

another thing you'll 'never believe'
by alina jacobs

*we are on a plane.
we have already taken off
we are at 35k ft more or less.
the passenger is sitting facing the audience
(or maybe the audience is seated on three sides)
i will reference the following objects:
sunglasses
some magazines
the in-flight entertainment
words in **bold** denote a heightened vocal expression
amount of pause time indicated by // is variable, can be short or long
occasionally there will be some mist in the cabin, nothing out of the ordinary ☺
at rise:
the passenger is wearing the sunglasses
they are seated, hands crossed over their stomach
sound of airplane ambience
the passenger crosses and uncrosses their hands, then legs
after a moment they undo their seatbelt and stand*

PASSENGER

(a pleasant realization) you remind me of someone i knew // someone with an immense bone to pick (pause) yes // the edges soften, and re-form, you could be anyone // there's always this immense intimacy on one of these (pause) on flights because we're so helpless, we're babies—it's the utmost sense of trust // full body trust // each pair of eyes a wellspring // it's very nice to see you again after all these years // you've changed so much (pause) or not too much but things have changed // lucky for me i am preserved in amber // on this civilian // civilian liner // just cruising

(turns head side to side)

and really it is a privilege to be here (a small cough that grows) sorry the air in here, it's so dry // you know in the umm less atomized parts of the world more or less civilized countries i hear they do still let people smoke on the planes // yes they do it, and they survive they move from day to day and in between, why not // anyway i'm too old to tell anyone what makes sense or doesn't after all if you haven't figured it out by now then who's to say // it's not so long a trip soon we'll wake up in florida or go to sleep in alaska tonight // tampa springs eternally, in our hearts // or perhaps alaska? the northern lights? polar bears?

i was going to say something about airplane food, but i would be kidding, it doesn't exist anymore, of course (smile, teeth) // do it while they still let you that's what i always say, do it while you can // life does not rebound indefinitely after all those threads become tangled past the point of fixing eventually

transitioned to the big time, go on tv, maybe you remember // that big time back then, the nineties or however long you may remember // you thought you were breaking for commercial but then // oops // you thought you were breaking to commercial but actually it was something else, back then you still had your something and your something else—

but instead of breaking for commercial it was actually breaking to speak directly to you, not at you—beaming into your mind as it were, all your favorite characters, makeup still on, accents and dialects unslipping, speaking directly // such that they do not even really need to speak the acts of suggestion and the spatial, ocular cues in some ways are enough but let's say, let's say they are really speaking and are in fact perfectly close captioned // they are urging you to pick up the gun, for instance, do some plane tricks, poison some wells, burn someone else's native lands, as you've been primed to do already, from before the commercial break and

lucky for you they aren't being too too literal (*smile, teeth*) // unless you're already there of course then it's too late // oops // but really they're telling you because it's already done // your parents' taxes collected // and left you, all you have left is cathected desire // misplaced and misbegotten // a seeded cloud of consent

(takes off sunglasses, clips them to shirt. takes off sweater, places it on seat.)

and i was there too you saw me // but maybe you don't remember // it's okay if you don't // how could you after all considering, considering everything else... // the ensuing years of displaced anxious longing // for instance // i had on a sweater yes one of the time very emblematic of the time // start of the decade // and my hair like a lobster // what's her name from the show you liked? she could never // cspan logo in the lower left corner // fat phallic microphones // no one had a summer vacation quite like mine

it's good to see you again after all these years // been so long that // couldn't look you in the eye back then you know even after all those long hours in the hotel rooms all the coaches the corrections on the printed pieces of paper, exercises in facial posture, (*slight frustration*) vocal intonations // who you may remember them ah, hill and the other one, nulton? knowlton?

their funding of course another goose chase // i am i am handed the shopping bag handed the script because // but because and simply that i can conjure things from my mind from within the beyond, et cetera, you know i can, in any case, conjure up, so to speak, the things because they are **real to me** and don't ever stop, don't ever quit being **real to me** // matching state department charm bracelets // numbers sliding downwards medical machines humming and beeping

why did they make me a nurse? i'm only a child, my hair in twin braids, pigtails // even so ah. no but really, whose idea was that?? // mine **my** idea my childhood daydream idea// o mister chairman o members of the committee o o o o

no let's be serious now it was definitely a very calculated decision // the womanly caretaking body // take care now // nurse in the center of the sex vision, the death bed, the love vision, the birth fantasy ah yes // they are dancing in a circle, who? the nurses of course (*small laugh*) they are mouthing the lyrics to a song they are moving their hands their eyes in synchro (*short*

