BILL. You got a date?

EMILY. Are you asking if you can come over later?

TWA/SAMUEL. *LaGuardia this is TWA two eighty-nine. We're looking for confirmation at Cameron.*

EMILY. Shit, they're not taking at Cameron. I guess I've got to eat this batch.

BILL. I'll take it, Em.

(EMILY rises and BILL sits in her chair.)

TWA two eighty-nine, this is LaGuardia Departure Radar Contact. Cameron denying air space. Hold southeast on the Solberg zero six one radial, three zero DME. Make left turns, one minute legs. Maintain one zero thousand. Expect further clearance in two zero, time now two three two five.

TWA/SAMUEL. *TWA two eight nine, roger and out.*

EMILY. By the books.

BILL. I have my moments.

EMILY. You still look a little toasted, Bill.

BILL. You should see the other guy.

EMILY. Joe's still at McSorely's?

BILL. Bet he's gone by now.

EMILY. I'm not even gonna ask if you went to the meeting.

BILL. I figured I'd get it second-hand.

EMILY. I was here. I was on.

BILL. They do that on purpose. FAA knows you're a dangerous weapon.

EMILY. Some danger. I can't even get you active, and I fuck you.

BILL. I'm an old-timer. Bucking for retirement.

EMILY. Exactly the kind we need.

BILL. Not me, not me, darling.

EMILY. You think everything's gonna magically get better? No one wants to strike, but...

BILL. Watch it.

EMILY. What?

BILL. Watch talking strike here.

EMILY. You think they don't know what we're talking about at those meetings? I'm not gonna fucking whisper in the halls. This is America.

BILL. Don't you think you're being a little naïve?

EMILY. Don't you think you're being a munchkin, which is exactly what they want you to be?

BILL. My head is spinning, Em. Can we talk about this later?

EMILY. Yeah, sure, if your head is spinning. Why not crash some planes first; we can talk about it then.

BILL. Sounds good.

EMILY. Don't forget my Cessna. He'd be heartbroken if I left him hanging.

(EMILY turns to leave.)

SAMUEL. How can we help but be reminded here of the 1970 injunction against PATCO striking, which was still in effect and was to be supported by Judge Platt of the Eastern District of New York who "gently reminded" PATCO members of their duty to obey the law. Can you feel how the whole interaction between Bill and Emily is just drenched with it?

(Before she goes...)

EMILY. I'll leave the key under the mat.

SAMUEL. Or moist with it?

Scene Eight

(Louise and Bill's Front Stoop.)

(EMILY crosses to LOUISE who is still wearing her robe.)

LOUISE. Bill'll be out in a second.

EMILY. Oh.

LOUISE. I couldn't get a sitter.

EMILY. Oh.

LOUISE. I'm not going to take the kids to a funeral. I'm not up to explaining about death.

EMILY. I don't blame you.

LOUISE. Carol's in the endless "why?" phase.

EMILY. How old?

LOUISE. Three. Almost three.

EMILY. Cute. Teddy's in school already?

LOUISE. Preschool. You have a cigarette?

EMILY. I don't smoke.

LOUISE. You want to come in? News is on.

EMILY. *(Shaking her head:)* Oh.

LOUISE. Those poor families.

EMILY. Reagan will have those hostages back five minutes after he's in office.

SAMUEL. Emily actually spoke those words in October of 1980. I took no liberties there: a direct quote. It was uncanny.

LOUISE. From your mouth to God's ears, but I don't think so.

EMILY. I said it here to you today. Rub my nose in it if it's not the truth.

LOUISE. We're Democrats.

EMILY. Right.

LOUISE. Mr. Carter gets a bad rap sheet, but he brought Peace to the Middle East. People forget that.

EMILY. We're talking about the Middle East.

LOUISE. But the Holy Land.

EMILY. Are you religious?

LOUISE. No. I mean we don't go to church.

EMILY. Does anybody?

