

"FLIGHT 237 - DENVER TO LOS ANGELES"

A Play in One Act

Cast of Characters

Lincoln: Young man around age 25

Nancy: Older woman around age 65

Woman with Baby: Late 20s, early 30s
Baby is about two years old

Setting

A small passenger jet airplane.

Time

Early morning, around 8:30 am.

A young man, around age 25 (LINCOLN) is sitting in the window seat of the left side of the plane. Seated next to him is an older woman, around age 65 (NANCY). LINCOLN is dressed casually, in a crumpled shirt, baseball cap, and jeans. NANCY is smartly dressed, wearing a scarf that is trying to look expensive, statement "button" earrings, and neatly coiffed hair. NANCY wears reading glasses.

LINCOLN is leaning his head against the window, propped up on a travel pillow, eyes closed. NANCY is reading the in-flight magazine.

*An electronic bell sound *BING* followed by an intercom voice, "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have reached cruising altitude. You may now feel free to use the lavatories, but while seated, please keep your seatbelts securely fastened." NANCY puts the magazine back in the seat-back pocket, reaches down and picks up her oversized purse from at her feet and puts it in her lap, fumbles through her purse, and pulls out her cell phone. This is all done very loudly. She adjusts her glasses as she fidgets with her phone, looking a bit confused or frustrated for a second, then leans over LINCOLN to take a picture of the scenery outside the window.*

LINCOLN opens one eye slightly, then shuts it quickly when she looks over at him.

NANCY leans over a second time, takes a second picture.

LINCOLN adjusts his pillow in an obvious manner.

NANCY leans over a third time, takes a third picture, then sits back in her seat and scrolls through the pictures on her phone. Makes a "tsk tsk" sound, sighs,

then starts to lean over a fourth time.

LINCOLN opens his eyes, sits up, puts his pillow away in the backpack at his feet, pulls out a big paperback book, and starts to read it. NANCY pulls back as he does this, looking slightly annoyed, but also apologetic or embarrassed. She straightens out and puts a smile on her face.

NANCY

Don't you just love mountains?

LINCOLN

Excuse me?

NANCY

The mountains.

Points out window

Aren't they just lovely?

LINCOLN

Um, yea, I guess.

NANCY

The pictures are for my son-in-law. He's a geologist. Works at the university. I think he said he teaches a class about mountains.

Pause

They really are lovely. We don't have them where I'm from.

LINCOLN

Does not look up from his book

Hmm.

NANCY

Florida. I live in Tampa.

Pause. LINCOLN does not acknowledge or look up from his book.

Well, actually, I'm from Nebraska, but at this point I've lived more of my life in Florida than Nebraska. But that's not counting the time I lived in Paris.

Dreamy look on her face

Either way, no mountains.

Another pause. LINCOLN still does not acknowledge or look up from his book.

NANCY

Do you live in California?

LINCOLN continues to look at his book.

LINCOLN

Yea. L.A. Well, Pico Rivera.

NANCY

So then you're used to the mountains.

Pause

Do you ski? Fish?

Lincoln closes his book, using his finger as a marker and looks at NANCY.

LINCOLN

I see them, but I don't visit them. They're just kind of... there. I've honestly never given much thought to the

mountains. I'm really enjoying this book though.

NANCY glances over at the book.

NANCY

That's a really big book. Usually on planes I bring light reading. I read that somewhere. Or heard it. Maybe on TV. That you should bring light reading on an airplane. Something not so bulky.

LINCOLN

I started it before my trip and I'm trying to finish it before we land.

NANCY

I see. Well, enjoy. Sure is a big book.

LINCOLN opens his book back up and continues reading. NANCY glances around her, searching. Her eyes meet those of the woman across the aisle. The woman has a small toddler on her lap. NANCY smiles, almost relieved.

NANCY

What a doll. She sure is well behaved.

WOMAN

Awe, thank you. She's having fun, I think.

NANCY

Is this her first trip?

LINCOLN looks up to see what is going on.

WOMAN

Oh no, she flies pretty often. Her grandparents live in

Florida.

NANCY

Oh? Which part?

LINCOLN rolls his eyes and goes back to reading.

WOMAN

Melbourne. It's near Orlando.

NANCY

Well isn't that funny, I live there, too! Well, Tampa actually. Just across the aisle, just like we are now. Isn't that funny. I have friends that live near Melbourne though. Their son is stationed there so they moved there to be closer to him and his family. Air Force, I think.

WOMAN

Oh, how nice.

NANCY

Should I thank you for your service?

WOMAN

Excuse me?

NANCY

Are you folks military?

WOMAN

Oh no, we're not. Just live there.

NANCY

I see.

Slight pause

Visit Disney World often?

WOMAN

Smiles and sighs a little

We haven't taken her yet. We figure she's still a little too young to really understand.

