

ONE FOGGY CHRISTMAS EVE

by Marty Duhatschek

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ONE FOGGY CHRISTMAS EVE

A Full Length Drama

by **Marty Duhatschek**

SYNOPSIS: It's every traveler's worst nightmare: being stuck in an airport on Christmas Eve. A single mom with two kids in tow on the way to Grandma's house, a father on a mission to save his son's life, and three crazy football fanatics trying to make it to the big game. These are only a few of the stories that will unfold. Join families, friends and strangers, in this comedy-drama, as they experience a Christmas Eve they'll never forget.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 females, 7 males, 3-11 either, 0-20 extras; gender flexible, doubling possible)

- THE (m).....Pronounced "Tee," is a flamboyant, self assured man in his late twenties. He works as a clerk at the Trans West desk. His quick wit is tempered by a kinder heart than he would care to admit to. *(93 lines)*
- DAVE DONALDSON (m).....Middle aged, divorced. He is a bit cynical about things at this stage in his life. His daughter Katie confuses him. *(101 lines)*
- KATIE "KAT" DONALDSON (f).....16; has just gotten her license. She is leaving her father, after visiting him for a short time, to return to her mother. *(85 lines)*
- SIDNEY (f).....A terminally cheerful person and not surprisingly, a bit naïve. It's her first day on the job as a clerk for Trans West. *(76lines)*
- JACK/JACKIE CORBAN (m/f).....Salesperson, likes to gamble. Going home for Christmas. *(43 lines)*

- SCOTT/SKY TAYLOR (m/f)..... Salesperson, likes to gamble.
Going home for Christmas.
(45 lines)
- RACHEL BELLMAN (f) A single mother with her two
children in tow. They are on
their way to visit the
grandparents in Idaho. She's a
good mom who could use a
vacation. (69 lines)
- TYLER BELLMAN (m)..... Rachel's son, about 12 years old.
This is his first trip on a jet and
he's excited about that. Like
most big brothers, torturing his
younger sister is one of the small
joys of his life. (73 lines)
- MERCEDES BELLMAN (f)..... Younger sister to Tyler, 9-ish.
She is concerned that Santa will
not be able to find them in Idaho,
or that she might not get
anything if she is too mean to her
brother. (68 lines)
- PAUL/PAULA POPOVICH (m/f)..... A parent, looking to close a life
changing deal in Boise that
night. (67 lines)
- EXTRAS (m/f)..... Optional. Passengers, airport
workers, etc. (*Non-Speaking*)

YOOPERS: From Upper Peninsula of Michigan, (*The Yoop*), they speak in a dialect similar to that used in “Fargo.” Party-hardy Green Bay Packer fans going to Dallas for the big game. Coming from a rural area, they are not very familiar with life in the big city.

- BART STAR BJORNSON (m)..... Pronounced “Byorn-son”.
(93 lines)
- CURLY LAMBEAU LIBERTOSKI (m).. Pronounced “Lib-er-ta-ski”.
(71 lines)
- VINCE AHOLAHA (m) Pronounced “A-o-la-ha”.
(80 lines)

PLAYER ONE (m)

- FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE (m/f)..... (7 lines)
 SPOUSE ONE (m/f)..... (5 lines)
 SECURITY GUARD (m/f) (3 lines)
 FIRST CLASS PASSENGER (m/f)..... (1 line)
 AIRPORT ANNOUNCER ONE (m/f)..... Offstage voice. (5 lines)
 BELL RINGER ONE (m/f)..... (3 lines)
 FOOD PEDDLER (m/f)..... Sells food from their trench coat.
 (10 lines)

PLAYER TWO (f)

- FLIGHT ATTENDENT TWO (m/f)..... (7 lines)
 SPOUSE TWO (m/f)..... (4 lines)
 SUVEYOR (m/f)..... (14 lines)
 AIRPORT ANNOUNCER TWO (m/f)..... Offstage voice. (2 lines)
 BELL RINGER TWO (m/f)..... (3 lines)
 PSYCHIATRIST (m/f)..... Lost an earring. (5 lines)

CASTING NOTE

In addition to their written roles, the Players may cross back and forth in the airport in different costumes any time at the director's discretion. It may be fun to see how many different characters they can be, such as: flight crew, passengers, airport security, janitorial services, vendors, street entertainers, etc.

DURATION: 90 minutes.

TIME: 1990's.

SETTING: Airport terminal.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The setting is your typical airport terminal. The airport will have several groups of chairs; some in the back could be on platforms to create different levels. Rows of chairs line both sides of the stage, making a soft diagonal towards the center where the boarding counter will sit. The "Trans West" counter is slightly off center, mid stage. There are exits to the left and right, and one behind the counter for boarding. Above the counter, sits a screen or sign that can be changed to display the flight status as, "Delayed" or "On Time." On the counter rests a computer monitor, a keyboard, and a phone. Announcements made by the actors playing "The" or "Sidney" can either be made through the phone to better emulate an airport terminal, on a microphone. The window looking over the tarmac, and where the plane is waiting to be boarded, is played as the front of the stage, looking into the audience. Colors should be neutral and cohesive with the "Trans West Airline" colors the production crew and director have chosen. Use airport signs at your discretion. (e.g.: baggage claim, no smoking, gate numbers, etc.) Save for the very first scene, which can be played out on front of the main set, or stage apron, the set should remain the same for the entirety of the play. Most characters stay on the set for the majority of the play. Their actions should be reflective of what most people do when they're waiting such as reading, engaging in small conversations, etc. Background actions however, should be small, and not distract from the dialogue of the play, but rather aide in creating the overall scene of an airport terminal.

SUGGESTED COSTUMES

THE – Tucked in monochromatic button-down shirt, khakis, and Trans West name badge

DAVE DONALDSON – Jeans and a sweater. (*Winter jacket in first scene*).

KATIE DONALDSON – Jeans and long sleeve shirt. (*Winter jacket in first scene*).

BART STAR BJORNSON, CURLY LAMBEAU LIBERTOSKI, and VINCE AHOLAHA – Packer shirts, jeans or Packer pants, and Packer hats. Really, you can't go wrong as long as it's Green and Gold and unsightly. (*Winter jackets in first scene*).

SIDNEY –: Tucked in monochromatic button-down shirt that matches T, skirt, festive vest, a Santa hat, and Trans West name badge. (*Winter jacket to exit last scene*).

RACHEL BELLMAN – Relaxed dress pants, with a neutral top and cardigan. (*Winter jacket in first scene*).

TYLER BELLMAN – Jeans and a T-shirt. (*Winter jacket in first scene*).

MERCEDES BELLMAN – Jeans and a brightly colored holiday shirt. (*Winter jacket in first scene*).

PAUL POPOVICH, (*Man/Woman- Paula*) – Suit with a nice button-down shirt with a tie and dress pants.

JACK CORBAN, (*Man/Woman- Jackie*) – Nice button-down shirt, untucked, and khakis. Wrist watch.

SCOTT TAYLOR (*Man/Woman- Sky*) – Button down shirt, with a lose tie, and khakis.