LOUISE. Oh, yeah, lots of people. Everybody.

(They laugh a little together.)

LOUISE. I liked Joe.

EMILY. Yeah. Was a good man.

LOUISE. Poor Ellen. You know Ellen?

EMILY. I guess I met her at that, ummmm...

LOUISE. Yeah, I was there; she's a good dancer.

EMILY. Yeah.

LOUISE. It's so stupid, you know. They spend all their time with safety regulations and then they drive drunk. I could kill.

EMILY. The Buick's taking another week, Bill said.

LOUISE. Sometimes I think it's harder on the wives than on them.

EMILY. I wouldn't know.

LOUISE. *(Apologizing:)* How stupid.

EMILY. It's all right.

LOUISE. I'm being stupid. Are you the only one?

EMILY. Susan Mayfield works runway; you ever met Sue?

LOUISE. I don't know, I don't...

EMILY. Black hair?

LOUISE. Yeah, I don't know.

EMILY. *(Beat.)* Should you go get him? We don't want to be late for the service.

LOUISE. I don't hate you.

EMILY. I know.

LOUISE. Bill thinks I hate you.

EMILY. Bill thinks all women have jealous minds.

LOUISE. He's right about that.

(BILL enters.)

BILL. I can't find my tie. That blue tie?

LOUISE. There you are.

BILL. God, it's still summer out here.

EMILY. It's gonna be a long, hot summer.

(BILL turns on her.)

BILL. Give it a rest, would you?

LOUISE. Bill.

BILL. No. *(Addressing EMILY:)* How'm gonna tell my kids to obey the law if I don't? How'm I gonna tell Teddy?

LOUISE. Tell Teddy what?

EMILY. I wasn't trying to start anything, Bill. It just came out.

BILL. Well, maybe you should watch what comes out of your mouth. I am not gonna strike.

LOUISE. And maybe you should...

BILL. It's illegal.

EMILY. It's not illegal to check a box on a piece of paper says you're thinking about something.

BILL. God damn it, what the hell do you want from me?

LOUISE. Bill!

(Pause.)

EMILY. I don't want anything. Louise, I am so sorry.

LOUISE. You're not the apology I'm looking for.

(Pause. LOUISE glares at BILL.)

BILL. Where's my tie? Do you know where's my tie?

LOUISE. Have you been drinking? Morning cartoons still on.

(BILL groans. He turns to exit.)

LOUISE. Bill.

BILL. What?

LOUISE. Ironing is by the back door. Your jacket, too.

(BILL exits.)

(Pause.)

LOUISE. He loved Joe, that's all. He's sad.

EMILY. We're all sad.

LOUISE. You don't really think it will come to a strike, do you? I mean Teddy is about to start school.

EMILY. I don't know, Louise.

LOUISE. Kids need so much. You would not believe what even a pair of new shoes costs. They don't think about that when they're making all their big plans to help our lives.

EMILY. Yeah.

LOUISE. You're single. It's different for you.

EMILY. Yeah.

LOUISE. I'll be happy once all this contract stuff is put to rest.

EMILY. Yeah.

LOUISE. Emily, are you okay? I'm sorry he got so...

EMILY. Yeah.

LOUISE. Emily?

(EMILY is crying.)

EMILY. We're all so sad. We're all so fucking sad.

LOUISE. Honey, it's okay.

EMILY. I don't want to die in a car accident on the side of the turnpike.

LOUISE. Honey.

EMILY. I don't want to die.

LOUISE. Of course, you don't.

(LOUISE embraces EMILY.)

LOUISE. You won't. You won't. No one's going to die. You won't.

(BILL re-enters. He watches his wife with her arms around EMILY, stroking her hair.)

Scene Nine

SAMUEL. I think to the end of clarification of some of the themes and as a counterpoint to and implicitly a further exploration of why the Strike was a bust, of why we as a nation have difficulty asserting and maintaining an ethically and ideologically healthy relationship to the political processes and to our own Labor for that matter; which I hope, of course, you're getting from these characters telling their story, their stories, happening here in and around the Tower... well, uh...