demonstration) // but now we have a million of me // fewer and fewer actresses in the cast, the clone, the heal, the copy and paste the drag and drop tool, the generation at the drop of the hat

they were working very hard // (*doing something of an impression*) well, we have a nurse, why not add some babies? ...so she's a nurse, volunteering during a war, a real nurse and a real war, supposedly, not staged or anything, and she's in the maternity wards, how do they do it over there anyway? // and let's just say that the invading forces, these soldier really want to steal some incubators, preemies be damned apparently, they're simply jealous of our—of our superior foreign direct investments our grand USAID hatcheries they only have ones from the seventies or something or or or they're going to use them to incubate strains of weaponized cholera syphilis rabies gonorrhea // goner // goner

what came first? what was the seed of imagination? // and where did all that leftover desire go? hmm? oh you don't really want to know but it didn't go into civil engineering that's for sure or flower arranging or the contemporary arts, or maybe it did (*a look of knowing*) // i don't know it must have made sense at the time what with the domestic anxieties // 'stay at home moms' // you must have had some real schedule one trust issues after that // after figuring it all out the following year // how could you ever believe again? how could you trust your ears, your eyes—

you only saw me for a second or rather, i didn't do anything didn't do any actual nursing just stood around, no way i could have really seen the things i said i did or otherwise we can just never know for sure // after all everything happened so fast // which is a nice way of saying, you put it in a nice way of saying // an ambassador's daughter, actually, she's been kept up in the embassy, clenched fists, turning her head from side to side // shaved a few years off her age too probably // she was miles away in a hotel room not the whole time but much of the time // she'd really like to move on with her life now which is fine i guess but she's just a collection of lines, shadows, et cetera—

who will play me in the film, on a glassy digital plate, someone of age for the labor laws naturally you can't get a child to work a twelver // and the screen itself, the cruel quality of the blue and orange, everything either blue or orange nothing in between // or otherwise all the colors completely desaturated any rosiness sucked clean out, to evoke the desert // ah the desert // i stand on my own two feet the gentlemen heads of state become but little action figures, i sidestep them, sweep them aside // though my disclosures remain limited // i'm merely a deviant with rich parents spinning silly songs a pr firm was hired to write for me // and now you'll hear them again // certain characters will get left on the cutting room floor // the audience will leave scratching their beards so to speak and say oh how crazy back then // back then when you had your something and your something else // it was something else as a matter of fact... // you couldn't imagine anything of the sort happening in this day and age what with everyone **knowing better** we **know better** naturally what with our marketplace of ideas

but now i'm a collection of zeros and ones continually reformulated as different bodies in my sleep of amber, coaching you reminding you guiding your hand // hand on the joystick // you can really hit those buttons at the appropriate time // now and again i'm lying on the ground with my face powdered, seemingly unmoving, but if you look closer, just a bit closer // ah but the dust got

in your eyes and you listened // and here you are, still listening and nodding like you're paying attention // no trust issues there

you might not believe me about the confluence between these realms of ostensible spontaneity // as much as anyone 'believes' as if your belief is in any way quantifiable // as though your belief could move mountains // not quite huh, hmm no not quite

(a sound, a warning is issued)

(to the flight attendants) what?

okay okay

no sorry, what do you mean exactly?

what light

isn't it always like that

they've got something to

fine *(passive aggressive smile)* fine fine

(sits down in seat. to the flight attendant)

what? i'm—

oh, *(fingers the seatbelt)*

it's

fine, look, look i'm putting it on

(puts on seatbelt. still for a moment. look of abject boredom. frustration. puts on sunglasses. takes off sunglasses. takes the inflight magazine, flips through it for a moment, puts it down)

what was i ... ?

i don't understand how you're still so calm, can't you feel it? *(pause)* // but you're right of course, what can you do...? // you're always one step ahead of me, so silly of me, just forget i said anything // oh and congratulations i would have needed to wait in line endlessly to feel so lucky as that

(taps fingers on armrest. a moment. undoes seatbelt. puts on sunglasses. attempts to access the inflight entertainment, clenches teeth, presses ear to the screen. a moment. digs around for the earphones, plugs in the jack, places buds in ears, we hear a pulse of feedback. small cry of pain. stands up, starts charging for the emergency exit)

there must be a way out

(a sound, another warning is issued)

no i didn't say that i didn't say anything // whatever // no don't bother don't bother

