

ALL ABOARD

Characters

MARTIN, male, 50s-60s.

ALEXIS, female, 30s-40s.

KENNY, a teenager. (Could be played by male or female. Change pronouns as needed.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT, male or female, 20s-30s.

HATFIELD, male, 40s-60s.

DETECTIVE HUGHES, female, 30s.

ARTIE, male, 40s-50s.

Time

Present.

Setting

An empty stage to be set with three folding chairs in a row center stage, as indicated. All exits and entrances proceed to and from stage right of the row of chairs, as if it were the center aisle of an airplane.

ALL ABOARD

Lights up on an empty stage. MARTIN enters from the back carrying a laptop and a folding chair, which he opens CS. He settles into the chair, and opens his computer and types.

After a moment, FLIGHT ATTENDANT enters with two folding chairs and opens them on either side of MARTIN, who takes no notice.

After a moment, KENNY enters with an airline blanket. MARTIN takes no notice as KENNY curls up in the chair to MARTIN's left, where he burrows into the blanket and instantly falls asleep.

After a moment, ALEXIS enters wearing a dark pantsuit and carrying an in-flight magazine. MARTIN takes no notice as ALEXIS sits in the chair to MARTIN's right, where she sits and begins to idly flip pages. After a moment, MARTIN looks at her.

MARTIN

That dress...

ALEXIS

(A bored sigh.)

Which dress?

MARTIN

The lavender one.

ALEXIS

I hate that dress. I told you that when you gave it to me.

MARTIN

It was perfect, though, for the party at Colin's, the night of the murder.

ALEXIS

Fuck Colin.

MARTIN

And you did, remember? On the coffee table in his office.

ALEXIS

Well, fuck Colin figuratively then. Besides, it wasn't the coffee table; it was the credenza.

MARTIN

You know...you're right: It was a credenza.

ALEXIS

Mahogany.

MARTIN

Anyway, that lavender dress--

ALEXIS

--Jesus, Martin, will you quit with the lavender dress? I threw it out a long time ago, OK?

MARTIN

But did you throw it down the trash chute of Colin's mid-town apartment, or did you toss it in the dumpster behind the Canary Club?

ALEXIS

How the hell should I remember?

ALEXIS flags down the FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT

Yes, may I help you?

ALEXIS

I want a gin and tonic.

ATTENDANT

Certainly, ma'am. We serve Old Tom.

ALEXIS

A double, please.

ATTENDANT

Would you like a lemon twist or a slice of lime?

ALEXIS

Lime. Who drinks a G&T with lemon?

ATTENDANT

It's just--well, I had a boyfriend once who always took lemon. Probably because he grew lemon trees on his estate on Martinique, one of the Windward Islands that's an overseas department of France. You remind me of him.

ATTENDANT leaves, smiling.

MARTIN

Interesting.

ALEXIS

Hey! You going to let him compare me to a farm boy?

MARTIN

Suppose we go with an herb garnish on that gin drink.

ALEXIS

Now you're sticking your nose in my cocktail? That's how you're going to lose your poetic license. And don't say I didn't warn you.

ALEXIS exits. MARTIN types for a bit, then stops, reflecting. He looks over at KENNY. Pokes him--no response. Shakes him--KENNY moans and burrows into his blanket. MARTIN shakes him again...

KENNY

Fuck! Leave me alone!

KENNY digs deeper into his sleep. MARTIN sighs. HATFIELD approaches, wearing baggy trousers, suspenders over shirtsleeves, and a fedora. He takes the aisle seat next to MARTIN.

HATFIELD

Martin, did you bring up that thing with Colin to Alexis?

MARTIN

Might've mentioned it.

HATFIELD

Well, she's all upset now, and it's your fault.

MARTIN

I just had a few questions.

HATFIELD

You and your few questions. She's breaking my balls about it.

MARTIN

Sorry, Hatfield, but you know how it is.

HATFIELD

Yeah, and sometimes you got to let it ride. You're going to get more information obliquely than head on.

MARTIN types.

MARTIN

I'll remember that.

ATTENDANT returns with MARTIN's drink.

ATTENDANT

Here you go. One Lavender Tom Collins...

(Notes HATFIELD.)

Oh. You're not her. Where'd she go?

KENNY

I'll take it.

ATTENDANT

(Brightly.)

As you wish!