(SAMUEL takes out a guitar.)

This song—I wrote this song—I just want to say that this song is dedicated to the striking workers, still striking, Strike's still on; PATCO never returned to work, and all those scabs running the air lanes...

(He just shakes his head.)

SAMUEL. It's called, "Pride and Guts." I hope, well, it should speak for itself. Pride and Guts.

(Launching into song:)

They scream, "unqualified disaster."
They shout, "complete wipe-out"
They say, "There's no redeeming aspect.
Now you all go home and pout."

But let me tell you friends,
Who're reeling from the counsel of despair,
You line up all the losers,
There ain't no PATCO posse there.

You gonna make a challenge?
Challenge our pride and our guts?
Pride and guts is what we made of.
We are made of pride and guts.

Reagan thought they'd all just buckle
Just to hear that open maw,
Reassuring and intoning,
Telling all about the law.

But PATCO said where he could stick it,
And they're chanting still, as loud.
A few jack-offs might have crumbled,
The rest are walking proud.

You gonna make a challenge?
Challenge our pride and our guts?
Pride and guts is what we made of.
We are made of pride and guts.

And FAA, who call themselves the "winners,"
They lose, too; here's what they had to do:
Congress gives them just one year to get their operation back
"up to steam," without 11,345 of their most valuable, experi-
enced manpower, while all the while suppressing any signs of
labor organizing amongst the returning and newly hired
staff...

Can't crack that nut in a single year?

All right, they'll give you two.

You told PATCO where to stick it,
And it seems that's where it stuck.
You may have won your stinking battle,
But the war's on boys: Good Luck.

But listen up, America,
I know you're reeling with despair,
But I swear there still are options.
I believe we'll make it there.

(MIKE, EMILY, BILL, and LOUISE join SAMUEL for the last chorus.)

ALL.

Let them put to us a challenge.
Challenge our pride and guts.
Pride and guts is what we made of.
We are made of pride and guts.

Pride and guts is what we made of.
We are made of pride and guts.

Scene Ten

(EMILY and BILL at TRACON.)

EMILY. Who's got a reference book? Anybody got a reference? This guy hardly speaks English.

(BILL turns to her.)

BILL. What do you need to know?

EMILY. Nothing. *LaGuardia Arrival Radar Contact, Avianca five two, repeat.*

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *Priority. We want priority.*

EMILY. *Motherfucker. Avianca five two, how long can you hold and what is your alternate?*

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *We able hold, uh, fifteen. Is what we do.*

EMILY. *Roger. What is your alternate?*

BILL. Send 'em Boston.

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *Uh, Boston, but uh, full of traffic.*

EMILY. *Repeat alternate airport, Avianca five two.*

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *It was Boston, but we cannot do it now. We run out of fuel now.*

(BILL looks at EMILY's screen. She pushes him away.)

EMILY. *Avianca five two, are you declaring a fuel emergency?*

BILL. Cover your ass, Em; they sound...

EMILY. *What the fuck do you think I'm doing? Repeat. Avianca five two, this is LaGuardia Arrival Radar Contact. Are you declaring a fuel emergency?*

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *Running low.*

EMILY. Every motherfucker made it here from Buenos Aires is low, motherfucker.

BILL. Em.

EMILY. *Repeat. Avianca five two, this is LaGuardia Arrival Radar Contact. Are you declaring a fuel emergency?*

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *We cannot make alternate.*

EMILY. *How many souls aboard, Avianca five two?*

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *Two zero niner people.*

EMILY. Give me heads up. These grease-heads don't know lingo, but give 'em space; can you hold?

BILL. I'll spin everything I got in the air. I can keep Delta at bay but they're already...

