

ROSIE

BY GRIZZLY K. SUNSHINE

ROSIE

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ROSIE

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GENRE

DARK COMEDY / SCIENCE FICTION

SUMMARY

THREE GIRLS NAVIGATE THEIR CHARACTER FLAWS TO INTERRUPT A TERRORIST GROUP THAT IS DETERMINED TO UNLEASH AN ACID RAIN OVER THE CITY OF LAS VEGAS.

THEME

OUR FLAWS CAN HAVE VALUE...

SETTING

COPPER MOUNTAIN AVIATION
LAS VEGAS, 1946

CHARACTERS

ROSIE

DOT

KAKTUS

ARTHUR

DR. OTTO

PROFESSOR MARS

PROFESSOR DUKE

MILLER THE PILOT

MARY LOU

MECHANICS

ROSIE

ROSIE

ACT 1
SCENE 1

Lights up on a closed curtain. Present day. School Bell SFX. After a moment, MARY LOU, 8, enters briskly and stops CS in front of the curtain with great aplomb, bouncing pigtails, and an aggressive lisp. Mary Lou speaks to the audience as if they were her unruly classmates.

MARY LOU. Shh!!! Mrs. Andrews, I'm ready to present my oral report to the class now! But I have a confession to make. I chose not to follow the directions you gave too good. I chose to do my research on someone who was NOT on your approved WWII list! (*Murmurs of confusion are heard from the class.*) Hashtag rebel! I chose someone who *wasn't* a war hero like those Call of Duty patriots. I chose someone who *didn't* try to save your precious Private Ryan. I chose someone who— Well, see, I found someone who might have done more for women in the 1940s than Rosie the Riveter herself! Someone definitely worthy of WWII textbooks, and *your* list Mrs. Andrews, but somehow, she didn't make either. My gal's name is Rosie too, by the way. But she was no riveter, no. She was a super-brave pilot. With prison tats! And boy, did she love marijuana...

She takes notecards from her pocket and clears her throat aggressively.

MARY LOU. Imagine this: Summer. 1946. A small Airplane Hangar just outside of Las Vegas...

Mary Lou exits as her oral report comes to life.

Fade to black.

ROSIE

SCENE 2

In the dark, we hear the cracked static of a 1940s Crosley Cathedral Radio. ‘Corns for my Country’ by The Andrews Sisters roars through as the curtain opens to reveal the Hangar Mary Lou was describing. Work benches and tools are scattered throughout the Hangar. A white neon sign glows: Copper Mountain Aviation.

A sparkly pink moon rises above the charcoal mountains, silhouetted in the distance, seen through the US floor-to-ceiling windows of the Hangar.

There is only one entrance/exit USR. There is one more door DSL that leads to the Break Room. The Break Room contains a table, a few chairs, metallic lockers, and an icebox.

The lights come up fully in the Hangar to reveal several imposing figures wearing dark mechanic garb contrasted by bright copper welding masks. As orange sparks fly, the music fades out. Workday Whistle SFX. At once, the MECHANICS remove their masks to reveal that they are all, in fact, women.

ROSIE. That’s the day, dames! Time to punch out! Uncle Sam sends his fuzziest regards, I’m sure. *(She chugs, and then crushes, a Schlitz beer can.)* Don’t forget your purses...

The gals disburse with their metal lunch kits. Except Rosie.

ROSIE, 22, dreams of being a fighter pilot. She’s got jet-black hair, prison tattoos, and rocks deep plum lipstick daily. She pulls out a newspaper and a marijuana blunt from her lunch kit. Rosie exposes her back, fanning an unfinished mermaid tattoo.

DOT, 19, enters with lightning blonde hair and ice-blue eyes. She wears a white and blue denim sailor-inspired outfit with her signature polka dot handkerchief holding up voluminous curls. She is Rosie’s kid sister. Dot is dumb.

DOT. *(Entering.)* Hey, convict.

ROSIE. Hey, dummy.

ROSIE

DOT. I'm here to pay my rent, sis.

ROSIE. You got the ink?

DOT. (*Holding up a clear whiskey bottle of tattoo ink.*) You got the weed?

ROSIE. Next to the lug nuts...

The girls move to the Break Room. Dot begins to work on Rosie's mermaid tattoo. Rosie smokes and reads the newspaper.

DOT. Hold it! I can't smoke this! They might make me pass one of those piss tests.

ROSIE. Let me guess...knocked up? Or the wrong sailor again?

DOT. Can it! (*Pause.*) It's the big bosses... (*Bragging.*) At The Flamingo!

ROSIE. The Flamingo!? I knew it! I knew you'd end up a showgirl...

DOT. Jeepers, no! I want to deal the cards! (*Beat.*) Quit wiggling, or your mermaid is going to look like a lop-sided Eleanor Roosevelt.

ROSIE. Cards? What kind of cards?

DOT. Blackjack a'course! Like we used to play with Daddy...

ROSIE. Daddy did the math for you...

DOT. (*Ignoring her.*) I miss Vegas so much, Rosie! It's got the brightest lights you've ever seen... Plus you can still smell the burnt frontier on the wind. Tumbleweeds, fire breathers, hookers...

ROSIE. (*Blowing smoke.*) Dot, you little dust bunny. Get your head out of the clouds! Tell me your qualifications...

DOT. (*After a moment.*) I got street smarts.

ROSIE. In Vegas, women wear feathers, serve drinks, or far worse. Have you ever heard of a female blackjack dealer?

DOT. (*Angry.*) Well, have *you* ever heard of a female fighter pilot?

ROSIE. The difference is, when WWII breaks out, I'm just as good, no better, than the boys!

DOT. Yeah, yeah...

ROSIE. I studied, I labored... You—

DOT. What? Say it, convict!

ROSIE. (*Pause.*) What's thirteen plus nine?

DOT. Let's see...

ROSIE. (*Pause.*) You're lucky I take tattoos as rent.

DOT. (*Counting her fingers.*) Carry the seven...

ROSIE

ROSIE. The last textbook you opened had an owl wearing a cap and gown on the cover.

DOT. That owl was a scholar madam...

ROSIE. You're going to be bumming around in my basement for the rest of your life, Dot.

DOT. But Daddy said I got moxie—

ROSIE. Moxie ain't money, honey.

DOT. Until very recently, I thought moxie was a family disease...

ROSIE. Math...not moxie, dummy. Practice.

DOT. (*Pause.*) Daddy said that *patience* is the best practice.

ROSIE. Twenty-two by the way...

DOT. Twenty-two! Thirteen plus nine is twenty-two! I knew that!

ROSIE. Bust.

DOT. It's harder when you ain't gots that many fingers.

Dot gives Rosie the middle finger playfully.

ROSIE. Your engine needs a tune. Here, peep this.

Rosie makes flash cards for Dot from ripped up newspaper and tattoo ink.

DOT. Flash cards? (*Offended.*) I always got high marks in primary school, thank you. Especially in focus! (*Losing focus.*) Oh, look! 'Two plus nine' is on the back an obituary. Kristoff Presley. Born in 1869...

ROSIE. (*Quizzing her.*) So that means Kristoff was how old?

DOT. If it's 1946 now, and he was born in 1869...

ROSIE. (*Very long pause.*) Seventy-seven.

DOT. Ha! You belly-flopped on this one! It looks like you don't know everything, Rosie. (*Confidently.*) It's *one hundred* and seventy-seven, dumbass!

ROSIE. Maybe start counting your toes too...

DOT. (*Angry.*) Go count *your* toes! You *toe-it-all!* (*Beat. Reading the obituary.*) Kristoff... That was Daddy's name. Daddy used to say—

ROSIE. (*Interrupting.*) Since you just love quoting Daddy so much lately, remember what he used to say above all else, almost every day: (*Handing her the flash cards.*) Always be prepared...

ROSIE

DOT. (*Pause. Reluctantly.*) Well, if flashcards ‘equal’ The Flamingo...

ROSIE. They do. But math skills will only even the playing field slightly. In today’s truth, growing two big, hairy...lug nuts...would probably be the most effective application effort.

DOT. (*They laugh. Beat.*) You’re laughing awfully hard for a gal who’s hiding two big hairy ‘lug nuts’ of her own!

ROSIE. (*On edge.*) I don’t know what you mean, Dot...

