

Capitoux: An Allegorical Headache

a new play

BA New Works Festival 2022 | Penn State University

B.A. in Theatre Studies

Revisions completed as of October 3, 2021

CAPITAUX: AN ALLEGORICAL HEADACHE

Story and characters inspired by Joe O’Dowd.

Written by Arushi Grover.

Characters:

| | |
|----------------|----|
| Cameron | 34 |
| Helen Stafford | 78 |
| Ryan | 35 |
| Danielle | 32 |
| Lauren | 34 |
| Ember | 58 |
| Mr. Atlas | 45 |

Time: 9:00 AM-12:00 PM, now.

Place: A small airport on a tiny island in the middle of the ocean. An American territory.

Scene 1

Lights up on an airport departure terminal. A wide expanse of blue and white, the terminal is comprised of a row of check-in desks on the left, a blue line on the floor in front of them, a lone blue vinyl bench in the center, and a set of sliding glass doors leading outside on the right. Through the glass, palm trees wave. A white bird dips down, then out and up. Gracing the background, more seating, rows of blue with metal armrests that prevent drowsy travelers from reaching what they so desire. A lit sign, positioned diagonal to scanning eyes, reads “Atlas Airlines”. Next to it, a digital clock, reading “09:00”.

A young woman rushes in through the doors, in a hurry. She pauses, taken aback by the silence and stillness of the scene. Not a soul, save her, breathes there. Donning a professional black turtleneck and shades of blue and white, and carrying a portfolio bursting with papers, she examines the terminal. She strides across the expanse, to the check-in counter, and rings a bell on the desk, once. Then, multiple times.

CAMERON

Hello?

She rings the bell again.

CAMERON

Please, I need to speak with Mr. Atlas! It’s very important!

She steps back, looks down the row of counters, then around at the empty terminal. She rings the bell again.

CAMERON

Hello?

Exasperated, she steps back from the counter and sets her portfolio on the lone blue vinyl bench. She places her hands on her hips and paces, examining her surroundings.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna, departing in three hours.

Cameron stops in front of a sign placed near the end of the terminal, in the far back, reading “Construction in the East Terminal. Please do not enter.” A woman appears suddenly, moving with authority, intelligence, and grace, and assuming a position behind the counter. She speaks nonchalantly, composed and collected. She rings the bell, reclaiming Cameron’s attention from the sign’s distraction.

CAMERON

Hello! Hi!

Cameron turns around and scoops up her portfolio on her way back to the counter.

CAMERON

Hello, I was wondering if I may speak with—

MS. STAFFORD

Blue line.

CAMERON

I—I'm sorry?

MS. STAFFORD

Blue. Line.

Ms. Stafford points to the blue line on the floor. Cameron looks down.

CAMERON

Oh!

She backs up to the line, making space and distance. Beat. She waits. Beat.

CAMERON

My apologies, I was hoping to speak with—

MS. STAFFORD

Name.

CAMERON

I...

MS. STAFFORD

Name.

CAMERON

Cameron. Willis.

Ms. Stafford types Cameron's name into an out-of-sight computer, efficiently and methodically. Each tap of a key punctures the silence.

MS. STAFFORD

Date of birth.

CAMERON

[*Sighs*] January 20, 1989.

More key taps.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Welcome, arriving passengers. The time in Capitoux is 9:00 AM, and the weather is sunny, with a temperature outside of seventy degrees.

MS. STAFFORD

Ms. Williams, I'm afraid you're not in our system.

CAMERON

Ms. *Willis*.

MS. STAFFORD

I don't believe you've taken any flights with us before, nor do I see any schedule for today for you to check in for.

CAMERON

That... doesn't make any sense—I flew in Atlas when I arrived at the island a couple months ago.

She shakes her head.

CAMERON

Anyways, that doesn't really matter. I apologize for the confusion. I'm not here to check in, I was hoping to speak with the CEO of Atlas Airlines, Mr. Atlas.

MS. STAFFORD

You wish to speak with Mr. Atlas.

CAMERON

Yes.

Beat.

MS. STAFFORD

Ms. Wilson, I'm afraid that will not be possible. Mr. Atlas is very busy today, as are we.

Cameron looks around at the empty terminal.

CAMERON

I... I'm sure you are, and he is, and I wouldn't bother you if it were not of the utmost important. You see I have knowledge about a storm and a flight—

MS. STAFFORD

I'm afraid it won't be possible at this moment. A flight is taking off at noon, and we are serving passengers at the moment.

CAMERON

Yes! That is the exact flight in question, Flight, uh...

She flips through her portfolio of papers.

CAMERON

Flight 434. To Vienna.

She looks up.

CAMERON

I have some credible knowledge here about an incoming storm that will undoubtedly interfere with the plane's flight path. That may have fatal repercussions for those on board.

MS. STAFFORD

Yes, well, that won't be possible. The flight has been scheduled and will leave on time.

CAMERON

Surely, the flight can be cancelled or rescheduled.

MS. STAFFORD

Of course not. In my forty years of working here at Atlas Airlines, never has a flight been cancelled before.

CAMERON

Respectfully, Ms., uh...

MS. STAFFORD

Ms. Stafford.

CAMERON

Ms. Stafford. I hardly believe that could be true. I, the storm...

MS. STAFFORD

And I hardly believe that some rain could—

CAMERON

Not rain. Not just rain. It's a rather strong one, approaching the island in the same direction the flight will be departing at noon.

MS. STAFFORD

Our island has survived through a lot. I'm sure a little storm won't affect it.

CAMERON

I, too, am sure the island will be okay, it's the sky I'm worried about.

She takes a breath.

CAMERON

Please. I was hoping to speak with Mr. Atlas for just a few moments. I'm sure he cares very much about the well-being of his flight crew and passengers. And that he'd rather cancel or reschedule the flight than see it crash.

Silence.

CAMERON

I understand that you may want to protect the airline's reputation—

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Atlas Airlines is known worldwide for its compassion for its passengers and for the people and places its planes touch.

CAMERON

—but I'm sure a crash and the resulting loss of life would be more disastrous than the cancelled flight of a couple dozen passengers.

Beat. Ms. Stafford picks up a pen from the counter and bends her head to scribble a note.

MS. STAFFORD

I will pass along your message.

She lifts her head and gestures at the center bench with the slip of paper in her hand.

MS. STAFFORD

Please, take a seat.

CAMERON

[*Relieved*] Thank you! Thank you so much! I'm eternally grateful.

Cameron retreats to the blue bench and sets her portfolio down, again, as she watches Ms. Stafford disappear behind the counter. Cameron bends her head and sighs deeply. Lights fade.

Scene 2.1

Lights up on Cameron, sitting by the secretary's post in the same position. An undetermined amount of time has passed—the clock on the wall reads one hour later, 9:30 AM. Cameron sits on the edge of her seat—nervous, but motivated and ready. Feeling a growing worry that the secretary may not return, Cameron pushes away doubts, reaffirming her personal confidence and determination. Moments pass.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 129H has been delayed.

Helen Stafford walks in briskly, followed by a younger woman and Cameron jumps up from her seat, grabbing her portfolio of papers and research and purposefully rushing to the secretary's desk.

HELEN STAFFORD

[*Perfunctory*] Thank you so much, Ms. Willis, for waiting. If you would be so kind as to follow—

CAMERON

Thank y—Mr. Atlas! Thank you so much for your time! As I was saying to your secretary, I am a meteorologist, and my team has received infor—

The woman raises a hand to stop Cameron. She laughs.

RYAN

[*Informally, laid-back by comparison to Helen Stafford*] Ah, I think you've got the wrong person.

CAMERON

[*Confused*] Are you not—

RYAN

I'm Ms. Daniels but please, call me Ryan.

Ryan extends her hand to Cameron. She reaches out to shake it.

CAMERON

[*Hurried*] Ms. Daniels—

RYAN

[*Prompting*] Ryan—

CAMERON

Yes, Ryan, ma'am.

They shake hands.

CAMERON

[*pause*] I was hoping to speak to Mr. Atlas. You see, I am a climatologist [*holds up her work badge*], I study the weather, and I had some concerns—

RYAN

Of course. Well, as you can see, we are very busy today...

Ryan gestures to the empty waiting area. Cameron is visibly confused; Helen Stafford nods in agreement.

RYAN

...but I am happy to help sort this out.

CAMERON

Thank you!

RYAN

If you'll please, follow me through this corridor...

CAMERON

Of course.

Ryan exits, Cameron following behind her, determined. She looks behind with one worrying glance at the empty waiting area, hesitantly, but continues behind Ryan, clutching her portfolio. Helen Stafford returns to her position behind her desk, and picks up the phone.

HELEN STAFFORD

Atlas Airlines. Reaching around the world since 1981. This is...

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna leaves in 3 hours. All passengers, please make your way to the security checkpoints.

Lights fade on the lone figure of Helen Stafford at the front desk.

Scene 2.2

Only moments later. Ryan enters, with Cameron following behind, into a new room. In the middle of the room, there rests a table with one chair on one side and two on the other. Half of the room, the side with one chair and the door, is lit harshly, an artificial blend of overexposed natural light and fluorescent ceiling light that effectively shows the environment, but invasively. The other half of the room is steeped in shadow. As they enter, Cameron is speaking.

CAMERON

So, Ryan—

RYAN

Yes, Ms. Willis?

CAMERON

I was wor—you know my name?

RYAN

Yes, was that not what Helen said?

Ryan walks to the far side of the room, into the shadow. Cameron looks into the darkness, confused at where she's disappeared, but continuing their conversation unaffectedly.