PLAYER ONE (*Multiple parts*) – Husband saying goodbye: Modern day clothes with a pea coat over the top.

SECURITY GUARD – Standard security guard suit. Passenger: Second set of modern day clothes.

BELL RINGERS – Red pullover sweater, with a collar underneath, skirt or pants, and holly pinned to sweater. Trench coat person: Trench coat with modern dress underneath, and fedora.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE and TWO – Flight Attendant: Button-down shirt with a blazer, a scarf/tie, and skirt or pants.

PLAYER 2 (*Multiple parts*) – Wife saying goodbye: Modern day clothes. Surveyor: Neutral tucked in polo shirt with skirt or black dress pants. Bell Ringer outfit: Red pullover sweater, with a collar underneath, skirt or pants, and holly pinned to sweater. Person that lost an earring: Nice dress or pants suit.

PROPS

- Hardcover Atlas
- Human sized football player effigy with a shirt that reads "Dalas" and football helmet painted on or a real helmet that is securely attached. (*Yes, "Dalas" is supposed to be spelled wrong.*)
- Gameboy
- Playing cards
- Multiple carry-on pieces for passengers
- Suckers

- Computer monitor and keyboard for front desk
- Phone or microphone for front desk
- Boarding passes (11)
- Small wrapped gift
- Books, magazines for passengers
- Driver's License (3)
- Kids backpack: Christmas stocking, coloring books, and crayons (2)
- Money
- Plastic coffee cups (2)
- Margarita glasses (2)
- Roll of toilet paper
- Packer tickets (3)
- Business cards (2)
- Clipboard with pen and paper
- Two Bells, different tones
- Doll
- Individually wrapped snacks: Chips, Cupcakes, Little Debbie, etc.
- Checkers Board Game

AUTHOR'S NOTE

One Foggy Christmas Eve is set in the 1990's; airports were a bit more relaxed back then. Since that time, a lot has changed, technical and medical advancements, airport security, but one thing hasn't: we still yearn for human connection. Something magical happens when you put strangers from all different backgrounds, with different ideals, together into one room, and they are forced to weather a frustrating situation. The magic I am referring to is the human condition. The magic of lending an ear to the weary passenger who needs someone to hear them. The magic you feel in your heart when you surprise someone with a small gesture, and their eyes crinkle as they smile. It's contagious, and some would say akin to the spirit that moves our souls when our heads hit the pillow on the eve of Christmas. So naturally, what could be more heartwarming than combining the communal anxiety we all feel at airports, with the happiest time of the year? When in doubt, err on the side of human, embrace all the wonderful flaws in these characters, and the nature of the play will shine through.

PROLOGUE

AT START: *FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE and FLIGHT ATTENDENT TWO enter through the house, and walk onto the stage. They pantomime with props and gestures performing the typical preflight safety drill.*

FLIGHT ATTENDENT TWO: Good evening [name of your entity] patrons and thank you for making [name of your entity] your theatre of choice. The FAA, Federal Acting Authority, requires us to run you through the following safety procedures.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE: Here at [name of your entity] your safety is our number one concern. We've had our share of actors die on stage, but we've never lost a customer.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT TWO: [Make this fit your performance space.] There are two exits at the front of theatre, with one located at the back of each row.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE: [Make this fit your performance space.] And there are two exits located directly behind us, as clearly marked by the exit signs on each side of the theatre.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT TWO: There are emergency exits located on each side wall, about seven rows back. While we do not have actual doors cut into those walls, you will find a hammer and chisel located under those two seats. If you feel you are not physically able to chop a hole through the concrete, please notify one of your play attendants and we will be more than happy to make other seating arrangements for you.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE: In the occurrence of a flash flood, your seat cushion may be used as a flotation device, simply remove the eight torque-head screws holding them in place.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT TWO: In the off chance the atmosphere is suddenly wrenched free from our planet, we have installed oxygen masks, which will drop down from the ceiling. Simply place the mask over your face and breathe normally. If you have young children with you, place the mask over your own face first, before assisting them.

FLIGHT ATTENDENT ONE: Please observe all the rules and decorum while audienceing for this play.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT TWO: Audienceing?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT ONE: Refrain from any flash photography.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT TWO: Talking loudly to your neighbor.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT ONE: And slurping your drink to get out the last few drops, (*Looks at FLIGHT ATTENDANT TWO.*) I hate that.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT TWO: If there is anything we can do to make your theatre going experience more pleasant, simply press the play attendant call buttons located in the adjacent building.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT ONE: And now, enjoy the show, and thank you for choosing [name of your entity].

FLIGHT ATTENDANT ONE and FLIGHT ATTENDANT TWO exit. Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: *Three separate groups are spaced out, the Yoopers are in the middle. They are all in chairs simulating the seats of three different vehicles, with one person pantomiming driving and the other people as passengers. This is played down stage in front of the set or in front the curtain, if you have one. Lights come up and go down on one group at a time leaving the other groups in frozen shadow. Lights up on DAVE and KATIE.*

DAVE: (*A nervous passenger, next to KATIE.*) I know you're licensed now and everything Katie, but you haven't had a chance to drive under conditions like this before.

KATIE: Please Dad, it's Kat, and I'm a good driver, okay?

DAVE: I'm not saying you're a bad driver. There's not a lot of ice and snow out in L.A., that's all I'm saying. It's different from what you're used to.

KATIE: I need to learn some time, don't I?

DAVE: Absolutely, but not during a snowstorm, on an interstate, with fog rolling in.

KATIE: It's just a few flakes, it's not a storm Dad, and there's no fog.

DAVE: The weatherman said we'd be getting fog.

KATIE: You and the weather, what is that? God help the person that tries to speak during a forecast. (*Imitating DAVE.*) "Hush! They're doing the weather now." If it snows or not, what's the big deal? Trust me; it's out of your control.

DAVE: I just like to know what to expect, that's all.

KATIE: It's the weather man, expect him to be wrong. I'll go slower, okay?

DAVE: It's not just your speed, there's keeping a proper interval between you and the next car, the correct rate of approach at a stop light.

KATIE: Mom said you would freak over my driving.

DAVE: I'm not freaking. I let you drive everywhere since you've come home, have I freaked yet? (*Lurches.*) Pump the break, don't stomp on it!

KATIE: Don't shout at me!

DAVE: I'm not shouting.

KATIE: This isn't worth it, why don't I pull over and let you drive?

DAVE: No... I've been thinking about what you said, and you're right. You need to learn how to drive in icy weather some time. You're doing fine. The thing to remember is to stay farther back from the people driving in front of you, and to take it slow when you're making a turn.

Blackout on DAVE and KATIE. Lights up on BART, CURLY and VINCE. They are decked out in Green Bay Packer apparel with Christmas accents thrown in here and there. They are riding in a truck, they lean left as BART does donuts. We hear an engine revved up.

BART: Yeeeeeee Haaaaaa!

CURLY: Floor it Bart!

BART: She's to the floor!

VINCE: Donut! Donut! Donut!

BART: Time out is called on the field!