DOT. (*Reading her sister.*) I think you do, Rosie. You’re wearing your lucky brassiere, your purple rabbit’s foot, and I can smell your four-leaf clover perfume from here! Spill your guts, sis.

ROSIE. (*Stumbling.*) Huh? I’m not, there’s nothing, I, I—

DOT. Tell me your secret, or your mermaid’s getting stretch marks.

ROSIE. Cool your jets. (*Beat.*) My head might just be in the clouds too...

DOT. Oh?

ROSIE. I didn’t want to say anything until I got accepted—

DOT. —into a drug rehab?

ROSIE. No! (*Whispering.*) The Nevada Aviation Academy.

DOT. (*Yelling.*) The NAA? That’s an all-boys academy!

ROSIE. I aced the written exam, Dot. A perfect score! No *boy* has ever done that. The instructors barely let me stay at first, because of the boobs and all, but during the flight test I made all those thumb-suckers look like rookies. I was doing crazy twin loops, Cuban 8’s, and even a real sharp Hammerhead Stall...

DOT. Well, you’d been flying tricks with Daddy since your lungs were strong enough to handle the crop dust residue. (*Genuinely.*) That’s swell and spectacular all at the same time, sis. I’m really rooting for you, Rosie. (*Beat.*) See, that’s an example of how you support your sister. So—

ROSIE. So, how’s my mermaid?

DOT. Taking shape nicely actually!

ROSIE. (*Admiring Dot’s work.*) She’s a doll! You could open your own tattoo parlor if The Flamingo falls through.

DOT. There you go again! Dis-believing in me!

ROSIE. I’m just giving you options, Dot.

DOT. Keep your options! The Flamingo is my future! You’ll see!

ROSIE. Okay, okay! I was just saying your tattoo in’ hand sure is steady, like a heart surgeon’s. Sobriety suits you. (*Dressing.*) Another successful prison tat cover-up...

ROSIE

DOT. Can I ask you something? What was it really like in there anyway?

ROSIE. Prison? Orderly...great library...and about twenty percent queer.

DOT. What about bullies?

ROSIE. I was the bully.

DOT. Did you have to carry around a shank everywhere you went?

ROSIE. *(Pulling a shank from her hair.)* 'Always be prepared!'

DOT. *(She takes the shank and puts it in her own hair.)* Let's have a drink. To celebrate your new mermaid!

ROSIE. What happened to sobriety? For the Flamingo!

DOT. Beer ain't weed. I'm trying to pass a drug test, not a morality one...

Dot goes to the icebox.

DOT. What kind of beer is this?

ROSIE. It's called Aye-Aye Ale.

DOT. Aye-Aye. Why?

ROSIE. There's a fisherman on the label. Must be a nautical theme.

DOT. *(Examining the label.)* This sailor is a spittin' image of Daddy! His mustache, his strong, serious demeanor...a real man that could take a left hook, you know?

ROSIE. Take a swig...

DOT. *(Drinking, not enjoying it at all.)* Jeepers!

ROSIE. *(After a moment.)* It's cheap.

DOT. Aye-aye! *(Drinking again.)* Cheapers! *(She brings a beer to Rosie. Beat.)* It looks like we are running low on tattoo ink.

ROSIE. Who gave you this stuff anyway? It smells like an old campfire...

DOT. Kaktus, who else?

KAKTUS, 50s, enters the Break Room. Kaktus is the sturdy, steely-eyed, stepmother of Rosie and Dot. She's a Romanov-era Russian dishwasher who wears cactus-green lipstick that pops against her short berry-colored hair. She is wearing a damp, dingy, diner uniform. She speaks with a thick Russian accent. She enters with an oversized, unusually fancy handbag.

KAKTUS. Comrades, it's Kaktus!

ROSIE. Come on in, Kaktus!

ROSIE

KAKTUS. Guess my luck! Fortune flourishes! Some pouting housewife forgot this handbag... In the executive dining lounge!

DOT. Wow! Looks designer! What's inside of this one?

KAKTUS. (*Thrilled.*) More of the exact same.

Kaktus scoops out several rattling pill bottles from the handbag.

DOT. (*Picking up a pill bottle.*) Jeepers, being a well-off housewife sure makes you sick in the head!

ROSIE. Kaktus! We're— (*Correcting herself to help Dot.*) —I'm out of weed!

KAKTUS. (*Pulling a bag of marijuana out of the handbag and dropping it on the table.*) Puff my pretties! In Moscow, they call this 'Magical Mist.'

DOT. (*Picking up the weed, transfixed.*) I believe in magic...

KAKTUS. (*With a wink. In Russian.*) Nazdaroyva! (Cheers!)

ROSIE. (*Smacking the weed out of Dot's hand.*) Flamingo first!

DOT. Ouch, convict! Oh, Kaktus, Rosie needs more tattoo ink too!

KAKTUS. (*She pulls out a clear whiskey bottle of tattoo ink from the handbag.*) Compliments of the Black Market.

DOT. Wow! How'd you know we'd be out?

KAKTUS. MAGIC!

Dot laughs and takes the whiskey bottle. But before she walks away, she pauses to wonder if it really was magic.

ROSIE. Hey! Follow the rules!

KAKTUS. (*Offended.*) I'm Russian, I love rules!

ROSIE. This is my Hangar, and we have a language code here, comrade.

KAKTUS. I know all about your code for language. I haven't broken it.

DOT. Check the rules again. They've been updated.

KAKTUS. (*Moving to a poster on the icebox.*) This poster is a strict ban of profanity, nothing new. But what has been scratched in here?

DOT. Rosie added words to the no-no list...

ROSIE. For good reason!

KAKTUS. You added 'magic,' 'magician,' and 'abracadabra...' Why?

DOT. Max. He skipped town on her.

ROSIE

KAKTUS. Max?

DOT. The big-city illusionist who broke Rosie's heart.

KAKTUS. (*In Russian.*) Oy, da. (Right.) Still sore, huh rebenok? (child?)

ROSIE. (*Dodging the question with disdain.*) The only thing sore on me, stepmother, is my new tattoo. Compliments of Dot's steady, sober hand.

KAKTUS. (*Surprised.*) Sober?

DOT. (*With a sigh.*) Yeah. Since lunch.

KAKTUS. (*Seeing Rosie's tattoo.*) A naked fish woman of the sea. She looks...I much appreciate the details in her... (*Kaktus mimes 'boobs'*) ...shape. (*Toasting Dot.*) To the busty mermaid! Nazdaroyva! (Cheers!)

DOT. Aw, gee! (*Beat.*) Say, what's in your tattoo ink anyway?

KAKTUS. Russian recipe. The three C's. Carbon, charcoal, and copper.

ROSIE. Copper?

KAKTUS. Correct.

DOT. (*Shaking a pill bottle.*) Knowing you, I'd have guessed one of those C's to be cortisone!

KAKTUS. When I was an infant in Russia, women didn't take weakness pills. They just suffered as the snow fell...

DOT. Well, here in America, we take the easy way.

KAKTUS. (*In Russian.*) Da! Nazdaroyva!! (Yes! Cheers!!) It still amazes me, you know. (*Taking a random pill.*) Pills for the cranium! What's next, a robot for scrubbing dishes?

ROSIE. (*Teasing.*) You better hope not. That's all you're qualified to do!

DOT. (*To Kaktus.*) What do these tiny gray ones do?

KAKTUS. I have much familiarity with these little storm clouds. When mixed with the olive-green ones, they put to silence my sharpest nerves.

DOT. Any side effects?

KAKTUS. There's always a cost, krasotka... (pretty one...)

DOT. How steep?

KAKTUS. This depends on the mix. At times, I sneeze, or I might sob.

DOT. That's all?

KAKTUS. Nyet! (No!) At darker times, I think I'm a pterodactyl...

DOT. (*Worried.*) Oh. Are any of the side effects ever good?

KAKTUS. (*Thinking.*) Well, often, when I take the baby-blue ones with half of the pale-yellow ones, I can speak fluent Finnish—

ROSIE

DOT. Swell!

KAKTUS. But only in my sleep...

DOT. Oh. (*Intrigued.*) Gots any pill combos in there that make you a wiz at arithmetic? I just need basic addition... And only up to twenty-one.

KAKTUS. What for?

ROSIE. Dot wants to work in Vegas. Dealing cards.

DOT. To honor Daddy, in a way.

