

TARMAC
By Jerry Rabushka

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CHARACTERS

At the gate:

Mother	an upper middle class “soccer mom” type
Kayla	her daughter, in her upper teens
Melody	her other daughter, 12 years old.
Brandon	a passenger about Kayla’s age.
Man	a disgruntled middle-aged businessman
Agent	at the gate (either m or f)

On the plane:

Flight attendant (either m or f)	
Akbar	a “foreign” man in his 40s or 50s
Bekah	a high-school aged daughter who finds her parents overprotective.
Her Father	
Her Mother	
Mrs. Milford, an elderly passenger.	She’ll say what she needs to get what she wants.
Security Guard (male)	

PROPS

Puzzle Books: Crosswords, word searches, and mazes.
Bags of peanuts like those served on airplanes.
Carry-on bags, and clothes & junk-jewelry to put inside them.
A briefcase (for AKBAR)
A purse (for MRS MILFORD)
Several Cell phones
Plate of food & silverware (for ATTENDANT)
Photos (for AKBAR and MRS. MILFORD)
Phone (at AGENT’s desk, not a cell phone)
Magazine (for KAYLA)
Money (for BRANDON)

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SCENE 1

SETTING: An airport gate in Phoenix, where several passengers are waiting for a flight that has been perpetually delayed.

This setting should include the desk the agent stands behind, and the wall behind the desk with flight information. The airline is a fictional company called Arizona Air. Several chairs are in this scene for the passengers to sit on, plus they all have carry-on baggage. The more disorganized, the better.

Another setting is on the plane on the tarmac, where several passengers have been sitting for a long time waiting to pull into the gate. This setting can be best represented by duplicating the cramped conditions on a plane, perhaps using a smaller area of the stage. In both cases, “extras” can be employed who have no lines but fill out the scene and react to some of the proceedings. A third setting, at the end of the play, is in airport security.

MOTHER: *(at the counter trying to get the attention of the AGENT, who is having a great time on a personal phone call. The MAN is waiting impatiently as well. HE's obviously on a business trip, and very impatient about being delayed. BRANDON stands behind MOTHER, bouncing around out of boredom.)* Excuse me. . . excuse me. . .
(louder) I have a question for you! *(SHE knocks on the desk, AGENT “sees” her and, after realizing MOTHER won't just go away, hangs up the phone very deliberately while staring MOTHER down, then gives her a big fake smile.)*

AGENT: *(totally fake)* How can I help you?

MOTHER: Can you tell us what's going on with the plane?

AGENT: *(in a harsh tone of voice, having said this numerous times)*
The flight's delayed for 15 minutes.

MOTHER: *(frazzled from waiting so long and dealing with her children)*
It was delayed for 15 minutes two hours ago.

AGENT: That would be correct.

MOTHER: So why are you *still* saying it's delayed for 15 minutes?

AGENT: *(explaining as if MOTHER is really stupid)* It's not the same 15 minutes. It was delayed the 15 minutes from six to six-fifteen, and

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now it's delayed the 15 minutes from eight to eight-fifteen. Each fifteen minutes is different.

MOTHER: Is there any indication of during which 15 minutes we'll actually be taking off?

AGENT: (*again, as if MOTHER is really stupid*) We'll be taking off in fifteen minutes. The sign says—

MOTHER: (*snippy*) I don't really believe the sign.

AGENT: Well, I don't believe your ticket. It's for a flight at six, and now you want to get on at eight. I should invalidate it.

MOTHER: I'd love to get on at eight, but there's no plane to board.

AGENT: Oh, there is. It's out on the tarmac. It's been there since five.

MOTHER: Why can't they bring it to the gate?

AGENT: Circumstances beyond our control. There's a snowstorm in Pittsburgh.

MOTHER: We're in Phoenix.

AGENT: This is a snowstorm with national ramifications. When it snows in Pittsburgh, the whole country catches cold.

MELODY: (*getting out of her seat and dragging herself to MOTHER.*

We can tell at this point SHE's bored to death and MOTHER is frustrated with having to deal with her.) Mom, when are we going to leave?

MOTHER: I don't know, Melody. Maybe this nice customer service representative can answer you.

MELODY: I don't think s/he knows anything.

AGENT: If you've been helped to your satisfaction, I need to wait on the customer behind you.

MOTHER: I'm sure he has the same question.

BRANDON: (*pushes his way up*) Like, hey, like when can we get out of here?

AGENT: Like when the plane takes off, you can like get out of here.

BRANDON: Do you have any idea when that might be?

AGENT: There's a fifteen minute delay!

BRANDON: How can a fifteen minute delay take two and a half hours? Are you living on Mars where the minutes are slower?

AGENT: It's incremental.