NANCY

Never too young to have fun. That's what I say. You should take her!

Woman smiles to appease NANCY.

NANCY's face winces and she grabs her neck.

WOMAN

Are you okay?

NANCY

Oh yes. Just a crick in my neck. Not as young as I used to be. You enjoy your flight. She really is precious. They grow up so fast...

Waves to the baby, then turns back around. As she turns, her smile fades.

NANCY turns back to LINCOLN

NANCY

So what's the big book about?

LINCOLN smiles and shakes his head a little in a "you've got to be kidding me" way. He reaches down to his backpack and pulls out a bookmark, puts it in the book, then closes the book

LINCOLN

Vampires, I think?

NANCY

You think? Looks like you're at least 400 pages in at this point. Seems like you'd have some idea what a book is about 400 pages in.

LINCOLN laughs

LINCOLN

A friend loaned it to me. She's picking me up from the airport. That's why I was trying to finish it. It's okay though, really. I still had 200 pages to go. I wasn't going to finish it.

NANCY

Well, like I said, it must not be that good if you can't even tell a person what it's about.

LINCOLN looks down at his book, a pensive look on his face, then looks back up at Nancy.

LINCOLN

It's alright, I guess. It's just a little weirder than stuff I usually read. I'm pretty sure there's a deeper, hidden meaning that I'm not seeing. Has to be. I mean, it does have vampires. Or what I think are vampires, but I think maybe they stand for something else? Like a metaphor maybe? Humanity's lost its...humanity?

NANCY

Sounds terrible.

LINCOLN

Laughs

Honestly, I really don't know. My friend Patty kept saying how much I'd love it, that everyone needs to read it. When she dropped me off at the airport, she handed it to me. I think she thought maybe it would help get my mind off of things. Give me something to do.

LINCOLN chuckles again, then stops and just stares at the book, lost in thought.

NANCY

My daughter bought me one of those electric book things. She put about a hundred books on it before she gave it to me. That way if I got bored with one, I could just pick another one.

NANCY pauses, looks up toward the corner of the ceiling as if contemplating.

I think she thinks I'm bored a lot. She asks me all the time, "Mom, do you have enough to keep you busy? Do you have enough hobbies? What about a knitting class?" Hah, like all old women need to knit. I lived in Paris for Christ's sake! People who lived in Paris don't knit. Well maybe they do, what the hell do I know?

LINCOLN furrows his brow, looking slightly confused, but interested.

LINCOLN

Well, is she right?

NANCY

About what?

LINCOLN

Does she have a reason to think you are bored?

NANCY

Maybe, I don't know. I think I get along just fine.

Shakes her head.

But that's not my point. The problem is that now I have too many options and I can never decide what to read! When I got it, I gave it a try. A good, heartfelt try. And when a book disappointed me, or I didn't get the point of it, I did what she suggested and just moved on to the next one. But then I just kept moving on, and on, and on. Never finished a damn book. So now it just sits on my nightstand, collecting dust.

LINCOLN raises his eyebrows and opens his eyes wider in dramatic boredom. NANCY does not notice.

I'd never tell her I hate it though. It'd just break her heart if she knew I didn't like it. So sometimes I tell her, "Jenny, I just love that book thing you got me. Use it all the time." Maybe you could just tell Patty you finished the book. Move on to something else.

LINCOLN

Thinks about it for a second

Yea, maybe.

Laughs

Your e-book problem kinda sounds like me and Netflix. Do you live by your daughter?

NANCY

Oh no. She hates Tampa. Says the humidity makes her hair frizzy. Makes a lot of jokes about alligators though.

LINCOLN

Huh.

Slight pause. LINCOLN looks away, thinking NANCY is finished talking.

NANCY

You know, I have yet to see a single alligator?

LINCOLN looks a bit startled and he quickly turns his head back to NANCY.

Been there going on 35 years and I hear about them all the time on the news, "Gator ate dog, gator attacks school children." Did you hear a gator killed a kid on vacation at Disney World? That poor kid. Happiest place on Earth my rear end. Well, not for him at least. But ain't that life. Full of promises and hope. Stability. And then...

NANCY looks lost in thought for a moment, then snaps back into rapid speech.

But I've never actually seen one. At the zoo maybe, and one time I made Frank drive me down to an alligator farm, just so I can say I saw one, but not in the wild. Not at my house. I guess they must not like me. Maybe they could bottle my pheromones and sprinkle them around DisneyWorld.

They both give an awkward chuckle.

So terrible. That poor kid. Oh well. What was I saying? Oh yea, she lives in Denver.

Makes a snarky face

Jenny and Dave. And they've got a little boy, my grandson

Braydon. Like that's a real name. But I don't say anything. Not my place, not my kid. Plus, it'd break her heart if she knew I didn't like my own grandson's name.