KENNY's hand emerges from the blanket to claim the drink in front of MARTIN and HATFIELD and pull it under the blanket.

HATFIELD

Say, that smells good. Can I get one too?

ATTENDANT

Right away. Garnish?

HATFIELD

Lemon, of course.

MARTIN

Just like his boyfriend says. Grows lemons. Lives on Martinique.

ATTENDANT

Not any more. He...

(Getting weepy.)

He was washed out to sea in the great hurricane of twenty-ten.

HATFIELD

Gaston or Tomas?

ATTENDANT

Hurricane Colin.

MARTIN

Ah-hah.

ATTENDANT leaves, sniffing.

HATFIELD

You know, technically, Colin was only a tropical storm.

MARTIN

(Typing.)

How many meteorologists do I know? I think we can get away with hurricane.

HATFIELD

I thought you were only drinking bloody Marys these days.

MARTIN

I have a new rule: From now on I will not adulterate my alcohol with vegetables.

HATFIELD

And that's how it starts.

MARTIN

(Preoccupied with his laptop.)

How what starts?

HATFIELD

The taxonomic slippery slope. First you're calling tropical storms hurricanes, then suddenly tomatoes are vegetables.

MARTIN

They aren't?

HATFIELD

Come on, they're fruits, you should've learned that in school.

MARTIN

How many fruits do I know? I think we can get away with vegetables.

HATFIELD

Fuck you, Martin.

MARTIN

Obliquely or head on?

HATFIELD snorts his appreciation of MARTIN's witticism. ATTENDANT returns with HATFIELD's drink, then leaves without a word, still sniffing. HATFIELD watches him go. Then...

HATFIELD

I should get back to Alexis. You got her so wound up, she's dripping sarcasm all over the upholstery.

MARTIN

You're just sniffing after that flight attendant.

HATFIELD

That too. So what?

MARTIN

So I noticed, is all.

HATFIELD

Yeah, well, keep it to yourself for once, if you can.

*HATFIELD leaves with his drink.
MARTIN thinks and types.
DETECTIVE HUGHES arrives and
leans over the open seat. She's
dressed like Hatfield, except
for a heavy overcoat instead of
the fedora.*

HUGHES

(Deadly serious.)

I want a word with you, Martin.

MARTIN

Not in the mood, Detective.

HUGHES

You got no choice in the matter.

MARTIN

Not now, I said.

HUGHES

You can't keep putting me off.

MARTIN

Really. You seem to forget who's running this show.

HUGHES

And you seem to be unaware of your limitations.

MARTIN

What limitations?

HUGHES leans over.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You're talking through your hat.

HUGHES

That expression puts you squarely in the wrong century.

MARTIN

I'll fix it later. For now, take a hike. Beat it. Am-scray.

HUGHES

I'll be back. And you will talk to me. You'll be in the mood, guaranteed.

MARTIN makes a "yak-yak-yak" motion with one hand as he returns to his keyboard. HUGHES leaves. Then ARTIE drops into the open seat. He's wearing a loud, cheap suit with stains under the arms and mustard on his tie.

ARTIE

(Whispering urgently.)

Martin! I can't take it no more.

MARTIN

What, Artie?

ARTIE

(Assumes a more conversational tone.)

The pressure. First, the feds. Then the mob and my ex--and then my other ex. Now I gotta remember my new name is "Artie", too?

MARTIN

It isn't Artie Two--it's just Artie.

ARTIE

You know what I meant. You're just toying with me. That's all I am to you, your pawn in the game of life.

MARTIN

It had to be done, Artie. You needed a new identity.

ARTIE

But I liked my old name--Leslie. It was my dad's name, and his dad's name before that.

MARTIN

The last guy I trusted named Leslie barely escaped *The Forbidden Planet*. And that was 60 years ago.

ARTIE

You're a heartless bastard, Martin. Or should I say "Marty."

MARTIN

That's not going to happen.

ARTIE

And what makes you think I'm gonna cooperate?

MARTIN

The writer's union. They make all the rules. Including the ones about nomenclature in general and monikers in particular.

ARTIE

I could take it on the lam. Disappear into any one of a hundred burgs. You'd never find me.

MARTIN

Oh, I'll always know where you are. And I could make your disappearance very unpleasant... Artie.

ARTIE leans back, twitching, sweating.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You got the second set of books ready?

ARTIE

(Sullenly.)

Yeah.