EMILY. Got it. *Avianca five two, LaGuardia Arrival Radar Contact, cleared for landing one three right.*

BILL. They didn't declare emergency.

AVIANCA AIR/SAMUEL. *One three right, thank you.*

EMILY. Fuck. *LaGuardia Arrival Radar Contact, United one four four, as soon as this corporate gets airborne, I'll give you four zero.*

UNITED/SAMUEL. *United one four four, standing by.*

BILL. Take a breath, Em.

EMILY. Don't tell me what to do? *(Focusing on her radar screen:)* Where'd he go? This fucking machine.

BILL. Louise didn't say anything. She doesn't...

EMILY. Suspect? Of course not. She's as dumb as the day is long.

BILL. Stop it. I need you.

EMILY. You have a wife. I met your wife. You need to get your fucking Delta in the air, Bill, is all you need. *(Looking at her screen:)* Where is this guy? Where are you? I don't need this shit. Where are you? Shit shit shit shit.

Scene Eleven

(McSorely's Bar.)

(EMILY picks up a glass and downs the contents. She is getting smashed.)

(MIKE enters and crosses to her.)

EMILY. What are you doing here?

SAMUEL. McSorely's Bar.

MIKE. Public place.

EMILY. PATCO place. You know that.

MIKE. I thought I might find you here.

EMILY. That's why you make the big bucks.

MIKE. I can reassure you that I'm not the one recommended reprimand.

EMILY. Course not.

MIKE. Or time off.

EMILY. The suspension did seem a wee bit harsh. Especially as how that machine was built before I was born. I don't think we should get demerits unless planes actually crash. If I'm gonna get put in the penalty box for two weeks, I'd at least like to see real live carcasses piled up on the runway.

MIKE. You're upset.

EMILY. No. Giddy. First black eye on my record. My cherry's finally popped.

MIKE. Looks like you've been crying.

EMILY. Everybody cries when they lose their virginity. Or is that only girls?

MIKE. I cried.

EMILY. I bet you did.

(She nods to the chair next to her.)

Make yourself comfortable, Mike.

(MIKE sits.)

MIKE. Where's Bill?

EMILY. My oh my.

MIKE. What?

EMILY. Last time we talked it was all let's don't mention Bill. I liked that protocol.

MIKE. You shouldn't be alone right now.

EMILY. Thanks for your concern. But I'm not alone?

MIKE. You know I want to stay.

EMILY. I'm not alone.

(She raises her glass in a "cheers" and drinks.)

EMILY. You gonna order?

MIKE. I don't drink.

EMILY. Ever?

MIKE. Never.

EMILY. No wonder you quit Control. Even if it was only military.

MIKE. I want you to know that your actions—even though they jeopardized smooth operations for other controllers—well, I think you might have saved two hundred lives.

EMILY. Two zero niner lives.

MIKE. I could say it wasn't a mistake. But you'd have to understand that I'm saying that emotionally and not professionally.

EMILY. Then save it. I can handle my emotionally.

MIKE. I don't doubt that. It's just that what we do... sooner or later... laws of probability...

EMILY. Ever fuck a married person?

MIKE. Once. In college.

EMILY. Once is good. The trick is never to fuck the same married person twice.

MIKE. So that's the trick.

EMILY. My father used to say, do you want the rush or do you want serenity? He was a pastor.

MIKE. Mine's a pilot.

(EMILY spits up her drink.)

MIKE. What?

EMILY. A little obvious, don't you think?

MIKE. What?

EMILY. Choosing a career just so you could tell your father where to go.

MIKE. Maybe I wanted to be a man my father could trust.

EMILY. With his life and the lives of his charges.

MIKE. I respect my father.

EMILY. I'm getting bored.

MIKE. You want the rush.

EMILY. I'm a controller.

MIKE. Talk about psychology. Attracted to flight, but you don't ride the plane.

EMILY. Don't you Fear-of-Flying me.

MIKE. Not everything that soars crashes.

EMILY. You must've failed Physics.