BRANDON: (*playfully spooky*) You know something and you're not telling me.

AGENT: Like what?

BRANDON: Like how should I know if you're the one who knows it and isn't telling?

MOTHER: (*barging back in, to AGENT*) Maybe you can explain to my daughter why she's got to spend all night with a gate full of crabby strangers rather than at home with her father.

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AGENT: Maybe this is a good time for a heart-to-heart mother-daughter talk. Make it a special bonding experience for both of you!

MOTHER: You obviously don't have children. *(more to herself, leaving the desk)* She's driving me crazy.

BRANDON: *(to MOTHER, hedging a bit)* Your older daughter's sort of cute.

MOTHER: *(turns around quickly, trying to discourage BRANDON)* She's not interested in you.

BRANDON: Huh? You work fast.

MOTHER: *(as if this is the answer to everything)* She has a boyfriend in Chicago.

BRANDON: Well, since we're never going to get to Chicago, she might as well talk to me.

MELODY: *(pulling at MOTHER)* I have to go to the bathroom.

MOTHER: You just went.

MELODY: *(insistent)* I have to go again.

MOTHER: No you don't.

MELODY: How would you know? You're my mother, not my bladder.

MOTHER: And this is an airport, not a gas station. Do you know how complicated it is to go with you and wait?

MELODY: You don't have to come with me. I know where it is.

MOTHER: You're too young, Melody.

MELODY: I've been going to the bathroom since the day I was born. I think I can handle it.

MOTHER: *(frazzled)* All right. *(while looking directly at AGENT)* There's too many crazy people in this airport.

(MOTHER and MELODY exit.)

AGENT: *(picking up a phone, and talking over an intercom)* Attention all passengers on flight 762 to Chicago, the plane is on the tarmac, but there's been a 15 minute delay. We'll have you on board just as soon as possible after it reaches the gate.

MAN: *(slowly walking up to AGENT, possibly playing with some handheld computer device)* Did you used to work for a communist government? All you do is lie.

AGENT: *(mimicking his tone of voice)* Would you like me to call security? I don't have to put up with your threatening insults.

MAN: I don't want to endure your falsehood and deceit, yet you seem to think it's imperative that I do so. When is the plane going to make the two-minute trip from the tarmac to the gate?

AGENT: It's a fifteen minute delay, so in approximately thirteen minutes the plane will begin its taxi to the gate.

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MAN: *(more aggressive and condescending)* You said “fifteen minutes” five minutes ago. And an hour ago. No matter how much of *my* time passes, *your* time stands perfectly still. In what reality, may I ask, do you currently reside?

AGENT: *(picks up phone)* Security guard to gate 26, security guard to gate 26. Passenger disturbance! *(to MAN)* In *that* reality. Currently. *(MAN leaves the AGENT's desk exasperated, BRANDON cautiously sits next to KAYLA, who looks pouty. AGENT picks up phone again.)* Cancel security, the disturbance has been contained.

(MAN sits down, gives AGENT a nasty glare, while AGENT responds with a victorious smile.)

BRANDON: Hi.

KAYLA: *(tone of speaking should convey that her family has a lot of money which they think makes them more important than most people, but also that many aspects of her life are out of her control. SHE dismisses BRANDON immediately.)* I have a boyfriend in Chicago.

BRANDON: *(HE's trying to be upbeat and easygoing in hopes of winning her over.)* Thanks for the clarification. Most girls just say hi.

KAYLA: I have a boyfriend in Chicago. So I don't have to.

BRANDON: What's his name?

KAYLA: He's my boyfriend.

BRANDON: Interesting name. I'm glad it isn't mine.

KAYLA: Why do you care?

BRANDON: *(joking)* Because chances are you're never going to see him again.

KAYLA: That's so mean.

BRANDON: If this plane doesn't get off the ground. . .

KAYLA: *(as if it's the truth)* She said it was leaving in fifteen minutes. I hope you're not sitting next to me.

BRANDON: I'm Brandon.

KAYLA: Every boy's name is Brandon these days. It's boring.

BRANDON: *(points to AGENT)* Wow, you should be working up there.

KAYLA: I should be in Chicago with my boyfriend.

BRANDON: I'm just trying to make conversation. Looks like we're going to be here awhile.

KAYLA: Then talk to that businessman. He looks bored. *(pulls out a magazine from her travel bag and pretends to read it, turning away from him. BRANDON plots his next move.)*

MOTHER: *(returns, dragging MELODY along with her, addressing BRANDON)* Leave her alone. I *told* you she had a boyfriend.

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BRANDON: All right. (*HE's confused, and annoyed, by this constant reminder.*) Does that mean she has to shun the every other member of male gender for the rest of her life? What is wrong with you?