CAMERON

To be honest, I couldn't keep track. "Wilson, Wallace, Warren". [*Laughs*] She said a number of names, none which were mine.

RYAN

Helen Stafford? She'd never forget a name. The memory of a mourner, that one.

CAMERON

[*Apologetic*] Oh, of course, I didn't mean to—

Ryan steps out of the shadows with a cup of coffee in her hand. She sees Cameron standing there, hovering, not awkwardly, but without purpose.

RYAN

Oh, would you like a cup?

CAMERON

That'd be lovely, thank you.

Ryan disappears back into the darkness and darts back out, just as quickly with another mug in her other hand.

RYAN

Yes, but Helen. [*Laughs enthusiastically*] We call her Mount St. Helens because she's been here long as any of us can remember, some forty years now. Also, her first name's Helen. Here, fresh.

Ryan hands her the mug. Cameron takes it graciously and sips from it, gingerly at first, then deeper when she realizes it's not too hot.

RYAN

I don't think she's taken so much as a sick day in all that time. God bless her though; we wouldn't get a *thing* done around here without her.

CAMERON

Really?

RYAN

Oh, she's the heart and soul of this place. But enough about her. [*Graciously*] Please, take a seat!

Cameron remembers her purpose and quickly sits down, setting aside her mug and putting her portfolio on the table.

CAMERON

Yes, of course!

Cameron begins to take some charts and reports out of it, spreading them on the table.

RYAN

What's here?

Ryan leans across the table, then steps back, unable to see anything.

RYAN

Oh, it's too dark in here! Hey, Danielle, could you turn on the light?

The darkened side of the room brighten with the same harsh lighting of Cameron's side. Cameron looks up from her papers to see another figure standing on the far side of the room, a lone coffeemaker on the ledge of a window, the blinds of which Danielle has pulled back.

CAMERON

Oh! Hello...

DANIELLE

Hi! Ms. Willis, is it?

CAMERON

Yes... uh, Cameron, you can call me Cameron.

RYAN

[Jokingly, gesturing at Danielle] What, does Danielle only get that courtesy?

CAMERON

Ah, no, of cours—

DANIELLE

I'm Ms. Ryan. But you can call me Danielle.

CAMERON

Danielle... so, uh, *[gesturing respectively]* you're Ryan Daniel and Danielle Ryan.

RYAN

[Nods] Huh, I never even thought about that!

DANIELLE

Funny.

RYAN

What brings you to the island, Cameron?

Cameron looks back at the papers.

CAMERON

Work. Research, actually; my team and I are here to observe the extreme weather patterns of the island. And I'm here, at the airline, because my team and I learned some worrying data about an upcoming storm that might affect a flight that's leaving this morning, Flight 434, to... *[checking papers]* Vienna.

RYAN

So you're here on the island for work.

CAMERON

[*Patient*] Yes, and I would love to talk to Mr. Atlas as soon as possible—will he be joining us here soon?

DANIELLE

Mr. Atlas is busy at the moment, in a meeting.

CAMERON

It really is urgent information. By our calculations, the flight in question will undoubtedly be caught in the storm, and the repercussions are sure to be fatal for those on board. Could that please be conveyed to Mr. Atlas?

RYAN

[*Nods, then, dismissively*] He'll be free soon.

DANIELLE

Tell me, Cameron...

CAMERON

Yes, and I really must insist, it is urgent—

DANIELLE

What do you and your team study on the island?

CAMERON

I... we, well, we study the effect of the extreme weather conditions that the island experiences on organisms. As I'm sure you know, the island of Capitoux experiences very unique weather throughout the year.

RYAN

Doesn't it? I keep telling Danielle, I never know if I'll be bringing a raincoat or shades the next day!

DANIELLE

It's pretty cool actually, a season-less haven, free from interference.

RYAN

Mr. Atlas always says it's like heaven on earth.

CAMERON

Well it's certainly very interesting, although I'm not sure I'd call this brand of seasonless a haven—that's why our team was interested in studying the life on the island, the flora and fauna, to

see how it thrives. We have a wildlife biologist and an aquatic ecologist on our team, and a botanist, coastal biologist, tropical ecologist—

DANIELLE

And you?

CAMERON

I'm a climatologist, although I'm also trained as a meteorologist.

RYAN

So, clouds and rain and all that?

CAMERON,

Yes, but with an eye, at the moment, for the long-term patterns and changes. I measure the effects of the climate and weather, and others on the team are trained in understanding the life on the island, the plants and animals. Together, we work to understand the effects they have on the natural ecosystems and organisms. Capitoux is such an interesting environment because it experiences droughts, monsoons, heatwaves, cold waves, *and* cyclones. And unlike other weather systems, there are no seasons for when they occur, no predictability. It's entirely random, and with that, we wanted to see organisms adapt to survive. Even with the conditions, still, somehow, life lives on on this island—

DANIELLE

Yeah, isn't that cool? Kind of miraculous, magical, even.

CAMERON

It's certainly very interesting, and normally, we would expect the plants to die—

RYAN

And they don't, here, do they? All the palm trees at the airport door are always green and the white sirin birds are always chirping. I think I can hear them now...

Danielle whistles a chirp sound.

CAMERON

Do you think Mr. Atlas may be free now?

DANIELLE

Nope, still busy.

RYAN

Have your, your team or research, have you found anything, any results yet?

CAMERON

Well, despite how the plants continue to persist, we've found that, incredibly, they haven't continued to grow and, exactly, thrive under plant conditions. It seems to be an internal decay of sorts, one that doesn't show from the outside necessarily, but a breakdown on the biological level, at the question of whether what we're seeing is even life, even if it is still green and fresh. It's been baffling really.

RYAN

Is that the same with animals?

CAMERON

Yes, we observed some frogs over weeks, and despite the changes to its environment, the group didn't change their behavior to find a different environment, a different, cooler pond.

DANIELLE

And what about your climate research?

Ryan fiddles with her coffee mug. Danielle takes a swig, now cold, from hers.

CAMERON

Well, based on the data we've collected so far, I don't foresee the extreme and erratic weather changing any time soon... and, as I said, it doesn't seem like life on the island is changing either.

RYAN

Wonderful! It's fantastic!

CAMERON

More fantastical. It's worrying, the effects on biolife. And more importantly, our team's unique understanding of the island's weather, with the new instruments we've operated, we've detected a storm coming that will intersect directly with a flight, 434's, path.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

[Cheery] Atlas Airlines cares about your safety. If you see something, say something.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas—

DANIELLE

Busy.

Beat.

CAMERON

Oh. [*pause*] I guess...we wait.

Beat.

RYAN

Well...

DANIELLE

Let's get on with it—

CAMERON

[*Interrupting*] What do you two do here exactly?

RYAN

We work for security.

CAMERON

[*Surprised*] Oh. You...

Cameron looks around the room and realizes how the two chairs face her. Worried, she tries to change the subject of conversation from her.

CAMERON

How did you end up working at Atlas Airlines?

RYAN

Oh, Danielle and I have been working for Mr. Atlas for years. We've been with him at his Moscow, Tehran, and Burma offices.

CAMERON

Oh! I think Burma was the nation's former name—I believe it's now Myanmar.

RYAN

Right, so Burma. And now we're here, working on an American territory, American soil, in the Pacific.

DANIELLE

Ryan, here, was so excited to get this opportunity.

CAMERON

Oh, are you two close?

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna leaves in two-and-a-half hours. Boarding starts in two hours.

RYAN

[*Gesturing to Cameron's mug*] Would you like another cup?

CAMERON

I... I suppose, yes. Yes, thank you, that'd be lovely.

Ryan pushes her chair back and grabs her and Cameron's mugs. Danielle reaches across the table and pulls a graph from Cameron's papers. Cameron defensively tries to get it back from her hands, worried about the organization and order of the papers. She lets Danielle look at it, organizing the rest of the papers.

DANIELLE

So what is this? All these lines and arrows?

Ryan fiddles with the coffee machine on the other side of the room.

CAMERON

[*Patiently*] This charts the path of the storm that is coming. The light blue is the ocean, this dark green the island, and the orange arrow shows the incoming cold wave and the accompanying cumulonimbus clouds that'll be towering.

A part from the coffeemaker breaks off and clatters on the floor with the shrill of plastic.

RYAN

Argh!

CAMERON

What's wrong? Did the coffee machine break?

RYAN

Yeah, I think so. Just this one part that detached.

CAMERON

I can help. I have the same model at home.

Cameron crosses the room, approaching Ryan and the coffee machine.

DANIELLE

Where is that, exactly?

CAMERON

Where is what?

Cameron takes the coffee machine in her hand and examines the object, turning it over in her hands and on the ledge on which it sits.

DANIELLE

Home.

CAMERON

Montpellier. I grew up in the States, but I did my degree in Climatology at a university in France—they have incredible science programs, and a real value and appreciation for the discipline. That's where the team is from actually, we're called Team *Boussole*. [To Ryan] I think a screw may have popped out here. Do you see one that may have been flung somewhere, maybe on the ground?

DANIELLE

These lines, so they're the path of the storm?

CAMERON

[Preoccupied with the coffee machine, distracted] Yes.

DANIELLE

What about rain? Couldn't it just be some normal rain?

Cameron examines the coffee machine, where the screw popped out, and then scans the floor carefully, holding the machine to herself.

CAMERON

That's what we thought originally. We weren't the least bit worried about it at all, just exploring an interesting set of data, but then we realized that the instruments we built here in Capitoux were picking up some patterns that the National Weather Service and World Meteorological Organization hadn't detected as precisely.