(sits down, is perfectly still for a moment. looks around furtively, stands up again)

im not her as you can probably guess but i // so close we could be sisters yes // womb twins // absorbing within // chimerism // and, to be sure, this is not some coma dream, this is **really happening** so // so you cannot help but see it in cycles // crossed into the likes of me whereupon i was, if you will, doing, if you will, my little routine // i took part in what i took part in // and so did you // it's really just as simple as that

why wouldn't it all be true? why would it matter // what if my fingers were crossed behind my back (*demonstrates*), you see there's no testimony to retract // she's a ship a big old boat a wide load a cargo transporter a USS an aircraft carrier a missile cruiser // just cruising // off the coast of // in the strait of // in the territorial waters of // virtue like a stone // sinking immediately, going down in the annals of history // reconfigured and hovering above you like undisputed allegations, mere allegations // something that's 'yours' // looming like a vapor mist—

which, come to think of it was it always this misty in here?? (*pause*) surely it's nothing, harmless, (*pause*) an optical illusion // certainly not—(*pause*) not **that** // it's—it's just like when they dye rivers on holidays harmless as food coloring // we all walk around with something missing // and it's not such a long flight! // florida springs, eternally // and—and—the northern lights? which are?? in actuality? // oh // i'm not sure—i'm not sure if it's something i'd really like to know

(the passenger gradually inches towards the exit sign)

well anyway there are a lot of umm statistics if you're interested i could provide you with a wealth of statistics if that makes you go 'aaah' if that tickles your fanciful // a massive ball of tangled limbs // a big hole in the ground, we've been in here forever quit digging us up to make us say this and that quit moving our jaws with your hands // (*pause*) but maybe you don't care about any of that // oh don't mind me, i'll just wait in a long line with a little traced heart on the back of my head yes that's where the spinal cord originates // a little invitation

(a sound, a final warning)

you're the parasite that lives under my skin the reason i've had to detox many many times // you don't even know the reality of the water mixed with sour substance spread over my cheeks pressure applied and yet and yet so you don't know don't have the slightest idea because nothing works // now the bomb sniffing dogs have smelled all my good luck charms i am short work i am mince meat

(enter two flight attendants, they physically restrain the passenger. their hands are bound to the armrests.)

well

well everyone loves a woman restrained // but you don't have me unconscious yet (*a long pause, a quiet whimper that sounds like a dog crying*)

the tensions are of course, as such // we can say the word when it comes to **classes**, imagine, the words are actually said // have to applaud the honesty i suppose (*imagines applause, cannot applaud because hands are bound*) // if they still let us smoke onboard none of this would have happened // all those points, racked, only to be banned, banned for life presumably // make me pay yes make me pay // and the parasites they're fucking in my bloodstream yes sexually reproducing // the medications in question can't quite just kill them it's more like birth control so the generations they progressively die off in say five or so years the population just decreases little by little as opposed to twenty or thirty or howeverlong you live to host them i suppose

(a large 'x' of tape is placed around their torso in lieu of a seatbelt. another flight attendant hands out packets of snacks to the audience.)

transitioned to the big time, lucky for you, you'll be picking up your bags, eyes dry mouth dry nose dry, feeling the scrapped boarding pass in your pocket, touching it to remind yourself it's still there // all the time eyes // oh is that a little tear or the suggestion of a tear, would have been a tear were it not so dry // you'll be going home with an arm around your waist ha jokes on you you you you bitch with an arm around your waist would that it were a snake // turn up from your drinking glass the bubbling within the parasites doing their dance // no goddamn i am not winking i am not making eyes at you mind your own goddamn // laugh all you want you'll be cut up too // floodgate overhaul cars piling up

northrop grumman poster child a free yearlong supply of DU you know what that is don't you sweetie i'm sure it's nestled in there somewhere buried if you will not that i'm accusing you of having buried something you shouldn't have // after all the dirt is constantly falling on us soo // can't believe it took this long to shout out our corporate sponsors, cradle them in our chest cavities // anyway it is such a privilege (*short cough*) to be the northrop grumman poster child this year looking so young for my age next year she'll have organs outside her body or something like that // so equitably included // i hear if you double or triple dose yourself the already poisoned parts of you will strike up such an affinity with it everything will boil off exit peacefully through defecation or perspiration