KAKTUS. (*Reminiscing.*) He did love his cards. (*Sad.*) Canasta distracted him through the war, until— (*Shaking the pills. To Dot with a smile.*) I'll mix you some Moscow magic! I support this! With wolverine's strength! (*Pause.*) But why not first try, what is the word? Flashcards!

ROSIE. That's what I said! Pills will show up on a piss test too...

KAKTUS. Listen to your sister then. (*Rolling her eyes.*) She keeps telling us that she's the smartest one of us.

DOT. (*Offended.*) Book smartest maybe! But even Rosie can't compare to my street smarts!

ROSIE. (*Laughing.*) Street what?

DOT. All you did was read a bunch of prison books! You think you're some fighter pilot? You probably just looked at the cartoon sketches!

ROSIE. Oh really? (*Grabbing her stolen prison books.*) This book was written by a scientist with a Ph.D. specializing in aerodynamics. This one was written by a mechanical fighter pilot who fought in WWI. And this one by a jet fuel specialist who helped to develop the new Grasshopper. Not a single picture, or sketch, in any of them. Which is why I'll be flying one day with the NAA, and you two broke Betties will still be living in my basement, paying rent with blunts and barbiturates.

DOT. Reading and flying are two different things, Rosie!

ROSIE. I fixed *and flew* a B-17 this morning! You counted your fingers to figure out how many days ago yesterday was...

DOT. (*Pause.*) Which is why I need the pills...

KAKTUS. (*Brainstorming.*) Maybe a crimson or purple followed by two shots of vodka...

DOT. See Rosie, that's how you support your—

ROSIE. (*Annoyed.*) There's no magic pill to a dream!

DOT. (*Lighting a blunt.*) You're not Amelia Einstein, you know!

ROSIE. Smoking, Dot? What about The Flamingo? Have you no will power?

ROSIE

KAKTUS. (*Digging in the handbag.*) I have a pill for will!

ROSIE. You two broads can't tame your vices long enough to get out of the starting gates...

DOT. You gots the same vices as us, give or take.

ROSIE. Mine are under control!

DOT. (*Rosie takes the blunt out of Dot's hand.*) Well, we all know how you love control!

ROSIE. You'll get my support when you start supporting yourself!

DOT. You smoke! I support you!

ROSIE. I can afford to lose brain cells... You 'gots' piss tests to pass.

KAKTUS. Devushki! (Girls!) You speak of support... (*Pause.*) Tonight, I am bringing more than marijuana, tattoo ink, and these cherry pies.

She pulls two cherry pies from the handbag.

DOT. Cherry pies!? Jeepers!

KAKTUS. (*Seriously.*) Tonight...I also bring the post.

ROSIE. Oh! (*Hiding her extreme curiosity.*) Anything interesting come by mail today?

Kaktus pulls two letters from the handbag.

ROSIE. My letter from The Nevada Aviation Academy!

DOT. My letter from The Flamingo!

KAKTUS. (*Pulling a third letter from her bag.*) And my letter! From The El Rancho Casino!

ROSIE. What's going on there?

KAKTUS. (*Cautiously, in Russian.*) Docheri, (Daughters,) I contain a glubokiy sekret (deep secret). A deep secret, a dream. My wish. (*After a breath.*) I did the auditioning... to have my own magic show! Downtown!

ROSIE/DOT. What?

KAKTUS. That's right, comrades! I never want to be scrubbing another dish ever again! I know this may be seeming foreign to you both, but my life is needing new purpose.

ROSIE. You think pulling rabbits out of top hats in Las Vegas is purpose?

ROSIE

DOT. Rosie!

KAKTUS. I have advanced far beyond rabbits!

DOT. A rabbit works for me! (*Excited.*) Do magic! Please!

ROSIE. Dot, don't encourage her!

KAKTUS. (*Pause.*) If you desire a rabbit...

ROSIE. Oh, I've got to see this...

KAKTUS. (*Getting serious.*) This is presenting a strong moment for me. To test flight my new magical catch phrase... (*Kaktus takes a deep breath in. She does a lackluster, off-balance twirl. The lights flicker and suddenly Kaktus is holding a mint green stuffed bunny rabbit.*) Presto Bango!

DOT. (*Squeezing the stuffed bunny.*) I love him! I shall call him Cannabis!

KAKTUS. (*Pause.*) So, can I count on your support?

ROSIE. (*After a moment.*) You're lug nut!

DOT. Rosie! If Kaktus wants to be a magician, we should support her!

ROSIE. Magic? Might as well be witchcraft!

DOT. I'll be your lovely assistant if you need one, Kaktus!

ROSIE. Magicians are fools in sequins! I'm sorry, I just can't support this lifestyle! It's not natural! (*With disgust.*) Magic!? Have you tried being something, anything, else? Why do you have to do this to me? Why?

KAKTUS. (*She chugs a beer and belches. Dryly.*) I crave sparkle.

ROSIE. (*Yelling.*) I won't have any more magicians in my Hangar!

Rosie grabs a marker and writes: 'NO FREAKS' on her poster of rules.

DOT. Rosie! Don't be that way! (*To Kaktus.*) How did your audition go?

KAKTUS. I'm not of pure certainty. My nerves. I swallowed a handful of pills right before. From the last forgotten handbag. It gets blurry.

DOT. Gee, it seems we all got big Las Vegas dreams. (*Elbowing Rosie.*) And we're all going to support each other, no matter what happens. Right?

ROSIE. Whatever you say, kiddo. (*Taking a deep breath in.*) This is it. Here's to the clouds!

The girls turn their backs to the audience and tear into their letters with furious hope. After a moment, we deduce that none of them got the news they were hoping for. One by one, they slowly sit down at the table and start cutting the cherry pie.

ROSIE

KAKTUS. They said I was too ‘emotional.’ Code for crazy!

DOT. They said I was too ‘ditzzy.’ Code for dumb...

ROSIE. They said I was too ‘delicate.’ Code for dame...

Rosie rips up her rejection letter and punches one of the metallic lockers leaving an impressive dent.

DOT. That’s a real ‘delicate’ dent.

KAKTUS. (*Annoyed.*) Back to the sink I sink...

DOT. (*Defeated.*) I guess I won’t be needing these flash cards...

ROSIE. (*Pause.*) Us girls are never going to get a *real* shake, are we?

KAKTUS. (*After a moment.*) At least we have these pies...

DOT. With *real* cherries...

KAKTUS. (*Pulling forks from the handbag.*) ‘Always be prepared...’

The girls sit and eat. Airplane engine SFX.

DOT. (*With eyes full of tears.*) What’s that sound?

ROSIE. Sounds like...engine failure... Take cover! Now!

Explosion SFX. An airplane crashes just outside the Hangar. Blackout.

SCENE 3

Lights up immediately post-crash. From outside the US glass windows of the Hangar, we see smoke. The girls stand up and dust themselves off.

KAKTUS. (*Delirious.*) What in the Romanov? Did the pie survive?

DOT. Jeepers! (*Looking at her arm.*) Is this blood or cherry? (*Tasting it.*) Cherry! We’re good! (*Savoring it.*) So good.

ROSIE. That sounded like a G-14.

KAKTUS. We should be checking for survivors?

DOT. (*Eerily.*) Plane crashes ain’t gots survivors...

ROSIE. Unless... **KAKTUS!** Summon your magic!

KAKTUS. (*Annoyed.*) I’ll summon a saw and slice you down the middle!

ROSIE

DOT. *(The girls enter the Hangar.)* Look!

ROSIE. The plane didn't crash. It was just a bumpy landing...

KAKTUS. Seems of suspicion. In Russia, where there's smoke, there's—

Shotgun SFX.

DOT. *(Scared.)* –gunfire!?

ROSIE. Lock yourselves in the Break Room. I'll check it out...

DOT. Careful, Rosie. The west can be wild...

Commotion is heard offstage. All the girls hide in the Break Room and eavesdrop at the door. MILLER, 30, a handsome pilot in a leather jacket, runs into the Hangar. Then, the door is kicked open by DR. OTTO, 50, who wears an argyle pastel sweater vest with khaki pants. He enters reloading a shotgun. Dr. Otto is a University Professor of Meteorology.

OTTO. *(Furious. To Miller.)* You fatuous traitor!

MILLER. I won't hurt people, Dr. Otto. That was never the plan!

OTTO. The plan? What part of 'the plan' are you? That's right, the pilot. You fly the plane. You do not alter the mission!

