

Strange Day

a new play by
Taylor Shann

The World Trade Center should become a living representation of man's belief in humanity, his need for individual dignity, his belief in the cooperation of men, and through this cooperation his ability to find greatness.

- Minoru Yamasaki, *Architect for World Trade Center.*

Characters

Lindsay, future theater director
Nick, future Secretary of State
Ed, future Engineer
Zach, future Doctor
Danielle, future writer
Tori, professional student

All early 20's college students.

Time 9/11/01 and afterwards.

Place College Dorm Rooms

PROLOGUE.

Lindsay, Danielle, Tori, Zach, Ed, and Nick appear, individually lighted.¹

LINDSAY

You can strike a spark anywhere. Dinner, lunch, coffee- going to get coffee without actually getting coffee- waiting for a train, bus, interview, appointment. Anywhere. You can strike a spark. All you have to do is ask...

NICK

Where were you?

ED

Where were you?

ZACH

Where were you?

DANIELLE

Where were you?

¹ In the original production, which was restrained by budget, there was a chalkboard that Lindsay, at the very beginning, wrote the date of that the show was being performed on. She then, at the end, wiped it out (as supposed to it being projected.) This was a great, low-budget away to achieve this effect.

TORI
Where were you?

LINDSAY
Asleep.

NICK
Getting up.

ED/ZACH
In class.

DANIELLE
Woken up.

TORI
I slept in.

ALL
Where were you?

LINDSAY
When?

DANIELLE
8 45 a.m.

ED
All times are Eastern Standard Time.

DANIELLE
8 45 am.

LINDSAY
Drama majors aren't awake at 8 45.

ED
Engineers are.

NICK
There are Poli/Sci classes at 8 45, but I don't take them.

ZACH
I had Organic Chemistry.

DANIELLE
My aunt called around 9.

ZACH
I don't *like* Organic Chemistry, but that's where I was.

DANIELLE
She asked me if I had heard from my Mom, I said no, why?

LINDSAY
How did you find out?

DANIELLE
So she told me.

ED
Someone came in the middle of class...

ZACH
... and everything just *stopped*.

NICK
People shouting in the hallway...

TORI
... waking me up.

LINDSAY
What did you see?

ALL EXCEPT LINDSAY
What did I see?

DANIELLE
I was watching when...

ED
I didn't see the second-

ZACH
I heard about it, but I didn't believe it until I saw it ...

NICK
I had to watch the replay. I only got to see-

DANIELLE
"Only?"

TORI
By the time I got up, it was all over. Probably better that way.

NICK
But by the end of the day...

ALL EXCEPT LINDSAY
I saw enough.

LINDSAY
Who did you know?

NICK /TORI/ED
No one, really, etc.

ZACH and DANIELLE are silent.

LINDSAY
Finally, why. (pause) Why.

TORI NICK
Hatred. Oil.

ED DANIELLE
Religion. Policy.

ZACH
I dunno.

TORI
Fate.

ZACH
Insanity

ED
Islam.

DANIELLE
Ignorance.

NICK
Ours or theirs?

DANIELLE
Ignorance.

LINDSAY
Why.

TORI
I don't know.

ZACH
I wish I knew.

ED
I don't know if I want know.

NICK
I think we know.

DANIELLE
We don't know.

LINDSAY
WHY. (pause) We don't know. So what do we do?

NICK
We look at the facts.

ONE

DANIELLE ²

At 8 45 am. A hijacked passenger jet had crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

ED

All times are Eastern Standard Time.

DANIELLE

8 45 am.

NICK

It tore a huge hole in the building and set it on fire. Later, it would be identified as American Airlines Flight 11 out Logan Airport, Boston, Massachusetts.

LINDSAY

Where we all live.

ED

People all over the world tune in. It is unclear what has happened and why.

ZACH

9 03 a.m. A second hijacked airliner-

NICK

-United Airlines Flight 175, also from Boston-

ZACH

-crashes into the south tower of the World Trade Center. It explodes.

TORI

People all over the world watch this happen *live*.

ZACH

Both buildings are burning uncontrollably. (leaves)

LINDSAY

Cnn.com is reduced to a white background, and a headline *New York Under Attack*.

TORI

9 17 a.m. The Federal Aviation Administration shuts down all New York City area airports. 9 21 a.m. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey orders all bridges and tunnels in the New York area closed. No one gets in or out.

DANIELLE

9 30 a.m. President Bush, speaking in Sarasota, Florida, says the country has suffered an—(beat) "apparent terrorist attack."

NICK

People all around the world say in unison, "No shit." (Tori, Danielle leave)

ED

9 40 a.m. The FAA halts all flight operations at U.S. airports, the first time since the 60s that air traffic nationwide has been halted. (pause) Later it would be noted that two planes do not respond to this order (Ed leaves)

² In the first production, the actors lined up as if in an airport line, waiting to have their ids checked to board a plane for this sequence.

NICK

One of those planes is American Airlines Flight 77. It crashes into the Pentagon, sending up a huge plume of smoke and killing some 177 people. America, for all intents and purposes, is under attack. (Leaves)

LINDSAY

Everyone has a story. Everyone remembers in one way or another, and everyone listens to everyone else. Whether the story is ultimately worth hearing or not, they listen. Everyone remembers. Except for those who can't remember anymore, because they were there. (pause) When, Where, How, What, Who, *Why*. Everyone has a story. This is ours.
(Gets into bed)

TWO

ED

(enters) Wake up. Wake up. (beat) Wake up. WAKE UP.

LINDSAY

(grumpy) Just three more minutes...

ED

Lindsay, I am not your mother. Get Up.

LINDSAY

What do you-

ED

The World Trade Center's been attacked.

LINDSAY

(beat)

What?

ED

The Pentagon too. Get up. You have to see this. (turns on the 'television', *which rests on the fourth wall. When they stare at it, we see them as if we are looking through a one-way mirror.*) They used airplanes.

LINDSAY

(to us) I'm in Medford, Mass, outside of Boston, it's 9 45ish, it's a beautiful day, and not a state and a half away this.... (to rob) Airplanes?

ED

Flew'em right into the buildings.

LINDSAY

Doesn't quite fit together in my head....

ED

I thought you would want to see this.

LINDSAY

We're going to war. (to rob) We're going to war. WE'RE GOING TO WAR.