BART stomps on the break. BART, CURLEY, and VINCE lurch forward.

CURLY: That was cool. I can't believe there's this huge parking lot and nobody else is out here. Why'd you stop Bart?

VINCE: Donut! Donut! Donut!

BART picks up the atlas and slams VINCE in the face with it.

BART: Shut-up and make yourself useful. Which way to the airport 'eh?

VINCE: *(Holding his nose.)* Ow! That hurt.

CURLY: *(Snatches the atlas from VINCE.)* Let me look it up, Vince here couldn't find an outhouse with a shotgun.

VINCE: I think you broke my nose there 'eh, is it bleeding?

CURLY: Quit whining ya big baby.

BART: Which way there Curly? Come on it's gettin' late.

CURLY: East. We go east about ten miles.

VINCE: Lake Michigan is about two miles east.

CURLY: I suppose you could read this better?

VINCE: *(Grabs the atlas.)* This atlas is from the school library, it's not gonna do us any good.

BART: Stuff hasn't changed that much.

VINCE: According to this, Alaska ain't even a state yet.

CURLY: So which way do we go then "Just Vince?"

VINCE: Shut-up already! Look, *(Pointing straight ahead.)* there's the interstate. The travel guy said it was right off the interstate. We just gotta find a way to get down there.

BART: It's straight ahead there yea? So, what's so hard about findin' a way down?

VINCE: There's a big chain-link fence at the bottom of the hill there, and there's a house right on the other side of it. I don't think we can...

BART: *(Calling signals like a quarterback.)* Bull rush 42! Bull rush 42! Ready! Hut, hut, hut.

CURLY: Hit it Bart!

BART: Go Packers!

BART, VINCE, and CURLY lean back and we hear squealing tires.

VINCE: Bull rush! Bull rush! Bull rush!

Blackout on VINCE, BART, and CURLY. There are loud crashing noises. Lights up on TYLER, MERCEDES, and RACHEL. RACHEL is driving with TYLER and MERCEDES in seats behind her. MERCEDES is playing a Game Boy.

TYLER: *(Points to the Game Boy.)* No! Go in there, don't go that way.

MERCEDES: Mom!

RACHEL: It's her game, let her play it.

TYLER: Go ahead and die if you want to then, I don't care.

MERCEDES: I like to die, so I can do the beginning part again.

TYLER: Don't you want to get better? Don't you want to go further than you did the last time?

MERCEDES: No.

TYLER: What a doink.

MERCEDES: I am not a doink.

TYLER: Doink, doink, doink.

MERCEDES: Mom!

RACHEL: Tyler!

TYLER: All right, fine! How soon before we're there.

RACHEL: Soon.

TYLER: How soon?

RACHEL: Not soon enough. *(Checking rear view mirror.)* Is your seat belt on Mercedes?

MERCEDES: I don't know.

RACHEL: What do you mean you don't know? Look!

TYLER: She has it on Mom. Is the airport far?

RACHEL: Not too far.

TYLER: Less than an hour?

RACHEL: Tyler, you're making me crazy.

MERCEDES: This game is stupid.

TYLER: *(Points to the Game Boy.)* No! Go the other way, not that way.

MERCEDES: It's my game; I can do what I want.

TYLER: *(Tries to take the Game Boy from MERCEDES.)* Here, let me do it.

MERCEDES: No, it's mine! MOM!!!

Blackout on TYLER, MERCEDES, and RACHEL. Lights up on DAVE and KATIE.

DAVE: Your mom said I was going to freak-out over your driving?

KATIE: I don't want to get into a, "he said, she said" battle with you Dad. Okay?

DAVE: It bothers me that she would put me down to you. We agreed when we got divorced that we wouldn't put you in the middle of things or belittle each other in front of you. I don't put your mother down or question what she's done, no matter how stupid it is.

KATIE: Right.

DAVE: I don't.

KATIE: (*Imitating DAVE.*) "Have you been shot at on the freeways out there yet? So, is your mother still worshipping trees or whatever it is she's into now? I suppose your mother has allowed you to get all sorts of things pierced that I can't even see!"

DAVE: I feel like I have no control over what's going on in your life anymore. Every time I call there's a bunch of people over there. I worry that you're living in some sort of transient party house or something.

KATIE: It's nice out there Dad. It's a more relaxed, that's all.

DAVE: Like everything is all tense in Poy Sippi?

KATIE: There's a difference between feeling relaxed and feeling dead.

Blackout on KATIE and DAVE. Lights up on CURLY, VINCE and CURLY.

CURLY: This truck is a beauty Bart. It went through that fence like a bat goes through butter!

VINCE: What are ya doin with these weird phrases ya keep commin out with? (*Imitating CURLY.*) "Like a bat goes through butter. Couldn't find an outhouse with a shot gun." What the heck are ya talkin about?

CURLY: I got it out of that book we picked up in Wakefield, "Yooper Wisdom."

VINCE: We're from the Yoop and nobody we know says things like that.

CURLY: All I'm sayin, is Bart's got himself a beauty of a truck, that's all I'm sayin.

BART: It was either buy the truck or pay for that weddin' Trishy wanted.

VINCE: Ya made the right choice.

BART: Like I told Trishy, "Ya can't drive a weddin' cake."

CURLY: That's pretty good; I should send that in to the Yooper Wisdom people, "Ya can't drive a weddin' cake."

BART: I don't know why everybody says people down in Milwaukee are all rude and everything. They keep waving at us real friendly.

VINCE: That's because you're driving on the shoulder, going the wrong direction!! Didn't you wonder why all the signs were backwards?

We hear horns blaring, blackout on VINCE, BART, and CURLY. Lights up on TYLER, MERCEDES, and RACHEL.

TYLER: Grampa said I could take the snowmobile out by myself this year.

RACHEL: I don't know about that.

TYLER: It's Grampa's snowmobile!

RACHEL: Yes, it is, but it's my insurance premium.

MERCEDES: I get to drive the snowmobile if Tyler does.

TYLER: No way! You are way too little. Maybe I'll give you a ride.

MERCEDES: That's no fair!

TYLER: Sorry Squirt, them's the rules.

MERCEDES: No it's not!

RACHEL: Look, I didn't say anybody could drive it okay? You are both too young.

TYLER: Mom! You ruin everything, you little creep. (*Pinches MERCEDES.*)

MERCEDES: Ouch! Mom!!

RACHEL: Tyler!

TYLER: What? (*Makes a cry baby face at MERCEDES.*)

MERCEDES: Stop it Tyler! Mom, make him stop!

RACHEL: Leave your sister alone Tyler.

TYLER: I didn't touch her. (*Makes a cry baby face at MERCEDES.*)

MERCEDES: Mom!

TYLER: Santa doesn't bring any presents to cry babies. His spies are probably watching you right now. I bet they're calling Santa on his cell phone as we speak.

MERCEDES: Stop it Tyler.

TYLER: *(As if speaking on a CB radio.)* "Breaker-breaker for the Big Red One, this is Secret Elf #6. Please take Mercedes Bellman off your list. Give presents to a non-brat child instead."