LRADs // but what if they were nice what if when they beamed the thoughts into your head it was nice and kind of tasted like sugar or honey or warm milk what if // i—i can't it's— // her milk she kept injecting inhaling, it was hate objectified her eel-like baby refusing to latch, hold out keep holding out until the last minute // she would pump the leftovers slip it into my food when i wasn't looking try to get that poison into me // forced unwitting milk siblings // like i can see it it's all over it's everywhere it's turning into acid burning the roof of my mouth

you never even called me // i sit in the back of the car with my ear pressed against the window // in a hotel room banished from thought // i do not sleep for fear of being reincorporated into the out of bound // you utterly gave up on me because i'm too old for you i guess, my skin drooping and unsightly // o how nice it was in that big hole // before you started digging us up and taking pictures // worm friends, subterranean mushrooms in so many colors

no no not a tragedy no not a tragedy no // i'm getting to decide this time i get to decide, it is the centerpiece of agency // ah ah yes

(the flight attendants tape the passenger's mouth. silence.)

(inaudible, through the tape)

amelia earhart

err hard

make an amelia earhart falling from the sky

reflect the lacy panties on those black leather boots

knife in hand

snake tongue out

transitioned to big time

wake up crying

a big hole in the ground

a ball of tangled limbs

but enough of all that

enough

that's not what interests you really...

okay so let's not talk about it

oh god what are we gonna talk about??

sorry i'm looking for better metaphors

it sure is misty in here

(silence, lights fade)

*we are sitting in the darkness, asking ourselves many questions
i.e., what the hell was that all about
a voiceover proceeds to answer our questions
we come to realize our questions are more or less irrelevant now,
but at last we have learned something
maybe?*

VOICEOVER

(voice)

what was the gulf war? the gulf war, also known as the persian gulf war, also known as the first gulf war, also known as ‘operation desert shield’ and successively ‘operation desert storm’ (for a brief time it was called the ‘iraq war’ but, obviously, not anymore), was a tenuously-defined military conflict between the united states and iraq following the iraqi invasion of kuwait, between august 1990 and february 1991. american diplomatic officials promised saddam no retaliation should iraq invade the oil-rich emirate of kuwait, saying they had ‘no opinion’ on ‘arab-arab conflicts’ nor any ‘special defense or security commitments’ to kuwait, which was a protectorate of the british empire until 1961.

*a lull in the voiceover,
lights up on tandy alone onstage, throwing up into a metal bucket
dried tears on her face
a moment, her eyes roll upwards
barely perceptible muted ‘party’ music in the background
enter marco, he has a bucket as well, he sits down on it. looks at tandy. he puts his head in his hands. he looks up at her again. tandy seems as though she is going to throw up again but does not.*

TANDY

(partially buried by the voiceover)

false alarm

a moment.

VOICEOVER

(voice)

who was ‘nurse nayirah’ and what did she allege? nurse nayirah was a character played by nayirah as-sabah who spoke at a congressional caucus broadcast on television in October of 1990. she claimed to have been a fifteen year old volunteer nurse at a hospital in kuwait city. she alleged that, based on personal observation, iraqi soldiers removed premature infants from incubators and left them on the floor to die. was her testimony at all important? then-president george hw bush mentioned her testimony half a dozen times in the three weeks preceding american military intervention in the war.

(an actual moment of relative quiet)

TANDY
do you think they're coming back?

MARCO
ummm

(a moment of silence, tandy wipes her face with the back of her sleeve.)

MARCO
are you okay?

TANDY
i feel a lot better already thanks
well more like—
ok i wouldn't say a lot
but
(pause)
how are you?

MARCO
(shrugging)
alright i guess
the people here—

TANDY
do you know them?

MARCO
sort of?

TANDY
are they your friends?

MARCO
sort of
one or two of them,
they're kind of—

TANDY
i don't really know them,
well i know one or two of them

MARCO
they're kind of—they're kind of their own category

TANDY

yeah

MARCO
kind of intense

TANDY
where did they all go?

MARCO
i think amber said something about the basement

TANDY
do you think they're coming back?

MARCO
i'm sure
some of them live here?

TANDY
they're all the children of certain dispossessed riche

MARCO
i only really know amber

TANDY
i only know amber
and that guy with the undercut
but i don't really know him i just see him around all the time

MARCO
oh yeah what's his name
he's got a lot to say sometimes
and sometimes he doesn't say anything but you can kind of tell what he's thinking

TANDY
and you?