ED

Sssh...

NICK

(enters, dressed in sleeping clothes and a towel over his shoulder) what-

LINDSAY

WE'RE GOING TO WAR, WE'RE GOING TO WAR.

NICK

(to Lindsay) What are you *babbling* about?

LINDSAY

We're going to war.

NICK

What?

ED

The WTC's been attacked.

NICK

You're shitting me.

LINDSAY

(drags him to the TV) Look, look!

NICK

This is live?

ED

The first hit around 8 45.

NICK

This is live.

LINDSAY

We're going to war.

NICK

(pause) It's... too early for this. I'm gonna get a shower. No one go anywhere. (exits)

LINDSAY

(quietly)

We're going to war.

There is a silence. Ed starts fiddling on his PDA. Lindsay stares in vague fascination. A moment. Lindsay has a reaction of shocked disbelief, as if watching a car crash. Ed calmly turns to the audience.

ED

10 05 a.m. The south tower of the World Trade Center collapses.

LINDSAY

Did you *see* that?

ED

What?

LINDSAY

Did that just *happen*?

NICK

(offstage) Holy shit, did you *see* that?

LINDSAY

That's- that's-

ED

(realizes) Holy shit.

LINDSAY

That's-

ED
Holy *shit*.

LINDSAY
I mean, that's-

NICK
(enters with a lawn chair and a can of coke) *Holy* shit is right

LINDSAY
Wow.

(pause)

NICK
They're going have to change the drawing of the skyline.

LINDSAY
Where?

ED
Everywhere. (beat) I'm going to class.

NICK AND LINDSAY
You're *what*?

ED
(shrugs) They haven't cancelled them. My problem set's still due, even if the world's ending (puts on backpack) And it is, in a way. Bye.

He exits. They stare at the television. Nick opens his coke.

NICK
You know...

LINDSAY
Hm?

NICK
Probably-

LINDSAY
Yeah?

NICK
Most of those people probably got out alive

LINDSAY
You think?

NICK
Yeah. I think there was enough time.

LINDSAY
God... I mean, I hope you're right.

NICK

So probably... this isn't that big of a deal.

LINDSAY

(beat) Huh?

NICK

Nevermind. (to us) At 10 10 a.m. United Airlines Flight 93, also hijacked, crashes in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, southeast of Pittsburgh. It is the last suicide plane.

Pause. Lindsay looks at Nick.

LINDSAY

10 28 a.m. The World Trade Center's north tower collapses from the top down as if it were being peeled apart, releasing a tremendous cloud of debris and smoke.

NICK

There it goes. 11 02 a.m. New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani urges New Yorkers to stay at home and orders an evacuation of the area south of Canal Street.

LINDSAY

This is really happening, isn't it?

NICK

Yep.

LINDSAY

(beat) We're going to war. (to us) I gotta call home. (to Nick) I gotta call home. (to herself) I gotta call home.

Lindsay tries to dial home, Nick keeps watching

VOICE

We're sorry. All circuits are busy. Please try your call later. We're sorry. All circuits-

LINDSAY

How many signals are blocked, all across the country? How many people are trying to call home? How many people are trying to call out of New York, into New York?

VOICE

We're sorry. The nationwide cellular network is completely maxed out.

LINDSAY

How many cell phone company employees showed up for work today? How many are considering quitting?

VOICE

We're sorry. Please don't try again. Your call will not go through.

LINDSAY

How many are jumping off of buildings as we sp-

NICK

Whoa.

Stop. Nick and Lindsay both focus on the television.

LINDSAY
Jumping off-

NICK
Whoa. (beat)

LINDSAY
(quietly) Oh, God. This before the buildings fell...?

NICK
Who needs reality TV? *Lindsay hangs up, sits down, quietly.*
You gotta think- how bad was it that people thought jumping was the better option?

LINDSAY
How can you be so detached?

Nick says nothing. Lindsay tries to redial.

LINDSAY
It's only a matter of time before friends converge during something like this... (she gets a busy signal) But, it was also only a matter of time before you found someone you knew, some friend or relative in danger that made them wait by the phone. (gives up on the phone) Who did you know? I knew two.

THREE

Lights go down on Nick and Lindsay. Lights up on Zach and Danielle

VOICE

We're sorry. All circuits are busy. Please try your call later. We're sorry. All circuits-

ZACH

And this message is what I get all day.

DANIELLE

My mom works two buildings over.

ZACH

I'm trying to call to figure out,- I mean, My uncle works one building over, and my sister is downtown

BOTH

My family is everything to me.

VOICE

We're sorry. All circuits are busy. Please try your call later. We're sorry. All circuits-

DANIELLE

And I can't get through, I don't know the number and her home phone won't-

ZACH

I can't get a cell signal through.

DANIELLE

I mean, it's my *mom*, and-Across my hall is some girl calling her friend to say 'oh my god' and 'can you believe' and she gets a signal, but I can't get a signal-

ZACH

No one in the country can get a cell signal. Cell phone companies are melting down everywhere. How much of that signal are going to people who don't need it?

DANIELLE

But I still try. What am I supposed to do? How can I worry about anyone else? How can you expect me to... I don't know where my *mom* is.(beat) It's my fucking *mom*.

ZACH

I'm not an angry guy, I'm not. But I'm sitting here, I can't reach *anyone*-

DANIELLE

Where's my *mom*? Where is she? Is she *okay*?

ZACH

I'm trying to get a signal through, and I'm angry. I'm not for war, but I want to find these people and I want them to bleed.

DANIELLE

If something happened to my mother, I will find whoever is responsible and I will tear their... I swear to God... and whoever else wants to listen

ZACH

I want them to hurt. I want them to be blown out of the sky. Ground. Whatever.

DANIELLE

I want my mom. (pause) Please.

ZACH

...I can't.

Silence. A phone rings.

DANIELLE

Mom?

ZACH

Uncle Henry?

DANIELLE

Oh.

ZACH

Thank God... right, I know other people have to get through, but thanks for calling... really, I'm so relieved. Stay safe, okay?

DANIELLE

Let me know as soon as you know something, ok?

A beat. Both hang up and sit down.