RYAN

I can't see it anywhere.

Danielle wanders to the other side of the table and sits in Cameron's seat.

DANIELLE

Well your instruments must be wrong if the bigger organizations don't see the same.

CAMERON

Actually, we've discovered some unique conditions about Capitiaux that other agencies did not know of—this has been one of the first studies of Capitiaux's environment, and the first to explore its weather specifically. Based on how much knowledge we had of the climate of this area of the globe, weather agencies assumed that the interaction of the atmosphere with the ocean could be predicted based on similar conditions of other locales.

RYAN

It's fine, it's broken.

CAMERON

We can fix it, don't worry! However, with our new research on the relationship between Capitiaux's latitudinal position and incoming cold waves, we've learned some factors that further allow us to predict the storms that will come. A lot of domains of knowledge are based on the best and most of what we currently know, but can veritably and validly change when we learn new information.

DANIELLE

Well, it's only a prediction.

CAMERON

"Prediction", with weather modeling, is a highly educated and reasoned projection—all but certain.

DANIELLE

But *not* certain?

CAMERON

All but. Aha!

She bends down to pick up the screen.

CAMERON

I found it!

RYAN

The coffee machine works fine.

CAMERON

No, it's broken, of course, but it's alright, we can fix it.

Danielle flips through pages.

DANIELLE

But what about errors?

CAMERON

Calculated, page two, 98%. I think if we both hold this piece down, we can fit it back together.

RYAN

Give me the machine.

Cameron hands it to her.

CAMERON

And caution would always be advised when it comes to human lives.

DANIELE

It works fine.

Cameron gestures.

CAMERON

[*Flustered*] It's self-evidently *not* working fine.

RYAN

What can a little storm do?

CAMERON

I really don't think...

DANIELLE

Only a screw.

CAMERON

It's broken, but we—

RYAN

I will handle it.

DANIELLE

And so-what if people die.

CAMERON

Danielle!

Ryan and Danielle continue, consumed by their respective activities.

CAMERON

[*Concerned*] Do you really believe that?

DANIELLE

[*Shrugs*] Does it matter?

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Please do not leave baggage unattended in the airport.

Beat.

DANIELLE

It's not even real.

CAMERON

Real?

DANIELLE

Who's to say? Maybe it's going a different direction.

Beat.

RYAN

Do you want another mug of coffee?

Cameron shakes her head.

CAMERON

[*Polite*] No, thank you.

Cameron hovers between Ryan, standing at the coffee machine, and Danielle examining the documents. She wanders, delicately approaching Danielle, who's sitting where she was. Danielle stands up and walks away, unaffected. Cameron gingerly sits down. Beat.

CAMERON

[*Changing subject*] So, when did you two start working with Atlas Airlines?

DANIELLE

Uh, three months ago?

CAMERON

[*Taken aback*] Three?

RYAN

I think so.

CAMERON

You've worked with him all over the world—Moscow, Tehran, Myanmar—in the past three months?

DANIELLE

Yes.

CAMERON

[*Beat, disbelief*] And... and before that? What did you do?

RYAN

We started working at Atlas, hm, three? Three months ago.

DANIELLE

[*Nodding*] I think so.

CAMERON

Huh.

Cameron pauses. Then she moves forward.

CAMERON

[*Cheerfully, a mask*] Well, it's really been lovely to speak with you today. I think I'll just go ask Helen about when I may be able to speak with Mr. Atlas.

RYAN

I think I can help with conveying the information to Mr. Atlas.

Finally.

CAMERON

[*Perks up*] Really?

DANIELLE

Mr. Atlas is very concerned with conditions. He has strict models of prediction.

CAMERON

I see...

DANIELLE

He doesn't appreciate when things stray from his predictions.

Cameron, eyeing Ryan and Danielle suspiciously, slowly takes out a small notebook and a pen from her of papers.

CAMERON

Say... Ryan, Danielle, would you mind spelling your names for me? I just want to make sure I get contact information for my...sources. In case I need to follow up.

RYAN

Of course! Here, I'll write it down, along with my number.

Cameron flips to a new page in her notebook.

CAMERON

[*Matter-of-fact, concealed*] Thank you.

She smiles. Ryan scribbles on the page for a few seconds, then hands it to Danielle who does the same. Cameron paces around the room, breathing deeply. Danielle finishes and takes the notebook and pen in one hand, extending it to Cameron. Cameron turns from her pacing, and reaches out her arm, taking it from Danielle, relieved.

CAMERON

Thank you.

Cameron smiles and walks back to her side of the table, reaching out to pack up her things. She looks down at the notebook and pauses.

CAMERON

Oh... Ryan, Danielle, I... I was asking for how to spell your names.

Ryan walks around to Cameron's side of the table, peering over her shoulder at the notebook. She gestures at the writing.

RYAN

And I did. Here: Ryan, Daniel.

CAMERON

This says "R-Y-4-N", "D-4-N-1-3-L." And this, Danielle, "D-4-N-1-3-L-L-3", "R-Y-4-N." These look like suggested passwords, not names. Just add one special punctuation character.

Cameron looks up, expectantly. Danielle nods.

DANIELLE

Yep, Danielle Ryan.

Beat.

CAMERON

Oh! [*looks down at the notebook*] Oh... [*looks up, relieved, nervous, she chuckles*] Ha ha...

Cameron stares expectantly at Ryan, then Danielle, then Ryan, looking for them to acknowledge the joke. Ryan continues in her stride, and Danielle pushes back the chairs at the table, sincere. Cameron, realizing it's not a joke, grows nervous.

CAMERON

Well, I... I... I guess Mr. Atlas is not available at the moment. [*Beat, disturbed*] I think I'll leave.

Ryan and Danielle assume position, standing behind the chairs in which they were sitting. Cameron stands, holding her portfolio and poised to bolt.

CAMERON

You know... I, I don't know. Both of your faces seem so familiar. So ordinary. I feel like... I feel like I've seen a, a... some random stock image that you look like...

Ryan and Danielle turn to each other to converse.

RYAN

Zij weet het. Ze moet met de anderen meegaan. [*Dutch; English translation: “She knows. She has to go with the others.”*]

DANIELLE

ستخوض معركة.

[*“Satakhub maerakatun”; Arabic; English translation: “She’s going to put up a fight.”*]

RYAN

Да, но за деньги можно купить все, что угодно. [*“Da, no za den'gi mozhno kupit' vse, chto ugodno;” Russian; English translation: “Yes, but with money one can buy anything.”*]

DANIELLE

我宁愿杀死兔子也不愿在花园里唱歌。 [*“Wǒ nìngyuàn shā sǐ tùzǐ yě bù yuàn zài huāyuán lǐ chànggē;” Mandarin; English translation: “I’d rather kill a rabbit than sing in the garden.”*]

Cameron looks back and forth at Ryan and Danielle, bewildered. The two turn their heads towards her.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna begins boarding in ninety minutes.

CAMERON

[*Urgently*] I have to go.

RYAN

Ms. Willis, now, if you’ll please come with us.

CAMERON

I have to go. I have to go.

She pushes in her chairs and turns towards the door gravely.

DANIELLE

Ms. Willis...

CAMERON

I have to go!

RYAN

Ms. Willis! You are proving to be a threat.

CAMERON

[*Tears threaten*] Are you *fucking* kidding me?...

Danielle pulls out a pair of handcuffs. She two corner Cameron against the table, apprehending her. Cameron drops her portfolio in the struggle, the papers dropping and scattering out, falling to ground like leaves.

CAMERON

Ah!

RYAN

Ms. Willis, stop!

CAMERON

Let go of me! What are you doing?

DANIELLE

You must be detained. You harbor ill will against Atlas Airlines—

CAMERON

Of course I don't!

DANIELLE

And you must allow us to take you to detainment.

CAMERON

I—[*sigh*].

Cameron ceases to resist and lets Ryan and Danielle escort her from the room—surrendered but defiant and determined—leaving an autumn of lost data on the floor...along with another screw.

Scene 3

Lights up on an airport detention facility. Separating the left third of the stage from the right two-thirds, a row of black, rectangular bars, reaching from floor to as high up as one can imagine, march a diagonal row of sentries that open wide toward the fourth wall, inviting. The detention cell, on the right of the bars, features a clean, sterile, industrial look at the opening to the cell, white resin floors and black bars. As the cell approaches the right, the clean industrial gives way to the old and decay of a chateau's dingy underground, gray-brown stones that build the sloping walls and broken floors. Along the back wall of the cell, a bench protrudes from the wall, a block of stone, a bed and crypt. On the wall behind it, there's etchings and writings, words scribbled, echoes from the past. Through this comfortingly threatening right-side of the cell, green creeps in; there are winding vines crawling in cracks of the wall, and stubborn, ceaseless and persistent leaves—be them weeds or proper, wanted plants—finding life between stone and confinement. There is no window, no bathroom facilities. The light remains dim on the far-right of the cell. On the left of the bars exists a door to the room and what one imagines must be a wall that is enveloped in the shadows of the unknown.