MARCO
i usually don't have much to say

TANDY
that's nice

MARCO
have we met before?

TANDY
 i doubt it
 but it wouldn't surprise me if we had
 given the—(*gesture*)
 (*pause*)
 were you involved?

MARCO
 oh come on

TANDY
 it's a real question
 i wouldn't be surprised if everyone here was involved in some way

MARCO
 look i
 i went to one of those schools but
 i was on scholarship, you know
 i grew up in the real middle of nowhere
 by which i mean, not a suburb of arlington or whatever
 my parents were not diplomats or political dissidents
 they couldn't find czechoslovakia on a map (*pause*)
 though now of course you can't anyway
 'cause it's, you know, they renamed it
 but still

TANDY
 that's funny
 how they rope along some token uninitiated into
 into everything really
 there's usually at least one
 my father was a cartographer,
 only, just a cartographer in his home country
 he just made the maps
 lined things up on the coordinate chart
 nothing like—i mean he didn't know anything about what was buried underground
 for instance

VOICEOVER
 (*voice*)
 was nayirah's testimony true? she never actually worked as a nurse in a hospital. no evidence has
 ever been discover that backs up the story of the incubator babies. this, along with nayirah's real
 identity was not widely known until january of 1992, after the war was officially over.

MARCO
 they had me doing the subtitles

(pause, actual silence for a moment)

TANDY
did the translation lie?

MARCO
the translation?

TANDY
yeah

MARCO
i don't know i didn't do the translation
they gave me the translation and i matched the words to the time stamps
i formatted the text
you can see the little black outline on the white text in the video, for instance
that was me
i mean it was supposed to match, i can only imagine how accurate it was

TANDY
your guess is as good as mine
that's why i asked
you got paid?

MARCO
obviously
would be funny if i didn't

TANDY
you're not so unlike them after all

MARCO
well we are here

TANDY
yeah
here we are

VOICEOVER
(voice)
who was nayirah's father? saud nasser al-saud al-sabah, kuwaiti ambassador to the united states.
who wrote nayirah's testimony? hill and knowlton, a pr firm headquartered in new york city.
who hired hill and knowlton? an 'advocacy group' named 'citizen for a free kuwait' (essentially
a front for the kuwaiti government, and therefore a front for the united states) who paid them

around 10 million us dollars. what are some other notable clients of hill and knowlton? the world health organization, the olympic games, and the church of scientology.

(sound from below, flickering of lights, the latter effect can be achieved through sound)

TANDY
what are they doing down there?

MARCO
i don't know

TANDY
sounds like something with the electrical wiring

MARCO
maybe there's a mouse

TANDY
a mouse?

MARCO
or a rat?
chewing on the wires

TANDY
could be

(a moment, we hear sounds from below again)

MARCO
they're probably just engaging in a traditional uh
circlejerk
they peaked in college
and, like, miss it

TANDY
you know the circlejerk is this like terribly maligned concept but if you ask anybody in one
they'll tell you they're having a great time

VOICEOVER
(voice)

did hill and knowlton ever formally retract nayirah's testimony? no. in fact, to this day they maintain that they have no reason to believe it was untrue. was the use of military force approved by congress? yes, it passed in the senate by five votes. is congressional approval really necessary? yes and no. for military action to be legal, technically. but legitimacy is a veil. if you

have a dream, why should the absence of congressional approval stand in your way? (that wasn't actually a question)

TANDY

i spiraled into something with amber

was it her?

yes it was amber,

love her to death obviously but i have to turn off my brain sometimes when she talks,

it was amber and her friend pamela, with the what do you call it

with the ombré

(a moment)

pamela's not here, i didn't see her here tonight

anyway this was a few months ago

i was busted off some shit

my edges were jagged

i totally just totally forgot to breathe

i was writhing like a little worm, my brain area shrinking

and then i remembered

baby brain!

crib death!

SIDS!

(laughter, marco joins, he has a laugh that one might call annoying, at the very least bizarre)

TANDY

don't do that

MARCO

what?

VOICEOVER

(voice)

what is depleted uranium? depleted uranium, or DU, is 40 percent less radioactive than normal uranium but is equally toxic. it is used in the production of certain military grade bullets in order to make them more effective at piercing armored vehicles. what are the effects of DU use on local populations? it depends who you ask, the IAEA says there is no proven or likely link between the use of depleted uranium and cancers or sustained environmental damage. in the ten years after the gulf war, however, record numbers of child leukemia and birth defects were observed in basra, iraq. are there any international treaties prohibiting the use of DU? no.