ZACH

I was still angry. I am still very, very angry. But I was also relieved, I mean (pause) I was very lucky, ok? There were a lot of unlucky people that day, and I was lucky. Everyone was okay. I mean, they're shaken up, but they're *alive* and they're *breathing* and I will see them again. I- I haven't always been so lucky. But I was lucky that day. (pause) History repeats itself, so I know that somewhere out there, there is probably another Mrs. Sullivan. Like in that Spielberg movie. *Private Ryan*- jeez, that was intense- and there was an old movie before that, and then the true story—you know, the mother, and she has 5 sons, and they all go off to war, and they're on one ship, and the ship sinks. And she loses all of them. All of them. (pause) I am very lucky. Very lucky. (looks at Danielle) I felt a little guilty about how lucky I was, but I was also thankful (Zach leaves.)

Danielle sits alone on stage, by the phone.

DANIELLE

I'm an English major. I want to be a writer. (beat) For creative writing, I've started a story. It's due in a week. The assignment was to write down your own personal hell, your worst fear, in three sentences or less. Then the teacher handed out those sentences and you had to create someone's own, personal hell. The one I pulled had only one sentence, with nine words "Time has stopped, but I am completely conscious of it." (beat) I never understood what they meant, to be conscious of time stopping. I understood it enough to bullshit half of the assignment, but I didn't... it was about two kids, trapped outside a movie theater that plays old movies. It's the last show ever, at this theater... I called it the Timeless theater, because it was late and I was tired... but when they try to leave the theater, they get stuck. They can't leave. No matter where they walk, they end up back at the movie theater. *The night never ends. They never get hungry, they never age, they never get sick, they never sleep and they'll never leave. They're stuck there, because the theater needs someone to remember it. They'll always be there because a theater can't survive without an audience.* (beat) Like I said, bullshit, and I didn't believe in a word I wrote because I didn't understand it... That's probably why I couldn't finish it. If time has stopped, how does the story end? (pause) But I think I get it now. "Time has stopped, but I am completely conscious of it." (beat) I get it. I get it. *(begins to cry faintly as the lights come up on NICK looking at Danielle)*

NICK

(beat) A kid is driving home from being with friends. He is changing a cd and his cell phone rings. He tries to answer it, runs a red light, gets sideswiped by an SUV and dies in the ambulance. His family, understandably, is quite upset. (beat) A fireman dies in that wreckage today. What's more tragic? The father or the son dying? Can you quantify that? (beat) Any big tragedy, if it's *your* family and *your* loved ones... It doesn't matter how many other people are hurt. It's your mother, your father, your son, your daughter. That's what it's about. Once they're okay, then you have the leisure to say, what about the country. (*lights are out completely on Danielle. Nick now looks directly at us*)

"Oh shit, the World Trade Center collapsed." Think about it, realize it, deal with it, and you will come to my conclusion this is a footnote. Oh, it's gonna be *huge* the next few months, yeah, but the event itself is a footnote. We lost some prime real estate, fine, we lost a few thousand lives. We had a lot of scares. This shit happens all the time, all over the world, in all years of history. Those businesses will have offices open within the next two days. Too much money is being made to have *that* stop. All this is really gonna change is the fortunes of some unlucky fuckers on the other side of the world, and it's gonna make Bush a goddamn war-time president, so say goodbye to a Democrat in 2004, and say goodbye to decreasing the military. That's it.

Think about it. At least Pearl Harbor—an over-blown loss that simply speeded us into World War II—we lost not only soldiers but a lot of important Naval vessels. But even then, you're talking one military base. We blew up two entire cities and firebombed most of the capital of Japan in response. Berlin was leveled, along with most of France. Millions of Jews slaughtered wholesale. You think history is gonna give a shit about two buildings that were ugly eyesores anyway? (beat) I don't *say* that, because I'd get lynched on this campus, but it doesn't make me any less right. Every wrongful death is a small personal tragedy. So go write a play about it. Good men and women die every day, even if they are New York's Finest. (sits in his lawn chair) Again, I don't say these things. Not yet. It's too early. (beat) We should order a pizza.

FOUR

Lindsay is outside the dorm, clutching a handful of money.

LINDSAY

(to us)

They sent me to get the pizza. I was the last to say 'not pizza bitch.' I don't mind getting the pizza, I mind being called a pizza bitch. (beat) Do they deliver pizza on 9/11, I asked? Apparently they do. The Pizza guy picked up and said thirty minutes, so here I am. I'm giving him a big tip. Why, Nick said, just because he's delivering pizza on a national disaster? Well, yeah, I said. Nick's an asshole. (beat, looks up) It's such a beautiful day. A few clouds, *its quiet, not a lot of people, no planes- no planes at all*. I guess. (looks at us, starting to lose it) It's 12 05. I woke up at 10 00. That means it was 9 in Chicago, 8 in Denver, 7 in San Francisco... did some people still not know? Do people still not know? Can someone in Boston still be sleeping? What about in New York? How many New Yorkers died in the night, natural and unnatural causes unaware? How many kids are being born in New York now, born into a city that's burning? (beat) There must be people still sleeping in San Francisco who don't know. Are there people still sleeping in San Francisco who have family in those buildings? When will they wake up? Are there people waiting in airports for those planes to land that don't know? How many planes are still in the air? How many... enemy planes, I guess... are still in the air? (beat) is there any reason one might be pointed at Disneyworld? Cause... my Dad... works for Disney in Orlando... No, that's... that's just *silly*... and in any case, I'm not going to class. Fuck that. No professor will thank me, or anyone, for today (beat) How many professors knew people? What about students? What about my friends? Nothing connects, no answers, only lots of information that's nothing that I need and only... is my Godmother okay? She lives in the Village. This- (sees the pizza guy) Hi! Over here! Delivery! (looks at us) This- I mean, this is... is this the worst day in American History. (pause). And I just ordered a pizza.

Continues looking at us as lights fade.

