

Ash

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a short play

By

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Characters

JESSIKAH 30s-40s

ASHLEIGH (ASH) 30s-40s

Time

Morning.

Setting

The interior of a plane rigged for skydiving.

Ash

The interior of a plane rigged for skydiving. The sound of engines roaring.

The lights come up on **JESSIKAH** and **ASH** seated on a bench, wearing parachutes. **JESSIKAH** holds in her arms a small urn.

ASH looks terrified. What **JESSIKAH** is feeling is hard to read.

The sounds of the engines starts to fade.

ASH: (OVER ENGINES) This is great.

JESSIKAH DOES NOT RESPOND. BEAT.

ASH: I said 'This is great.'

JESSIKAH: Glad you're enjoying it.

ASH: I'm dying here.

JESSIKAH: What do you want me to do about it ?

ASH: You asked me to come. (BEAT) Well ?

JESSIKAH: Thank you.

ASH: That's much better. I may be about to die but now at least I'll die knowing that my best friend was grateful.

JESSIKAH: You're not going to die.

ASH: Open door – airplane – sucked out. Float float float – splat splat splat.

JESSIKAH EDGES CLOSER TO ASH. SHE PUTS HER ARM AROUND HER.

ASH: What are you doing ?

JESSIKAH: Holding you. If I hold on to you – you can't get sucked out.

ASH: No / can't but *we* can. Then it's double float float float – double splat splat splat!

JESSIKAH: I've got you. You're not going anywhere.

ASH: Yes I am. I'm going to 10,000 feet.

JESSIKAH: We're wearing parachutes.

ASH: That were made in 1933. And packed by Barnacle Bill.

JESSIKAH: We won't need to use them.

ASH: Shouldn't there at least be a safety thingo.

JESSIKAH: Safety thingo ?

ASH: Some kind of red nylon net thingo to catch us before we get sucked out. And look at this old junk box. It'll probably fall to pieces before it even hits 10,000 feet and then not only will we fall 10,000 feet to our deaths but we'll be obliterated by pieces of old junk box once we hit the ground. Splat splat splat. Pulp pulp pulp. When was the last time it had a safety check ? Probably shouldn't even be flying.

JESSIKAH: Probably.

ASH: Then what are we doing in it ?

JESSIKAH: He's the only one who would take us.

ASH: You mean the cheapest.

JESSIKAH: The only one. (LOOKING AT URN) I'm not sure what we're doing is all that ... legal.

ASH: Oh great. I'm going to die and get arrested too.

JESSIKAH: Alright Ash.

ASH: What Jess ? There is no alright here.

JESSIKAH: You've made your point. You don't want to be here. I don't want to be here.

ASH: It was your idea.

JESSIKAH: No. (LOOKING AT URN) It was his.

ASH: But you decided to go through with it.

JESSIKAH: It was his last request.

ASH: He wouldn't know.

JESSIKAH: But I would.

ASH: You didn't have to drag me along.

JESSIKAH: He wanted you here.

ASH: Me ? Why ? Because he hated me. He wants me to die in this old junk box.

JESSIKAH: Does he want me to die ?

ASH: No. He loved you. Typical Lex. Being weird. Being weird even after he's ...

JESSIKAH: Is it really weird ?

ASH: What would you call it ?

JESSIKAH: Unique, memorable, romantic.

ASH: Romantic ? A dozen roses and a candle lit dinner is romantic. Being sucked out to your death at 10,000 feet is very definitely unromantic.

JESSIKAH: That's what I would've called it. Once. When we first met. That's what I thought of everything Lex did. (BEAT.) Would you like to hold him ?

ASH: No.

JESSIKAH: Just for awhile. We're almost there.

ASH: You hold the bastard.

JESSIKAH: Don't call him that.

ASH: He is a bastard. For getting us up here.

A RED LIGHT GOES ON IN THE PLANE.

ASH: Shit ! What's that ? That red light over there. It just came on.

JESSIKAH: That's the signal.

ASH: That we're out of fuel? That the engines have stalled? That we're going to plummet to our deaths? Well it's nice of that nutcase pilot to notify us. (CALLS) "Thanks Barnacle Bill – we're ready to die!"

JESSIKAH: That we've reached ten thousand feet.

ASH: We have? Oh shit. That's great. Do what you have to do and let's get out of here.

JESSIKAH: (HOLDING OUT HAND) Help me.

ASH: What ?

JESSIKAH: Help me get to the door.

BEAT.

ASH: (SUDDENLY BLOCKING HER) No Jess. You can't jump. It doesn't matter if that crazy bastard wanted you to join him - I'm not going to let you.

JESSIKAH: I'm not going to jump. Just help me to the door.

ASH TAKES JESSIKAH'S HAND. SLOWLY THEY EDGE TOWARDS THE DOOR.

ASH: Okay, now for christ sake – say what you have to say and let's get back on the ground.

JESSIKAH: Say what ... ?

ASH: The weird poem or whatever he wanted you to say. That's what this is all about isn't it ? Reciting one of his stupid poems ten thousand feet above the earth.

JESSIKAH: It's not a poem.

ASH: Don't tell me he wrote some stupid song he wants you to sing.

JESSIKAH: Ash – he wanted to have his remains released into the stratosphere.

ASH: What ?

JESSIKAH: Someone to pour his ashes out of a plane at ten thousand feet.

ASH: Crazy bastard. Alright then – chuck the stupid bugger out the door.

JESSIKAH: He wanted to have his remains released by the person he cared most about in his time on earth.

ASH: So tip them out.

JESSIKAH: The person he cared *most* about.

ASH: That's right – you. So do it.