MARCO

are you—

TANDY

busted

no

well just a little bit

MARCO

i can't help feeling dirty around these people
and each of them is a reflection of someone else,
including amber
like a worse reflection,
you turn your head and—
i want to scrub every pore of my skin
i want to be sprayed with disinfecting agent

TANDY

be careful what you wish for
they might just give it to you

MARCO

there's always something going on
that's why i didn't go downstairs
i just drink to forget you know
everything else is rather extraneous

TANDY

and how's that working?
the forgetting?

MARCO

were you involved?

TANDY

i was only kind of involved
i remember i was there in the airport looking at the menu for the one café in the terminal
everything was taking its sweet time
some old guys just sitting there with their little teacups not even looking at us or even speaking
like they could speak without talking just looks and waves of the hand and then i heard the sirens
going off
i was often in airports, hotel lobbies,
i was in a fun outreach study abroad program
they gave me a scholarship to go there, like a considerable amount of money?
we were studying internecine conflict mitigation, always just and only mitigation, deploy the
teams of napkin folding types to patiently dab napkins on the gaping wounds, to mitigate the
contradictions, god forbid they ever end up solving themselves

MARCO

who paid your scholarship?

TANDY

oh come on, do you expect me to remember?

MARCO

you mentioned it

TANDY

i mean this was like ten years ago

maybe more

i mean i could look it up

does it matter i mean

there isn't a

there isn't a lot of them

MARCO

there isn't a great diversity in who gives out the scholarships

TANDY

yeah but they're getting really good about who gets them (*pause, no one laughs*)

i'm joking obviously

but anyway, the trip,

anywhere you go in college is fine, you know

MARCO

i guess

TANDY

there were some obligatory meetings that were like unthinkably long and tedious, someone just talking and not stopping

they all blur together

but that's the essence of 'being somewhere' on one of these programs i guess,

that and the obligatory dinners with official looking types and uh the paper maybe we had to write a paper or fill out a survey when it was all over?

that part i really don't remember.

i mean the rest of it was fun,

there was a guy in the program and we got along pretty well, i was in college so you know how it is

MARCO

i guess so

TANDY

i remember someone was asking all these questions one of those types who was just kind of there on the trip i knew i just knew that—

well whatever there's always one smartass at any of these things who just kind of just shouldn't fucking be there

and when the extremely tedious presentations opened to questions he would always—oh my god and it was always the most the most like obviously—ugh

MARCO

like what, what kind of—

TANDY

it didn't even matter the kind of questions because like it had already gone on for so fucking long like why would you even bother at that point...?

he would be like, like, 'why does this girl only tweet in English, you know, i thought she was from one of those parts of the world?'—the part of the world, incidentally, we were supposedly visiting—and 'isn't she a bit young to be talking about MANPADs? and her video streams are like really smooth, if she's in a war zone? is she plugged straight into the grid or something?'

MARCO

she was kind of young, like eight?

TANDY

seven actually—

but that was, that was for like a legitimate reason, so that she would grow into it you know, they made her young so they could age her up as time went on anyway, i'm sitting there just like this (*she puts her hands on her face in mock exasperation*) like these questions, man they just answered themselves... i mean, i'm on **study abroad** goddamn it, i'm twenty-one, i just want to get fucked in my hotel room...

MARCO

where is he now?

TANDY

the question asker?

another dead eyed nameless cryptoblogging dude
unsurprising

MARCO

the guy you got along with

TANDY

oh god, a think tanker, probably, doing spots on someone's show or maybe some kind of content strategy bullshit wouldn't surprise me if he was here tonight

MARCO

you think?

TANDY

who knows,

he might be in the basement, with amber and the rest of them, with duct tape over his nipples

MARCO

ew. why?

TANDY

so they can pull it off,
for someone's enjoyment
chest hairs caught in the sticky tape and—

(she mimes a ripping off of the tape)

(laughter from far away)

MARCO

ew

i mean dif strokes whatever
but that sounds rather uncomfortable

VOICEOVER

(voice)

what did alina mean by cars piling up? she was presumably referring to the 'highway of death.' what was the highway of death? the highway of death was a six lane highway between iraq and kuwait where u.s. planes bombed fleeing iraqi vehicles in february of 1991. what was the death toll of this incident? unknown. what was the mist? presumably nothing, something harmless, something to keep everyone's sinuses from drying out. it was not weaponized bacterium being sprayed.

was nayirah the airplane passenger? that seems highly unlikely. where is nayirah now? i don't know, we don't really know. presumably she's about 45, leading some kind of life.