FIVE

Light focuses on Tori

TORI

(storms in, barely taking a breath) You *believe this shit*? I wake up and it's, what is it now, 1, so I wake up at 11 30ish and Comedy central is *off the air*. So is QVC. So is the Cartoon Network. Some guy on CNN cracked live on the air! Now they got this Aaron guy on. Aaron "today my career gets made" Brown. Why not, that's how Peter Jennings made his-jesus, look at that! That's happening live, and still, our university president hasn't cancelled classes! Says we have to keep going on with life. Well, fuck that! Fuck Astronomy! Life's on hold! (beat) Afghanistan is *fucked*. I wouldn't be surprised if we start bombing tomorrow, what with- Look at this! A tidal wave of people, everyone north of Houston street! I know, I know, in New York they call it 'how-ston' but New York is retarded, it's Houston. (beat) It's Houston. (beat) Jeeeesus, I never thought I'd ever see any New Yorkers walking together in harmony, let alone Wall Street types with the Deli Owners. I thought that only happened in Disney musicals. Well, they're all even today, aren't they? Can't trade stocks, can't sell bottled water, everyone's just got their shit blown up and had to move. (beat) There's an old Chinese curse. May you live in interesting times. Hah. BULLSHIT that's a curse. Drama like this is what brings us altogether. Where was the world when they cured polio? No one believed it. Where was the world when Kennedy got shot? Altogether as one. 'Interesting Times' give everyone something in common, something to talk- Jesus! (beat) Everyone around the world, friend or foe, is watching TV together. Even Dave Letterman's staying home today. DAVID LETTERMAN! (pause) I mean, do you *believe* this shit?!

Lights up on Lindsay and Nick, eating the pizza.

LINDSAY

Not really.

NICK

I like this Aaron Brown guy.

TORI

He's okay. (pause.) I love this. I'm sorry, I know the human loss and the blah blah blah but this is *great*. I love it when something big happens. I *love it*. Plane crash, scandal, kidnapped celebrity.

LINDSAY

(upset)

Tori.

TORI

What?

LINDSAY

I don't even know how too... I- you can't *mean* that.

TORI

Over the line? (beat) Over the line. Look. Okay. First off, you know anyone directly involved?

LINDSAY

I-

TORI

Is anyone in the family dead?

LINDSAY

NO.

TORI
And you?

NICK
Shit, no.

TORI
Okay, so no one here is grieving. Good. So you're upset out of empathy. Which is good, that's natural. But for a moment remove the human element, remove the tragedy, remove the shock, remove everything that morality has ever taught you and look at the situation objectively.

LINDSAY
... okay.

TORI
Now look. (Points at TV) Right now, hundred of thousands of people? Their lives are drastically changed forever. Everyone else? Their lives are altered slightly. History is being re-written, all the little shit people were fretting over is now a dead issue-

LINDSAY
What is your point?

TORI
(points to TV) It's great fucking television! (Lindsay groans) I mean, they can't write shit like this—no one would believe it!

NICK
She's got a point.

LINDSAY
That's awful.

TORI
What? You're watching for the same reason-

LINDSAY
I am not. This is a tragedy, not a-(losing her train of thought) celebrity trial, or a sex scandal or-

TORI
Fine. You're right. We shouldn't gawk at the world's greatest car wreck. Let's turn it off. (she reaches for the remote, Lindsay reaches for it as well but stops herself. They stare at each for a moment.) See? We're gonna be good, decent human beings. (turns off the TV. She puts on the straightest face she can) Let's talk about this sensibly, and calmly, and intelligently. We are undergraduates at a Liberal Arts institution, after all.

LINDSAY
You're not funny

TORI
I'm not trying to be.

NICK
(after a deadly pause, finally loses it) I'm sorry, I've never seen a female dick measuring contest.

LINDSAY

Alright. Alright. Alright.

TORI

(jumps up and turns on TV) See? No one can turn away. Fiction can't compete with life, it's not twisted enough.

LINDSAY

Yes. New York is burning to the ground, and your ass is in the way. Sidddown.

TORI

Ooh, she does have a bitchy bone in her body after all.

NICK

Yeah yeah, just turn it up and sit down. (Lindsay picks up the phone and goes to exit) Where you going?

LINDSAY

I'm gonna try to call home again. (leaves)

TORI

(grabbing a slice of pizza) Hey, where's Ed?

Ed walks in. The scene freezes. Spot on Ed

ED

Those buildings should not have fallen.

SIX

ED (to us)

Those buildings should not have fallen. Should *not* have fallen. *pause* I was sitting in EN-4, and the teacher is really emotional and only half the class is there. She says, you all can go if you want... a lot of people do. I sit there. I keep thinking *those buildings should still be standing*. You build the tallest building, buildings, in New York, in the world, at the time, you have to plan. You have to plan for anything that could happen, any act of God or man. They built these things when planes were invented. The designer was - Minoru Yamasaki. I look things up. Mr. Yamasaki should have *known* better. I mean, a plane's a big fucking obstacle, but planes were *around* in 1973, when the Ribbon was cut, and in 1966, when ground was broken, so what the *fuck* Mr. Yamasaki. Why couldn't you plan on a 767 hitting the building? Were you asleep during *that* meeting?

I leave class, go to the library, go to a computer, and I go to Boeing's website. I look things up. Ok, so the first 767 wasn't delivered to a commercial airline, United Airlines until 08/19/82. So he couldn't have planned for that plane. But you're not off the hook yet, Mr. Yamasaki. Because the 747, the fucking commercial biggest plane in the world, sir, *that* plane was first in service for Pan AM on January 21st, 1970. Your building was finished in 1973. NO EXCUSE! NO FUCKING EXCUSE! YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN, YOU SHOULD HAVE PLANNED, YOU BUILT THE TWO TALLEST BUILDINGS IN MANHATTAN AND YOU DIDN'T PLAN FOR THIS?! (beat) Well-to be fair- you plan for an accidental crash, but what kind of pilot would accidentally fly a plane that size into such a small target? Who would bring up at the table, "but gentlemen, what if someone seized control of a jetliner and plowed it into the building?"

I dunno.

You've got to build things right. You've got to build them to last. You've got to plan around all disasters, natural and man made. You've got to build things to *last*. Even if a plane comes out of the sky and strikes it like the hand of God, trying to wipe it off the face of the earth, you've got to build it *better*. (beat) Except of course, this wasn't the hand of God, was it? It was the hand of man. Men drove those planes into those buildings.

In the name of God, maybe. Their God. But Men's hands.

(The Scene Resumes. He walks in and sits down)

NICK
How was class?

ED
(beat) Fine.

SEVEN^f

Lindsay has gotten through to dad.