MILLER. Professor, I won't aid in a massacre!

OTTO. Massacre? *(Aiming his shotgun at Miller.)* This is war!

The light shift to the Break Room.

DOT. War? The papers said the war was kaput already!

KAKTUS. Anyone have hunger for more pie?

ROSIE. Shh!

The light shift back to the Hanger.

MILLER. This is *your* war now, Professor. And SHIRLEY—

OTTO. Keep your voice down! I've had just about enough of your vulgar conclusions! *(Beat.)* You were left out of 'the plan' because you don't possess the brain power necessary to comprehend my very nuanced and very delicate atmospheric meteorology—

ROSIE

MILLER. Your meteorology? (*He laughs.*) You've really lost it! Your meteorology has gotten muddled, Professor!

OTTO. (*Laughing.*) You insult my life's work and I'm still thinking like an educator. Good use of the word 'muddled.'

PROFESSOR MARS, 50s, enters. He is also wearing pastel colors and khakis. Mars has a briefcase handcuffed to his wrist. On it, 'SHIRLEY 99' is written in bold letters. Mars is a grumpy chemist who substitutes curse words with his favorite elements from the periodic table.

MARS. What the helium happened? (*Coughing.*) Is anyone injured?

Dr. Otto shoots Miller in the chest. He falls dead.

OTTO. (*Pointing to Miller's corpse. Dryly.*) Miller.

MARS. Was that imperative, Otto?

OTTO. He figured out what SHIRLEY was meant to do...

MARS. (*Concerned.*) Did he flap his fat gums to anyone else?

OTTO. He can't now.

The lights shift back to the Break Room.

ROSIE. ACADEMIC ASSASSINS!

DOT. TEACHER TERRORISTS!

KAKTUS. (*Eating pie.*) POISONOUS PROFESSORS!

The light shift back to the Hanger.

Otto and Mars roll Miller's corpse under Rosie's work bench right before ASSISTANT PROFESSOR DUKE, 20s, enters carrying his experiment log. He, too, is dressed in pastel colors and khaki pants. He is wearing thick glasses. Duke is a nerdy, nasally Professor of Atmospheric Science.

OTTO. Gentlemen, it may be cloudy but it's not raining...

DUKE. Point of inquiry! I can't seem to locate our pilot, sir. Is he—

ROSIE

OTTO. He's in the wind...

DUKE. I see. (*Opening his experiment log.*) May I ask the precise reason for this emergency landing to catalogue this deviation into the experiment log?

OTTO. Sure, Professor Duke. Document that our pilot forced us to land because, suddenly, he had a crisis of conscience.

DUKE. (*Writing.*) Crisis of conscience...

Duke sits at a work bench to finish his writing. Mars pulls Otto aside.

MARS. I told you it was a bad idea to keep half of the team in the dark!

OTTO. Do you want out too? Because I've got one bullet left!

MARS. Ha! (*Tapping the briefcase handcuffed to his wrist.*) Without me, you'd have no fire power! You'd just be two weather boys—

DUKE. (*Joining the conversation. To Otto.*) Dr. Otto! I may have a viable solution to our pilot conundrum, sir. Your offspring. He's a first year at the Nevada Aviation Academy, correct?

OTTO. (*Smacking his forehead.*) Of course! My son! Hope is still on the horizon!

MARS. You're hanging your hopes on Arthur? A novice student at best!

OTTO. Professor Duke, please fetch Arthur...

Duke exits.

MARS. Are you even certain Arthur will be on board with our 'adjusted' plan? We are in bare knuckle territory now...

OTTO. Arthur may not be the ideal candidate, but he's all we've got! Remember, the less these boys know about SHIRLEY the better. We need their help, not their opinion.

MARS. But—

OTTO. Silence! Here they come!

ARTHUR, 19, enters. He is classically handsome, with silky hair, wearing an NAA sweater. But he isn't the hotshot he appears to be. Duke follows.

OTTO. (*To Arthur.*) How bad is the damage to the plane, my boy?

ROSIE

ARTHUR. It's not hopeless... But the container marked 'SHIRLEY 99' spilled everywhere. What exactly is—

OTTO. (*Devastated.*) Horsefeathers!

MARS. (*Sarcastically.*) Good thing you didn't off me too, Otto.

OTTO. Mars! Are you prepared to make more?

MARS. Indeed. (*Hugging his briefcase. To himself.*) Provided you find us a *real* pilot...

OTTO. (*To Arthur.*) Arthur! You are our pilot now, son!

MARS. (*To himself.*) Aw, nuts...

ARTHUR. (*Elated.*) Me? Yes, sir! It's an honor! (*Worried.*) It's just—

OTTO. (*Suddenly angry.*) Just what?

ARTHUR. Just I know how important this mission is to you, and science.

OTTO. And the entire world, son! Millions of lives are on the line!

ARTHUR. (*Gulping.*) Right. But I... That's a double engine plane, sir, and I, I...

OTTO. (*Annoyed.*) I've been paying your tuition at the Nevada Aviation Academy for the past year...

Rosie flinches and eats a fistful of cherry pie off KAKTUS' plate.

OTTO. Am I going to get a return on my investment or not?

ARTHUR. Yes sir, it's just— I just don't know if I'm ready...

OTTO. Just once, can you behave like the King you were named after!? (*Rubbing his temples.*) For now, just repair the plane. I'm assuming you can handle a bit of elementary mechanical work. (*He takes a skeptical pause.*) Take Professor Duke along. Dismissed!

Arthur exits with Assistant Professor Duke. He then briefly runs back in to grab a roll of duct tape before running back out.

MARS. (*Sarcastically.*) Gee, I sure hope they have enough duct tape... Perhaps we should get them a few Legos or maybe a tin of Lincoln Logs?

OTTO. Make yourself useful and—

MARS. I am not getting on any plane that that adolescent is flying!

OTTO. Balderdash! Arthur is at the finest flight academy in the world...

MARS. With a 'D' minus average!

ROSIE

OTTO. (*Furious.*) I am aware of Arthur's average!!! (*Pause.*) Why is it that I am the only one trying to see this mission through? Let's get some reality into your forecast, Professor Mars. You left your tenured teaching position, just like me. You are out on a water-logged limb, just like me.... (*Struggling.*) You—you...

Laughing SFX only heard by Otto. The laughing sounds should be from an older female. Her laughs should be accompanied with echoed phrases like: 'Get out!' and 'You're a joke.' The sounds crescendo dramatically, overwhelming the stage. Otto grabs his head. All the sounds stop abruptly.

Otto recovers his regular demeanor quickly.

MARS. Get a grip, Otto! Pull yourself together!

OTTO. (*Pause.*) The university, they laughed. They broke our beakers for this, Mars! And you're ready to take a zero? You followed me because you were smart enough to know what *we* have created is real. Don't you see how close we are now? So, wipe the weakness from your mustache! Tonight, we are going to unleash SHIRLEY over Las Vegas! And, finally, be vindicated by the whole damn world!

MARS. I don't care about the whole damn world. I just want to shove it up the university's tailpipe. (*After a moment they smile and shake hands. Beat.*) You really think my mustache looks weak?

Duke reenters.

DUKE. After a cursory examination, Arthur has informed me that he will require two hours to finish the repairs, Dr. Otto.

OTTO. (*Licking his finger and putting it in the air.*) The dew point is crowning. You're only going to have one hour if we are still going to catch the nimbus cloud system moving over the city.

Otto realizes he just said too much in front of an in-the-dark Duke.

DUKE. City? Point of inquiry... My experiment log clearly states that we are supposed to be conducting our acid rain experiment over the Copper Mountains. Approximately fifteen miles southwest of Las Vegas...

ROSIE

MARS. Pick up your pennies, Otto. You've spilled them everywhere.

OTTO. (*To Duke. Tenderly.*) That *was* the mission, yes. But...our trusty chemist here, Professor Mars, discovered that the element copper works as a deactivating agent. A simple one cent penny could render our acidic solution, SHIRLEY 99, worthless.

MARS. Worthless! Much like the actual penny.

DUKE. (*Flustered.*) I had better document that in my experiment log! (*Writing.*) Copper deactivates SHIRLEY—

OTTO. We don't need your detailed notes! (*He takes the notebook from Duke and throws it down.*) We need you to analyze the current weather patterns over Clark County now that we are behind schedule. I'm sure you are aware that precision is paramount...