MELODY: (*snaps a shot of the two of them with a cell phone, then says, singsongy*) I'm going to send this to Sean.

KAYLA: (*puts down the magazine and whirls around, threatening*) You better not! Brandon, get away from me.

MELODY: Brandon and Kayla sitting in a tree. . .

KAYLA: (*very "bossy big-sister" like*) Does this look like a tree to you?

BRANDON: If two and a half hours can be fifteen minutes, then a chair can be a tree.

MOTHER: (*stands over BRANDON*) Besides, that's my chair.

BRANDON: You left it. At an airport, when something is abandoned, it's confiscated.

MOTHER: I'm sitting there.

BRANDON: No you're not. I am. (*MOTHER won't leave, so HE gets up and whispers something to MELODY.*)

MELODY: I have to go again.

MOTHER: You do not!

(*BRANDON gives MELODY a dollar or two.*)

MELODY: (*more insistent*) Yes I do! I have to go now!

BRANDON: What are you giving her to drink?

MOTHER: You do not have to go!

MELODY: *You're the one that doesn't have to go. Every other girl my age gets to use the airport bathroom by herself.*

MOTHER: I know of fifteen girls your age who used the airport bathroom by themselves and they were never seen again.

MELODY: That's not true.

MOTHER: (*nonchalant*) Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't. Sometimes that automatic flush is a lot stronger than a young girl can handle.

(*They leave again, MELODY clutching MOTHER fearfully.*)

BRANDON: See? Just bought us a few more minutes.

KAYLA: So? This is an airport, not a cell phone. Our "minutes" are unlimited.

(*They talk in pantomime as MAN and AGENT get in a heated discussion.*)

MAN: (*goes back up to AGENT*) I demand an explanation now!

AGENT: I gave you an explanation!

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MAN: I want one that makes sense.

AGENT: There is a fifteen minute delay due to a snowstorm in Pittsburgh.

MAN: That doesn't make sense.

AGENT: It would if you worked for the airlines.

MAN: I'm going to get a bite to eat. And when I get back, you better have a plausible explanation. *(HE starts to leave.)*

AGENT: *(into phone-intercom, smug)* While there is a slight delay, we recommend you not leave the gate area. The plane may board at any moment.

MAN: What kind of logic is that? This isn't some wack job ministry of information! This is the United States of America!

AGENT: For now.

(MAN storms off.)

What a wack job.

SCENE 2: On the plane:

ATTENDANT, MOM, DAD, AKBAR, MRS. MILFORD, BEKAH. *While the family should be seated near each other, director's discretion can put the actors in the seats that are most effective for each particular production. As the scene opens, a short silence establishes that everyone is bored, hungry, and uncomfortable.*

MOM: Can we have some water?

ATTENDANT: Sorry, we're out.

MRS. MILFORD: Can we have some peanuts?

BEKAH: I'm allergic.

(AKBAR starts to laugh.)

It's not funny.

AKBAR: In my country we have no such thing. Children of all ages eat peanuts. Whether they like it or not.

BEKAH: *(to her parents)* I'm bored. When can we get off this thing?

DAD: Don't you have homework to do, Bekah?

BEKAH: My laptop battery died.

MOM: Can't you read a book?

BEKAH: It's on the laptop. You wanted to go electronic to save packing. And it's hot in here.

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MRS. MILFORD: Very hot. *(to ATTENDANT)* Can you turn on the AC?

ATTENDANT: We can't waste the fuel.

MRS. MILFORD: Why not? You only have to drive to the gate. I could do it in a golf cart.

MOM: Can't someone bring some water to the plane? Come to think why can't we get off the plane and get it ourselves? I can see the gate from here.

ATTENDANT: When we've pulled into the gate and it's safe to get up, we'll allow you to move about the cabin.

MRS. MILFORD: You seem to be moving about with total impunity.

ATTENDANT: I'm seeing to your safety.

MRS. MILFORD: My safety requires I have peanuts. Twice a day.

BEKAH: If you have peanuts, I'm going to get violently ill.

AKBAR: In my country. . .

BEKAH: Your country scares me if it has official policy about peanuts.

Do you have a bomb or something?

AKBAR: Do you think because I'm not from America I have a bomb?

BEKAH: Yep.

DAD: Yep.

MOM: Yep.

MRS. MILFORD: *(thinks)* Umm. . . yeah.

ATTENDANT: Well. . . our training manual says–

AKBAR: Don't you think if I had a bomb I'd have detonated it by now?

DAD: I know how you terrorists think. You're friendly one minute and the next it's smithereens. "Oh, it's a beautiful day outside. . ." then boom! Not so beautiful anymore, is it?