LINDSAY

Dad, I'm fine. (beat) No one can get through. Anywhere. (beat) No. (pause) Were you? (laughs) You fell off the *treadmill*? Sorry, sorry, it's not funny. (beat) Okay, it is. A little.

Zach appears on his cell phone.

ZACH

Yeah, Mom. Sorry I didn't- I was in a store, I didn't hear the phone- yeah, I'm on my to see friends. (beat) Mom, I'm sorry, I didn't *know* the signal went dead in that store.

LINDSAY

Is mom okay? (pause) Right. Right. Well, is- I mean, does she have any reason to think they were... you know, *around*...

ZACH

Weirdest thing, Mom. I was in that store and- what? My friends? Oh, they're okay. (beat) I mean, I *think* they-

LINDSAY

Good. Good. You know, there but the grace of God- yeah. (beat) Yes, Dad, I think I *will* stay on campus. The trains aren't even going *into* Boston.

ZACH

This store, I go in there all the time, and- you know, *coffee, muffin, bottle of water*, whatever. It's run by this-Indian gentleman, I guess? South Asian American?

Danielle appears, waiting by her phone. She is staring into space. The phone does not ring.

ZACH

Maybe he's Pakistani? I never asked. Nice guy. Can't really speak English, but nice guy.

LINDSAY

I'm staying put. We ordered a pizza, I'm staying- right.

ZACH

Today, I go in after my last class- yeah, no we had classes today, bizarre stuff. Anyway, he's standing outside his store while his daughter runs the store. He's smiling, but I think he was— he was scared of me, or something. (beat) Yeah, bizarre.

LINDSAY

Besides, if they're going to hit any campus around here, it's gonna be Harvard.

Danielle's phone rings. She grabs it so fast she knocks it off the table.

DANIELLE

Hello?? Hello??

ZACH

I mean, I said to this guy hello, he says nothing. And I think, ok, whatever, it's that kind of day, doesn't want to say hello that's fine-

DANIELLE

Hel... Hello? (beat, she hangs up the phone and puts her head in her hands)

ZACH

Buy my coffee, and decide that since the world is ending out there, I'll get a donut too. You know. (beat)
Yes, mom, I've been watching what I- yes, I've been walking a lot, would you just- let me finish!

LINDSAY

Dad, look, we should- yeah, people need this line more than we do, but- yeah, would you? Tonight?

ZACH

The point is, I get my change, I walk out and I go to say goodbye to the guy-

LINDSAY

Yeah, I'll be up. We'll all be up.

ZACH

-and he points at this sign behind him, freshly painted, and the sign says, "I am Indian, not Afghan. I am Hindu, not Muslim. I am an American."

Beat.

LINDSAY

(tearing)

I love you, Dad.

ZACH

Strange stuff, huh?

Danielle's phone rings again, she answers it.

DANIELLE

Hello??

ZACH

Strange day.

Danielle bursts out into hysterics. Lindsay hangs up, leaves, comforted. Zach shakes his head.

ZACH

Yeah. Bye. Love ya.

He hangs up, walks out. Danielle calms down.

DANIELLE

... oh, thank God. Thank *god*.

Lights fade down-

DANIELLE

Mom, I love you *so much*.

-and out.

EIGHT

NICK, TORI, ED are now sitting around, watching. LINDSAY lays down on her bed, staring at the ceiling. A large bag of chips is being passed around.

LINDSAY

This day is taking *forever*. (beat) What time is it anyway.

TORI

4 o'clock, and all's not well.

NICK

(his mouth full) Question. (he finishes chewing) How hard can it be to fly a 767 into a building? (no one answers) I mean, for someone that already knows how to *fly* one. (beat) Any pilot could probably do it. (beat) How difficult can it be—really—to hit one of the two tallest targets in a city that size?

ED

Bullshit.

NICK

They're 110 stories tall!

ED

These guys were pros.

TORI

Pass the salsa.

ED

You're talking an acre of rentable space per floor—4,020 square meters each. That's a big building, but for a plane that's *nothing*.

TORI

How the hell would you know?

ED

It's *nothing*.

TORI

You ever fly a plane?

ED.

Yes. (That gets their attention. They all stare at Ed) Well, a *sessna*.

NICK

Okay then.

ED

4,020 square meters-

LINDSAY

How do you know these numbers? Where would you—who looks for these numbers.

TORI

They were probably on that ticker down there.

NICK

They're the tallest buildings in New York. It couldn't have been *that* hard.

ED

Bullshit. The whole cite is 16 acres.

NICK

How big is an airport? How big is a runway?

ED

Okay. Okay. *goes to computer* Lindsay, you still have that thing I sent you?

LINDSAY

Which one?

ED

Nevermind. I found it. *Flight Simulator 2000*. (he types, they all turn and stare) New York Map... Boeing 737... partly cloudy skies... morning. There. (beat, he looks at Nick) Try it. Fly a plane into the two tallest buildings in New York.

pause

NICK

They flew 7-6-7s, not 737s.

TORI

That's fucking sick!

ED

Try it.

LINDSAY

Guys...

NICK

sitting down I'm not even *good* at this game

TORI

Well, then it's not going to be an accurate simulation.

ED

Try it. See how easy it is to plow a commercial airliner into the tallest buildings in New York.

TORI

But if he's not *good* at the game-

LINDSAY

Are none of you finding this a little bit sick?

TORI

It's completely tasteless. Now c'mon, do it.

NICK

See. I crashed already.

TORI

You didn't even make *land*. You're a shitty pilot.

NICK
I told you.

TORI
Ed, you do it.

ED
Nah, I made my point.

NICK
What point? That someone not good at flying can't fly a plane?

ED
Yes. That was my point.

TORI
Ed, do it.

LINDSAY
(with a sigh)
Why not, Ed? It's not like God's got the time to watch us play a game right now anyway.

TORI
That's the spirit.

ED
Okay, okay. (beat. He starts fiddling. They all watch.)

LINDSAY
What are you waiting for?

ED
I want to make sure the landing gear is set up right.

Pause.

NICK
Why.

ED
(beat) Right.

NICK
(to us) Flight number one.⁴

TORI
The world trade center, not the empire state building.

LINDSAY
(to us) Flight number two.

ED

⁴ The actors should give these beats some time, 'watching' Ed's various flights.

The wind was off.