MERCEDES: They are not!

TYLER: *(Sung to "I'm Getting Nothing for Christmas.)* "Merk's getting nuttin' for Christmas, Mommy and Santa are mad."

MERCEDES: Cut it out! And don't call me Merk, I hate it.

TYLER: *(Continuing song.)* "Merk's getting nuttin for Christmas, 'cause she ain't been nuttin' but bad."

MERCEDES: Mom!!

RACHEL: Tyler!

TYLER: What? I didn't touch her!

Blackout and the car groups strike their chairs.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *Lights fade up. JACK and SCOTT sit with an empty chair between them; they are playing cards on top of a brief case. PAUL is pacing back and forth. THE and SIDNEY are behind the counter. AIRPORT ANNOUNCER ONE and AIRPORT ANNOUNCER TWO are offstage. SPOUSE ONE and SPOUSE TWO are saying goodbye off to one side.*

AIRPORT ANNOUNCER ONE: *(Offstage.)* Attention U.S. Flyway passenger Ryan Horsman, please pick up the white courtesy phone, you have a call. U.S. Flyway passenger Ryan Horsman you have a call, please pick up one of the white courtesy phones located throughout the terminal.

AIRPORT ANNOUNCER TWO: *(Offstage.)* Smoking is not allowed inside the General Mitchell International Airport. If you must smoke, please do so outside the terminal, as smoking is not allowed inside the terminal. Any person caught smoking inside the terminal is subject to prosecution, fine, or both. Thank you for observing our no smoking policy.

JACK: *(Has a sucker in mouth.)* Yea, yea, I hear you.

SCOTT: Having a hard time giving it up?

JACK: I can't believe I promised the kids I'd stop by Christmas.

SCOTT: How long have you made it now without a cigarette?

JACK: *(Looks at his watch.)* About forty-five minutes.

SCOTT: It's Christmas Eve Jack, aren't you cutting it kind of close?

TYLER: *(Enters running.)* Here's the gate mom, hurry!

RACHEL and MERCEDES enter holding hands and lugging carry-ons.

RACHEL: Calm down Tyler! They haven't called for us to board yet, we've got plenty of time.

TYLER: *(Runs to the viewing window overlooking the runway.)* Look! I bet that's our jet landing right now. I call the window seat.

MERCEDES: Mom! I called the window seat already.

RACHEL: *(Plops into a chair.)* We worked this out in the car Honey. You have the window seat on the way home, remember?

MERCEDES: Okay.

MERCEDES walks over to SPOUSE ONE and SPOUSE TWO and watches them closely. As they talk she will step up onto a chair to get a better look at them.

SPOUSE ONE: I hate not being with you over Christmas.

SPOUSE TWO: I hate it too, don't go, stay here with me.

SPOUSE ONE: I have to go, I wish I didn't. We can have our Christmas when I get back.

SPOUSE TWO: I can't believe I have to go back to that empty apartment on Christmas Eve.

SPOUSE ONE: I'm sorry Hon. I'll call you as soon as I get there tonight, okay?

SPOUSE TWO: Call me Christmas morning too, promise.

SPOUSE ONE: I'll be back before you know it.

SPOUSE ONE and SPOUSE TWO kiss, and then pull away, uncomfortably, when they realize that MERCEDES is staring at them.

MERCEDES: My grandparents live in Boise.

SPOUSE ONE: I'll call you when I get there.

SPOUSE TWO: Okay, Merry Christmas, I'll miss you.

They almost kiss again, then think better of it. SPOUSE ONE and SPOUSE TWO exit in opposite directions.

MERCEDES: That was rude. *(Hops of the chair and sits by RACHEL.)*

THE: I can't believe they started you on Christmas Eve of all days.

SIDNEY: Oh, I don't care. I love Christmas!

THE: *(Looking at her outfit.)* Really, I'd never have guessed. Did they train you on our booking system yet?

SIDNEY: Not yet.

THE: But, you have worked with airline software before, at another job?

SIDNEY: Sorry. But, I pick things up real fast. By the end of the shift you won't even know I'm a rookie.

PAUL: *(Bustling up to the counter.)* Is this flight still on schedule? Why aren't we boarding yet?

SIDNEY: Good afternoon sir and Merry Christmas from Trans West Airlines. How can I be of service?

PAUL: I just asked you, are we departing on time or not?

SIDNEY: Let me check on that and I'll get right back to you sir. The, where would I find that information, on the computer?

THE: It's on the board behind us, see those big letters there? Perhaps literacy is the issue, why don't you read it to him.

SIDNEY: Oh, of course, I'm sorry sir. *(Reading slowly and pointing to the board.)* "Flight 843 to Boise, Departure..."

PAUL: Look Buddy, *(Looks at THE'S nametag and pronounces it with a 'Th'.)* "The," *(Looks closer at the tag.)* your name is "The?"

THE: It's pronounced "Tee."

PAUL: I don't care how you pronounce it, it spells "the."

SIDNEY: How can he be able to spell and not know how to read?

PAUL: I am not illiterate!

SIDNEY: He's right though, it's very unusual. Is it a family name?

PAUL: I don't care where his name came from!

SIDNEY: Then why did you bring it up?

PAUL: I didn't!

SIDNEY: Of course sir. Now, how can I help you?

PAUL: Forget it! *(Storms off and plops down into a seat.)*

SCOTT: That guy's a little stressed.

JACK: It looks like he's still on the clock, what kind of a meeting do you have to make on Christmas Eve?

SCOTT: Maybe he just wants to go home.

JACK: No way, look at him. He's got his tie two sizes tighter than his neck is. I got ten bucks says he's back up to the desk before they call to board.

SCOTT: You're on.

SIDNEY: He seemed upset. Was it something I said?

THE: No, you were fine. But, we better make an announcement to calm down the rest of the herd. *(Speaking into the receiver part of the phone on the counter or a mic.)* Attention Trans West passengers, Flight #843, to Boise, will be departing from Gate B7. Boarding will begin in a few minutes.

SIDNEY: *(Leaning into the phone.)* Happy Holidays and thank you for choosing Trans West. When you fly Trans West, you fly the best!

THE: Nice touch.

SIDNEY: I'm so excited about having a job with Trans West. I've been singing along with the commercials all week!

THE: You're not going to sing, are you?

DAVE and KATIE enter.

DAVE: Here's your gate. I wish we could have booked you on a direct flight to Los Angeles. I don't like the idea of you having a layover in the middle of the night at some strange airport.

KATIE: We're two hours ahead out there Dad. I'll still get into L.A. by dinner. It's no big deal.

DAVE: How much time is there between flights? *(Settles into a chair.)*

KATIE: I get to spend about an hour in Boise, Idaho. *(Sits in chair next to DAVE.)* It's Idaho Dad, what could happen?

DAVE: Tell that to the Uni-Bomber.

KATIE: He was from Montana.

DAVE: Montana, Idaho, what's the difference?

KATIE: You don't have to wait with me Dad. I'll be fine by myself.

