

OXYGEN

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CHARACTERS

**DIANA
SOFIA
PSYCHOLOGIST**

SCENE I

Two women, two wheelchairs, and two oxygen masks. The constant noise of oxygen is heard. DIANA has a bandage on her head. SOFIA is dressed for a night out and has ripped stockings. Neither has shoes on.

SOFIA: You have to talk to someone.

DIANA: I'm talking to you.

SOFIA: To someone who can help you, who can help us...

DIANA: I don't know...

SOFIA: Why didn't you get off?

DIANA: I could've saved all those people.

SOFIA: Oh, yeah? How?

DIANA: At that time of the morning, everyone is so tired...

SOFIA: Why didn't you get off?

DIANA: In twelve years, I have never been late for work.

SOFIA: Until today.

DIANA: I don't know what happened to me. I see this guy get on, a regular guy, well- dressed, and he leaves this backpack under the seat. It's clearly heavy. And he places it carefully, looks around quickly, and then gets off the train. No one notices, except me. Never in my entire life have I had such a bad feeling. Do you know what I am saying to you? I felt like screaming!

SOFIA: But you didn't.

(DIANA suddenly gets up off her wheelchair.)

DIANA: LISTEN EVERYBODY! SORRY TO BOTHER YOU! BUT SOME MAN HAS LEFT THIS BACKPACK AND GOTTEN OFF THE TRAIN! IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS! WE SHOULD STOP THE TRAIN! WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING!

(DIANA walks out into the audience and confronts some audience member.)

DIANA: LISTEN! WAKE UP! IT COULD BE A BOMB! LET'S GET OFF THE TRAIN! PLEASE, C'MON LET'S GO!

(Nobody reacts. DIANA remains standing, staring out at the audience absorbed.)

DIANA: Nobody would've paid any attention to me. No one.

SOFIA: Who knows?

(DIANA returns to her wheelchair trembling, she puts on her oxygen mask, and breathes. The noise of the oxygen mixed with her voice is heard as a voiceover.)

DIANA (*Voiceover*): I'm trapped. I don't want to get off. I can't get off. I'm going to move to the end of the car and wait. I see all of these people. I observe their faces, one by one, record their gestures, the last moments of their lives. Some read, others doze, a young boy text messages someone on his cell phone. Who could he be writing to at such an early hour? I notice a couple. She's dressed up to go out for the night. You can tell she hasn't slept much, but her face is rosy, glowing, and happy. He's reading absentmindedly. She opens her purse and writes a phone number on a little piece of paper. She gives it to him and whispers something in his ear. They smile and caress each other's hands. And, then it happens. The book falls on the floor and she leans over to get it. At the same moment, there's white smoke. I see him fly out the window, still holding onto the little piece of paper...

(DIANA takes off her mask. Then trounces on SOFIA.)

DIANA: What's going to happen now?

SOFIA: You're asking me?

DIANA (*Shaking SOFIA*): How am I supposed to live? How will I ever forget it?

SOFIA (*Dazed*): I don't know. I really don't know. (*Out of breath. Loss of oxygen.*)

SCENE II

The two women sit face to face. They take each other's hands. They look into one another's eyes.

DIANA: It was your first night together. Right?

SOFIA: Yes.

DIANA: Have you ever taken that train before?

SOFIA: Never. It was just by chance.

DIANA: Did you love him?

SOFIA: If I had had a little more time... *(She pulls away from DIANA.)* A little more time to tell you not to take that train. A little more time to force you, forbid you, scold you, or use whatever excuse possible, to not let you on that train, you're not going, you're not going, and that's final. Life is so screwed up for those of us who remain that we may as well just suddenly go, in that low, but explosive flight, lightly feeling the caress of the air right before it becomes unbreatheable in that last inhalation. *(Pause.)*

DIANA: What did you whisper into his ear?

SOFIA: I don't remember.

DIANA: Really?

SOFIA: Everything is all mixed up, I don't know...

DIANA: Think a little.

SOFIA *(Upset):* I'm telling you I don't remember. And, anyway, who cares.

DIANA: I care.

SOFIA: Oh yeah? Why?

DIANA: Curiosity.

SOFIA: Isn't it so you can recreate the last moments of his life?

DIANA *(Hurt):* Why would you say that?

SOFIA: Leave the dead in peace. Worry about your own life. You didn't know anyone and my boyfriend...

DIANA: Your boyfriend?

SOFIA: He could've been my boyfriend, my true love, my lover, the father of my children...I don't know, but he has died and I'm here) alive and kicking.

(Behind her wheelchair a bag filled with her personal items hangs. SOFIA empties the bag onto the floor: shoes, purse, broken cell phone, and a book. DIANA leans over quickly to grab it. SOFIA does too. There is a brief struggle. Finally, SOFIA gets the book and puts it into her purse.)

DIANA: What's it called?

SOFIA: What difference does it make?

DIANA: That book saved your life. I need to know the name.

SOFIA: The title doesn't matter. It's just a book.

DIANA: That's a lie! It's that book that makes it so you can be here talking to me. It's that book that kept you from going through the window. I was there. I saw you lean down to get it. Don't you remember? If you had flown away with your

boyfriend you would be dead right now. It can't just be incidental...*(Pleading)* Please tell me what it's called...

SOFIA: When will you stop living other people's lives?

(SOFIA puts on her shoes nervously. DIANA remains on the floor kneeling.)

DIANA: You're just going to leave me like this?

SOFIA: Look at yourself. You're pathetic.

(SOFIA exits. DIANA, on the floor, sobs.)