NICK

You landed in *New Jersey*.

TORI

(to us) Flight Number Three we try London.

ED

I don't think they actually mapped Big Ben...

TORI

That's a shame. (beat) Aim for the Queen.

ED

(to us) Flight Number Four Paris.

LINDSAY

(in spite of herself) Look! The Eiffel tower! Get it!

TORI

Get it! (beat)

NICK

You got it.

TORI

Viva la France!

LINDSAY

(to us) Lucky number five back to New York.

NICK

Easy... easy...

TORI

You're tilting left, tilting-

LINDSAY

Sssh-

Zach enters, distracted, with a "tall" cup of coffee. They don't notice him. He looks at them, looks at the TV, then looks at them not looking at the TV.

ED

C'mon you bastard...

NICK

Left, left-

TORI

Oh, man-

ED

There... there!

They all cheer and congratulate Ed.

ZACH
What happened?

They turn and stare. Dead silence.

ZACH
What?

The four look at each other before reacting, each in a different way. Zach walks over and 'looks' at what was going on. He stares for a beat. Then

ZACH
My latin teacher, he was in college when the Challenger blew up. With the teacher on it? (some of them nod vaguely) He said it took about ten minutes before he heard the first joke. What color were Sharon McAuliffe's eyes? (beat) Blue. (beat) One blew this way, one blew that way. (dead silence. Nick finally breaks out with a wild laugh, then catches himself.) It's alright, guys, human nature, whatever. (he turns off the computer) Stand upside down and the world comes into focus. Laugh so you don't cry. All of that. (sits) All of that.

Beat.

LINDSAY
My Uncle told me a different one.

TORI
Oh, tell!

LINDSAY
What were the last words heard on the Challenger? (pauses) "Not that button, bitch."

Some laugh, some don't.

NINE

Danielle
(singing to herself) "Everything's alright... Yes everything's fine" This day is still happening... it's so odd... to think how much has happened, and still, there's more time. It should be tomorrow already. It's just messy storytelling now... time needs elapse so we can get caught up, instead of seeing every moment. Next chapter, please. (sings) "Could we start again please." (beat) Jesus Christ Superstar. I've been listening all day. So, she's okay. She called an hour ago. Called again, just now. I still can't leave the phone. I don't believe it. (beat) When my Mom... when she told me my grandmother died a few years ago, I laid down in the middle of my room. I put on the Beatles album, Yellow Submarine, and I laid down in the middle of my room. I don't know why I didn't lay down on my bed. Right there on the ground-(lays down, looking up) And I sung along, "We all live in a yellow submarine... yellow submarine... yellow submarine... we all live." (beat) It didn't make me feel better, exactly, but it made me feel 'ok.' I was 'okay.' I'm 'okay.' (sits up) What *time* is it? Did I eat anything today? (looks at her alarm clock) Huh. I guess not. You never think what happens after the person gets the call, what happens after they find out everything's fine. After the resolution of the crisis. They still have to eat, still have to talk to people, still have to sleep. 'Arrive late, leave early,' that's- that's how you tell a story. No one cares what Horatio had for dinner after Hamlet died. (slightly angry) Life is *sloppy*. It's just sloppy storytelling, with no proper beginning or ending, just all middle. All middle, no meter, no scheme, no grace, no wit, just random notes from a tone deaf piano player. And he just keeps *playing*. (her phone rings. Beat) And I'm sick of it. (It rings again.) Hello? Hi, Ed. Yeah. Everything's alright, everything's- I mean, I'm okay. I'm 'okay.'

TEN

Lindsay
(staring at the TV)
We're going to war...
We're going to war...
We're going to war...

Ed
If one person in a group of friends has a crisis, that group can come together to help and offer support.

Lindsay
We're going to war...

Danielle
We brought this upon ourselves...

Ed
If the whole group is having a crisis, still, they can offer each other support, because they're going through it together and the outside world can offer some support.

Lindsay
We're going to war...

Zach
(confused) We... We need to... We...

Ed
But if the group has a crisis, if the world has a crisis, if everyone's in a crisis... that support can turn sour, and it can bring out the darkness in people.

Nick
We need to do X. We're going to do Y, but we need to X.

Lindsay.
We're going to war...

Ed
You can judge people by what they do when they fall apart. Observe it and note it, but it's not who they 'really' are.

Tori
What if...

Danielle
We're wrong.

Tori
What if...

Nick
We're right.

Tori
What if...

Zach
We're...

Lindsay
... going to war.

Ed
At least I hope not. (beat, looks at his friends) These are good people. Really, when the world isn't ending, they're good people. I believe that. (beat) But when good people watch television together for more than eight hours, and it's not some kind of Law and Order marathon... Well... when it gets to be around 11 30, they started to fight.

The scene restarts in real-time.

Lindsay
Are you kidding? Of course we're going to war!

Danielle
The damage has already been *done*...

Lindsay
Fuck that! Fuck it! What mercy are we due *these* people?

Zach
These people?

Lindsay
What *leniency* do we owe them?

Zach
These people...

Lindsay
Palestinian children are celebrating in the streets! Osama Bin Laden is probably smoking a cigar-

Ed
(trying for humor) Sleeping with the forty virgins?

Lindsay
He-Shut up-

Ed
Sorry.

Lindsay
He's, he's probably laughing at us.

Zach
Those children are-

Lindsay
He's *laughing* and people are *dead*. He *killed* them. He promised those hijackers paradise and they killed them.

Danielle

And we killed *his* people.

Zach
No, the children are-

Danielle
This is payback. that's all it is-

Nick
We didn't kill his people. Our weapons maybe, but-

Danielle
You think it's any different to them?

Nick
It's more complicated than that.

Lindsay
People are *dead*-

Zach
The children-

Nick
People die all the time

Danielle
No one you know-

Lindsay
No! Not here! Not fucking here-

Ed
Lindsay-

Lindsay
Not from something like this-

Nick
People die and kids celebrate all-

Zach
SHUT SHUT *SHUT* UP. (beat) THOSE CHILDREN DID NOT KNOW WHAT THEY WERE DOING. I refuse to believe that. They were told to celebrate. Children don't do that.

Nick
You're naïve.

Zach
No. No We're not discussing it any more. No. *beat* Kids don't do that

Nick
They *did*.