DAVE: I know you'll be fine. But, I'm not going to see you for another six months, is it all right if I sit with you for a little while?

KATIE: Sure. I just know how much you hate waiting.

DAVE: I'll be fine. *(Gets a small wrapped gift out of his pocket.)* Before I forget, Merry Christmas, Honey.

KATIE: We already did our gifts this morning Dad.

DAVE: Well, this one is for Christmas Day. Don't open it until tomorrow morning.

KATIE: Don't you want to watch me open it?

DAVE: No, you save that for tomorrow, Okay?

KATIE: Let me open it now. *(Goes to unwrap it.)*

DAVE: No Katie, please!

KATIE: Sure Dad, whatever.

DAVE: Indulge me, all right? Why does everything have to be such a big deal?

KATIE: It doesn't have to be, believe me.

DAVE: Look, I know being at odds with adults is a requirement at your age. But, in these last six months, I've only seen you a single week and I spent the whole time feeling like we were on the verge of an explosion. What's the problem?

KATIE: Nothing.

DAVE: No, I want to know. Have I done something wrong?

KATIE: Nothing is wrong. *(Stuffs the gift into her bag.)* Don't open 'till Christmas, I got it.

DAVE: I just want to talk without feeling like we're fighting all the time.

VINCE, CURLY and BART enter in a rush. They have an odd assortment of carry-ons including a life size effigy of a Dallas Cowboy player with a noose around his neck that they are dragging him by. They have painted "Dalas" on the white t-shirt jersey.

BART: See, I told you we'd make it eh?

CURLY: I can't believe they confiscated our cooler at that little phone booth place. What are we gonna do fer beers now?

VINCE: At least you didn't have that stinkin' machine beepin' at ya every time ya tried ta walk through it.

CURLY: Well it's a mental detector, what did you expect? *(To BART.)*
Vince here probably set some kind of a record eh.

BART: That was a metal detector ya big doof! They got them to keep those terror guys from blowin' up planes and stuff.

CURLY: Oh. Well what was yer problem then Vince?

VINCE: I don't know. Ya think it was the roll of quarters I got taped inside my pants?

BART: Why do you got a roll of quarters taped inside yer pants?

VINCE: I told Ma I'd call when we got there an I wanted ta have enough change.

CURLY: Why not keep it in yer pocket then?

VINCE: 'Cause I'm not stupid, that's why.

CURLY: What the heck?

BART: Come on! Geez, you guys make me batty! Let's check in with the airline already.

CURLY: I still wanna know what's stupid about puttin' yer change in yer pocket.

BART: *(Walks up to the counter.)* Hello there, *(Looks at SYDNEY'S name tag.)* Sidney. We're goin' ta Dallas fer the big Packer game tomorrow. You a Packers fan?

SIDNEY: Well, I...

BART: Dallas must die!

CURLY: Dallas must die!

VINCE: Dallas must die! *(Shaking the Dallas dummy.)*

All three are now acting like they're TV announcers, holding pretend mics in front of their mouths.

CURLY: The Dallas quarterback drops back to pass, he looks over the field but he's got nobody to throw to.

VINCE: The Packers D-Backs are coverin' them Dallas receivers like flies on a frog.

BART: Look out! Here comes an unblocked Safety, right up the middle an he's got a full head of steam.

CURLY, VINCE and BART: Bam!!!

CURLY: Oh! The Packers come up with a huge quarterback sack!

BART: That was one big hit he made, Curly.

CURLY: I'll say! That quarterbacks helmet went sailing all the way into the stands.

VINCE: Wait a minute folks, it looks like that helmet wasn't empty when it went flying, I think he may have knocked his head clean off!

CURLY: Now there's an unusual souvenir for some lucky fan.

VINCE: You think he'll sign that for em after the game?

BART: I think they'll try an' reattach that head, he may be out a few weeks.

SIDNEY: Happy Holidays and welcome to Trans West Airlines, how can I be of service to you?

CURLY: She's cute. What are ya doin after the game?

VINCE: We'll be in Dallas Curly, she ain't gonna be there.

BART: Have we got some time before we leave? Is there a gas station or some place like that in the airport where we could pick up some cold ones?

THE: Pardon me gentlemen, but can I help you with something? Will you be flying with us today?

BART: Yea, we got our tickets right here. Mr... *(Hands three tickets to THE and looks at his nametag.)* Yer name is, "The?"

VINCE: His name is what?

CURLY: No, his name is "The" not "What," can't ya read Vince?

THE: It's pronounced "Tee." *(Looks over tickets.)* And you are?

BART: Bart, Bart Star Bjornson.

CURLY: And I'm, Curly Lambeau Libertoski.

VINCE: I'm, Vince Aholaha.

THE: Let me guess, Vince Lombardi Aholaha?

CURLY: Naa, he's "Just Vince."

VINCE: Cut it out already with that "Just Vince" stuff.

CURLY: His family was poor; they couldn't afford a middle name for 'im.

BART: Okay Curly, lay off Vince here for a while eh. We just drove all the way down from the Yoop.

VINCE: That's Upper Michigan.

CURLY: We call it the Yoop up there.

THE: We call it the Yoop down here too. Now, according to your tickets, you're flying all the way out to Boise, and then making a connecting flight to go back down to Dallas, Texas, is that right?

BART: The agent from Travel Train, back in Ontonagon, made all the arrangements. He made us a pretty sweet deal too, only \$899 a piece!

THE: Sweet? Well, it's interesting at any rate. I'll need some ID from all three of you.

BART, CURLY and VINCE each hand THE their driver licenses.

CURLY: Hey Bart, come over here.

Pulls BART aside and VINCE joins them. They speak in what they think is a whisper, but are obviously heard by THE and SIDNEY.

CURLY: Are you listenin' ta the way this guy talks? I think he might be one of those guys who, ya know, likes other guys.

VINCE: Shouldn't he be in California if he's one of them?

BART: This is Milwaukee, it's a big city, they got everything down here. He's probably not the only one.

VINCE: You think that Sidney is really a boy dressed up in girl's clothes then? Some of them do that you know.

BART: Ya think so? Hey, come to think of it, Sidney is a boy's name.

CURLY: She ain't no guy, is she?

VINCE: Oh man and Curly thought he was cute!

BART: That's right!

SIDNEY: I am not a—

THE: Down girl, let me handle this. Excuse me boys, your boarding passes are all set. We'll be calling to board in a few minutes. I couldn't help but overhear the little huddle you just had, and you are in fact right, I am attracted to other men. The acceptable term to use would be to say that I am gay. Now I can tell from the concerned looks on your faces, that this is not only confusing, but a little frightening for you. Let me take this time to assure you about a few things. The fact that you have now met someone who's gay, does not, in-and-of-itself, mean that you are now gay or that you will start to exhibit any behaviors leaning in that direction. Such as actually looking at the clothes you are about to put on. And, Sidney is simply the lovely young woman that she appears to be.

SIDNEY: Thank you.

THE: Lastly, and believe me when I tell you this, I find none of you remotely attractive, and you do not have to worry about me hitting on you. Now, do you have any questions?

