War and Peace

By

Justin Kuritzkes

(310) 498 9134

Justin_kuritzkes@brown.edu
The air.

Suspended in it are: A STEWARDESS, GREG (a man), AMY (a woman), a gift in wrapping paper, a Santa hat right above GREG’s head, an upside down food cart, a can of soda and its spilled contents, a chicken dinner, GREG’s wallet, AMY’s cellphone, a copy of War and Peace, and any number of opened and unopened peanut packages.

Aside from the Santa hat, everything suspended in the air should be on the same horizontal level -- roughly in line with GREG and AMY’s waists.

GREG, AMY and the STEWARDESS stand next to each other in a line center stage. The ends of AMY’s hair point straight up. Ditto with the STEWARDESS. For the most part, they do not move their bodies, especially their feet. The STEWARDESS keeps her eyes closed and doesn’t move at all.

At rise, GREG and AMY look around blankly. After a while, AMY turns her head out to the audience.

Amy
I bet you’re wondering what’s going on.

GREG
Who are you talking to?

Amy
I’m humoring myself. Chill out.

GREG
Chill out?

Amy
Yes.

GREG
Where’d you learn that?

Amy
We have children. They’re cool.
Oh. I forgot...shit....My sister?

No, no. My mother.

She’s old, honey.

She’ll do.

Yeah, OK.

Or, I mean...whatever...

Pause.

Well tell us.

Huh?

Tell us what’s going on.

Oh. Yeah.

(back to audience)

My husband...

(indicates GREG)

...likes to fly to Chicago every year for Christmas, because his whole family lives there. He’s the only one who moved to California, so, since it doesn’t make sense for any of them to come out and visit us, we fly to Chicago for the Holidays. Earlier today, we were on a plane. Now we’re not. Primarily because we jumped out.

We didn’t “jump out”?

What do you mean we didn’t jump out?

When you say it like that it sounds like we just decided on a whim that it would be fun.

OK, we jumped out because there were Arabs on the flight.
They were terrorists!

They were Arabs, and they were angry.

They had a bomb.

You don’t know if it was real.

They were gonna blow up the plane.

Yes, Greg. They were gonna blow up a plane from Burbank to Chicago somewhere over -- fucking -- Kansas, right in the middle of the sky.

Is that completely unreasonable?

Yes.

Well, I’m sorry.

Me too.

When the two young middle eastern men stood up with the fakest looking bombs I have ever seen strapped to their chests, my husband grabbed me so fast I didn’t even have time to put down my book. With me in hand, he made a mad dash down the aisle for the emergency exit located near the lavatories. A Stewardess tried to prevent him from opening it, but he violently charged into her and forced all of us, along with her cart and it’s contents, to spill out of the door into the sky. My husband is an idiot.

Pause. GREG seems to accept this.

She hasn’t screamed in a while.

That’s because she’s dead, Greg.

Oh.
AMY
She probably had a heart attack a couple of minutes ago.

GREG
I’m surprised we haven’t had any of those.

AMY
Me too. I’m waiting for it.

Pause.

GREG
I still think they were gonna blow up the plane.

AMY
They weren’t.

GREG
Or at least run it into something.

AMY
You don’t crash planes from L.A. to Chicago into buildings.

Why not?

AMY
There’s not enough fuel.

Sure there is.

AMY
Still. It’s unlikely.

GREG
Well, OK.

Pause. GREG and AMY look around. AMY looks at her book and sighs.

AMY
I was close to finishing it.

Why don’t you?

AMY
Can’t reach.

GREG shrugs.
With some difficulty, he reaches out and grabs an unopened packet of peanuts that is floating near him. He opens the packet and starts eating some. He offers some to AMY, she eats a few.

GREG
Did you know that the reason we’re all falling at the same level is that any object, no matter its weight, has the same acceleration due to gravity, and since we all fell at roughly the same time, we’ve all been accelerating at the same rate since we left the plane?

AMY
Yes.

Pause. AMY looks up at the hat.

AMY
How do you explain that?

GREG
Wind resistance.

AMY
Ah.

Pause. They keep eating the peanuts. AMY looks down.

AMY
Can you make out what the ground looks like yet?

GREG looks down.

GREG
No. It’s mostly green though. It’s probably a field.

AMY
Oh...that’ll be nice.

Pause. They eat a few more peanuts. AMY looks around.

AMY
I think we just passed through a cloud.

GREG
Yeah. It gets a little colder whenever we do.

AMY
They look like Ice Cream.
GREG

Maybe they are.

Pause. They eat some more peanuts.

GREG

(singing)
“I'm singing in the rain
Just singing in the rain
What a glorious feelin'
I'm happy again

AMY

Stop.

GREG

I'm laughing at clouds
So dark up above
The sun's in my heart
And I'm ready for love
Let the stormy clouds chase
Everyone from the place
Come on with the rain
I've a smile on my --"

AMY

Is this supposed to be funny?

GREG

Yes.

Pause. AMY thinks about it and laughs.

AMY

OK, maybe it is a little bit.

Pause. They both laugh.

Dance with me.

GREG

I can't.

AMY

Sure you can.

Slowly and with some difficulty, they manage to get into starting Waltzing position. Once there, they can't so much waltz, but they can move their arms together.
They dance and dance, meanwhile, the STEWARDESS has started to open her eyes slowly. When they are fully open, she has a moment of assessing the situation, after which she starts to scream loudly.

GREG and AMY stop waltzing and look over at her.

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

She looks down.

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

AMY

Calm down.

AHHHHHHHHHH!

AMY

Just calm down.

Who are you? Where are we? What the fuck!

AMY

My husband pushed you and me off the plane. We’re all falling to our deaths.

WHAT!

AMY

You, me, and him are falling...to the ground...where we will die.

STEWARDESS

Oh...oh...ok, yeah, I remember....sorry about the screaming.

AMY

Yeah, don’t worry about it.

STEWARDESS

I must have fainted.

GREG

We thought you were dead.
AMY

Greg!

GREG

What?

AMY

You don’t just say that to someone.

GREG

Oh.

(to STEWARDESS)

I’m sorry.

STEWARDESS

It’s OK....Actually, it’s kind of funny. I knew all along I was gonna die today somehow.

Pause.

What do you mean?

STEWARDESS

Oh...um...well, what the hell, I guess it doesn’t matter now...You see, I’m not really a Stewardess. I was supposed to help blow up the plane.

I’m sorry?

STEWARDESS opens her shirt to reveal a bomb strapped to her chest.

Oh...

GREG

Well what do you know!

STEWARDESS

Yeah. Sorry.

GREG

That’s OK.

Pause.

AMY

Do you want to just blow us up now?
STEWARDESS
No, I can’t....The detonator’s in that gift box over there.
I was supposed to unwrap it, say “merry Christmas,” and set
us all off around the time you forced me out the emergency
exit....Besides, I think I’d rather just fall if that’s OK
with you guys.

AMY
Yeah.

GREG
Sure.

Pause.

GREG
Did you know that the sky is just the air, and that we’re
always in the air, even when we’re on the ground, so we’re
always, technically, flying.

STEWARDESS
(to AMY)
Is he always like this?

AMY
Yes. But he’s got some good in him.

Really?

STEWARDESS

AMY
Yeah. I think I love him.

Well that’s nice.

Pause. AMY grabs another packet of peanuts out of the air and opens them.
She eats one and extends the packet out to the STEWARDESS.

AMY
Peanuts?

Sure.

STEWARDESS

They all eat peanuts. They all keep falling.

Lights fade.

End of play.