DUKE. Sir, but Las Vegas is highly populated...

MARS. (*Rolling his eyes.*) Such a Boy Scout! I am going to break into the city's power grid and set off the nuclear alarm siren.

OTTO. Everyone will take cover inside. SHIRLEY will get the job done. No one will get hurt.

MARS. Minimal human loss, maximum message...

DUKE. What message? (*Flipping through his experiment log.*) I, I—

OTTO. (*Annoyed.*) Are you going to try and down us too, Duke?

DUKE. No, sir! I just didn't realize civilians would be anywhere near harm's way. I may just be your assistant, but there are precise protocols—

MARS. Pay attention! I will be sounding the nuclear siren. The rats will scatter.

DUKE. (*Squirming.*) I'm not entirely certain that Dr. Barbara would approve of something of this nature...

MARS. Don't bring up Barbara now, we don't want to get derailed.

DUKE. But she's our Department Head and she has strict expectations—

OTTO. And here's your chance to shatter those expectations!

DUKE. (*Pause.*) I'm not so certain. (*Beat.*) You mentioned a 'message...'

OTTO. Right! You see Professor Duke, we believe that if a World War must be brought to a swift conclusion, a nuclear bomb is too...chaotic.

MARS. Generations of innocent people get poisoned.

OTTO. Precisely. Nuclear war is brutally un-precise.

MARS. Hardly protocol...

OTTO. But we have developed a new, sophisticated weapon.

ROSIE

DUKE. (*Protesting.*) Weapon? Point of inquiry!

OTTO. Weapon is a harsh word.

MARS. It's more of a solution!

OTTO. Capital! A new, more humane, sophisticated *solution* to war that can guarantee mass destruction *without* guaranteeing mass casualty.

MARS. With no nasty radioactive aftertaste!

OTTO. That is the key! Radiation free!

DUKE. I see the surface appeal. But why Las Vegas?

OTTO. Because— (*After a moment. Frustrated.*) To make them all listen to us! Sometimes a teacher must take control of his class...

MARS. We've *told* them...

OTTO. Now it's time to *show* them...

DUKE. But I was told that SHIRLEY 99 was an acid rain experiment. In the Copper Mountains...

OTTO. Well, now she's a mission to show-up nuclear warfare!

MARS. (*Trying to lighten the mood. Jazz hands.*) In sunny Las Vegas...

DUKE. Isn't Dr. Barbara from Las Vegas?

OTTO. (*Pretending he didn't know that.*) Oh, is she? Small world...

DUKE. (*Pause.*) The university fired you for this, didn't they?

OTTO. It wasn't the university. It was that *woman.* (*Brief Laughing SFX. With disdain.*) Barbara the barbarian!

MARS. She came in a month ago and cut the funding for projects that—

OTTO. She came in, thinking with her perm, and spoiled everything!

DUKE. (*Horried.*) Dr. Barbara didn't sign off on this experiment!?

OTTO. The barbarian wrote SHIRLEY off as the work of mad scientists!

MARS. *She* called *us* radicals!

OTTO. That tempestuous charlatan could only see the immediate muscle behind atomic warfare. None of them ever stopped to...to consider the innocent people...that suffer...and survive...

MARS. Perhaps you should tell him about Caroline, Otto.

OTTO. (*Pause.*) My wife, Caroline, was studying Japanese Agriculture for our university. They sent her there and then—

MARS. —and then our fine institution blinded her! And poisoned her body with radiation! Without so much as a warning...

ROSIE

DUKE. Heavens! Well, an accurate description of me would be one that includes nonviolence, and I am all for ending nuclear warfare, Dr. Otto. But I can't go against the university. I plan to build my career here into something. Dr. Barbara is watching... I'd like to express my gratitude to you, but I fear I'm having the same crisis of conscience that our pilot had.

OTTO. Professor Duke—

DUKE. If we miss read the winds, if the dew point suddenly drops, if the rats *don't* scatter... Forgive me, but there's a terrorism tone here that Dr. Barbara just wouldn't tolerate... She'd classify it as a joke.

Again, Otto hears loud laughing and Barbara's critical voice. The sounds crescendo quickly inside his head, but this time he shakes them off. Duke heads toward the exit. Otto aims the shotgun at Duke's back.

MARS. Wait! (*Duke stops. To Otto.*) Calm yourself down!

OTTO. What if he goes to Barbara?

MARS. You *must* convince him to stay.

OTTO. I can update the atmospheric calculations without him. At least I think I can. I'm betting on myself, here.

MARS. You're not a gambling man, Otto. You never have been. We can't risk losing our genius! Don't roll the dice...

OTTO. (*Pause. Defeated.*) Craps. (*After a moment.*) Duke, you earned your advanced degree at Rice University, correct?

Otto and Mars slowly circle Duke like sharks.

DUKE. Yes, in Houston.

MARS. A fine institution. Wonderful program.

DUKE. Yes, indeed.

OTTO. The Atmospheric Science Program at Harvard is better though.

DUKE. Harvard was my first choice as a matter of fact. But unfortunately, I was not admitted.

MARS. They rejected me too.

ROSIE

OTTO. (*Holding his hand in the air.*) Rejected twice. (*Pause.*) And yet the three of us Ivy League ‘rejects’ are in a room together right now. With history on the tips of our pencils. With real ammo, for once! And—

DUKE. Ammo? So, this *is* a weapon...

OTTO. (*Pause.*) What do you want, Duke?

DUKE. (*Exiting.*) To make Barbara proud. And I’m afraid this isn’t the runway...

OTTO. Would a Nobel Prize do the trick, Duke?

Duke stops dead in his tracks.

OTTO. You’re at the top of your field, so I’m sure by now that you’ve put together the pieces. And I’m also sure you’ve deduced that we need your atmospheric expertise to pull this off. We are in dangerous territory here Duke but think of the upside! Where SHIRLEY could lead! You’re smart enough to know this could catapult your career into the troposphere! (*He walks over to Duke.*) Now, do you have the thunder or not?

MARS. (*After a moment.*) I guess he doesn’t have the hailstones...

DUKE. A Nobel Prize? (*Thinking.*) You say that no one will get hurt?

MARS. Correct. All human variants will be directed to safety by siren.

DUKE. All?

OTTO. (*Ignoring him.*) Harvard could never overlook a Nobel Prize. Put yourself on their illustrious radar, Duke!

DUKE. (*After a moment of contemplation.*) I’ll stay...

The lights shift to the Break Room.

DOT. Everybody knows the only way you’re safe in a nuclear explosion is to put a book over your head, get underneath a school desk, and put a number two pencil up your nose...

ROSIE. (*Eating pie.*) I wish I were named after a King...

DOT. That Mr. Mars was a *real* looker. Arthur too. Don’t you girls think?

KAKTUS. I think you should learn to swing the sword yourself instead of always looking for a knight! (*Sniffing in panic.*) Oy-vey! I am having the bad side effects! Snee-zure coming on!!!

ROSIE. (*Sarcastically.*) Can’t you just cast an anti-allergy spell, wizard?

ROSIE

DOT. Quick! Shove two pencils up her nose!

KAKTUS. (*Loudly.*) AHH-CHOO!!!

SCENE 4

Hearing her sneeze, the professors storm the Break Room and drag the girls into the Hanger.

ROSIE. Get your calloused, chalk-covered claws off me!

DUKE. It seems we have a few tardy students!

OTTO. Little houseflies.

MARS. Housefly spies!

OTTO. Let's restrain these little bugs. We don't need trouble.

DOT. No nerds are going to tie me up! Not for free anyway!

OTTO. (*Thinking.*) When the new batch of SHIRLEY is ready, we can test her out with these meddling miscreants.

MARS. I love a controlled experiment!

DUKE. Sir, I thought we were trying to avoid casualties...

OTTO. We are, but these are just...houseflies. Worse gnats.

Arthur enters with a broken piece of the aircraft. Otto hides the shotgun.

ARTHUR. (*To Otto.*) I've started my repairs, sir.

OTTO. That's my King!

ARTHUR. All I need now is the wiring for this fuselage cap.

OTTO. We are in an Airplane Hangar. Look around.

ARTHUR. Even if I find the wires, I don't know how to repair—

ROSIE. (*Under her breath.*) Psh. Amateur.

OTTO. Louder please! So the whole class can hear!