The door opens. Ryan and Danielle walk Cameron—resolute in her goals and principles, but yielding to the undeniable force of her situation—into the detention facility. Dazing on the back bench with her head bent to the right, Lauren lays languidly, draped in a light and half-transparent, lilac blanket. Sitting comfortably on the floor to the right, on the border of the decay, and sitting on top of a brown-and-orange plaid cushion of fabric, Ember calmly moves a charcoal pencil across the page of a sketchbook bound in a black cover. There's a white ceramic pitcher resting on the floor on the border of where the resin gives way to stone, and not much else. The two, Lauren and ember, wear some form of denim overalls, Lauren with a white t-shirt embroidered with strawberries, and Ember with an earthy green t-shirt. Ember looks up from her book at the intrusion, surprised to see a new person. Her gasp alerts Lauren, who readjusts her position to glance at the door; seeing Cameron, she sits up, startled. Cameron resists her captors, pleasing in words not action.

CAMERON

Please, I really don't understand why you're doing this, *how* you can do this.

RYAN

Cameron, you've proven a threat.

DANIELLE

You'll remain detained here.

CAMERON

And what is here?

Danielle holds onto Cameron firmly as Ryan lets go, moving to the cell bars, retrieving a set of mostly golden keys from her pocket, and unlocks the barred door with the single red one.

RYAN

Atlas Airlines' detainment facility.

Ryan steps aside, and Danielle pushes Cameron into the cell. Cameron stumbles forward, turning to see Danielle shut the door and Ryan locking it.

CAMERON

And why would an airport necessitate such a detainment cell?

RYAN

Don't run.

CAMERON

Ryan, Danielle, I mean... this isn't *ideal*, but still, I must insist—a plane is going to take off, and I must speak to Mr. Atlas about it.

DANIELLE

He's busy.

Ryan and Danielle exit through, leaving Cameron staring at the door to the room. She turns to look into the cell, acknowledging Lauren and Ember's presence.

CAMERON

[As a sigh] Hi.

EMBER

[With a smile] Hi darling.

Cameron smiles. She turns, speaking directly to the silent and absent Lauren.

CAMERON

Hi, there.

LAUREN

[Half-apathetic] Hello.

Cameron smiles; then, her face breaks into worry. She paces.

CAMERON

Gosh.

Ember scoots over and pats the spot next to her.

EMBER

It'll be okay, dearie.

CAMERON

[Overwhelmed] Ah, I'm so sorry. My name is Cameron.

Ember extends her hand.

EMBER

I'm Ember.

Cameron bends to friendly shake her hand. Turning.

LAUREN

Hi, Lauren.

Cameron waves. Lauren waves back half-heartedly, then sits back, desolate.

CAMERON

Well, I'm here because I've been trying to speak with Mr. Atlas about a situation with a plane. May I inquire about you two?

Ember continues to work in her sketchbook.

EMBER

We've been here ages.

CAMERON

Ages?

She begins to eye their familiarity and comfort in their surroundings with fear. Lauren lays down again, this time with her eyes vaguely following Cameron.

EMBER

Lauren, here, a couple months. I've been here some years now.

CAMERON

Years?

Ember nods.

CAMERON

I can't... I.... Listen, I just came to the airport this morning. There, there... there's this plane, Flight, Flight... oh gosh, they took my portfolio, I can't remember.

EMBER

Flight 434?

CAMERON

Yes! Flight 434, to Vienna, departing at noon! I'm a climatologist, [*calming down*] I'm currently working on the island with my team from Montpellier, from France, to research the effects of Capitoux's unique weather on the vitality of life, of organisms, of plants, on the island.

Cameron sits down next to Ember.

CAMERON

We saw this storm coming from the West that would undoubtedly knock a plane from the sky, and I came here this morning to inform Mr. Atlas that Flight 434, leaving this morning, would be in harm's way—potentially, *all* on board could die.

Cameron pauses and takes a breath.

CAMERON

Flight 434... you *know* it?

EMBER

Yes, it departs at noon every single day. Like clockwork, it's daily, regular. It's how we've kept track of time passing here, without daylight or a window to let us know the passing of time.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 departs in ninety minutes. Boarding for passengers begins in one hour.

Cameron looks up at the omniscient voice. It's the first time she's actively noticed it's regular presence. Ember flips to the last page of her sketchbook and shows Cameron the page.

EMBER

Been keeping tally of every time it takes off. It's the only constant flight that leaves this airport.

Cameron stares aghast at the utter number of tallies on the sheet, horrified. Ember flips back to her previous page before Cameron can take in the immense number of days, the number of flights, that Ember has seen here. Ember continues drawing.

EMBER

Cameron, what brings you here?

CAMERON

[*Soft*] I have to get out.

Cameron gets up from her seated position next to Ember and approaches the cell bars, shaking them.

CAMERON

I have to—

LAUREN

The bars are strong.

Beat.

LAUREN

They really do hold.

Cameron steps back, momentarily defeated. Her eyes wander around the cell, determined once again. Catching sight of the corner, she approaches, exploring.

LAUREN

It's decay. It's been this crumbling mess long as we've been here... the walls, the floor.

Cameron watches the decay.

LAUREN

[*Defiant, given up*] Our castle.

She flops back onto her bed of stone, turning away from Cameron and Ember. Cameron forgets the corner and paces.

EMBER

Cameron, sit down.

CAMERON

I don't know what to be more worried about, the flight or my freedom.

EMBER

Sit, sit.

LAUREN

It's no use, really.

EMBER

Oh, shut up, you.

Ember gestures at the spot next to her. Cameron sits again, a reflex.

EMBER

Tell me, tell me more about your research.

CAMERON

We... we came from France. We had read a fascinating paper, the observations of one Jerilynn Corbin, an Englishwoman and researcher, about the nature of the nature of this island. She had observed life on the island—the natural plants and animals—and done a survey of the coast, the water, and forest, and she had some intriguing notes about the unique growth of life on the island. She had only observations herself, and the conclusion of her paper indicated that further research would be necessary to understand the why and how of these conditions, specifically theorizing that the unique position of the island in its experience of weather patterns could be illuminating.

Cameron looks over Ember's shoulder at the page that Ember is scribbling on.

CAMERON

We researched the island for a whole year before we departed to come here. Interestingly, there'd never been a comparably study done on Capitoux, or even much knowledge on anything to do with the island—its history, the geography or natural life, even on the goings-on at the airport, with Atlas Airlines, or on Mr. Atlas.

Lauren turns over on her bench, shifting the blanket to a new, comfortable position. Cameron looks over at her motion.

CAMERON

His work is... interesting. He has money. And influence. Heads of state, old tycoons and new magnates, the philanthropists and speakers... touching institutions, but also people's hearts.

Cameron rolls her eyes. She turns back to Ember.

CAMERON

So, we arrived at the island. Arrived here, actually, through this airport. Our team of researchers, we study the plants, the ecosystem, the coastline, the animals and other organisms, the water... and the weather. We've been looking at the island's extreme weather, I'm sure you're both familiar with it.

EMBER

[*Nodding*] I remember. We can't see or really feel much of the outside, but I remember that, that climate. The uncertainty, really...

CAMERON

We found this, this, this *internal* decay to the life here. It looked very much alive, and it functioned fine, but plants felt hollow and nothing much seemed to be growing or changing, just existing.

Lauren bolts up.

LAUREN

Existing?

CAMERON

Yes, just existing.

LAUREN

And decay?

Cameron nods. Lauren rests back, relieved.

LAUREN

[*Quietly*] I've always seen that, I thought I was crazy.

Cameron opens up, facing Lauren and Ember.

CAMERON

We were absolutely shocked. The team, our informal title is Team Boussole—

EMBER

“Boussole”?

CAMERON

“Compass”, French. We've been looking for the key to this phenomenon, how it thrives, or at least, exists in this chaotic weather. It doesn't really... the air can be hot, humid, frigid, windy, it sits there.

I'm a climatologist, although also trained as a meteorologist... which is how I got to noticing the upcoming storm.

Cameron gets up, looking at the bars. She turns, examining the walls, the back wall of the cell. There, inscribed in rough scratches and scrawled in broad, frantic, black strokes, warnings and omens. Lauren sits up. Cameron traces the words with her fingers.

CAMERON

[*Whispering*] What kind of place is this?

LAUREN

I often wonder why such a detainment facility must exist in an airport.

Cameron turns to look at Lauren, now apparently lucid.

LAUREN

Why there's such a need. Ryan and Danielle are security officers here, I suppose. Sometimes they work with the pre-boarding screening officers. Sometimes they protect Mr. Atlas. They do work *for* him. One can imagine... imagine a threat from time to time. A threat to the flight, to the passengers—

She turns to Cameron.

LAUREN

To the man. And one can imagine they're here to *protect*. From threats. Protect the flight, protect *us*. But I don't remember consenting to this *security*. It feels rather invasive, violating.

She holds up the half-transparent lilac blanket.

LAUREN

No privacy.

Lauren collapses again, given up.

CAMERON

Have you ever tried to escape?

EMBER

Tried. There's no way out through this side of the cell—

She waves vaguely towards the right.

EMBER

There's no window to climb out through, and the crumble on that side is only encroaching, never giving way. Before Lauren was here, I tried escaping, once, when Ryan and Danielle came by. Just slipped by them when they opened the door and ran as fast and as far as I could.

Ember stops scribbling in the sketchbook.

EMBER

I couldn't get past the front doors. There's security there, and people watching. And since I left right under their watch, Ryan and Danielle were able to catch me—going out of the North Terminal, the international gates.

Ember looks at Lauren, resting.

EMBER

And Lauren here doesn't even want to attempt to escape.

LAUREN

What's the point? We'll fail, they'll just add another barrier. It's not enough.

EMBER

[*To Cameron*] I won't go without her. I don't think I can, for one, we might need two to get past. There's no communication in or out, and I don't know what to do now.