MARCO

it doesn't sound like you were doing much outreach

TANDY

of course we were

(she reaches out her hand, as a joke, he does not take her hand)

TANDY

you subtitled one of our videos

MARCO

apparently

it was just a college kid job, internship stuff, you know
they wouldn't have trusted me with anything real

i'm not like you

or amber

or the undercut guy whatever his name is
you know he's got allegations

TANDY
oh sure

MARCO
looming over him, like uhh
like a cloud

TANDY
i mean, all things considered,
it's kind of crazy that we're even talking about
like
like right now

MARCO
jessica—

TANDY
it's tandy

MARCO
oh i just thought that was your—

TANDY
we've never met, hun

MARCO
i just thought i heard someone addressing you earlier
across the room

TANDY
i mean it's just like look at everyone else
shit
look at the world
like to be talking about—
shit
who fucking cares
(*pause*)
anyway he beat the allegations if you hadn't heard

MARCO
beat the allegations?

TANDY

and nothing else

MARCO
that's great

TANDY
you don't sound convinced

MARCO
i don't know the guy
i told you i only really know amber

(more sounds from below: we hear bludgeoning, some kind of vocalizations halfway between cries of pain and cries of joy, perhaps an animal sound, and ultimately an electrical pulse)

MARCO
i'm going to check on them

TANDY
you're leaving me

MARCO
i'll be back

TANDY
i was joking

MARCO
i just want to see something

marco exits
a moment of silence, tandy looks at the ceiling
enter AMBER, she's really fucked up! tandy turns and sees her

TANDY
hey amber
(pause)
do you *(she indicates her vomit bucket)*
need this?

a moment, amber refuses the bucket, seems like she has nothing to say. Then—

AMBER
it's ripe
particularly so
(pause, almost slightly laughs, smiles at the audience)

you're
 i'm
(places a hand on her chest)
 bathroom!
 wow
 can't
 can't
 wouldn't
 believe it
(pause, as though quoting someone)
 whatthefuckdidyousayaboutmeyoulittlebitch
 hahaha
(slight pause)
 another
 time
 you
 me
 ...
 pamela?

TANDY
 right
 right, pamela with the uh *(she indicates her hair)*

AMBER
 yes
 right
 very
 true
 haha
 remember...

TANDY
(assumed politeness)
 haha no thanks!
 i don't need to remember any! thing! else!
 do you need to throw up or not??

AMBER
 tandyyy
 i'm
 thriving ☺

*amber exits, if she stumbles she is absolutely graceful about it.
 tandy sighs. a phone rings, it is hers, she looks at it and immediately dismissing the call,
 she puts down the phone. a moment.*

the phone rings again. she reluctantly looks at it, she swipes the screen to receive the call

TANDY

(on the phone)

what

(pause)

everything's fine

please don't call me

like ever

please...

she hangs up the phone. it rings again. she throws up in the bucket. enter marco with a large bottle of water. he seems somewhat shaken. he turns over the bucket he was previously sitting on and pours the bottle of water into the bucket. he kneels on the floor. he starts to wash his hair with the water in the bucket. tandy observes and then helps him wash his hair.

MARCO

was that amber in here

tandy doesn't say anything, she helps him wash his hair. a moment.

MARCO

thanks

the voiceover speaks but the gain on the microphone is too high, the words are distorted beyond intelligibility. lights dim.

...

we are still on a plane, who knows how long we've been here, time behaves differently at 35k feet (more or less)

...

the passenger cabin:

the mist/fog machine is on

the mist covers everything and everyone

the passenger sits in their seat, arms crossed over stomach

sunglasses and sweater on

shredded bits of the in-flight magazine around their feet, no notice is made of them

the passenger undoes their seatbelt and stands

but almost immediately sits back down

PASSENGER

(a long silence, mouths words without speaking them.)