Looks down, slight pause

So, I keep my mouth shut. Give'm hugs when I see him. Call him on his birthday.

Slight pause, quickly picks her head back up

Anyway,

Smiles

I stopped there to visit for a few days on my way to L.A.

Pause

What's Netflix?

LINCOLN

Laughs

It's kinda like your electronic book thing, but with movies and shows. You watch them on a TV, or your phone or iPad.

NANCY

Huh. What'll they think of next...

LINCOLN

You know, I think I'm going to keep trying to figure it out. The book, I mean. Mind if I keep reading?

NANCY

Of course! Don't let me be the one to stand in your way of learning the deeper meaning behind vampires.

Winks

LINCOLN smiles at NANCY, looks to the window, relieved, then opens his book back up and continues to read.

NANCY picks up the in-flight magazine from the seat-back pocket again and starts flipping pages quickly, trying to find something she hasn't read yet. She sighs, then puts the magazine back into the pocket. She starts looking around again, searching.

NANCY turns to the woman across the aisle again and points out her window.

NANCY

Oh look, there's another airplane out there. It looks like we're racing! Maybe they're trying to beat us to L.A. I think maybe the little one would like to see. Can she see from that side?

WOMAN

Oh yea, look at that. Hey look Sydney, another airplane.

The baby does not look interested.

NANCY looks disappointed as she turns around to face forward. She sighs loudly. LINCOLN slowly closes his book again, sighs, purses his lips into a makeshift smile, then turns to NANCY.

LINCOLN

So, who are you visiting in LA then?

NANCY's face lights up.

NANCY

Some old friends of mine. We all live in different parts of the country, so we never see each other. Sheila's in Seattle, Gayle lives in Montana, and poor Susan never left Nebraska, bless her heart. Betty lives in Twelve Oaks, I think? I don't know. I wrote it down somewhere, but now I can't find it. I just know she's picking me up from the airport.

LINCOLN

Thousand Oaks?

NANCY

That's it!

Laughs and shakes her head

Twelve Oaks. I'm so silly. That's where Scarlett O' Hara went to the fancy party before the Yankees burned it down.

LINCOLN looks confused

Anyway, we're all boarding a cruise ship in LA and setting sail for Maui.

*Does a little dance in her seat,
LINCOLN smiles*

Fourteen days of fruity slushy drinks, dancing, and sun without all the stupid mosquitoes ruining the mood. After Denver this'll be such a relief.

LINCOLN

You don't like Denver?

NANCY

Who likes Denver? That's like someone saying they like Nebraska.

Laughs

LINCOLN

Well that sounds like a great time. I'm sure you deserve it. I've never been to Hawaii. I've never really been anywhere.

NANCY

Oh! You've gotta go! So many places. And they make it so easy! You just pick a hotel, pick an airplane, and you just go!

LINCOLN

My mom and I were planning a trip to Alaska, but we just never went.

NANCY

Well you should. I bet she'd like that. A trip with her son. What mom wouldn't like that?

LINCOLN

Looks down at his lap, furrows brow.

She died, actually.

NANCY

Covers her mouth with her hand

Oh honey, I'm so sorry. How long?

LINCOLN

Still looking down

Last week. Cancer. They said she was getting better, then she just...died.

Looks up at NANCY. Pained look on his face

How does that happen?

Pause. NANCY is quiet, but her face

shows concern and pity.

Her funeral was in Denver. There was a cancer center there, so she moved there a couple years ago with my stepdad. Fell in love with the place. I think she really liked the snow. She always talked about living somewhere with snow. Some doctor with some new treatment said things sounded hopeful. Anyway... it's like you said about the alligators.

NANCY

Alligators?

LINCOLN

Things are full of hope and promise. Stability. You're planning a trip to Alaska, visiting Disney World. And then... it's just gone. Everything's different. Why does that happen?

NANCY

I don't know. I really don't know.

LINCOLN

Who is Frank?

NANCY

What?

LINCOLN

You said Frank took you to see the gators.

NANCY

Oh right.

Slight pause

Frank was my husband.

LINCOLN

Was?

NANCY

A year ago. Heart attack. Didn't see it coming.

LINCOLN

I'm sorry, too.

*NANCY looks down. She takes LINCOLN's hand in both of hers and squeezes it. She looks up and her eyes are filled with tears. Her lip trembles. The plane jumps and they jump with it, startled. A loud, electronic bell sound *BING* followed by an intercom voice, "Ladies and gentlemen, please fasten your seatbelts as we are experiencing a bit of turbulence." NANCY lets go of LINCOLN'S hand, wipes away her tears, then reaches forward and straightens out the magazine in the seat-back pocket. She looks at LINCOLN and laughs. He laughs, too.*

END OF PLAY