MARTIN

And the key to the coded list of all the individuals who found cash in their pockets that wasn't their own?

ARTIE

It's safe.

MARTIN

In a safe?

ARTIE

(Tapping his temple.)

Up here.

MARTIN

You think that's going to protect you?

ARTIE

Only thing I got. My ticket to a long retirement.

MARTIN

We'll see. What about Colin?

ARTIE

The mobster or the tropical storm?

MARTIN

I'm calling it a hurricane.

ARTIE

Oh, you got such a disrespect for names.

MARTIN

Deal with it. I was asking about our friend who owns the Canary Club.

ARTIE

Don't worry. His fingerprints all over this mess.

MARTIN

Keep up the good work, Artie. When this is over, you might find yourself with a nice gig--and a bungalow in Florida.

ARTIE

Just as long as we both agree on the definitions of "gig" and "bungalow."

MARTIN

What--you don't trust me?

ARTIE

(Snorts derisively.)

This from a guy makes no distinction between "uninterested" and "disinterested."

MARTIN

Either way, who cares? I don't expect you to understand, Artie. It's not in your nature. Now get out of here.

ARTIE leaves. ALEXIS arrives, wearing a lavender dress.

ALEXIS

There. Satisfied?

MARTIN

Much better. In fact, very nice.

ALEXIS sits.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Color goes well with your eyes.

ALEXIS

What do you know about my eyes. Yours are always stuck on that computer screen.

MARTIN

Alexis, you know I love you, don't you?

(Beat, no answer.)

Do you love me?

ALEXIS

Got no choice in the matter.

MARTIN

You know, you're the second person who's said that today.

ALEXIS

Who else?

MARTIN

Tell you later. The important thing is that you know that you do have a choice. Every day you make choices. You choose to get on this plane. You choose to sit next to me. You even choose to wear the lavender dress.

ALEXIS

(Unconvinced.)

Doesn't feel like a choice.

MARTIN

But it is. Don't you see? I might try to manipulate you, but if it's not in your character, not who you really are, then I can't force it. It won't work and that's all there is to it.

ALEXIS

And Colin? You killed him.

MARTIN

Colin had it coming. You don't betray *omerta* and get away with it. That's a given, beyond anyone's control.

ALEXIS

I don't trust you.

MARTIN

You don't have to. Just go with the flow.

ALEXIS sets her jaw and MARTIN leans over to kiss it. KENNY emerges from the blanket with an empty glass.

KENNY

Shit. What's she doing here?

MARTIN

Settle down, Kenny.

KENNY

No, you told me you weren't seeing her any more. You said you were going to dump her.

ALEXIS

Dump you, asshole!

MARTIN

Don't take it personally, Kenny. There's no need to feel threatened. You two live in totally separate worlds.

KENNY

Then what is she doing here where I am?

MARTIN

A momentary plot twist.

ALEXIS

Oh, and I suppose that's all I am to you, too?

KENNY

There you go again, bitch! It's always about you! Whenever I want a little of his time, you always interfere.

ALEXIS

Maybe if you weren't such a stereotypical, misunderstood juvenile delinquent--

KENNY

--I can't help it! I'm dystopic, all right?

ALEXIS

It's "dyslexic". Read it and weep.

KENNY

Allergic is more like it, allergic to you. And right now, I'm getting a contact low from the botox fumes coming off your ugly face.

ALEXIS

Poor little Kenny. Does your personal coming-of-age story disappoint you?

KENNY

Go fuck a platoon. Better yet--

KENNY is suddenly distracted when HUGHES returns, opening her overcoat to reveal a Halloween-style "sexy cop" outfit.

HUGHES

You in the mood now, Martin?

ALEXIS

Who's this?

HUGHES

Your nemesis, honey. His salvation.

ALEXIS

You want my heel in your eye? Keep it up...

HUGHES

That's what I do best, honey. Just ask your friend here...

A bell. All look up to listen...

ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Your attention please. The Captain has turned on the seatbelt sign. He's expecting some turbulence...

MARTIN pulls the two halves of a seatbelt from underneath his chair and buckles up.

MARTIN

(Gleefully.)

Oh, yeah--bring it on!

HATFIELD, ARTIE, and ATTENDANT join ALEXIS, HUGHES, and KENNY in haranguing MARTIN, who's happily typing, trying to transcribe it all verbatim. As the ad-libbed overlapping voices peak... fade to black.

END OF PLAY