MIKE. Do you always have to have the last word?

(Long silence. EMILY looks at him. She doesn't say any words.)

MIKE. All I want to do is make love to you.

EMILY. It would be twice.

MIKE. You're not married.

EMILY. Married to the screen.

MIKE. In that case, we won't talk about that faulty, nasty, obsolete screen.

(MIKE stands and offers his hand to EMILY.)

EMILY. We disagree about fundamental things.

(She takes his hand and they exit together.)

Scene Twelve

(LOUISE and EMILY watch TV in Louise's home.)

(SAMUEL holds a mask of Carter in front of his face.)

CARTER/SAMUEL. If we were dealing with a rational government, what you propose would be feasible. But we are

dealing with a group of fanatics who have violated every principle of human decency and human rights in holding 52 absolutely innocent Americans hostage, away from their families, away from freedom, away from communication with the outside world. We're not dealing with rational people.

EMILY. He looks old.

LOUISE. If you're young, he looks old.

EMILY. He's aged.

LOUISE. Reagan's old.

EMILY. He doesn't look old.

LOUISE. He's lucky.

EMILY. Isn't lucky good?

LOUISE. It's luck.

EMILY. But isn't that what we need, some luck?

LOUISE. Luck always turns.

EMILY. Not if you're lucky.

LOUISE. No one's that lucky.

CARTER/SAMUEL. There is no doubt in my mind that I will be re-elected. Because there has never been a sharper difference between two parties and between two men as in this election. There is a growing realization in this country, and in my own mind, that we are no longer dominant.

EMILY. What the fuck is that? You can't say that on TV.

LOUISE. I don't want to be dominant.

EMILY. You can't say that if you're President.

CARTER/SAMUEL. No longer dominant in that we cannot enforce our will on others. And that's an inevitable consequence of changing times.

EMILY. Fuck. *(Beat.)* Did you ever work?

LOUISE. I work.

EMILY. Did you ever get a paycheck?

LOUISE. Not for a long time.

EMILY. That's not even what I mean. Are you proud? Do you ever feel that proudness?

LOUISE. Of a couple hundred-odd people might die if it's not for you?

EMILY. Yeah.

LOUISE. Yes.

EMILY. I'm not minding being out of the Tower right now. Spend my day doing nice things for myself instead of my stomach all in knots. I feel less helpless all the time; thought I'd feel more; I feel way less.

LOUISE. Mike sounds like a good man.

EMILY. I believe that. Trustworthy.

LOUISE. And that's important.

CARTER/SAMUEL. The President has the ultimate responsibility and in order to deal with potential crises in such a way that they don't become actual crises. There is a lonely, uh, important decision-making process that goes on in the mind of one person, the President, and if he makes a mistake in judgment that's of serious, of serious dimension, it could affect the future of the entire world.

LOUISE. You want a beer?

EMILY. What time is it? It's not even two o'clock.

LOUISE. 'Cause I think I'm going to have a beer.

EMILY. Sit, Louise. I'll get it.

LOUISE. I'll get it.

EMILY. I'll get it.

LOUISE. Glasses in the freezer.

Scene Thirteen

(TRACON.)

(EMILY stands, watching BILL who is at his monitor. He notices her.)

BILL. Hi.

(Too long pause.)

EMILY. Hello.

BILL. Welcome back.

EMILY. Thank you.

BILL. How have you been?

EMILY. Well-rested, thank you.

BILL. Rested's how you look. *(Pause.)* You, okay?

EMILY. A five year, 2.8 million dollar, FAA-sponsored study says as a group, we're ummm, controllers are strong, emotionally normal, dominant, uh, highly motivated, and self-confident people.

BILL. Em, are you okay?

EMILY. With, ummm, entirely, no, significantly higher intelligence levels than the national average. Too bad we're all munchkins.

BILL. What are you talking about?

EMILY. It doesn't say that in the report though, about the munchkins.