CURLY: *(After a brief silence.)* Why is it stupid to wanna know why someone tapes a roll of quarters inside his pants instead of puttin' 'em in his pocket?

THE: Pardon me?

BART: Shut-up Curly. Is there a place we could get some beers in here?

THE: The bar is that way.

BART: To the bar!!

BART and CURLY run off exiting. VINCE starts off, stops and places the Dallas dummy in one of the empty seats, then exits following BART and CURLY.

RACHEL: Tyler, go to the bathroom now before we get on the plane.

TYLER: I don't have to go.

RACHEL: Go any way, you too Mercy. Once we're on the plane you may have to sit for a while. *(Looks out the window.)* It's getting a little foggy out there.

MERCEDES: Don't worry Mom, Santa has Rudolf with him, he'll make it through. Are you sure you sent the letter telling him that we'd be at Gramma and Grampas?

RACHEL: I did.

MERCEDES: Where's my stocking?

RACHEL: It's in your backpack, Mercy; *(MERCEDES runs back for it.)* don't get it out now.

MERCEDES: I just want to look at it. *(Dumps everything out of her backpack.)*

RACHEL: Mercy!

PAUL: *(Walks up to the counter.)* It's starting to fog up out there. You said we'd be boarding in a few minutes, well; it's been a few minutes.

JACK: *(Taking money from SCOTT.)* That was a sucker bet Scott.

SIDNEY: How may I help you sir?

PAUL: When are we boarding?

SCOTT: I deserve a chance to win it back. Double or nothing he takes a swing at one of them.

PAUL: You! The! It's time to board; it's past time to board!

JACK: No bet.

THE: My name is "Tee" and I'll call for boarding when I get—

SFX: Phone rings.

THE: Pardon me.

PAUL: With the fog rolling in, the sooner we get up, the better. I bought this ticket well in advance and I expect to leave this airport on schedule.

THE: *(Announcing over the phone receiver or mic.)* Attention Trans West Flyers, flight 843 to Boise will be experiencing a slight delay. An indicator light has burned out in the cockpit. As soon as our technicians get that replaced we'll be ready to board.

PAUL: I knew it! I knew it!

Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *RACHEL is seated with her head in her hands. TYLER and MERCEDES are chasing each other all over playing "tag." SIDNEY is alone behind the desk. SCOTT is looking out the window, and JACK is playing Solitaire. PAUL is off to one side pacing back and forth. KATIE is reading a magazine. Everyone else is offstage. TYLER tags MERCEDES just as she sat down in a chair near RACHEL.*

TYLER: You're it!

MERCEDES: No! The chairs are ghoul.

TYLER: Not all the chairs, just Mom's chair.

MERCEDES: You didn't say that before.

TYLER: Did too. You're it.

MERCEDES: I am not!

TYLER: You are too!

MERCEDES: I'm on a chair you can't tag me. (*Stands up on the chair walking slowly down the row to RACHEL.*) Besides all these chairs are touching. Everybody knows that ghouls have electricity, since these chairs are touching Mom's chair, they're all ghouls. So, you're still it! (*Drapes herself over a slouched RACHEL.*) Right Mom?

RACHEL: Mercy, if you don't get off of my head, right this second, I'll be claiming one less tax credit this year.

MERCEDES: What?

TYLER: She said get off or die.

MERCEDES: (*Jumps off onto the floor.*) Geronimo!

TYLER: (*Tags her.*) You're it!

TYLER runs offstage chased by MERCEDES, they almost knock over DAVE walking in carrying two drinks.

DAVE: Whoa!

RACHEL: (*Looking up.*) Sorry about that.

DAVE: No problem. They're getting a little stir crazy, believe me I understand.

RACHEL: At least yours is sitting quietly reading.

DAVE: I think that's worse. You've got no idea what's going on in that teenage brain of hers. Besides, it's probably a magazine of tattoos or something. She's paging her way through, to find the most hideous one she can to give her father a heart attack. Would you like a coffee?

RACHEL: Isn't one of those for your daughter?

DAVE: I think you need it more than she does.

RACHEL: Thanks, that's nice of you.

DAVE: It's Christmas Eve, what the heck.

RACHEL: She's pretty.

DAVE: Katie? Oh yeah, she's a doll. When she was your daughter's age she was the biggest tomboy you ever saw. She had calluses on her hands from swinging on this one tree branch all the time. I swear, the bark was worn off and the wood underneath looked like it had been rubbed smooth. She wanted to be a mountain climber.

RACHEL: What does she want to be now?

DAVE: Now? Now, she wants to be difficult.

RACHEL: Mercedes wants to be the next MMA star and Tyler, I don't have any idea about him. I think he's happy just to be, it's almost as if he's well adjusted.

DAVE: They're cute kids. It's brave of you traveling with them like this.

RACHEL: They are good kids, and I thought they deserved a nice Christmas. When my folks wanted us to come out to Boise it would have been easy to say no. But, I know they'll make it special for the kids and I don't have the money, or the energy lately.

DAVE: It's not supposed to be this hard, is it?

RACHEL: No, it's not. They just wear me out sometimes.

DAVE: Unless I miss my guess, it looks like you're doing it on your own too.

RACHEL: Their father left when Tyler was two years old, just before Mercedes was born. He decided that doing the "kids" thing was not what he wanted. Nobody asked me what I wanted.

DAVE: You know, that's his loss. Katie and I, we did everything together when she was their age. I coached her soccer team, we went on vacations together, we used to take walks at night, we'd talk about everything. I've been watching you with your kids, you're doing a good job. Right now, it feels like a lot of work, but it's going to pay off for you in the long run.

RACHEL: I know. I guess it's just that I've been doing it for them for so long, I feel like there's no room for me in my life. Does that make any sense?

DAVE: Sure. I can't say as I know what to do about it. Except that, well, once they're out on their own more, and they don't need your attention every minute, or they've moved away, it's not the great relief you thought it'd be.

SCOTT: What do you think Jack? Will we be back in Boise in time for supper?

JACK: Changing a burned-out bulb, even for an airline, shouldn't take more than half an hour.

SCOTT: Double or nothin', we don't get on that plane till after 6 o'clock.

JACK: Let's see, (*Looks at his watch.*) it's 5:15 now, they made the announcement at about 4:30, so you're saying they'll go another 45 minutes until we board?

SCOTT: That's what I'm saying.

JACK: Okay, that's a bet.

SCOTT: You might as well pay me now Jack, cause we ain't taking off in less than an hour.

JACK: What kind of inside information do you have?

SCOTT: Elementary my dear Watson, (*Points out the window.*) one of our engines is no longer attached to the wing.

JACK: What! (*Jumps up to look.*)

PAUL: Are you kidding me! (*Runs down stage to look out the window.*) They said they were changing a light bulb in the cockpit!

SCOTT: Maybe they have to crawl in through the wing to get at it. I used to have an oil filter like that, you had to remove the radiator to change it.

PAUL: They can't do that!

SCOTT: Oh, but they did, those nutty Chrysler engineers.