AKBAR: *(points out the ATTENDANT)* Here is someone who denies you food and water, keeps us confined like prisoners on a hot tarmac for hours with no air conditioning, and yet you think I am a terrorist!

DAD: *(to ATTENDANT)* Why can't you at least let in some fresh air?

ATTENDANT: There's a storm in Biloxi. As soon as it clears up, we'll be on our way to the gate.

BEKAH: *(crabby)* Your airline doesn't even go to Biloxi. I've read the entire in-flight travel magazine, which seems to be a compendium of the most boring articles ever produced by the human race. And we're not even in flight.

ATTENDANT: It's a system you wouldn't understand.

MRS. MILFORD: I don't understand why I can't have some peanuts. *(to BEKAH's parents)* What's wrong with your daughter? *(thinks for a second)* Is she a vegetarian?

MOM: She has a peanut allergy. It's not her fault. Can't you do with a cashew or two? Hazelnut maybe? Or what if you just do like the rest of us and not eat anything at all?

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MRS. MILFORD: I've been flying Arizona Air for years, for decades, for the last half century because of their peanuts! (*loves them!!*) You can't get 'em anywhere else.

MOM: So you went all the way to San Francisco and back for a bag of peanuts.

MRS. MILFORD: Yes I did. "Bekah" didn't have a problem when we ate them on the flight over.

BEKAH: Last time the air was circulating. I barely made it though as it was.

MRS. MILFORD: What kind of allergy is that? Selective indifference?

BEKAH: (*defensive*) Do you not have any medical problems?

MRS. MILFORD: Oh, I have plenty, all of which are being exacerbated by sitting here under these cramped hot conditions with an ill-mannered young lady such as yourself, and a terrorist.

AKBAR: I am not a terrorist.

MRS. MILFORD: You say that now. You won't be saying as much when the bomb goes off.

DAD: (*to BEKAH*) Do you have a paper to write?

BEKAH: Do you have a business proposal to prepare? Maybe if you did something of your own you wouldn't try to spend all your time giving me homework. I have six teachers doing that already.

DAD: Don't sass me, young lady.

BEKAH: Or what? You're pretty much trapped in your seat for all eternity.

AKBAR: In my country, daughters do as they are told. Whether they like it or not.

DAD: In this country, they talk back, wear skimpy clothes, and spend all day listening to loud rap music in portable devices. (*pause*) I like your way better!

MRS. MILFORD: (*to AKBAR*) Why are you here, if I may ask?

AKBAR: To visit my daughter. I don't live in my country. I live in Chicago, and she lives in Phoenix. What is so difficult to understand?

BEKAH: Your accent, for one.

DAD: Bekah! Quiet. (*points to one of AKBAR's bags.*) If he opens that briefcase, we're toast.

MOM: (*to ATTENDANT trying to distract everyone*) Have you heard anything from the pilot?

ATTENDANT: I've been here with you the whole time. Seeing to your safety.

MOM: (*aggravated*) How does this not affect you? How come we're hot, hungry, and uncomfortable and you're waltzing around the aisle like prom royalty?

BEKAH: Mother, prom royalty does not waltz.

MOM: I did when I was prom queen.

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BEKAH: *(doesn't believe her)* Right.

MOM: *(defensive)* I did. And I highly doubt that's an election you're going to win.

BEKAH: Mother! That's just rude.

MOM: Then don't sass your father.

MRS. MILFORD: Yes, Bekah. Older people have emotions as well. We have feelings. Just because we get a few years on us doesn't mean we can't be hurt by disrespectful young girls.

MOM: Oh shut up and stay out of my family!

ATTENDANT: I think we're all a bit ill at ease.

MRS. MILFORD: All except you, waltzing Matilda. *(If the flight attendant is male, the phrase "waltzing Matilda" is optional.)*

ATTENDANT: Let's just all wait patiently. I hear there's a fifteen minute delay. And a storm in Philadelphia.

DAD: You said it was in Biloxi.

ATTENDANT: It was in Biloxi. Now it moved to Philadelphia.

MRS. MILFORD: That fast?

DAD: What does that have to do with the fact that we're stuck on a tarmac in 110 degree heat in Phoenix, Arizona!! We want answers!

MRS. MILFORD: *(threatening)* If I get a leg cramp, I'll spazz uncontrollably.

ATTENDANT: Calm down. Do you want me to call security?

DAD: Yes! Call security! Someone needs to take action!

EVERYONE: *(chanting)* Call security! Call security! Call security!

AKBAR: *(reaches for a briefcase and pops it open, and everyone shrieks!!! When HE closes the case, they stop, all at once. The more "together" everyone is with this, the more effective it will be. AKBAR smiles and hold up a small book)* Crossword!