ROSIE. (*Bragging.*) I've been wiring fuselage caps since the Dust Bowl.

ARTHUR. Who's this beautiful, wise ass?

ROSIE. Wise what? What did you call me?

ARTHUR. Beautiful. But I guess I'll need your real name...

ROSIE. (*Blushing, flustered.*) You're a wise ass... (*She quickly composes herself.*) You'll get my name when I give it.

ROSIE

Otto notices Rosie's attraction to Arthur and rolls his eyes.

OTTO. *(To Arthur.)* This giggling grease ball makes an excellent point. It seems it's always 'something' with you. Have you been neglecting your studies?

ARTHUR. *(Flustered.)* That's the work of a *third* year! I'm just—

ROSIE. —not man enough? *(With a jealous bite.)* I can relate.

OTTO. *(Frustrated.)* Arthur... I've had quite enough of your exhausting excuses! Kings don't make excuses! Return to the plane. Fetch me my barometer.

Arthur exits.

MARS. We can't change the world if we die in a plane crash, Otto. I'd rather one of these dizzy dames in the cockpit!

DOT. Hey! *(Blurting out.)* My sister Rosie is the best pilot on this side of the Mississippi!

ROSIE. Dot! Shh!

MARS. *(To Rosie.)* You can fly?

DOT. *(Bragging on her sister.)* She can even do Hammerhead stalls!

ROSIE. *(Whispering.)* Quiet, dummy!

MARS. *(Looking at her grease covered overalls.)* A mechanic too?

ROSIE. I won't help you. Not now, tomorrow, or ever.

KAKTUS. Nazdaroyva, Rosie! *(Cheers, Rosie!)*

OTTO. *(Annoyed.)* The female species... There must be another pilot in this Hangar somewhere! *(To Rosie.)* Where is your boss?

ROSIE. You're looking at her.

OTTO. *(Upset.)* This damn war! Sprinkling women into the workforce—

ROSIE. We kept this country going because we *were* the workforce.

OTTO. I need a *real* pilot! And you're just an insignificant gnat.

ROSIE. Jealous?

OTTO. Of?

ROSIE. A woman with wings.

OTTO. *(Short pause. With bite.)* Like a stewardess?

MARS. *(To Rosie.)* Do you really know how to fix a double engine plane?

ROSIE. I do it all. It's my Hangar after all.

ROSIE

Mars walks over to Otto and gets into a whisper argument with him.

OTTO. (*Yelling.*) No! Absolutely not! I would *never* put a mission of this importance into the hands of some dumb broad!

Arthur is heard offstage struggling with his repairs.

ARTHUR. (*From off.*) Does anyone have the kind of screwdriver that has the little star thingy on the top?

A crash of metal.

ARTHUR. (*From off.*) Ahh! (*Pause.*) I'm okay!

MARS. Otto, that little prince is going to kill us! He's a jester at best!

OTTO. (*Flinching.*) Someone's got to give him an opportunity...

MARS. He can have an opportunity fixing my Oldsmobile. Not this...

Another crash is heard from off. Arthur wails.

OTTO. (*Thinking briefly.*) Fine! (*He turns to Rosie.*) You're going to get us airborne, you inked-up gnat.

MARS. (*Relieved.*) Thank Gallium you've come to your senses, Otto!

ROSIE. (*To Otto.*) The Hell I will!

OTTO. You dare raise your voice to a land-owning male?

DOT. You were born in the 1800s, huh? Women today gots words!

KAKTUS. Presto Bango!

ROSIE. And no means no! I said I won't help you! So, *buzz* off...

OTTO. You will! (*With an evil gleam.*) Or my colleagues and I will set fire to your Hangar with you inside.

MARS. Fireflies...

Otto snaps his fingers. Mars and Duke restrain Dot and Kaktus.

ROSIE. So, you're going to burn us all if I don't fly for you?

OTTO. Correction! A gnat will *never* fly my aircraft. But I can allow one to fix it.

ROSIE

Mars takes Dot and Kaktus, to the Break Room. He locks them each inside a metal locker. Mars sits to mix more of his SHIRLEY 99 solution. He opens the briefcase that he has handcuffed to his wrist, taking out papers and colorful chemicals.

Duke exits the Hangar looking to the sky. Rosie remains to fix the plane's fuselage cap. Arthur reenters with a chrome gadget. Otto stops him, somewhat violently, and pulls him aside. He whispers something in his ear. Arthur protests his father's plan, but Otto insists. Otto exits. Arthur checks his breath, fixes his hair, and inflates his chest.

ARTHUR. I found this. Is this helpful?

ROSIE. That's a toaster spring.

ARTHUR. Oh. *(With a charming smile.)* Hungry for a snack, wise ass?

ROSIE. Charm may have fooled the Nevada Aviation Academy, but it won't start my engine, so save your jet fuel.

ARTHUR. *(Deflated.)* Ah. *(Beat.)* Well, anyway, I'm Arthur. And you are?

ROSIE. In charge here...

ARTHUR. I see. So, how can I help? Here, hand me the—

ROSIE. You've been handed enough already...

ARTHUR. What's that supposed to mean?

ROSIE. Nothing.

ARTHUR. *(After a moment.)* Should we start by removing the fuse box?

ROSIE. Only if we want to start in the wrong place. Move.

Rosie pushes Arthur out of her way and begins to work.

ARTHUR. *(Genuinely impressed.)* You work quickly. *(Beat.)* How do you know so much about this stuff? Where'd you go to school?

ROSIE. The Reno Women's Correctional Facility.

ARTHUR. *(Intimidated.)* Oh. *(He finds Rosie's whiskey bottle of tattoo ink.)* Is this...jet fuel? *(He almost drops the bottle, but Rosie takes it from him and puts it on her work bench.)* What's that smell?

ROSIE. Easy with that! It's tattoo ink...from the Black Market.

ARTHUR. Is that why you went to jail?

ROSIE

ROSIE. *(She glares at him, holding a wrench.)* No, I clobbered a useless little daddy's boy with this here rusty wrench. *(Arthur gulps.)* But don't worry. I've been rehabilitated...

ARTHUR. Is that so?

ROSIE. No.

ARTHUR. 'No' you're not a murderer, or 'no' you're not rehabilitated?

ROSIE. Yes.

ARTHUR. Okay...

ROSIE. Scared?

ARTHUR. *(Looking her up and down.)* You're a little feisty, maybe... But nah, you couldn't kill anybody.

ROSIE. Oh, no?

ARTHUR. Well, you couldn't even spy on my father properly...

ROSIE. My stepmother had a snee-zure! And now, thanks to your geek squad, we are all in real danger. Under fire even!

ARTHUR. *(Confused.)* Danger? What danger? *(He cuts his hand.)* Ah! My hand...it's bleeding... Son of a bitch...

Rosie wraps up his hand to stop the bleeding.

ROSIE. Cool it! We don't say the 'B' word in my Hangar!

ARTHUR. You mean 'bleeding?' Or 'bit—

Rosie squeezes Arthurs wound, hurting him on purpose to shut him up.

ARTHUR. Ouch! Hey! Easy, bit—

Rosie glares at him, squeezing his cut hand even harder.

ROSIE. How can you be at the NAA and still be...such a tool?

ARTHUR. Listen, not everyone grew up with motor oil in their veins.

ROSIE. Planes use jet fuel, Dumbo.

ARTHUR. Dumbo? You saying I've got big ears?

ROSIE. No. I'm saying you can't fly...

ROSIE

Arthur is hurt by her comment but plays it off. She notices.

ROSIE. (*Slight guilt.*) At least not at the beginning...

ARTHUR. Some of us had other childhood dreams, you know.

ROSIE. Oh yeah? Was it your dream to be a teenage terrorist?

ARTHUR. A terrorist? You don't know what you're talking about...

ROSIE. (*Kicking over Miller's corpse, unseen by Arthur.*) Sure. (*Beat.*) Whatever you are, whatever your father is, I want no part in it.

ARTHUR. (*Pause.*) If you think I'm a terrorist, why are you helping me?

ROSIE. Because your flame-throwing father is forcing my—

ARTHUR. —My father said his little experiment could save millions of innocent lives. (*Arrogantly.*) And guess what, girlie? He just chose *me* to be his pilot...

ROSIE. Is that what he told you? Did he also tell you that *he* is the *only* reason you got into the NAA? That...and your...lug nuts.