BILL. You look a little fuzzy, Em.

EMILY. When was the last time you did anything brave?
(Pause.) Yeah, me either.

BILL. Like what?

EMILY. Leave her. Run away with me. I hear they need good controllers in Saudi Arabia.

BILL. Em, are you okay?

EMILY. No dice. No dice, Emily Gardener.

(She looks around vaguely.)

(MIKE enters.)

EMILY. Hail to the chief.

MIKE. Gardener, welcome. You ready to get back to it?

EMILY. You bet.

BILL. That was a tough break about the suspension.

EMILY. I know, can you fucking believe that horseshit? A bunch of greasy let's just say non-English speaking retards don't know enough to use the proper language, and I get them to the ground in one piece, and those FAA bastards give me a reprimand, and believe me nobody was scheming to get it off my record the way that I happened to have done for some people at certain points along the road.

(EMILY takes a step towards the control terminal. She stumbles.)

(MIKE catches her. He looks at her.)

MIKE. Emily.

(EMILY exhales a deep breath straight into MIKE's face.)

MIKE. Have you been...?

EMILY. Drunk?

MIKE. Don't say that.

BILL and SAMUEL. Don't say that.

EMILY. Drunk?

MIKE. You know I'd have no choice.

(MIKE holds on to EMILY's arm.)

EMILY. It's okay, Mike.

BILL. Em, don't.

MIKE and SAMUEL. Emily.

EMILY. Because I quit.

(EMILY pushes herself away from MIKE. She begins to exit.)

EMILY. What's the point of hurting people needlessly? Why do we all have to feel so hopeless? *(Turning back to MIKE:)* And will you call me later?

SAMUEL. Damn it; why does she do that?

(EMILY exits.)

Don't do it. Don't...

(MIKE follows her.)

Excuse me; I, I never expect to be so stymied, but "will you call me later?" Tiny silhouettes in the big Tower, we move through this, our nation, as shadows. It's difficult to watch. The... it's not apathy. Worse. Picking up the football and running in the wrong direction.

Don't you see that this is the moment?

(BILL crosses to the bed and lies down.)

This is it: where change happens. You don't need another beer. You don't need...

(LOUISE enters and gets in bed with BILL.)

(To audience:) I know, I know what you must be feeling. It shocks me, too. Every time. She could have stayed and been a leader. I think it's not saying too much to say that there were political motivations to her suspension. She could have fought that; she could still make a stand for, for something more than her right to cook Mike's dinner. Maybe the despair becomes too overwhelming, but it really...

(The next scene begins.)

Scene Fourteen

(LOUISE and BILL in bed together. He rolls off of her.)

BILL. Jesus Christ.

SAMUEL. What am I doing? What was I thinking?

BILL. It's the stress.

LOUISE. Uh huh.

BILL. It's the pills.

LOUISE. You keep taking those pills, mister. Doctor says...

BILL. I know.

LOUISE. I'm happy to cuddle.

BILL. Me, too.

(They lie still.)

BILL. Our stress is unique, toxic, preventable, and caused by the FAA system rather than by our jobs per se.

LOUISE. You had a PATCO meeting tonight?

BILL. Yeah.

LOUISE. I should have guessed. I don't know why you go.

BILL. This country respects a citizen's right to withhold non-strategic labor services.

LOUISE. I hope you're not having any awful ideas.

(BILL grabs LOUISE by the shoulders and shakes her.)

BILL. Do you love me?

LOUISE. Stop it.

BILL. Do you know anything about me?

LOUISE. Let go. I wish you wouldn't go to those meetings, and I'm not going to say I wish you would; that's not love. I'm here. I've always been here. I'm the one should be shaking people around, asking all kinds of disgusting questions.

BILL. I'm sorry.

LOUISE. Fine.

(SAMUEL is still lost in his own thoughts.)