Ember turns back to the sketchbook. She closes it and sets it aside, getting up to pace and to stretch her legs. Cameron gets up too, walking over to the bars and shaking them half-heartedly. She sighs, then turns, leaving the industrial for the brown, gray, and green of the far side. There's a mystical quality to the cell's fade from industry to earth.

EMBER

There's plants too. They've been slowly creeping in as long as the cell's been crumbling, and as long as we've been there.

Cameron notices the vines on the walls first.

CAMERON

It's almost... charming.

Ember smiles. Cameron bends down next to a sprout that's persevered, rooted between stones. She gently lifts a leaf. She lets it go, and it bounces back to its tall, thriving position. She smiles.

CAMERON

It's so... living. My team's been inspecting the flora of the island for a couple months now, but it all feels rather... plastic, by comparison. [*Bitter.*] Feels like home.

EMBER

It's living alright. It's the only thing that gets Lauren, here, up.

Ember bends forward, speaking more softly so Lauren doesn't hear, respectful to her slumber and her feelings.

EMBER

She stays sleeping most of the time. Not much motivated to do anything, and an apathetic, listless wreck most of the time. But, she gets up once a day, to water them.

LAUREN

I get up to walk too.

Yikes.

EMBER

Yes, of course, darling!

Ember flashes a smile at Cameron. They share a silent laugh.

EMBER

Ryan and Danielle are kind enough to bring water daily for the plants.

She gestures at the white pitcher in the corner.

LAUREN

Kind enough to lock the door when they leave too.

CAMERON

And what about for you? Water? Food?

LAUREN

White birds. Spinning wheel. Prick goes the shorn sheep!

Cameron looks past Ember at the far corner of the cell, seeing no bathroom either, only a still shelter. Ember talks past her—it's immaterial.

EMBER

Strange dreams.

CAMERON

What are you doing?

EMBER

Writing. I'll probably work on a drawing in the afternoon.

CAMERON

How do you know when—

EMBER

When the plane takes off.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Passengers for Flight 434: please make sure you have made your way through the pre-boarding security check as soon as possible. Your safety is our priority at Atlas Airlines.

Cameron looks up and notices the voice. Ember rips the page she was working on from the sketchbook. She folds it into a paper airplane and throws it at Lauren, hitting her. She rolls over with a groan, and Ember laughs. Cameron smiles; then, her gaze turns back towards the walls.

CAMERON

Did you two write all that on the walls?

Ember shakes her head and gestures to the sketchbook.

EMBER

I've only written in here. I've heard it was written before my time.

LAUREN

She's heard stories.

EMBER

Ryan and Danielle told me about before I was in here. I don't think I was the first, here with Atlas.

CAMERON

Airlines?

EMBER

Who knows? I know this is a tiny island, and barely anyone even knows about it, let alone what happens here. But a fair few seem to be brought here by Mr. Atlas, and with questions. Not unlike yourself. And gosh, none of us even knew of *this* chamber.

LAUREN

They say it's haunted.

EMBER

She says it's haunted. Now, we've only these words to know why or what happened, and we long for the key that can open that door.

She looks wistfully at the barred door to the cell.

CAMERON

Have either of you ever seen Mr. Atlas?

LAUREN

I hear he has a blue beard.

EMBER

I heard he's only a puppet.

CAMERON

He worries me... And how did you two end up here?

LAUREN

I have a headache.

Lauren closes her eyes and puts her head down.

CAMERON

[Quietly] Oh, I'm sorry!

Lauren sighs, tired. A few moments pass. Cameron meanders around the cell softly. Then, at a loss, she wanders to Lauren's bench and kneels next to it. She lifts her arms onto the edge of the bench near Lauren's head and rests her head on them. Lauren opens one eye, hesitant.

CAMERON

[*Softly*] How did you end up here?

Lauren opens her mouth to answer, then decides not to.

LAUREN

It doesn't matter.

Lauren turns towards the wall and faces away from Cameron. Cameron sits, dejected. Then Lauren turns back, having retrieved a small, silver mechanical device that fits in the palm of her hand, and offers it to Cameron.

LAUREN

It's a music box. You turn this little crank with your hand, and it runs through this punctured piece of paper. The holes are the notes and chords. It can play a short melody.

Cameron takes the music box from her and turns the crank. A delicate lullaby, "Dance of the Knights", plays. The two look at each other.

LAUREN

We have two. Two, um, of these strips.

She pulls a second roll of the plastic-paper strip from her pocket and hands it to Cameron.

LAUREN

But that one's my favorite.

Cameron pulls the "Knights" strip out of the musicbox.

CAMERON

How did you end up here?

Lauren doesn't answer.

CAMERON

Ember, she said everyone first comes to Atlas with questions.

She looks up.

CAMERON

What was yours?

LAUREN

[*Hesitant*] I came to interview Mr. Atlas. He had just delivered that statement, the one at the summit at Agincourt?

Cameron nods. She remembers.

LAUREN

He was talking about reaching every corner of the Globe. I came here to ask him about that, his intent for expansion, with all his businesses and empires, and then also about the, well, I called it “rotting”, something rotting on this island.

Cameron replaced the first song with the second, feeding the strip into the music box.

LAUREN

I had seen the trees and lakes, and his Airlines is really all there is on this island. Ryan and Danielle kept me, uh, preoccupied for a little while, while I was trying to get to Mr. Atlas—

CAMERON

I know that.

LAUREN

[*Laughs*] And then I ended up here.

Cameron turns the handle on the music box, and it plays “The Imperial March”. They watch the box. It ends.

CAMERON

It almost sounds the same.

LAUREN

I don’t like that one as much. And it gets kind of unbearable and hopeless, only getting to hear from these two melodies. Over and over again.

EMBER

Well...

LAUREN

Well, I tried making my own at first. You can make your own paper melodies if you use your own paper and poke holes in it. I did that at first, with Ember’s sketchbook—

Ember waves the book.

LAUREN

But the thing is that that paper is not as strong as this.

She shakes one of the plastic strips.

LAUREN

It's not this durable plastic-paper. It gets torn after one crank through.

EMBER

You can still hear it once through—

LAUREN

But it doesn't last. It's not worth it.

EMBER

I don't have any musical inclinations; otherwise, I'd try my hand at making some songs for us. And for her.

Lauren enthusiastically turns the crank two slow rotations. The slow, haunting notes of "The Imperial March" chime softly before she stops...

LAUREN

Argh!

She sets it down, frustrated. Lauren gets up from her bed, a first. She wanders over to the stoned side of the room, moving like a ghost, only hovering, and leaving Cameron to watch her. She picks up the white pitcher and water sloshes in it. She bends by the same sprig of green that Cameron noticed earlier, and gently pours a stream of water in the crack between bricks. Cameron gets up and hovers behind Lauren, unsure and uncertain, watching her ritual.

LAUREN

They're only weeds. And rude vines.

She moves to another tuft of fertile grass and tipover the pitcher.

LAUREN

But they're green.

The water splashes down. Cameron moves next to her and silently helps her to water the plants, tending to each sprout of life.

CAMERON

[*With difficulty*] They grow with time, do they?

Lauren breaks from their pas de deux together, moving away from her side and putting the pitcher back. Cameron is left kneeling on the floor. Lauren goes back to her bench and resumes her slumbering position. Cameron, nervous, turns to Ember.

CAMERON

[*Bright*] And you? How did you end up here?

Cameron moves over to Ember, sitting beside her, resting her elbows on her knees and chin on her palms. A child.

EMBER

I used to work here actually. Up above, with the planes. I'd see them take off. I was part of the group of people working here in the first years of this airport opening. It was exciting, those times, this place.

Lauren turns the crank of the music box. "Dance of the Knights"...

AIRPLANE INTERCOM VOICE

Atlas Airlines is proud to be the only airline flying to the island of Capitoux. The weather outside in Capitoux is sunny, without a cloud in the sky.

CAMERON

Oh, I have to get out of here. You didn't stay?

Ember shakes her head. She gets up from her seated position on the ground.

EMBER

I left, went back for the States. The winds blew too strong here and in the wrong direction. I saw the flights take off from up there, but they never quite landed.

Ember paces, looking out beyond the bars.

CAMERON

[*Distracted*] I wonder if there may be a way to call for Ryan and Danielle at least.

EMBER

The times are tense. The atmosphere, restless. Those in power refuse to listen to those they represent. The nation, ravaged. Thousands... thousands dead. A crisis with the FDA. Protests against the federal administration. Protests at the Capitol. Clashes of riot gear and surgical gloves.

CAMERON

Ah, I've seen this story.

Ember turns to Cameron. A tearful smile. Lauren plays the "The Imperial March".

EMBER

The year was 1988.

Beat.

EMBER

It was... the AIDS epidemic. We saw so, so much destruction. There were massive rollbacks—

CAMERON

The flight can't have taken off yet, we would have heard it—

EMBER

And we saw them go. I saw my friends go. I saw many of them die—

CAMERON

You know, ever since Mr. Atlas bought this island, it's only been decay. Decay and death and—

EMBER

One in my arms—

CAMERON

But this can't last forever, this must be the late stages of his—

EMBER

And. I learned, in my youth. The history of the world is not a straight line from worse to better. Getting progressively progr... Evolution and time march forward, indifferent.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 will be departing at noon. Passengers: boarding will commence soon.

Cameron rushes to the cell door and inspects the lock.

CAMERON

I am going to get there, to him.

EMBER

It doesn't always last. You can't count on it.

Cameron turns to her.