SCENE 3: Back at the gate:

KAYLA: *(SHE's on the phone, obviously upset.)* Look, Sean, I can't make it. I'm in Phoenix. Phoenix! Phoenix has nothing to do with if I love you or not. *(more insistent)* I'm in Phoenix, I'm not making out with it! *(pause)* Stop it! *(starts to get teary)* Well okay, I'll just get out and run and maybe I'll be there by ten. *(hangs up)*

BRANDON: Who was that?

KAYLA: *(turning away from him)* It's my boyfriend, not that it's any of your business.

BRANDON: He sounds mad.

KAYLA: He's always mad.

BRANDON: Then why do you go out with him?

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KAYLA: Because if I dumped him he'd be *really* mad. Besides, I love him. He just doesn't understand.

BRANDON: Understand what?

KAYLA: (*still aggravated*) That I can't fly a plane. And that in airport-speak, fifteen minutes means all night long! Next time mom says "clean up the kitchen" I'll tell her "fifteen minutes" and wait three days.

AGENT: (*has been listening all too intently*) Young lady, are you going to force me to call security?!

KAYLA: I can't even *force* you to tell the truth! I wasn't even talking to you.

AGENT: You were talking *about* me, and that's worse. (*sarcastic, and looking past them over the seating area*) Do I see some unattended bags that need to be confiscated?

KAYLA: What?

AGENT: You heard me. Now sit down and be quiet.

BRANDON: Don't you dare talk to her like that!

AGENT: I'm hearing a young man that might be bumped from his flight.

BRANDON: What flight? Do you even work here?

AGENT: What are you implying?

BRANDON: That you don't know anything. You're like a parrot. Fifteen minutes! Fifteen minutes!

EVERYONE: Fifteen minutes! Fifteen minutes!

BRANDON: See? Sounds sort of empty after awhile. You speak words without having any idea of what they mean.

KAYLA: My boyfriend will never forgive me if we're late.

BRANDON: Why is it your fault?

KAYLA: Everything's my fault. It's just how it is. Stop starting trouble.

BRANDON: Hey I'm not the one standing in the way of the plane.

AGENT: I'm sorry. There's a tornado in Tulsa. There's a snowstorm in Syracuse. There's a—

BRANDON: There's nothing whatsoever in Phoenix other than a plane on the tarmac that's probably out of gas.

KAYLA: It could be worse, we could be on it.

(*MOTHER and MELODY return.*)

MELODY: Oh great, they're still talking. I'm not waiting in that line again so you can hit on my sister.

MOTHER: He needs to leave your sister alone. Kayla has a boyfriend, yet you abusively insinuate yourself on her despite our demands to the contrary.

BRANDON: She has a boyfriend in Chicago. I doubt she'll ever see Chicago again.

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MAN: *(to MOTHER)* Excuse me, but could you watch my bag for just a bit? With this constant bathroom bantering, I need to make a pit stop.

MOTHER: Excuse me, but no. Isn't that like the most suspicious thing to do in the United States, watch someone's bag at an airport? What if I put something in it?

MELODY: *(loud)* Like an explosive or something!

AGENT: Did someone say explosive?

MELODY: I did.

AGENT: You realize we have to take all your comments seriously.

MAN: I don't see why. We can't take any of *yours* seriously. You and your blasted fifteen minutes. It's like my wife getting ready for a party.

AGENT: It's different. I'm in a position of authority, and you're in a position of sit down and wait. I suggest you start fulfilling your role a bit more cooperatively.

MAN: *(to MOTHER)* If you watch my bag, I'll bring your children something from the food bar.

MOTHER: Are you one of the 47% of men who don't wash their hands? If you are, they can't eat what you bring.

MAN: Look at me! I'm compulsively neat and tidy. I've washed my hands fourteen times today.

MOTHER: Wow, you've got a complex. Just put it in your pocket.

MAN: *(opens his bag and invites them over)* Look! Do you see anything remotely explosive?

(Everyone looks, even the AGENT gets closer.)

KAYLA: That's some cool underwear!

MELODY: Designer shirts!

MOTHER: Pants don't match the shirts. Even for golf. *(SHE looks through everything while MAN looks on, annoyed.)* Ok, coast is clear, you can go.

MAN: It all better be there when we get back.

(HE exits, they go through stuff and pull out a book, AGENT comes over and takes it.)

MOTHER: What are you doing?

AGENT: He could use it to give someone a paper cut or hit them over the head. It's not safe.

MOTHER: You're nuts! It's paperback!