(silence, a terse whisper)

amelia earhart

err hard

(pause, speaks very slowly)

i have this feeling

that i am going to be taped

(looks around, a silence that hangs in the air)

make an amelia earhart falling from the sky

reflect the lacy panties on those black leather boots

knife in hand

snake tongue out

she's ten and just went viral

she's got a lot to say about the here and the now and the massive cow figures made of salted butter

kids

women

i don't know

doctors

the quality of a social currency,

reminding you of other things

either you have it or you don't,

and we'd never not-believe her

i have seen the flop of ages

i saw a star i heard a shark

i heard a cartoon hedgehog himself crying

crying over the latest irredentist paean

don't ask me which one

though surely my whole identity was bent and built upon the assemblage of such names and color within the line flags

(a long pause)

sorry i'm looking for better metaphors

(a longer pause)

it sure is misty in here

it's auto-populated in our hearts and minds

it's difficult

and hard to swallow

the treaties are already signed

i think there is a halo of some kind

no

no not quite a halo

leftover and re-hashed

the undying fire in the eye of counter-insurgency

transitioned to the big time

wake up crying

waxen bodies, warped and knotted,

a big hole in the ground, a massive ball of tangled limbs,
something that gets your heart beating faster than oil prices

but but but enough, enough

enough of all that

no one really cares about it—

let's not talk about it

(a moment)

oh god what are we gonna talk about??

(looks around)

it's kind of a crazy place

what model is this

the airbus or ?

some string of numbers

no matter, better to not know some details,

could make you anxious to know too many details...

(pause)

humiliation rituals

again and again

was it you?

were you involved?

i was only kind of involved

hands tied, growing too old for this little routine

(mouths words without speaking them, silence)

i don't know why

i just have this feeling

i know something but i cannot see it

there is a sticky substance on my arms and face that i can't quite scrape off

and i'm waiting in an endless line, of course

some kind of mandatory arbitration clause, et cetera

an implausibly large monetary figure that seems rather unnecessary

how warm and nice it was in that big hole
 worm friends, subterranean mushrooms in so many colors
 a lane i'm staying in
 something that's 'mine'
 they put a drain in my liver
 you know that right
 not for any good reason i don't think there was a good reason

but
 i was lucky
 we are all lucky
 obviously
 priv-ileged (*pause but no cough this time*)
 i got out right in time
 consequences unfaced
 even if they are (*gestures*) still around, even if they are pasted on the back of my head
 so to speak
 your concern, so bright and bulky it seemed at so many points in time, could not budge
 past a certain part of something
 and now so long past the point of fixing—
 generally frowned upon if not always then generally
 and you don't have much more than that right now,
 your generous countenance,
 and it really is generous

i came here to avoid something else
 i came here to cast a coin into a well
 i came here to run my numbers up and down and in-between

dreaming away (though of course i do not really dream)
 dreamt away one's past life
 gored on the edge of a bull your past life was,
 went down like a dog
 zeroes and ones reset impossibly
 threads tangled past the point of fixing
 cannot be put back in place in spite of the trite nonconsensual organ removals

one day it must end of course,
 a shutting off of the sun (but not the real sun!)

a snack section
 would have been so good of them to have offered
 how mighty good it would have been
 and now
 still
 ah

(pause)

could you imagine a phone ringing at this altitude?

(pause)

sorry again, i'm looking for better metaphors, i really am

(pause)

but thanks for looking, i guess!

if i was smart i would have promised to not make any comparisons which overstate or understate or underrate unfairly

but then again i have a very bad track record

and have spent too much time digging around in lost returns

and going places uninvited

and otherwise just failing to appear, to show up

but you know me

i'm so sensory sensitive i stand in the shower with the water off most of the day

my function was replaced

look under your seats

look under your seats now

(does not. though perhaps we do. not sure what we expected to find...)

such a miracle to be cruising impossibly at thirty five thousand feet, and so fast too,
think about it, our prehistorical ancestors envying those big birds who migrated for the winter
little did they know their imaginations were but too small

preparing for a war that doesn't happen

it's honestly really about the build up

but how did they know it wouldn't happen?

how did they know to trust the intel?

i trust the intel *(smile, teeth)*

i trust the symbols

i trust the ambiance

i trust the internal combustion engine
i trust the connector chips
i trust the blue light
i trust the drain in my liver
i trust the mist

(slowly stands. walks off into the mist. a long moment. lights dim to half. the in-flight entertainment switches on, all screens turn on at the same time as though there was a crew announcement. the screen displays the 1990 broadcast of nurse nayirah's speech. the image lingers on her face, we do not (?) hear what she says. the mist is extremely dense now. lights fade.)