ARTHUR. (*Surprised.*) What? Don't say that! That's not true, I— (*Beat.*) You're nothing but a pretty *girl* with a bitter streak. Bet it kills you.

They work in silence for a while. Rosie shows Arthur what to do through gesture and, to her surprise, he learns quickly. At one point, they must get physically close to one another to do the work. A spark ignites. Rosie moves away quickly.

ROSIE. What would *you* know about pretty girls, anyway?

ARTHUR. The real question is, what are *you* going to teach me?

ROSIE. (*Blushing briefly.*) Shut your pie hole. Winch.

ARTHUR. What did you call me?

ROSIE. Hand me that winch, dummy.

ARTHUR. Oh.

Arthur looks at Rosie's tools and doesn't know which one to grab.

ROSIE. The gold one on the left. This is a winch, wench.

ARTHUR. Oh. You're going to use this to hoist the pressure valve?

ROSIE. (*Impressed.*) He learns quick...

ARTHUR. And then this copper compression patch goes here...

ROSIE

Arthur begins to put a part on backwards.

ROSIE. Close. But that's backwards. (*Flipping the part.*) Like this. See. (*Beat.*) Now for the wires. Work them through.

ARTHUR. I don't know how. Can you show me?

ROSIE. You can do it. (*Guiding his hand.*) Yellow to green. Red to black. White to blue. Strip them, connect them... Give it a tilt, then push.

ARTHUR. Got it! (*Dumbfounded, proud.*) I can't believe we just did that!

ROSIE. You did. I watched with words. Turn it on. If you think you can...

Arthur pushes a few buttons, but nothing happens.

ROSIE. That's odd. What did you do? Did you bleed on something?

ARTHUR. Why do you assume it was me?

ROSIE. Well, it certainly wasn't me!

ARTHUR. How can you be so sure?

ROSIE. (*Scoffing.*) This is child's play—

ARTHUR. So then why—

ROSIE. (*Outburst.*) I don't know!

ARTHUR. (*Sarcastically.*) There's actually something you don't know!?

ROSIE. (*Pushing him.*) Move! (*Beat.*) It looks like there's something lodged in the...ugh it's too dark to see!

ARTHUR. (*Producing a flashlight.*) Always be prepared...

ROSIE. (*Slight pause.*) That's a good motto...

ARTHUR. But nothing is lodged... I know what's wrong.

ROSIE. Doubtful. (*Crawling under the fuselage.*) Maybe it's the—

ARTHUR. Hello? Ma'am? I know what to do...

ROSIE. What!?

Arthur moves behind Rosie. He picks her up and moves her out of the way.

ARTHUR. Your turn to move.

Arthur walks past Rosie and simply plugs the fuselage into a power outlet. The fuselage turns on. He smugly smiles at Rosie.

ROSIE

ROSIE. (*Annoyed.*) The wisdom of a wise ass.

ARTHUR. (*Dusting his shoulder off playfully.*) Yeah. I like to think I know it all.

ROSIE. (*She hugs Dot's mint green bunny.*) Know it all's are the worst.

ARTHUR. You know, I may not be the valedictorian or anything, but I could talk to the stuffed shirts at the NAA and—

ROSIE. And what?

ARTHUR. C'mon! That's where you belong!

ROSIE. I'll apply again next semester and get in on my own, thank you.

ARTHUR. No, no! Not as a student. (*Short pause.*) As an instructor...

ROSIE. Quit cracking wise, ass!

ARTHUR. I'm not! (*Beat.*) I know who you are, you know...Rosie.

ROSIE. How do you know my name?

ARTHUR. You're the only girl in history to tryout to get into the NAA. You're famous around our parts.

ROSIE. As a joke, I'll bet...

ARTHUR. (*Pause.*) None of the instructors could do half of the things you pulled off in your test flight.

ROSIE. (*Smiling.*) Yeah. (*Dropping her smile.*) So?

ARTHUR. So, why not? I'm sure my father and I could make a call...

ROSIE. I have a feeling after you destroy Las Vegas, being associated with you and your father will only hurt my application.

ARTHUR. (*Frustrated.*) Listen, I don't know what you think you know. But I do know you're a man hating beast, all bent because some college-educated cocks got into your henhouse—

ROSIE. A bunch of cocks that can apparently do nothing but crow!

ARTHUR. Cock-a-doodle-do!

Lights shift to the Break Room where Mars is mixing SHIRLEY. He burns his hand. Dot is concerned through her locker prison.

MARS. Youch! For hydrogen's sake!

DOT. Hey, Mr. Saturn, are you okay?

KAKTUS. (*Russian mumbling. A pill bottle is heard rattling.*) I have located my little darling pills! It is now pterodactyl time!

ROSIE

MARS. Quiet in there! This is complicated work! I don't need any dizzy dame, or dinosaur, distractions!

He burns his hand again.

MARS. (*Cursing.*) Fluorine!

Lights shift back to the Hangar.

ROSIE. Your privilege isn't funny.

ARTHUR. I'm sure you're the authority on what's funny too.

ROSIE. You should be ashamed, you know. Leaning into your father's success the way you do—

ARTHUR. I'm certainly not doing that.

ROSIE. Well, you're certainly not NAA qualified. I could see that a mile away with little to no visibility.

ARTHUR. Not qualified at all!

ROSIE. That's right. (*Pause.*) Wait... You agree?

ARTHUR. Can I trust you with a secret? I haven't been exactly attending classes lately...

ROSIE. Well, that's about three miles from a 'secret...'

ARTHUR. Rosie, the NAA...I'm only...I'm only flying...to impress my father. To keep him happy. There. That's my secret.

ROSIE. You don't want to be a pilot someday?

ARTHUR. Nope.

ROSIE. But you're at the NAA!

ARTHUR. Technically, yes.

ROSIE. (*Pause. Reading him.*) You don't know how to fly at all, do you?

ARTHUR. Paper airplanes only.

ROSIE. I don't think those skills will transfer...

ARTHUR. Right. (*Upset.*) The truth is that I'm terrified to crash—

Otto is heard offstage yelling at Duke.

ROSIE. And you're about to nosedive...

ROSIE

ARTHUR. I know I barely just met you and all, but would you be decent enough to let me ask you for a favor?

ROSIE. I'm not buying you beer kid...

ARTHUR. What? No! (*Vulnerable pause.*) Rosie, I need *you* to fly the plane.

ROSIE. Pass. Besides, your father won't dig on a female pilot anyhow.

ARTHUR. Oh, no?

ROSIE. He already said as much. He isn't letting me anywhere near that beautiful, streamlined, top of the crop, dual engine beauty!

ARTHUR. (*Getting an idea.*) You like the plane?

ROSIE. (*Gazing out the Hangar US windows.*) Any pilot worth a penny knows that that is a great bird...

ARTHUR. You really dig all this greasy engine stuff, huh?

ROSIE. It's in my blood. But I'll never fly a plane like that...

ARTHUR. Why not?

ROSIE. Because... (*Pause.*) I'm not a King...

ARTHUR. Everyone is a King to someone. (*Beat.*) I've got another secret for you. And this one is going to rattle your cage.

ROSIE. What do you mean?

ARTHUR. Before I came in here, my father told me to flirt you up real nice like.

ROSIE. What? Why would he do that?

ARTHUR. Because he doesn't, deep down, trust *me* to fly. So, he knew that he needed *you* to. But he also knew that you would never fly for him.

ROSIE. Yeah, I sort of screamed that in his face...

ARTHUR. But maybe, just maybe, my 'boyish charm' and my 'sugary sweet smile' could trick you to do it...for me. His words not mine.

ROSIE. Why are you telling me your master plan?

ARTHUR. It was never *my* plan. I would've flirted with you on my own.

ROSIE. Oh, no. I'm not falling for it, sugar.

ARTHUR. Yeah, I can tell. So, that's why I'm on to my next tactic.

ROSIE. Which is?

ARTHUR. (*Thinking.*) Bribery. What if I convinced my father to give you his fancy plane? I'm set to inherit it someday anyway.

ROSIE. Hmm. (*Pause.*) Now, that's actually interesting... Why would you do that? Is it not all it's cracked up to be or something?

ARTHUR. It's not that. (*Pause.*) I just have other dreams...

ROSIE

ROSIE. Which are?

ARTHUR. Nothing spectacular, believe me.

ROSIE. Just don't tell me you want to be a magician...