JESSIKAH: No Ash – (HOLDING OUT THE URN) you.

ASH LOOKS AT THE URN. BEAT.

ASH: What ?

JESSIKAH NODS.

ASH: No, I'm not ... No ... It's a mistake. He wants you to do it. You.

JESSIKAH: Reach into my pocket.

ASH: Why ?

JESSIKAH: Just do it.

ASH REACHES INTO HER POCKET. SHE PULLS OUT A FOLDED SHEET OF PAPER.

JESSIKAH: It's Lex's will. Read the bit underlined.

ASH: No.

JESSIKAH: Ash – read it.

ASH: (OPENS THE PAPER, READS) “when the plane reaches the aforementioned altitude” ... Aforementioned altitude. Who talks like that ?

JESSIKAH: Ash !

ASH: (READS) “when the plane reaches the aforementioned altitude I would like my earthly remains released into the stratosphere by the person who I cherished most in the physical realm – my most beloved ...”

JESSIKAH: Read it.

ASH: “My most beloved it ...” (BEAT) It's a mistake. It has to be.

JESSIKAH: No mistake.

ASH: He got mixed up. It was all those medications he was on. He didn't know what he was doing. He meant to write your name and he wrote mine. He was thinking about ashes. Ash-leigh.

JESSIKAH: Look at the date. He wrote it six months ago. When he was still lucid.

ASH: It's still a mistake.

JESSIKAH: It's okay Ash. It doesn't matter. What happened between you and Lex ...

ASH: You think Lex and I ... No way!

JESSIKAH: It's okay.

ASH: Jess -

JESSIKAH: It's alright. I've dealt with it. It hurt at first – a lot – but I got over it.

ASH: Nothing happened !

JESSIKAH: Jess, we don't have to talk about it - (HOLDING OUT THE URN)

ASH: We don't have to talk about it cause nothing happened.

JESSIKAH: "My most beloved"

ASH: Nothing happened! Sure – he tried it on a couple of times. When you went on tour .

JESSIKAH: It's alright.

ASH: Nothing happened !

JESSIKAH: Why else would he -

ASH: Because he was sick, because he was fucked in the head, because he was cruel. Because he wants to reach out from the beyond the grave and do the thing that he did so well for the last decade – fuck up your life !!!

JESSIKAH: I know how you felt about him.

ASH: I hated him.

JESSIKAH: You wanted him for yourself.

ASH: Jess – that is fucking insane! He was a sleazy dirtbag. A talented sleazy dirtbag but still a sleazy dirtbag.

JESSIKAH: Please Ash. This is hard enough for me already. Don't make it any harder.

ASH: But Jess – nothing happened.

JESSIKAH: I don't care ! Whatever Lex did I still loved him. I want his last wish to be carried out. Just take the urn and do what he asked. And then we can go home. If not for Lex – for me. Please Ash.

BEAT.

ASH: Only if you accept that nothing happened.

BEAT. **JESS** NODS.

ASH: And this is insane.

JESSIKAH: Please Ash. Just do it. Then we can go.

BEAT. **ASH** TAKES THE URN. SHE MOVES SLOWLY TOWARDS THE DOOR.

ASH: This is crazy. (TAKING OFF THE LID) Okay. Here I go.

JESSIKAH: It's what he wanted.

BEAT. **ASH** PUTS BACK ON THE LID.

ASH: I know why he's doing this.

JESSIKAH: Please.

ASH: Because he's scared.

JESSIKAH: He's dead.

ASH: And he's scared he'll be forgotten. And if he got you to do this – as is right, as you should be – then it's beautiful and touching and it closes the circle - and then you'll write a few songs about him and get on with your life.

JESSIKAH: He was my life.

ASH: But this way - you'll never get over it. This moment will be burned into your irises for the rest of your life. The day your best friend released his ashes into the stratosphere. You'll walk around for the rest of your life a slave to the memory of Lex Grant.

JESSIKAH: It's the one thing he wants.

ASH: To hurt you. To scar you. To wound you so deeply you'll never recover. Look at us Jess. We're in a rickety old plane, ten thousand feet above the earth – I'm holding the love of your life – god knows why – but the

ASH: (CONT) love of your life in my hands. And *I* – not *you* – am about to carry out his final wish and worst of all - you have to watch. This is a moment you are never ever going to forget for the rest of your life – (HANDING URN BACK) and I will not play my part in his plan.

JESSIKAH: Please – just do it.

ASH: No. Because you'll hate me for it. You'll thank me now. But in a day or a week or a year you'll hate me - and I am not losing my best friend so her fucked up dead boyfriend can make her a martyr to his memory.

JESSIKAH: Please ...

ASH: If anyone is going to release him – and it's not like he deserves his final wish – it's you. Now take him.

JESSIKAH: Ash ...

ASH: Take him !

BEAT. **JESSIKAH** REACHES OUT WEAKLY TO TAKE THE URN. SUDDENLY THE PLANE JOLTS AND **JESSIKAH** LOSES HER BALANCE. SHE KNOCKS THE URN OUT **ASH'S** HANDS.

LIGHTING AND SOUND CUE : **JESSIKAH** AND **ASH** GO INTO SLOW MOTION AS THE ASHES POUR OUT ON TO THE FLOOR OF THE PLANE AND ARE SUCKED OUT THE DOOR.

JESSIKAH: No Lex. No !

BACK TO NORMAL LIGHTING AND SOUND.

JESSIKAH SLOWLY SINKS TO HER KNEES. **ASH** KNEELS BESIDE HER, EMBRACING HER.

ASH: He got his wish. The bastard got his wish.

LIGHTS FADE. END PLAY.