Zach
Shut *up*.

Nick
I don't have to.

Danielle
Stop! Would you all stop!? What's to analyze? People are dying! What's too decide!? You're just like the TV, you're just all noise, no sense, no meaning, just noise, Noise, Noise, Noise, *Noise!!*(Danielle starts to cry. No one knows what to do.) Excuse me... (leaves)

Everyone stares at one another.

Lindsay
Someone-

Zach
I'll go. (to Nick) You're an asshole.

Nick shrugs. There is another uneasy silence.

Lindsay
(loud) *Hey.* It's almost midnight.(everyone stops, looks at the TV, dream-like) It's almost another day.

Tori
(beat) Someone tell a joke.

Zach
What?

Tori
Someone say something funny. This day's gotta end with some... I don't want to say hope. but it can't end like this.

Danielle
They're still looking for survivors-

Tori
We can't do anything about out there, we can't help anyone now, but in here... there's no one dead in here. There's no need for us to be at a funeral. So someone, please, make me laugh. (beat) Anyone.

Ed
Did I tell you guys about Joe the Bum?

Lindsay
Joe the Bum?

Ed
Joe the Bum, friend of my Uncle Mike? (beat)

Nick
... crazy Uncle Mike?

Ed
(nods) Mike called me an hour ago... I didn't tell you guys?

Nick
Who is Mike and why is he crazy?

Ed
Mike is a long story but sort of a short one...

Tori
Another time. Focus. Joe the Bum.

Ed
Okay. Well, Mike has a friend Joe, Joe the Bum. We don't know where or how he met Joe, but we he likes to bring Joe to parties. Joe showed up at my 20th birthday.

Lindsay
Did Joe give you a present?

Ed
4 pack of Guinness. I think Mike bought it for him too-

Tori
Focus. Joe the Bum.⁵

Ed
Yesterday, Joe the bum was looking for somewhere to sleep in Manhattan. He knew a security guard at one of the office buildings about a block from the World Trade Centre. Joe went to go see this guy and said, hey, let me spend the night. The guy said, hey, it's a Monday- next day is just a regular Tuesday, a regular business day like any other, why not-

Nick
Uh oh.

Ed
Wait. Now it was late, and Joe hadn't slept under a roof for awhile, so he didn't wake up today until 1ish. (beat) Joe slept *through* the crash. Joe sleeps *through* the collapse. Joe even sleeps through the evacuation. It's the end of the world as we know it, and Joe the Bum is sleeping in. Joe wakes up, notices the building is empty, but doesn't really think much about it. He walks outside and—
Well, how did he get there? The streets are covered in ash, no one around, nothing is what it should be. The city is a movie set. Then, a man in a gas mask walks up to him, brandishing a gun. He looks at the man, and realizes this is not New York at all. Clearly, he has woken up on Mars. The Martian asks, "are you okay?" And Joe thinks about it, and he says, "No."

(slowly at first, there's an outbreak of smiles and a little laughter.)

Lindsay
How did Mike know? What was this, 10 hours ago?

Ed
Well, Joe called Mike right away. He needed a new place to sleep.

Tori
(in spite of herself) Did Mike say 'yes'?

Ed
Of course. He's crazy.

⁵ In the original production, the story of Joe the Bum was pantomimed by the two actors playing Danielle and Zach, with the actors onstage watching the pantomime as Nick narrates. It proved to be a very effective way to enhance the humor of the story.

Lindsay
(beat) It's 12 02.

Silence. Everyone stares at the TV.

Tori
Think we have classes today?

No one answers.

ELEVEN

Each person appears, in their own light and space.

TORI
One day...

ED
One week...

DANIELLE
One month...

ZACH
One year...

NICK
Two years...

ALL EXCEPT LINDSAY
After...

LINDSAY
Where were you?

ALL (building)
Where were you?
Where were you?
Where were you?
Where were you?

TORI
One day later my professor comes into class. Middle aged white guy teaching Japanese history. He has a Japanese wife and is damn proud of it, thinks that gives him a license to correct everyone in class, you know. Knows his shit, though. He usually has this *glow*, this *aura* of 'good morning, my uneducated children. I come to dispense the knowledge of ages.' Not today. He comes in and says—let me try to do this justice—he says, "Well. Obviously, we're all dealing with—"he pauses, and makes this hand motion—a wave, saying, "I don't need to finish that sentence. This annoys the piss out of me for some reason, but he keeps going, "I have a good friend who was on the 62nd floor of the North Tower and—" he makes the slightest facial wince, "well, let's face it, she's dead. (beat) BUT—" and here at the BUT the aura returns, slightly changed but still fucking arrogant, "But, even though I'm upset over that, we shouldn't let anger cloud our vision. And we, as educated people— need to stop these people... (beat, her emphasis) *these* people— from comparing this attack to Pearl Harbor." And he starts going on the blah blah blah about the American internment camps, about the different death counts, about how the one was an act of war and this is a response to *our* terrorism JESUS CHRIST. PEOPLE ARE DEAD AND YOU'RE LECTURING US

about your GOD DAMNED AGENDA. This is the year two thousand and one. We're not about to put people in fucking concentration camps, and I don't give a shit about what you say we did to whatever country. Whatever it was, we didn't deserve this. We didn't deserve fucking jetliners, people just trying to get across the country, their lives ended by ramming them into our skyscrapers.

ED

One week later. I got my answer. To why the buildings fell. Jet Fuel. The planes were Boeings 767-200s. I looked it up—and they must have too—that the Boeing 767-200 has a fuel capacity of 13,900 gallons. 13,900 gallons can take you 3,671 miles at 527 miles per hour. Was that how fast they were going when they slammed into the buildings? (beat) Those planes were re-directed and crashed shortly after takeoff. And no steel could withstand the temperatures reached with a little under 13,900 gallons of jet fuel melting them. They knew that.

TORI

You're saying we made this happen. You're saying we're the terrorists. And you have a right to say that. You have that right, a right a lot of people *don't* have, in this country.

ED

They knew the planes were 159 feet, they knew that they had a maximum take off weight of 30 tons and they *knew* that each plane held 2 pilots and up to 216 passengers.

TORI

But as my *teacher*? You have a right to teach me Japanese goddamn history. Leave your *bullshit* opinions at home.