CAMERON

Okay. Get this: the political atmosphere is tense. Those in power refuse to listen to the people they represent. University students are protesting rising tuition costs, workers are staying at home, the country is in a state of national crisis with shortages, and millions are calling for the resignation of the state leader. The year is... 1968, May, and the place, France.

EMBER

Geez, how old *are* you?

CAMERON

[*Laughs*] No, I wasn't there... But I've walked the streets of France today. In winding paths in Montpellier and on the wide boulevards of Paris, you still see messages on the walls, carved into stone or painted new with cans, the same that first adorned the youth's ideals in May, 1968.

EMBER

No, but that's the thing—there's just the messages, the posters, the pretty, fun words and sweet sayings.

CAMERON

They've lasted.

EMBER

Yes, they've lasted, but what of their effect? Can't tell from the walls, but that's no guarantee.

She looks at the walls, covered in words.

EMBER

We don't know where they are now. And look, look where we are now.

Lauren speaks, perched on the edge of slumber.

LAUREN

It's hopeless.

EMBER

No, not hopeless. Work. A struggle, and hard arduous effort. But doable. And very, very possible.

CAMERON

I do wonder...

EMBER

Yes?

CAMERON

You said you got caught trying to get through the front door.

EMBER

Yes.

CAMERON

Well, when I was walking in, I saw a sign that said the East Terminal was under construction, and currently shut down. Would it help to go through there instead? There would be no security or airline employees there at the moment.

EMBER

Yes. Yes! That would be, that would be it...

CAMERON

And you said the bars can't be broken through?

EMBER

Yes.

CAMERON

But if we had the key to the door...

EMBER

How would we—

The door to the room swings open with a quiet and resolute bang. Ryan and Danielle enter, Ryan holding the coffee pot, now filled with water, and Danielle swinging the ring of keys. Cameron makes eye contact with Ember.

RYAN

Hello!

DANIELLE

Good to see you all.

RYAN

We brought—

LAUREN

[*A breath*] Water.

Lauren bolts up and rushes to get the white ceramic pitcher. She runs back, and approaches the bars, crouching at them.

RYAN

Here...

Ryan crouches next to the bars and pours water from the coffee pot into Lauren's pitcher, through the bars. Cameron watches the act. This is routine. Ember walks over to bars across from Danielle, downstage from Lauren and Ryan.

EMBER

Danielle?

DANIELLE

Yes.

EMBER

[*Nothing, nothing*] What does the weather look like out there?

DANIELLE

A slight drizzle that's been going on for about an hour. It's pretty, calming.

EMBER

Brilliant.

She smiles and exchanges a glance with Cameron.

EMBER

Speaking of a drizzle... there's a bit of a leak on the far side, here, by the bricks and crawling ivy.
[Cocks her head] Would you mind taking a look?

DANIELLE

A leak? I can't imagine how. Of course. A moment...

Danielle opens the door to the cell with a key from her ring, a red one. Ember walks to the far side of the cell, pointing out a phantom spring. Danielle steps into the cell.

DANIELLE

Ryan?

Ryan looks up from her interaction with Lauren.

RYAN

Hmm? Oh, of course.

She moves to the door, guarding it from opening. Danielle walks towards Ember. Cameron reaches for the black sketchbook and Ember's pencil, abandoned on the floor.

CAMERON

May I?

EMBER

Of course. Danielle! Right over here...

Cameron rips a page from the sketchbook and starts folding it up. Danielle bends to examine the stone floor, where Ember is gesturing.

DANIELLE

I don't see...

EMBER

Oh, it's started here! It must have dried up.

She gestures vaguely at the wall and corner, and Danielle gets up to inspect. Cameron smooths a crease.

DANIELLE

I really... I really don't see.

EMBER

Oh, it must be gone now. No matter!

Danielle nods and turns, walking to exit the cell. Cameron lifts her arm and playfully shoots a paper plane at Danielle.

CAMERON

[Laughs] Watch out!

The paper plane hits Danielle in the head, surprising her. She stumbles, and the keys fall from her hand, a clang of freedom echoing as they hit the floor.

DANIELLE

Ah!

Cameron quickly swoops in and scoops them up with her right hand. She switches the ring to her left hand and offers it to Danielle.

CAMERON

Here! Sorry!

Danielle picks up the paper plane and crushes it slowly in her hand. She shakes her head and takes the keys.

DANIELLE

Thanks...

Cameron sits back down and takes up the sketchbook, tearing out another piece. She takes the pen and starts poking holes in it. Danielle pockets the ring of keys, keeping the ball of paper in her palm, and walks out of the cell, shutting the door behind her and staring blankly. Ryan nods with Lauren and then rises.

RYAN

See you.

Lauren retreats and looks at Cameron and Ember. The three hover gingerly with bated breath.

EMBER

[Cheery] Goodbye!

CAMERON

Oh! Ryan, Danielle!

The two look back.

CAMERON

Do let Mr. Atlas know that I am still interested in speaking with him!

RYAN

He—

CAMERON

I have words only of acceptance!

The two pause and look at each other. Then, they continue. Danielle starts to exit the detainment room first, with Ryan following. The three breathe a sigh of relief. Then, Danielle pauses abruptly, mid-step. They freeze.

DANIELLE

Wait, Ryan, the door—

RYAN

Oh!

The two hurry back in and surround the lock of the barred door. The three are struck with terror. Danielle fumbles in her pocket. Then, Ryan reaches into her pocket and pulls out a second set of keys, finding the red one. For the three, relief. Ryan locks the door, and the two exit. Moments pass, the three frozen. Then, they break...

LAUREN

I cannot believe!...

EMBER

We did it.

CAMERON

Oh we can—

She holds out the red key, hidden in the palm of her hand.

EMBER

We did it! I can't believe—this key, after all this time...

CAMERON

We—

EMBER

We have to wait. They have lunch at noon and then we can sneak past the break room unseen.

CAMERON

The airplane will have taken off by then!

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna departs in one hour.

Cameron looks up at, what, God?

CAMERON

Yes, we know!!

She looks down at Ember and Lauren.

CAMERON

You two have to go.

LAUREN

Cameron...

CAMERON

No, truly. There's a plane that's going up in an hour, and I have to do everything I can to make sure it doesn't, make sure those who would board it are safe and on the ground.

EMBER

It leaves every day—

CAMERON

And it won't leave today.

She turns, looking at Lauren.

CAMERON

Now, you two. Be ready to bolt at noon, promise me?

Cameron presses the key in Lauren's hand.

LAUREN

Cameron, no, I—

CAMERON

Wait!

Cameron rushes to Ember's plaid cushion on the floor that befriends the scattered gathering of the sketchbook, torn paper, and the pen. She picks up a scrap and rushes back. Lauren looks down at the key and pockets it.

CAMERON

Sit, sit!

Cameron takes Lauren's arm and sits her down on her bench, on top of the lilac blanket. Ember sits on the plaid cushion on the ground and flips to a new page in her sketchbook. Cameron holds out her hand.

CAMERON

Your music box, please!

Lauren, smiling, pulls it out of the pocket of her overalls and places it in Cameron's outstretched hand.

CAMERON

Thank you!

Cameron takes out the plastic strip of music wound in the metallic contraption and tucks it in her pocket. She gingerly feeds a paper strip, rough around the edges, into the box, and slowly turns the crank. The wheel turns, and the music boxes a soft, lullaby, "La Vie En Rose". The music box tears the strip as the notes ring out. Cameron pauses before the last chord, then lets it chime and echo in the space between thoughts. She looks up at Lauren. The two are smiling.

CAMERON

Did you—

LAUREN

Thank you!

Lauren hugs Cameron. They part. Cameron hands the music box back to Lauren, who absentmindedly places it on the bench next to her. She stares at Cameron a moment, then stands up, energized. She looks around and scoops up the paper plane that Ember had aimed at her early.

LAUREN

Ah! What's this?

EMBER

Oh, I'm drafting a poem.

Cameron takes the lilac blanket in her hands. Lauren sits back down next to her, crossing her knees, and Cameron comfortably drapes the lilac over both their legs.

EMBER

Just odd lines and phrases.

LAUREN

“...an omen on the shelf...” “... broke like thunder, shattered light fell around...” “...then came the spring of cigarette smoke...”

CAMERON

“We woke up and saw the sun set...” “We ache for what was”

LAUREN

“...a haven woven of beams of light and held up with strings of fate...” “The future remains theoretical...”

Lauren leans back, content. She rests her shoulder on Cameron's shoulder. Ember sketches in rough, ardent strokes. Cameron glances at Lauren.

CAMERON

I can imagine a haven far away... with beams of light and verdant hills.

LAUREN

Are there flowers? I like pink roses dipped in green.

CAMERON

If you say so.

Beat.

LAUREN

I do.

CAMERON

You do?

They sit up and look at each other.

LAUREN

There would be. There would be lush, verdant hills, rolling over, and sheep in the meadow. They won't stay locked up, they'll roam but they'll always come back to us. And blooms would decorate the branches above, and squirrels will pick the one below. And there'd be no white birds.

She smiles.

The world would open when the winter thawed... We'll shear the sheep come summer and knit with the wool come winter.

Her smile adopts sorrow.

And... the winter would come, and the blooms wouldn't last. They won't grow back either. It'd be cold, and you can't share a sweater for two. We could plant new flowers in early spring but... knowing they'd suffer, should we? Would we?

She shakes her head. Tears threaten, and Lauren rests her head. The two rest, holding the moment. Lights fade.