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AGENT: We only have our passengers' safety in mind. (*KAYLA's phone rings again and SHE picks it up, AGENT takes a look at the book quickly.*) This reading material is inappropriate. (*throws the book out*)

KAYLA: (*after a short pause, while everyone else is still looking at the contents of the bag*) Sean, I told you. . . No we haven't taken off yet or I wouldn't be on the phone. Well, I don't know. I can't find out. Nobody knows. No I'm not "doing this to you!"

BRANDON: (*takes the phone, KAYLA tries to get it back but HE won't let her have it. HE keeps moving away from her, so it can get pretty fast moving by the end.*) Sean, leave her alone! I'm tired of your abusive behavior, and I'm not putting up with it anymore. It doesn't matter who I am. What matters is I have your phone number, and you don't have mine. That matters a lot. (*quietly frightening*) It's going to matter more and more, Sean, as the hours go by. (*HE smiles, hands phone to KAYLA, a bit out of breath*) Here.

KAYLA: (*listens for awhile and hangs up*) Ohhh. He's really mad now.

BRANDON: (*giggles a bit*) Boy needs to lighten up.

MELODY: Sean's a jerk anyway. Do you live in Chicago?

BRANDON: Actually, I do.

MELODY: Maybe you can date my sister. She might be easier to get along with if every minute wasn't about Sean.

AGENT: (*picks up the phone and talks into the loudspeaker*) This is just a reminder that flight 762 from San Francisco is on the runway, and as soon as it pulls into the gate and the passengers deplane, we'll board for our departure to Chicago. We apologize for the delay and thank you for choosing Arizona Air. And remember, any bags—or children—left unattended will be confiscated! Confiscated! (*starts to laugh*)

MELODY: (*a bit scared*) What's so funny? Can we cancel our tickets? I don't wanna go anymore.

AGENT: Ha! You'll never see that money again!! (*phone rings and SHE picks it up*) Yes? Oh, I see. How long? I see. How long was that again? Sure, no problem.

KAYLA: What was that?

MOTHER: Is there an update?

AGENT: Yes, of course. (*over loudspeaker*) Flight 762 for Chicago will board in approximately 15 minutes.

SCENE 4: On the plane:

BEKAH: If someone had a laptop that works, I have J-Lo's latest movie.

AKBAR: And you accuse *me* of having a bomb.

BEKAH: I have Britney's latest CD.

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AKBAR: Again, a bomb.

MOM: Leave Britney alone!

AKBAR: I wish she would leave *me* alone! I can't go anywhere without hearing about her. In my country—

MOM: No one cares about your country!

AKBAR: You should. Our pop music scene? Blows this one to bits.

DAD: As long as it's quiet.

AKBAR: (*looking at his puzzle*) What's a four letter word for civil disturbance?

MRS. MILFORD: (*as everyone thinks*) Riot!

AKBAR: You're right. How about a seven letter word for "loud explosion?"

BEKAH: Bomb is only four.

MRS. MILFORD: BombING! (*cheering herself on*) I love a good crossword.

AKBAR: I think that fits. How about a six letter word for "passenger rebellion?"

ATTENDANT: (*suspicious*) What kind of puzzle is this?

AKBAR: Crosswords for the delayed traveler. This one's called "caught on a plane."

ATTENDANT: I think I'm going to have to confiscate that!

AKBAR: You can't, it's mine!

ATTENDANT: You're using that to incite the passengers. It's like a bomb without the ticking.

AKBAR: What's a 15 letter phrase for "someone who has no feeling or compassion!"

DAD: Flight attendant!

AKBAR: Right again. (*FATHER and AKBAR high five, if possible.*) This is a very educational puzzle! If you're going to confiscate anything, you need to take her J-Lo and her Britney.

DAD: Don't you come near my daughter!

MRS. MILFORD: Is there any news?

ATTENDANT: Of what?

MRS. MILFORD: (*can't believe it*) Of what? What do you think? It looks like we'll have peace in the Middle East before we get off this plane. We'll solve global warming. And hopefully find a cure for peanut allergy. Are we going to pull into the airport before my funeral?

ATTENDANT: It really depends on how old you are. There's a problem in Poughkeepsie.

MRS. MILFORD: What kind of problem in Poughkeepsie?

ATTENDANT: It's really not your business. People in Poughkeepsie are particularly private.

AKBAR: What's an eight letter word that means. . .

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ATTENDANT: How much fun can that be if you don't know any of the words?

AKBAR: I'm trying to learn English! If you don't mind.

ATTENDANT: With a crossword puzzle? (*grabs the book*) What are these? What kind of word is. . . u. . . r. . . a. . . hold it, I am not!

AKBAR: (*jumps out of his chair*) I think you are. You're all that, and you're a seven letter word for (*whispers something to ATTENDANT*) Now give me that back!

ATTENDANT: Sit down!