JACK: Maybe they have to reapply the duct tape, one of those, "every hundred thousand miles," sort of thing.

PAUL: You two are hysterical. (*Stomps up to the counter.*)

SIDNEY: (*Looking at her computer.*) Merry Christmas sir and how may I— (*Looking up and seeing PAUL.*) you've come up here to be unpleasant with me again haven't you?

PAUL: No, you're doing a fine job. I'd just like to know, why one of the engines has been taken off the airplane.

SIDNEY: Maybe they have to rotate them. You know, like tires.

PAUL: That's what you're going to give me as an excuse? As a representative of Trans West Airlines, you are telling me that I am going to be, at least, at a bare minimum, an hour and a half late arriving in Boise. And, that the reason for this, is that they are rotating the engines?!!

SIDNEY: Why don't you let me call down there and see what I can find out sir? Please have a seat and I'll let you know what I find out.

PAUL: I'm fine right here.

JACK: Hey buddy, lighten up. What did you expect traveling on Christmas Eve? It's the busiest travel day of the year. The lady behind the counter here, she didn't order those guys to drop the engine, you know?

PAUL: I have to get to Boise tonight, there's someone I have to meet at 8:00, I have too!

SCOTT: Hey, I beat the bushes as hard as the next guy, but Christmas Eve? I hope you got one heck of a pitch to make.

SIDNEY: They're going to call me right back. I'll let you know as soon as I hear, okay?

PAUL: Fine. *(Walks away and plops down in the chair next to the Dallas dummy.)*

THE: *(Enters from the back door with a Margarita glass.)* Why don't you take a break, I'll baby-sit them for a while.

SIDNEY: One of the passengers was concerned about the engine lying on the runway out there.

THE: Never mind Hon, you're doing fine for your first day. Now you go in there and get one of these before Captain Garcia drinks the whole batch.

SIDNEY: The pilot is drinking?!

THE: The pilot for this flight isn't drinking. The pilot I'm referring to is Captain Fabio Garcia, and he's done flying for today.

SIDNEY: Fabio Garcia?

THE: Oh, and he looks like he sounds too. Go-go-go.

SIDNEY exits as THE pushes her through the back door.

VINCE: *(Runs on like he is going out for a pass.)* I'm open, Bart, I'm open!

BART: *(Coming in playing Quarterback, CURLY is trying to tackle him.)* Bart Star Bjornson is back to pass, he dodges away from one tackle.

VINCE: Throw it Bart!

BART: Bart just barely gets that one off!

BART throws a roll of toilet paper to VINCE as CURLY grabs him.

VINCE: And Vince Aholaha from Ontonagon makes the catch!

CURLY: *(Sits down on the other side of the Dallas dummy.)* Have you been behaving out here without us Dude? He hasn't been botherin ya has he mister?

PAUL: Are you talking to me?

CURLY: Cause if he has, I might have to teach him a little lesson in manners.

PAUL: What are you talking about?

CURLY: That's it! (*Grabs the Dallas dummy, throws it to the ground, and starts wrestling with it.*) I'll teach you to smart talk me!

VINCE: Has he been a bad little cowboy?

BART: When you gonna learn? (*VINCE and CURLY hold the Dallas dummy by the arms.*) What'd you say about them Packers?! (*Punches the Dallas dummy.*) Are you talking to me punk?! (*Punch.*) I guess some people gotta learn the hard way. (*Punch, punch, punch.*)

SECURITY GUARD: (*Enters.*) Stop that! What's going on here?

VINCE: Nothin'.

THE: These gentlemen were just, what exactly was it you were doing?

BART: Just goofin' around, it's not a real person, see.

SECURITY GUARD: Okay, just calm down, all right?

CURLY: We're goin' to the Packers game in Dallas tomorrow.

VINCE: Packers!

BART: He won't make anymore trouble officer, I'll vouch for 'em. (*Puts Dallas dummy back in the chair.*)

CURLY, BART, and VINCE find a place to sit.

SECURITY GUARD: That's fine, (*To THE.*) call me if you need me. (*Exits.*)

THE: Right.

SFX: Phone rings and THE answers.

THE: The speaking, I see, whatever you say Hon. Yea, yea, ho, ho, ho. (*Presses a button switching over and speaks into the phone.*) Attention Trans West Flyers, flight 843 to Boise is still experiencing technical difficulties. Not to fear, our crack maintenance crew projects we can still be in the air by 6:00. It's Christmas Eve, anything's possible. (*Hangs the phone up. To PAUL.*) Now sir, and when I say, "sir," I'm addressing the person that doesn't have the word Dallas misspelled on their T-shirt, give me a moment to explain something to you. Boise is two hours ahead of us, and the pilot should be able to make up time in the air reducing the actual fly time, there's a good chance you can arrive in Boise by six or six-thirty. Now, what time is your appointment?

PAUL: 8:00

THE: Then, as of this moment, I would say you have every reason to expect you'll make that appointment sir.

CURLY: What about us?

THE: You'll have no problem making his appointment either.

CURLY: What?

VINCE: What he means is, if that guy's getting to Boise at 6:30, what time will we be getting there?

THE: If I remember correctly, your seats are at the back of the plane, so that would mean you'll be arriving at about 6:31.

CURLY: See, we have a flight to Dallas we gotta catch in Boise.

THE: Yes, your connection is at 7:30, you should make that without a problem.

BART: We're goin' to the Packers game tomorrow.

THE: Yes, I know. By the way, where are your seats?

CURLY: They're in Dallas.

THE: Yes, I know that. I mean where in the stadium are you sitting?

BART: Here are the tickets. (*Hands them to THE.*)

THE: (*Looks at tickets.*) You're in what is usually thought of as the visitor's end zone, you should be with a lot of other Packer fans on that side of the field.

VINCE: End zone? All right!

CURLY: How do you know that? This is a football game we're talkin' about.

BART: You like football?

THE: You know, it's horribly wrong to pigeonhole a person into some stereotype you have of them. I am a gay man who likes sports and football in particular. In fact, my partner is a sports writer for the Milwaukee Sentinel, and we've seen the Packers play all over the country. You assuming that all gay men hate sports, would be no better than me jumping to the conclusion that all people from the U.P. are totally ignorant of U.S. geography.

BART: What do you mean?

THE: I mean that Dallas is basically South and about 850 miles from where we stand right now. Boise, on the other hand, is 1300 miles due West and from there you'll still have to travel, oh... about another 1300 miles from Boise to get to Dallas.

VINCE: I hate story problems.

THE: You've taken a simple 850-mile flight and turned it into a 2600-mile odyssey.

CURLY: Is he right?

BART: I guess so, he sounds right.

VINCE: Oh man!

THE: Not to worry, you should still get into Dallas in time to party before the game. Here, *(Fishes a card out of his wallet.)* if you want to be with other Packers fans go to this bar you'll have a good time. Okay guys?

VINCE: Thanks!

KATIE: Pardon me. Will I have any trouble making my connection to L.A.?