ARTHUR. (*Checking to make sure Otto is not in earshot.*) Nope. (*Pause.*) It's my aspiration to be...a nurse. (*Pause.*) Go ahead, laugh...

ROSIE. Laugh? No, I'd rather you take a look at this mole on my neck. (*Noticing Arthur is distraught.*) What does your father say about nursing?

ARTHUR. He said that nursing, just like geology, is for women only. (*Impersonating Otto.*) That's a woman's career! Next, you'll be telling me you want to go to college to learn to scrub dishes! (*Pause.*) He told me I would be laughed at. A joke.

ROSIE. That sounds like *his* fear.

Otto is heard berating Duke offstage.

ARTHUR. He wants me to fly. He's invested...

ROSIE. That's tough, kid.

ARTHUR. Too tough.

Otto is heard yelling again from off.

ARTHUR. We don't have much time left. If you do this for me, fly, my father's 'top of the crop, streamlined, beauty' is all yours.

ROSIE. Do I get a lollipop too? (*Pause.*) No, thanks, nurse. I don't want to get into bed with all of this SHIRLEY nonsense.

ARTHUR. (*Offended.*) Oh, no? How do you know about SHIRLEY? You don't know anything about her!

ROSIE. Apparently, neither do you!

ARTHUR. You should be thankful SHIRLEY is even here!

ROSIE. What's that now?

ARTHUR. Your tiny garage will make history tomorrow.

ROSIE. When this *Hangar* makes history, it will have nothing to do with you boys...

ARTHUR. I don't know why you're fighting. If you knew SHIRLEY—

ROSIE. Don't defend this monstrosity!

ARTHUR. Monstrosity of genius!

ROSIE

He drops the winch on his foot but plays off the pain.

ROSIE. What are *you* doing here with these...pastel professor pricks? Men like your father—

ARTHUR. You'd be lucky to fly for him...

ROSIE. Even if people in Las Vegas get killed?

ARTHUR. What? My father is simply strict. He is a scientist not some serial killer. Some would say a hero!

ROSIE. *(Beat.)* We're done with the rewire here...

ARTHUR. Good, good. *(Nervously.)* Almost time for take-off...

ROSIE. *(Handing him a manual.)* Want a manual?

The late shift back to the Break Room.

Mars is looking everywhere for something.

MARS. Where in the Einsteinium?!

DOT. What are you looking for?

MARS. *(Coughing.)* A crucial piece to the puzzle!

KAKTUS. That's a nasty cough... *(Shaking her pill bottle.)* You need me to mix you up something?

MARS. Hush, you drug dealing boron!!!

The lights shift back to the Hanger. Arthur is reading the flight manual as if his life depended on it.

ROSIE. It might be a good idea to check the parachutes before you hit the runway...

ARTHUR. What does 'T' stand for?

ROSIE. Temperature.

ARTHUR. What about 'P'?

ROSIE. Pressure.

ARTHUR. Yes! I'm under pressure! So, if you don't want to help me—

ROSIE. No. 'P' stands for pressure.

ARTHUR. Oh.

ROSIE. And I thought my kid sister had daddy issues...

ROSIE

ARTHUR. He says that I screw things up for him.

ROSIE. Do you?

ARTHUR. Well, I guess I don't try not to as much as I should. (*Pause.*) He named me Arthur, so I'd act like a King. But what if I just want to be a weed smoking shift nurse from Carson City?

ROSIE. I'd sit at that round table...

ARTHUR. I want to help people. Even the gross stuff. Seems exciting.

ROSIE. So, about my mole...

ARTHUR. Nursing isn't *man* enough for my father. He always says—

ROSIE. (*Annoyed.*) “Father says, father says...” Forget your father! What do *you* say? Let's hear *your* voice for once!

ARTHUR. Oh yeah? You sure? (*Pause.*) Okay. I say let's get supper.

ROSIE. (*Surprised.*) What's that now, nurse?

ARTHUR. Supper.

ROSIE. I'm not flying for your sugar, your spot, or your supper.

ARTHUR. Forget the flying for a second. Supper. Maybe a nice salad... (*Holding up his bloody hand.*) And then perhaps some light bloodwork—

ROSIE. The only supper that you'll be eating will be defrosted Salisbury steak, provided by the taxpayers...

ARTHUR. (*Flirtatiously.*) Quit acting like you're not hungry...

ROSIE. (*Blushing. Beat.*) Listen, Arthur, there's something you should probably know. (*Slowly.*) It's about your esteemed father. I overheard him, untethered. This 'noble' mission that you believe you're on...has turned into an attack...on the city of Las Vegas. And it's all to prove that he has bigger lug nuts than those nuclear losers.

ARTHUR. I don't understand...

ROSIE. (*Flicking his flight manual.*) No kidding.

ARTHUR. Wait, I— (*Dumbfounded.*) An attack? What kind of attack?

ROSIE. Acid rain. That's what I've been able to gather.

ARTHUR. No. No, I don't believe you.

ROSIE. Arthur—

ARTHUR. And my father's lug nuts are big enough, I'm sure.

ROSIE. How big are *your* lug nuts?

ARTHUR. Huh?

ROSIE. Big enough to stand up to professor papa bear? Or at least to confront him? Why don't you find out for yourself that what I'm saying is true...?

ROSIE

ARTHUR. That's totally unnecessary. You don't know my father like I do. Old man temperament aside, he's a teddy bear...not a grizzly...

ROSIE. Oh, no?

Rosie rolls Miller's corpse for Arthur to see.

ARTHUR. (*Shocked.*) That's, that's Miller! Our pilot! He's been—

ROSIE. Shot. By the teddy bear.

ARTHUR. (*Accepting the truth.*) I, I—can't believe this. Why would—(*Beat.*) Are they all in on it? Even that little puke Duke?

ROSIE. Seems so.

ARTHUR. So, SHIRLEY *is* a weapon? (*Upset.*) When my father kept mentioning her, I thought she was his secretary!

ROSIE. Calm down, you look a little 'delicate' and 'emotional.'

ARTHUR. So that is why you have been so hostile toward my father! (*Thinking.*) It's all starting to make sense now! Their whispering, the sending me out of the room all the time...

ROSIE. It's not too late to stop them...

ARTHUR. We're up against Ph.D.'s. How are *we* supposed to stop *them*?

ROSIE. Easy as pie! We could be two dummies and muck up the repairs.

ARTHUR. Right! They can't hurt anyone if they can't take off! We've got to stop them! At this point, I'm practically an accomplice!

ROSIE. But if Otto figures out that I am the one responsible... Then my sisters and I will be burnt to a crisp... I can't risk it. So, just fly off...

ARTHUR. (*Pause.*) Fair point. You're scared. (*Triggering her.*) You are just a *girl* after all...

ROSIE. Watch it, wet nurse...

ARTHUR. Maybe you're all talk...

ROSIE. You speak like someone who's only ever known a safety net!

ARTHUR. (*Pause.*) What about the citizens of Las Vegas?

ROSIE. What about my family?

ARTHUR. Seems selfish to me... I'm not going to sit by—

ROSIE. So, *stand up* to your father then, boy!

ARTHUR. Don't tell me what to do, girl!

ROSIE. Don't be a tool, terrorist!

ROSIE

ARTHUR. Can it, bit—

Rosie kisses Arthur passionately to shut him up.

ARTHUR. (*Enamored.*) So, about that bloodwork salad...

Duke reenters. Arthur and Rosie separate quickly.

DUKE. Dr. Otto wants an update. How much more time will you require?

ROSIE. (*After a moment.*) We're done here.

ARTHUR. We are?

ROSIE. (*Seeing Dot's stuffed bunny Cannabis.*) Absolutely.

DUKE. Stupendous! I'll be sure to document that in my experiment log! In addition, my updated atmospheric calculations are almost complete. (*Exiting.*) Once Professor Mars has SHIRLEY ready, we can carry on.

ARTHUR. So that's it?

ROSIE. I'm not risking our lives to live out some adventure you cooked up thirty seconds ago.

ARTHUR. But—

ROSIE. You're cleared for takeoff...

Arthur exits with a huff. Otto enters with a large pipe, unseen by Rosie. He sneaks up behind Rosie and knocks her out.

OTTO. (*Looking down at her body.*) My dear, you look a little under the weather...

Storm SFX. Music plays. Otto lets out a thunderous laugh. Fade to black.

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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