AKBAR: Give me my book!

ATTENDANT: You're using it to provoke unrest and I'm going to confiscate. (*SHE starts to walk off, everyone starts to get up.*) Did I give you permission to get up? On this plane, you will speak when spoken to, and you will sit until directed to do otherwise. Is that clear? Until we clear up the issue in Istanbul, this plane stays right where it is.

BEKAH: I think you should give him back the book. If I remember correctly, we still live in a democracy.

MOM: Bekah, those people don't understand democracy.

DAD: And they don't want it.

ATTENDANT: Democracy? Not on my plane. Why do you think I took this job?

MOM: How come you're not hot, hungry, and crabby?

ATTENDANT: Power! Absolute power, backed by the FAA. It cancels out my other emotions.

AKBAR: Fine. Keep it. (*HE snaps open the case and everyone screams again until HE closes it. HE holds up another small book.*) Word search.

SCENE 5: At the terminal:

Everyone is trying the MAN's clothes on.

MELODY: What do you think?

MOTHER: It's big but you'll grow into it.

BRANDON: I like this one. What do you think, Kayla?

KAYLA: I don't notice boys who I'm not dating.

BRANDON: Whatever.

MELODY: I think it looks hot.

BRANDON: (*confident*) Course it does.

MOTHER: (*holding up a dress shirt*) Kayla, do you think your father might like this?

KAYLA: It's kind of old-man-ish. And dowdy.

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MOTHER: (*agrees*) You're right. (*happily*) He'll love it! (*SHE puts it in her carry-on.*)

BRANDON: (*looking in the case*) What's this?

MOTHER: What?

BRANDON: This!

MOTHER: (*looks*) It's ticking! (*everyone gathers around to look and screams CALL SECURITY just as MAN comes back*)

MAN: What are you doing?

MOTHER: What is that? That sound!

MAN: It's my travel alarm clock!

KAYLA: Don't you have one in your cell phone? You scared us half to death.

MAN: Then it is only half as effective as I'd hoped! What are you doing with my clothing?

MELODY: (*happily*) You left it unattended, so we're confiscating it.

MAN: Is that your answer to everything? Confiscation?

MELODY: It is here. Mom thinks your clothes look old-mannish.

MAN: On her! I like to think they bring out my subtle masculine qualities.

MOM: Subtle indeed.

MAN: Ok the fun's over. Now put this all back, or I'll have the agent call security.

MELODY: I doubt she'll do anything. She's just soaking in a luxury bath while everyone else rots on the tarmac. (*short pause*) Can I keep this? I really like it. It's roomy.

MAN: Ok, but everything else comes off.

BRANDON: Uh. . . even the socks?

MAN: The socks?

BRANDON: You were gone a long time. An extra pair makes my shoes snug. (*pause*) I have very picky feet. And they sweat a river. You want 'em back?

MAN: You are the sickest, most perverted. . .

MELODY: Weren't you supposed to bring me something from the food bar?

MAN: (*opens a candy bar and starts to eat it*) Yes, I was. But I'm confiscating it.

MELODY: That's not fair! We watched your luggage, and now you eat my candy. Mommmmm!

MOTHER: She's right, you know. You can't do anyone a favor any more. (*as SHE puts another article of MAN's clothing in her bag*) People have no class these days.

MAN: (*starts to fight with MOTHER and get his stuff back, calls to AGENT*) When is this plane leaving?

AGENT: You know! Fifteen minutes. There's a snowstorm in Miami.

MAN: (*as they play tug of war with a shirt*) It never snows in Miami.

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AGENT: That's why there's a delay! And you should be glad it's just 15 minutes or we'd be here all night. *(if possible, the shirt rips just as the lights go down)*

SCENE 6: On the plane:

ATTENDANT is eating what appears to be a very nice dinner, everyone watches jealously through a couple bites. We can see ATTENDANT really enjoys it.

MRS. MILFORD: Where did that come from?

ATTENDANT: Oh, we have a stash, just in case.

MRS. MILFORD: Just in case what?

ATTENDANT: Just in case we run into a problem and we have to work overtime.

BEKAH: You mean you're getting paid for this?

ATTENDANT: Of course. This is my job!

AKBAR: What? To terrorize people?

ATTENDANT: Nope. That, apparently, is yours.

AKBAR: I see a lawsuit in your future.

ATTENDANT: I see a long delay in yours.

AKBAR: *(to family)* Help me with my word search?

MOM: What is it?

AKBAR: Airline terms.

MOM: *(goes to look at his book, walking over people who might be in her way)* Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me. Wow. . . this is interesting. . . lawsuit. Here it is. . . Overflowing toilets. . . that's a long one! Peanuts.

BEKAH: Mom!