Scene 4

Lights up, just barely, on the airport detainment facility. Have moments passed? Minutes? Hours could have passed, sitting. Footsteps approach. Cameron and Lauren scramble, Lauren getting up and frantically tossing the key in the white pitcher, with a “plop!” of the water. Cameron smooths the blanket out and sits on the ground next to the bench, resting her head on the edge. Lauren lays back down on the stone and lays rigidly languidly. Ryan and Danielle enter.

RYAN

Hello again.

DANIELLE

So soon. We never do this.

RYAN

We’ve come to take...

Cameron stands up.

RYAN

Lauren.

Lauren stands up, bewildered.

LAUREN

Okay.

RYAN

It won’t be long. Mr. Atlas wants to see you.

Lauren turns to Cameron and Ember, petrified. Ember is fixed on the motions of Ryan and Danielle. Ryan pulls out her set of keys. Ember breathes. Ryan opens the door and beckons at Lauren. She walks out slowly and looks back in the cell. Ryan locks the door behind her, breaking her gaze. Danielle opens the door to the room and walks out, beckoning for Lauren to follow her freely, with Ryan escorting from behind. They exit. Cameron turns to Ember, both shocked, distraught. Cameron sits down on the bench and wraps herself in the lilac. Ember looks to make sure that they are not returning, then hurries to retrieve the key, now wet, from the pitcher. Cameron sits back, and, resting her hands on the bench, realizes that the music box is still sitting there. Ember shakes the key and tucks it in the pockets of overalls, safe. Cameron picks up the box and slowly turns the handle. A soft, slow, melancholic “Dance of the Knights” plays. Lights fade to beams and shadows. Ember approaches the stone bench and sits next to Cameron. Cameron lays down, her head in Ember’s lap. The two hold, hold for a moment. Cameron holds the music box tightly in her hands, and Ember looks up into the great abyss, pensive.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Passengers of Flight 434: Please make your way to gate 4F to begin boarding soon.

Footsteps approach and the door to the room swings open. The beams and shadows give way to light. Cameron and Ember sit up, expectant. Ryan walks in, then Danielle... then Lauren. Cameron and Ember smile. Cameron rises.

CAMERON

Lauren!

Ember rises behind her.

DANIELLE

Hello.

Ryan unlocks the door to the cell, and Lauren walks in, listlessly. She sits on the stone bench mechanically.

CAMERON

Lauren?

Ryan and Danielle exit. Cameron bends down next to Lauren.

CAMERON

Lauren?

She takes Laurens hands, shakes her. Lauren remains lifeless, suspended between a dream and death.

CAMERON

[*Forcefully*] Lauren.

Tears.

CAMERON

Laur—

LAUREN

Flight 434 will begin boarding. Passengers in Group 1, please make your way to the gate.

Beat. Shock.

CAMERON

Lauren...

Lauren slumps. Slumber. Cameron waits momentarily, mouth agape and devastated. She rises. Paces.

CAMERON

I—

She paces and catches sight of the pitcher. The water and her tears, she takes to water the plants. She attends to the one prominent one on the floor, the vines on the walls.

EMBER

Cameron... I don't even...

Cameron sets the pitcher down and roughly pats her face.

CAMERON

We...

Footsteps. The door swings open.

RYAN

Cameron?

CAMERON

Lauren...

RYAN

Cameron, please come with us. Mr. Atlas will see you now.

Danielle enters the cell. Ember leans in to Cameron.

CAMERON

Ember.

EMBER

Cameron.

Beat.

CAMERON

Act up.

Ember nods. Ryan joins.

EMBER

Act up.

DANIELLE

Ms. Willis. Now.

Danielle and Ryan pull Cameron away from Lauren and Ember, and out of the cell. Lauren starts.

LAUREN

Roses!

CAMERON

Lauren!

Cameron is dragged out by Ryan and Daniel, fighting every inch. Blackout.

Scene 5

Lights up on an office. On the right, a slick, white desk, a curved three-fold piece of chrome, glass, and plastic, facing the left. Behind the desk, right most, a white leather chair, a sleek ergonomic and broadly ribbed seat with silver aluminum legs and black wheels. In front of the desk, sitting center-stage, a dark brown, leather armchair with a rosewood frame, aluminum legs, and dark wheels. The walls on the left and right are white and chrome, as slick and modern as the desk, with touches of a neon blue in slits that suggest light but not power. In the background, a wall of glass, looking out onto airport apron, a line of still airplanes at gates, an newly landed airplane moving slowly into to an arrival gate, a single airplane that left the runway a minute ago exiting sight as it reaches the sky, and a dozens of puffy, towering cumulonimbus clouds gracing a bright, auspicious, and blue sky. On the white table, a tablet in front of the bright white seat, a potted plant on the far side of the tabletop, and a pile of Cameron's portfolio of papers in front of the brown armchair.

Sitting in the slick white chair, one Mr. Atlas, dressed in a navy suit with a light blue pocket square with small red details, a white shirt, a navy tie, and brown dress shoes, and with his hands in a steeple gesture.

The door to the room, a cut out into the left wall, swings inward, and Danielle walks in, stepping out of the doorway in front of the door. Cameron is guided in, her hands restrained by Ryan. Cameron's dejection fades quickly to surprise as she sees Mr. Atlas, who looks up from his position. He sits relaxed in his chair, leisurely enjoying the read of a book. As he flips a page, he looks up, and his face breaks into a wide smile, seeing Cameron.

MR. ATLAS

Cameron! Please, come in.

He waves his hand, gesturing for her to step into the room, as he closes the book and puts it down. Ryan lets go of Cameron and pushes her forward a step. She stands a moment. Finally.

CAMERON

[*Hub.*] Mr. Atlas.

MR. ATLAS

[*Charming*] It's wonderful to finally meet you. I've heard so much.

CAMERON

[*Half-indignant*] I could say the same to you. I've been here [*searching for the time*]...

AIRCOM INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna departs in thirty minutes.

CAMERON

Yes, thank you—two-and-a-half hours, now.

RYAN

It's been fun though, right?

CAMERON

Oh, an absolute ball, just splendid really.

MR. ATLAS

I'm so glad to hear you've enjoyed your time with the Airlines thus far.

Cameron sighs. She stands, a bit defeated at a passive loss of purpose, in the space between.

MR. ATLAS

Please, please, take a seat.

She remembers her place and jumps forward, approaching his desk. Pulling the brown airchair-on-wheels back, she spies her portfolio sitting on the desk.

CAMERON

My papers!

She rushes forward, sink into the chair, and begins shuffling through them, attempting to put them back into some semblance of order.

MR. ATLAS

Ryan and Danielle brought them to me. They said you were carrying them with you, brought them here?

RYAN

Yeah, you had left them in the...

Ryan looks to Danielle, trying to recall.

DANIELLE

Yeah, from the—

RYAN

Back in Scene 2.

MR. ATLAS

[*Dismissing them.*] Ryan, Danielle, thank you so much.

DANIELLE

Right, boss.

RYAN

Bye, Cameron.

Cameron sighs. Ryan and Danielle exit. Cameron continues to sift through the papers, worried.

MR. ATLAS

I do hope they haven't been damaged in any way, it was never my intention—

CAMERON

[*Sarcastic*] Oh, they're fine.

She stops.

CAMERON

I apologize, I don't mean to be short. It's just that I've been through quite a bit since I arrived here this morning, and I've been trying to to speak with you—

MR. ATLAS

Yes, I apologize profusely for the wait, but I am so glad we can talk now.

A beat. A breath.

CAMERON

Yes. Of course.

She smiles.

CAMERON

I'm so sorry. It's lovely to meet you, Mr. Atlas—

She reaches out her hand.

CAMERON

I am Cameron Willis.

Mr. Atlas reaches out. They shake hands.

MR. ATLAS

Mr. Atlas.

Two smiles. Genuine.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas, I'm here to discuss Flight 434, the one leaving this morning at noon, to Vienna.

MR. ATLAS

Yes, of course! Thank you so much for bringing your concerns to us. We are eternally grateful. We at the Airlines want nothing more than to serve. Please, go on.

CAMERON

I am a climatologist, as well as a meteorologist—I am on the island with my research team from Montpellier—

MR. ATLAS

Oh, France! *Parlez vous français?*

CAMERON

Ah, *ouais, mais pas très bien.*

MR. ATLAS

Excellent.

CAMERON

—and. My team detected a storm that is approaching the island that would undoubtedly interfere with the plane in its flight path.

Cameron picks out a page from her portfolio. She leans over and points out the features.

CAMERON

As you can see on this map, the flight path is charted in green and the storm in red.

MR. ATLAS

I see.

CAMERON

The incoming storm is a strong one and would undoubtedly interfere with the flight's onboard navigation controls. Between the severity and direction of the storm, it is all but certain that the flight would be pushed out of the air, and that every person onboard would perish.

MR. ATLAS

I see.

Beat.

CAMERON

Therefore. It is imperative that the plane does not take flight, that it does not find itself in the air. [*Beat.*] It is imperative that the flight be cancelled before it departs. Immediately.

MR. ATLAS

I see.

Beat.

MR. ATLAS

The island really is isolated, isn't it.

He gestures vaguely at the map.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas...

Mr. Atlas gets up from his chairs and walks over to the glass window, pacing with his hands in his pockets.

MR. ATLAS

We all are isolated really. We exist as individuals in this vast world.

Cameron looks on at Mr. Atlas, puzzled. What the f...