THE: *(Looks at her ticket.)* It may be tight, but I think you'll be alright. Your departure gate is two down from where you're arriving. What does your bag look like? *(Picks up the phone.)*

DAVE: Any problem Katie?

KATIE: It's sort of like a duffel bag with tiger stripes on it.

THE: *(Looks at DAVE.)* A gift? *(Into phone.)* Leonard? Yes, it's The... nice and warm up here thank you. I need a favor; do you remember loading a tiger stripped duffel bag? Yes, I'm guessing it was a gift too, could you red flag that for a 7:05 flight at Gate A3 in Boise? Thanks doll, stay warm. *(Hangs up.)* That should get your bag there on time too.

KATIE: Thank you, that was nice.

THE: Christmas Eve always does this to me. There goes a whole year of being a jerk straight down the drain.

Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: VINCE, CURLY, and BART sit slumped down in their chairs. VINCE is hugging the Dallas dummy, obviously asleep. KATIE is reading a magazine, DAVE is looking at the ceiling. SCOTT and JACK are playing Gin again, JACK has another sucker in his mouth. PAUL sits in the same spot as the last scene, staring at the counter and display board that has been changed to read, "DELAYED." TYLER is playing a game and MERCEDES is sitting on the floor with a Christmas coloring book and crayons on the chair in front of her. RACHEL is reading a book. SIDNEY is behind the counter with an empty margarita glass. THE is talking on the phone.

KATIE: How many?

DAVE: (Still looking at ceiling.) What?

KATIE: How many? Whenever you're bored you count things.

DAVE: There are 18 and a half ceiling tiles across, and 14 deep in this bay, so that's 259 tiles. Now, each tile has 240 little "X" marks in the pattern... so that's about... 62,000 little X's.

KATIE: Dad, you don't have to wait with me you know. I'll be fine.

DAVE: I know you'll be fine, it's me I'm worried about. What if this flight doesn't take off in time and you miss your connecting flight? What if this is the last chance I'll ever have to see you? A lot could happen in six months, who knows? This way I can see you off, I'll know you're safe, and on your way, and I'll feel better tonight when I try and fall asleep. Believe me, my staying here has nothing to do with you.

KATIE: Well, if you're going to sit with me, let's at least talk.

DAVE: Do you want to "talk," or do you just want to have a conversation?

KATIE: What's the difference?

DAVE: If we talk, as in we genuinely communicate with each other, about subjects that matter to us, then we run the risk of exposing part of who we really are, and what we truly want out of life.

KATIE: In other words, we'll fight.

DAVE: Exactly.

KATIE: (Thinks about it.) So, are you going to watch the Packers game tomorrow?

DAVE: Oh sure. Is your Mom having company for Christmas dinner?

KATIE: Of course. We have people over constantly now. Mom said you were always afraid of having people over.

DAVE: I wasn't afraid to have people over. I preferred to relax, not have to worry about a bunch of guests invading over the holidays. I wanted it to be the family so we could sit around in our PJ's, belch, and watch whatever we wanted on TV.

KATIE: It's kind of nice having people over, it's more fun.

DAVE: I remember my families big get togethers when I was your age. Somebody always ended up crying about something, or one of the Grandparents would leave in a huff. For weeks, I would agonize over buying just the right gifts, and they never were. Then I'd spend the whole day worrying, trying to make sure that everyone else was happy, it all became so neurotic. Gimme two or three people I love, a good football game, and a turkey sandwich, and I'm happy.

SCOTT: You're really going to town on that sucker Jack. Sure, you're going to make it?

JACK: You know, if I could just have one more smoke I'd be fine. But once we land in Boise my wife and kids are going to be waiting for me in the car.

SCOTT: So have one more before we leave here.

JACK: I would, but as soon as I go outside of the terminal, they're going to call to board, I just know it.

SCOTT: Twenty bucks, you make it back on time to board the plane.

JACK: That means, if I win I spend the night in Milwaukee.

SCOTT: So what? You're twenty bucks ahead, and you can chain smoke until you get on the next flight.

JACK: You think I can make it?

SCOTT: I'm putting twenty on Jack to smoke 'em.

JACK: *(Looks at his sucker.)* Right now, I'd be willing to pay twenty bucks to have a cigarette, but the way my luck is running, the only way I'm going to have one and still make this flight is to bet against myself. *(Throws sucker into a nearby garbage can.)* You're on!
(Exits.)

MERCEDES: I'm going to put this picture out for Santa tonight.

RACHEL: That's a good idea, you're doing a nice job with it. Gramma said she made some cookies, you can put some of those out for him too.

MERCEDES: Do Gramma and Grampa have a Christmas tree?

RACHEL: They have a real tree, a big one with lots of lights and ornaments. Grampa said they have about a foot of snow too. It's always real pretty up there at Christmas time.

TYLER: I'm going to sleep in the barn tonight.

RACHEL: You're what?

TYLER: Grampa said that the animals can speak at midnight on Christmas Eve. I'm going to find out if that's true.

MERCEDES: I'm sleeping in the barn too.

RACHEL: You're both sleeping in the house. Grampa used to like telling me that story about the speaking animals too; I think something happens to the magic if a person is there with them. You don't want to be the reason they can't talk this year, do you?

TYLER: I don't believe it anyway. I just wanted to prove that it couldn't happen.

MERCEDES: I believe it.

TYLER: You believe everything.

MERCEDES: It's one of Santa's powers, when he comes to the house his magic lets the animals speak.

TYLER: I don't believe in that either.

RACHEL: You don't believe in much anymore do you Tyler?

TYLER: That's little kid stuff, it's all made up.

MERCEDES: It is not, it's true!

RACHEL: There are people all over the world that believe in all kinds of things. They believe in lots of different gods, in all sorts of miracles, and impossible things that they are sure really happened. I believe in Santa Claus. I believe there's magic all over the world and that Christmas Eve is one of the most magic nights of all.

TYLER: You can't prove any of that is true. Have you ever seen Santa Claus?

RACHEL: No. I've never seen the Statue of Liberty either, does that mean it's not there?

TYLER: You've seen pictures of that.

RACHEL: I've seen pictures of Santa Claus too.

TYLER: Then, explain to me how he gets to all those houses in just one night and carries all those toys with him.

RACHEL: I don't know. I don't know how computers or televisions work either, does that mean they don't exist?

TYLER: You can see those.

RACHEL: Can you see air? Can you see love or joy? A blind person can't see anything, all they know is what they hear or they feel.

TYLER: But, it doesn't make any sense. How can you believe it?

RACHEL: Faith is believing in something when it doesn't make any sense, trusting in things that you can't see. It's believing that what you know inside of you is true, no matter who tells you that it's wrong. It's something you know when you're little, but it gets taken away from you by people that are jealous, because they don't have it. You're stronger than that Tyler, don't let them take your magic away from you.

MERCEDES: When I think of Santa Claus it makes me feel happy. Why would you want to stop feeling happy Tyler?

TYLER: I don't.

MERCEDES: Good! (*Gives TYLER a hug.*) I think you still have lots of magic in you.

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