MOM: I can say the word, at least! Oh here's more. Liquid. Banned substances. Strip search. Why do we fly anymore? It's like buying a seat on Prison-Air.

MRS. MILFORD: At least in prison you can lay down.

(The plane starts to move.)

DAD: *(thrilled beyond belief)* Do you feel what I feel?

MRS. MILFORD: We're moving!

MOM: *(angelic, relieved)* We're moving. *(SHE starts to get up.)*

ATTENDANT: You need to sit down ma'am.

MOM: We're only going two miles an hour. I've been on escalators that go faster.

ATTENDANT: It's a federal mandate for your safety.

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MOM: I think *you're* in the most danger right now. From me.

ATTENDANT: Do I need to call security?

MOM: What's security going to do? Stop the plane in its tracks?

ATTENDANT: A plane doesn't use tracks. A train does. I think your *brain* needs security.

MOM: I think your *mom* needs security.

BEKAH: Wow mom, that was a good one!

MRS. MILFORD: (*inappropriately loud*) I have a medical condition that needs immediate attention!

ATTENDANT: A likely story.

MRS. MILFORD: I said, I have a medical condition that needs immediate attention.

BEKAH: (*loud as well*) I do too. It's called "stop shouting!"

MRS. MILFORD: I have a medical condition that needs immediate attention.

ATTENDANT: What is it?

MRS. MILFORD: (*shhhh!*) It's personal.

ATTENDANT: If it's personal, then I can't accurately determine your need for immediate attention.

MRS. MILFORD: If I tell you, you'll laugh at me.

ATTENDANT: I'm a professional.

MRS. MILFORD: I doubt it.

ATTENDANT: Try me. (*MRS MILFORD tries to get up.*) Sit down! It's for your safety!

MRS. MILFORD: If you don't let me get up, this medical condition will be all over the passenger next to me! And *that* won't be safe for anyone!

AKBAR: (*dismayed*) We've stopped!

MOM: How far did we go?

BEKAH: Ten feet?

DAD: Fifteen, maybe. Can't we just walk from here?

ATTENDANT: It's not safe.

DAD: Why not? Nothing's happening on the tarmac. Other than 120 degrees.

AKBAR: (*amused with himself*) But it's a dry heat, is it not?

MRS. MILFORD: Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me. . . (*goes to attendant and whispers something*)

ATTENDANT: What? Are you serious?

MRS. MILFORD: Yes. Serious.

ATTENDANT: Really?

MRS. MILFORD: Oh, yes. (*ATTENDANT bursts out laughing*) You said you wouldn't laugh.

ATTENDANT: I also said we'd be at the gate two and a half hours ago.

AKBAR: What is it? (*attendant whispers to him, HE laughs too.*)

MRS. MILFORD: Get me off this plane, or I'll open the peanuts!

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ATTENDANT: If you do that, I'll call security.

MRS. MILFORD: I'll call them myself. It's about time we did something about this. *(SHE starts to get out a cell phone and ATTENDANT tries to stop her.)*

ATTENDANT: Don't you *dare* call security! If you call security, I'll call security!

MRS. MILFORD: I don't care who calls as long as they pick up the phone!

AKBAR: *(to BEKAH)* Let's try something.

BEKAH: What?

AKBAR: *(opens case, everyone screams, HE closes it and they stop, HE does this about three times.)* It's like Pavlov's Dog. In this country you're conditioned to be afraid of a man with an accent and a briefcase. *(HE opens and closes it really quick before they can scream)* Fooled you! *(HE reaches in and pulls out another book while everyone holds their breath.)* Mazes!

SCENE 7

Everyone in the terminal is looking out a window, imaginary or not, watching the plane.

MOTHER: Is it moving?

KAYLA: Is that it? It stopped.

MAN: *(wistful)* So near, and yet so far. *(goes to AGENT)* My internet weather report on my handy new iPhone says there's no snowstorm in Pittsburgh, no problem in Philadelphia, and no tornado in Tulsa, Trenton, or Tuscaloosa. So what's the problem?

AGENT: *(chatty and impressed)* You got an iPhone?

MAN: Well, *(flattered)* yes.

AGENT: Did you get it before or after they lowered the price? That was a real kick in the soccer ball.

MAN: Before, I must admit.

AGENT: You just don't have a lotta luck, do you?

MAN: You're trying to distract me! I want to know what's going on.

AGENT: So we do all. You know what's funny? When I get off work. . . you'll still be here!

KAYLA: It stopped. It just moved ten feet and stopped. What's keeping it from getting from there to here? *(pause, to AGENT)* Well? Do you even work here?

AGENT: A question I'm asked so often!

KAYLA: Excuse me, but who died and left you dictator?

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