SAMUEL. Maybe Emily Gardener wasn't the best choice. I chose her because, well, she's a woman... a very attractive woman... a very strong woman... but a woman who gives in to the pressures of the status quo, to the forces of counter-revolutionary ideals, to the forces of Reagan, the reassurances and the security...

BILL. Are you mad at me? Kiddo?

LOUISE. Bill?

BILL. Yeah?

LOUISE. I'm glad you stopped seeing her.

(BILL kisses LOUISE. He gets up out of bed and begins to get dressed.)

Scene Fifteen

(EMILY on the couch.)

EMILY. There's a lot of pressure, a lot of pressures, a lot of forces that conspire to keep us down.

Gravity is the worst, of all those forces. You can't get away from it. Gravity's always there. It dooms us straight from the start. I read somewhere that when a woman gets pregnant, you know egg and sperm, right away that little package starts turning and stuff, and it's all affected by gravity. I mean, even before we know who we are, even before we're born; this shit, it's just pulling on us. It colors everything. What's the first thing that pops into your head when you hear these words: Up? High? She's flying? Those ought to be nice words, great words, words of potential. But on account of gravity, all you can think of is the inevitable Down; Low; She's crashed.

But then there's airplanes, right? And you watch them and you think they've really got it figured out. When a plane's taking off and there it goes gliding upwards, or if you're riding in one of those new jets, so smooth, if you have a good pilot, you could maybe forget about your morbid visions of tailpipes in flames and really believe, believe for a moment that you can overcome... fuck, you could overcome anything, you're flying, you did it.

Why can't that be the way we think? Why can't we teach our children that in the womb? Not to be afraid. Not to assume yeah, sure you're Up now, but here comes Failure, you might as well throw in the towel. And if a baby could feel all right, up in the air, in a plane, soaring along, could experience freedom from all that pulls her down; if she could learn that, can't you maybe imagine that she could get free of a bunch of other shit, too? That we'd grow as a species and triumph? And change, and growth, and all that are possible?

She's flying. She's flying.

SAMUEL. Oh, Emily. She wrote that herself. I just helped her to structure some of the ideas. I wasn't sure if she was going to present it today, but... *(Suddenly:)* Emily, I love you. I'm in love with you. I love you.

(Of course, there is no response from EMILY.)

Excuse me. That was uh... as an example of, an expression of, uh... in the 1980 election which we are about to look at more closely, I feel it's Jimmy Carter who...

(SAMUEL holds the Carter mask in front of his face.)

I love you, Emily. I, Jimmy Carter, truly am in love with the working man and woman, the American worker. I love the worker in all her glory, for what she could be if she believed in herself and her power to effect change, if she believed in the mission of the U.S. government to support her and abet her in achieving her goals. *(Dropping the Carter mask:)* That's what I was trying to get across there, just a moment ago. You know, Carter... well, in his seminal 1975 meditational autobiography *Why Not the Best?*... or his favorite Bible quote... *(Holding the*

mask again:) “Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” That’s Revelations 3:20, and I certainly am not reciting that because I believe in the New Testament or because I want Emily to have dinner with me sometime.

(SAMUEL drops the mask.)

Will you excuse me for just a moment? I need to get a glass of water.

(SAMUEL leaves the stage.)

Scene Sixteen

(BILL in the Coffee Lounge.)

(MIKE enters with a file.)

MIKE. You’re early.

BILL. Morning to you, too.

MIKE. Did you R&I?

BILL. See for yourself.

(MIKE looks at his file.)

MIKE. See you on the floor, Bill.

BILL. You ever miss it?

MIKE. What?

BILL. When that sixth sense was juicing, when you were flowing with it, with the traffic, like it was some brand new video game, except you were inside it. You were it it. ’Cause now, what have you got? You can reprimand us out the yin-yang but that’s not gonna change the fact that we’re the magic keeping the sky moving and you might as well be picking your ass for a living.

MIKE. You going whip out your dick and pee on me next, Bill?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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