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas, I really must insist, the people on this flight are all in danger—

MR. ATLAS

It's the eternal struggle of man. The bridge between the individual and the collective. We are social animals—all just *skin and bone, trained to get along*. And there, there's the merriment of life, after the joys, struggles, the triumphs and pain, in this dust. We're born alone and full of want, in competition and struggle for survival, against nature, and against each other. And here we come along, we extend

an olive branch to each other, and together, we tame nature, combat its evils and thwart its disaster, and we build civilization in its place. The coliseums of Rome and the pillars of Greece rise from ash into marvelous societies. Of democracy. Of candor. Of honesty. The birthplace of freedom and truth, we have a lot to owe to the Greeks and Romans, truly. They influenced a great deal—they built our communities and science. Science, and technology. The wheel of technology, it turns, turns every moment. Turns. Every. Second. Your cloud forecasts, and my businesses, we are indebted to this inevitability of progress. Sparked from the enlightenment of Athens—a spark! Ah, a spark, of light, to give us greater knowledge and understanding: the Enlightenment. We’ve developed reason, logic, the scientific method. The tall smokestacks of Victorian London’s factory, the Industrial revolution and the birth of our work today, spill over into modernity, and give us the foundation for innovation today. The death of God, the ones and zeroes. Innovation, innovation is inevitable, this progress is inevitable. We take on nature and build a glorious empire, carve it out of the cliffside of time to hold, hold for a moment... and yet this technology, it breaks, breaks and it destroys that which it builds. You and I, we stand here today, on the precipice of revolution, one may say, the intersection of technology, as the primary power at the root of society’s direction, and it’s folly to man. One can’t help but desire each new case of innovation—the lightbulb, the dial tone, the power to see into the future. [*Gestures at Cameron’s papers.*] It’s temptation in little doses, an inoculation against the reality of threats to our freedom, to our time and personhood. How could we save ourselves? Oh, but how could we ever *stop*? Onward, onward! We press onward, we build higher and higher towers—they sway in the wind, but oh, the *view*. I do like this view. You can’t save everyone. Some will fall, some will fall inevitably, and there is only but so much in nature’s bounty to spread. And in that inevitability of loss, it is imperative that we save the empires we’ve built, the soul of man.

He turns to Cameron.

MR. ATLAS

We’ve inherited a great civilization. It’s ours and our duty.

Beat. Cameron turns towards the audience.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas is getting very profound. He reads deep books with long words in them.

She turns back.

MR. ATLAS

Come, come.

Mr. Atlas gestures to the window overlooking the airport apron. Cameron remains seated.

MR. ATLAS

Come, see the planes lined up, departing and arriving. There, there's 434.

Cameron stands and walks over to the window.

CAMERON

[*Solemn.*] There's 434.

Beat.

CAMERON

It looks so... from here...

MR. ATLAS

Small? Larger than you imagined?

Cameron shakes her head.

CAMERON

It just...it exists, there. We have this expanse of blue sky. It's extraordinary how we can touch the clouds...this plane...*and* there are so many people on it.

Mr. Atlas continues looking forward at the planes. Cameron turns around.

CAMERON

[*Sighs*] I... don't even...

She shakes her head and looks around the office. Her gaze and legs wander.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas, you...found this island in the eighties, right?

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Atlas Airlines has been serving Capitoux since January 1981.

CAMERON

Thank you.

Beat.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas, pardon me, but you can't be more than... what, forty years old yourself?

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Passengers of Flight 434 to Vienna: boarding will conclude soon. Please make your way to gate 4F.

MR. ATLAS

Yes, of course.

Cameron rushes to the desk and sits down, picking up her papers. Mr. Atlas turns away from the window and walks back to the desk. There, he stands behind the chair, gripping the top.

MR. ATLAS

I remember first stepping on this island, all those years ago. My team and I were the only people on this parcel of land. Our goal, when we first established this airport, was to reach every corner of the globe. I've embarked on my share of enterprises in my lifetime, I'm sure you know...

Cameron nods.

MR. ATLAS

Some look to the stars as the next frontier, as if we've fully traversed our Earth yet. But we've barely
Of course, we are the only airline at this airport, but we aim to serve the community on Capitoux.

CAMERON

The community?

MR. ATLAS

Yes.

Silence.

MR. ATLAS

The first time I saw the island was a dream. It was always so captivating, Capitoux. It still is, look—

He gestures to the window as he pulls the seat back and sits down.

MR. ATLAS

All its glory. Look how rich this island is.

Mr. Atlas paces.

CAMERON

I've seen it. It's part of my research.

MR. ATLAS

All its flora and fauna...

Cameron cocks her head.

CAMERON

I'm sorry, Mr. Atlas, but I don't see how sending a plane of people to the sky only to fall and die serves the community. The *community* of Capitoux, this otherwise empty island.

MR. ATLAS

We can't foresee the future, Cameron. We don't know what will happen, and it is unreasonable to try to adapt to what has not yet happened.

CAMERON

It's caution. The benefits outweigh the risk by a mile, the loss of human life alone...

MR. ATLAS

Atlas Airlines is simply unable to cancel the flight.

CAMERON

And that is a choice. You are making an active choice in seeing this information—

MR. ATLAS

We at Atlas Airlines care about your perspective—

CAMERON

—and not changing your plan of action.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434—

MR. ATLAS

We hear you—

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

—boarding will be ending...

CAMERON

“We”? “We”, who’s “we”?

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Passengers—

MR. ATLAS

Atlas...

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Beware.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas, people will die.

MR. ATLAS

Yes.

Silence. Silence.

MR. ATLAS

Yes, people will die. The plane will go up in the air, and it's regrettable, but people will die.

Silence.

CAMERON

The airline...

MR. ATLAS

... is committed to its customers, and unfortunately—

CAMERON

Flight 434—

MR. ATLAS

—will touch water before it does Vienna.

Beat.

CAMERON

People will die.

MR. ATLAS

Yes.

CAMERON

And you don't care.

He doesn't answer. An unbearable loss hangs in the air. People will die... and Cameron already knows that.

CAMERON

Mr. Atlas, sir, I don't know how distanced you may be from the business of the planes actually going in the air—your office, for sure, sits at a distance—but even you must see that your head is in the clouds, this is absolutely insane.

MR. ATLAS

My head? In the clouds? Says the weather forecaster.

CAMERON

Researcher. Does human life have no dignity? Who are you to control their path?

Mr. Atlas rises from his seat, keeping the tips of his fingers on the table.

MR. ATLAS

Ms. Willis, I must ask you to understand your place here.

CAMERON

Respectfully, I have a duty.

MR. ATLAS

And I have... a plant.

He picks it up off the corner of the desk and places it in the center. Mr. Atlas leaves his place behind his desk to check on the window. Cameron reaches out to finger a leaf on the potted plant. Touching it, she recoils.

CAMERON

[Aside] Oh! It's plastic...

Mr. Atlas returns, standing behind his chair and towering over Cameron, still seated.

MR. ATLAS

I ask you to think of the threat to human life and dignity.

Beat.

MR. ATLAS

Cameron...

Mr. Atlas takes a seat and leans forward. Cameron leans away, petrified but tied to her seat.

MR. ATLAS

The airline appreciates your discretion.

CAMERON

...You can stop the plane.

MR. ATLAS

I can't.

CAMERON

You are the CEO, this is your airline, you can stop the plane.

MR. ATLAS

I cannot.

CAMERON

You must...

MR. ATLAS

Cameron.

CAMERON

You must be able to.

MR. ATLAS

Cameron.

Mr. Atlas stands up.

MR. ATLAS

As it is...

Mr. Atlas leaves his empty chair and stands next to it.

MR. ATLAS

It's not in my control.

He puts his hands in his pockets and walks away, to the space between Cameron and the window. Cameron is left staring at the empty chair, mouth agape.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434 to Vienna, departing soon.

Cameron looks up... then at Mr. Atlas. Her gaze settles on the door. Mr. Atlas watches the plane.

MR. ATLAS

I do dislike the sun at noon. How it tips from one slant to another.

Cameron discreetly packs up her things, haphazardly and absentmindedly grabbing a handful of papers, and turning, then approaching the door. The door bangs open, and Ms. Stafford enters, holding some paper notes.

MS. STAFFORD

Mr. Atlas, I wanted to step in about some phone calls before your noon lunch break.... Oh! Ms. Willis!

The door slowly swings shut behind her.

CAMERON

[*A hush*] Ms. Stafford.

MS. STAFFORD

Glad to see you found Mr. Atlas. Mr. Atlas, before you break, I wanted to hand you these notes.

MR. ATLAS

Thank you. Please put them on my desk, with the others.

CAMERON

[*Aside*] Okay, okay...

Cameron creeps towards the door.

MR. ATLAS

Cameron.

She turns around.

CAMERON

Thank you so much for your time! I think I'll have to leave now, but I really appreciate—

The door bangs open, again, and Ryan and Daniel walk in, detaining Lauren and Ember, respectively.

RYAN

Mr. Atlas!

MR. ATLAS

Ryan, Danielle! What do we have here?

DANIELLE

These two were trying to escape. Through the construction in the East Terminal.

RYAN

Got caught, huh?

MR. ATLAS

Well, I'm so happy they could rejoin us. Ember. Lauren.

Ember remains defiant. Lauren, lost.

CAMERON

Ember...

EMBER

We tried...

LAUREN

We try.

CAMERON

[*At a loss*] I really must leave.

Ryan lets the door shut behind her and steps in front of it, blocking Cameron. Cameron steps back. Beat.

MR. ATLAS

Please, Cameron. Join us.

CAMERON

I won't.

Blackout.

AIRPORT INTERCOM VOICE

Flight 434, to Vienna, departing soon.

END OF PLAY