ED

They knew. Of course they did. I'm sorry, Mr. Yamasaki. You built them right. You just didn't plan on Men driving 13,900 gallons of fuel into your buildings on purpose. But who could? Who, standing around that table, could have thought, "what if some pilot flies a huge airplane into the building on purpose?" Who?

DANIELLE

One month later, I'm at a concert. Metallica. (beat) Yeah, that's right, Metallica. My friend someone to go with, and I wasn't a fan but I am her friend so I went. The opening act, I forget who they were, they had this song. It was a song of mourning with some kind of pop beat, except they changed it to be about 9/11 with these back-projected images... now I'm thinking, wow, this is awful.

ED

They were beautiful buildings, Mr. Yamasaki. (beat) Mr. Yamasaki, born in America. At first I thought, wow, a Japanese man built it. But I looked you up. You were born here, you're an American.

DANIELLE

But all around me, there's this chanting and yelling and angry, angry yelling, people screaming, USA, USA, USA... and... where am I? Is this America? Or is this a Nazi Rally?

ED

"I am not, blank, I am an American." (Ed Leaves)

DANIELLE

The message and meaning is different, but the tone is the same, the anger is the same. 'United we stand'... against what? Murder? Paying for Oil? We aren't *thinking* as a people. Nationalism is nationalism! That's what led Japan and Germany into war. *that's what led them to their total destruction... at our hands.* With our 'just' war. Who are we? Really, who are we, and what do we want, as a country, as a people? Cause we're saying one thing and doing another.

ZACH

One year later... When they bombed Afghanistan, when they finished bombing the crap out of that patch of rock, I was happy. I was. I felt vindicated. No mercy for those fighters in the mountains. None.

DANIELLE

Not that it's anything new. Nothing new from our slavery days, our manifest destiny days, our imperialism days... you don't have to look too far into our past to realize how messed up we are.

ZACH

I don't know if it was right but it felt like it made sense. Maybe it didn't, but that's how it felt. Now we're gonna invade Iraq. Probably. And I don't know why. It doesn't feel right.

DANIELLE

I can't wait to leave this country. Not that paradise exists anywhere else, but... it's gotta be better than here. (beat) It's gotta be better than what we're becoming. (Danielle leaves)

ZACH

Oh, there's the *reasons*... oil, Saddam's a monster, liberating Iraq, why not? (beat) Yeah, but why? Iraq and 9/11, I don't see it. Where's the connection? They say he's a threat. Where are the Iraq bombs dropped on our houses? Where is the hidden Iraqi cell in Seattle? (beat) They say he's a second Hitler. Well, maybe. He's crazy enough. So we're doing the right thing. Has to happen. Gonna happen anyway. Inevitable. Maybe.

NICK

2 years later, we've won the war in Iraq. That's what the TV says. Bush says the world is safer. Bush says we won that war, the war on *terra* continues, and we can win it.

ZACH

Why is this happening now? Bush wants it. He's a cowboy. He's doing it for daddy. Too simple. Nothing's that simple. (beat) I hope not, anyway.

NICK

You do realize, we can blow up soldiers, we can blow up tanks, we can do whatever...

ZACH

People are dying in my name, my country's name, halfway across the world and I don't know why. Or at least I know *less* why they are doing it. I mean, I'm proud of them, I'm- I support the troops but-

NICK

But what we're fighting here-

ZACH

Does anyone else have a problem with this?

NICK

Who we're fighting here...

ZACH

1991, Kuwait. Fine. 2002, Afghanistan. Okay. Now?

NICK

(laughs) It's all a fucking mess.

ZACH

Now, Iraq? What? *What?* (leaves, shaking his head)

NICK

If someone walks into a bank, a mall, a train, a school, strapped with C4 and the will to use it, there's not a damn thing you can do to stop them. Some religious Shiite freak walks into a theater like this, tomorrow, or the day after, programmed by some pissed off sect leader and flips his switch. How do you stop a man who believes he's going to heaven by killing you? (beat) You stop him by making the world a place where no one *wants* to do that to you. Yet, what are we doing across the world? We're making a lot of people want to do that to us. (beat) A lot of people don't like us. A lot of people. So what do we do? Appease? Treaties? Let fanatics control people's lives? Build a giant wall, maybe.

LINDSAY

You can strike a spark anywhere.

NICK

We've got the ball—right now the US has the power to change the world, and the world is a mess, it's all a goddamn mess. Anyone who tells you can solve it by firing a missile or signing a piece of paper is either a liar or an idiot. Or they think you're an idiot, and you're gullible.

LINDSAY

But eventually, you won't be able too.

NICK

Look, maybe I'm full of shit, maybe I'm wrong. But if you take anything from what I'm saying, take this—don't be fools. Don't believe everything you're hearing. There are people making decisions, and they don't know or don't care about *all the facts*. And it *doesn't impact you until... until ...* (beat) You know what, fuck it. Do what you want. You don't care about it, you deserve what you get. (starts to leave) We deserve exactly what we're gonna get. (Nick Leaves)

LINDSAY

The next generation, you'll ask, 'where were you?', and they won't remember. A generation that came into this world as it is now. A generation born into the world we create. Holocausts, men on the moon, the internet, and a big hole in downtown Manhattan. So what is all of this— a time capsule? In a year or two, these thoughts, these questions will have well researched answers. Maybe not the right answers, but answers. The answers will become Books. Books will get broken down into chapters. Chapters will become paragraphs in textbooks. Then a sentence. Then a footnote. Then, gone. Rome fell. So will we, whether we believe it or not. So what do these questions matter? We can't get away from them now, but maybe... maybe I'm gone, and you're hearing me when they've already been answered. So what then? Why should you care? (she thinks) Someone across the world is fighting for me right now. Maybe he— maybe she— is killing another man. A woman, a child. They are all living in interesting times. Maybe the soldier is dying. And I don't think—if he, she, asked me why... not if it was right or wrong, just *why*. (beat) Odds are, someone is across the world is fighting, killing, dying for you. Someone is living in interesting times. Be sure they know—that you know *why*. (beat) Today is another day. Mark it, footnote it, it happened and now it's over. It's history. Just like yesterday; just like now.

(She turns around and the Date and Year of the specific day the play is being performed is projected behind her. She looks at it for a beat, then gives us a look and leaves.)

End.