

AIR RAGE

CHARACTERS: (3)

MR. BROWN, a man in a suit and tie, reading a magazine, any age
between 45-70

JEREMY, a man casually dressed, carrying an overnight bag, any age
between 21-35

ATTENDANT, any age, either sex, with a few lines at the end

SETTING: Two seats on an airplane. Real airplane seats would be nice, but two chairs
side by side will do just fine.

(At rise MR. BROWN is already seated on the “aisle” side. He is reading
an in-flight magazine.)

(JEREMY enters, looking at his boarding pass stub while looking for his
seat, can’t find it at first)

JEREMY Let’s see now. (looking at the seat next to Mr. Brown) Oh, that must
be it — 22F. Or are you 22F?

MR. BROWN No.

JEREMY Are you 22E?

MR. BROWN Only today.

JEREMY Huh?

MR. BROWN (twisting his legs so that JEREMY can get by) Be my guest.

JEREMY (trying to get into his seat, hitting MR. BROWN with his overnight bag
by accident) Oh, sorry!

MR. BROWN (gritting his teeth) No problem.

JEREMY Guess I should have checked my bag.

MR. BROWN Guess so.

JEREMY But I decided it would be faster if I brung it on board. It was too big
for that box they’ve got, but I snuck it past the gate. Good idea, huh?

MR. BROWN Very enterprising of you.

JEREMY (trying) It don't seem to fit under the seat here. (Tries several ways, knocking MR. BROWN again.) Sorry. I guess it's just too big!

MR. BROWN I'd suggest an overhead bin, but they're all full.

JEREMY Did I hurt you?

MR. BROWN I'll live.

JEREMY (having an idea) I know! (calling) Attendant! Attendant! (to MR. BROWN) I'll have the flight attendant stash it somewhere.

MR. BROWN (looking) I don't see one.

JEREMY (calling too loudly) Hey, attendant! (to MR. BROWN) Where's that button? (looks for attendant button)

MR. BROWN (showing him on the "armrest") Here.

JEREMY (banging on the button) Service here! Service! I bet they're up there having sex with the pilot.

MR. BROWN (deliberate non-answer)

JEREMY You think? I hear that goes on a lot on flights these days. Oh, hell, I can keep my bag on my lap, I suppose. (Puts it there)

MR. BROWN For six hours?

JEREMY It'll be okay. I can use it like a pillow. (Puts his head on the bag) Like this. Maybe you could hold it every other hour or so?

MR. BROWN (a dig) Too bad there isn't a seat between us. So you could put it there, I mean.

JEREMY Keep your eyes open, and if you see a free seat, I'll run over and put it there. Do you see one? Let me look too. (Gets up to survey other seats) Do you see one yet?

MR. BROWN Or you could even sit over there if we find one. And I could look after your bag *right here* on this one. (meaning Jeremy's seat)

JEREMY Thanks! (Turns and looks at MR. BROWN) Hey, don't I know you?

MR. BROWN I don't believe so.

JEREMY Your voice sounds real familiar.

MR. BROWN Oh, I doubt it.

JEREMY I'm sure I know you. (leaning past MR. BROWN, looking up the "aisle" at an unseen passenger going past) Hey, look at the sweet ass on her! Whew! (to MR. BROWN) You sure I don't know you?

MR. BROWN (embarrassed for him) Positive.

(JEREMY checks him out.)

JEREMY Now I know who you are! You're Mr. Brown. You were my teacher in high school!

MR. BROWN (quietly) Really?

JEREMY Don't you remember me? Jeremy!

MR. BROWN I've had a lot of Jeremys over the years.

JEREMY Jeremy Hepplewhite!

MR. BROWN Hepplewhite? That does sound sort of familiar.

JEREMY English, right?

MR. BROWN Yes.

JEREMY Yeah, you gave me a D. Remember?

(MR. BROWN turns and recognizes JEREMY)

MR. BROWN Oh, my god. It's you.

JEREMY Yeah, it's me! I used to fall asleep in your class all the time.

MR. BROWN How could I forget!

JEREMY Now I have to stay right here. So we can talk. There's some things I'd like to get off my chest. (He sits back down)

MR. BROWN But isn't that a free seat? (points) Right there! See!

JEREMY Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown. I can't believe it. You used to write on my Papers — when I finally turned them in — all this stuff about how bad they

were. The punctuation. The grammar. The consperence.

MR. BROWN . . . You mean the coherence?

JEREMY Yeah, all that kind of crap. On every single one of my papers.

MR. BROWN But of course you eventually mastered it all, no doubt, and went on to graduate.

JEREMY Yeah, I graduated high school. Can't say that I mastered all that crap, though.

MR. BROWN Pity.

JEREMY You know it's, like, you don't really need that stuff in the real world.

MR. BROWN I'm sure you're right. There's far too much punctuation in the world.

JEREMY Have you noticed that too?

MR. BROWN To say nothing of grammar and consperence.

JEREMY Why do you go on teaching that shit then?

MR. BROWN Can't stop myself. Did you "graduate college" too?

JEREMY Yeah, now I know it for sure — you're Mr. Brown. You know what? I don't think you liked me in high school.

MR. BROWN How could anyone not like you?

JEREMY Come on, confess. That's why you gave me that D. I did half the papers and I still got that D!

MR. BROWN Well, yes, I dickered over that A with myself for hours and hours.

JEREMY It wasn't just because I fell asleep in class, now was it? I always wanted to know. The reason was because I used to mouth off in class, no?

MR. BROWN There have been so many it's hard to recall.

JEREMY I used to slouch down in my seat like this (does so). Remember?

MR. BROWN Ah, it's all coming back to me now too . . . Jeremy Hepplewhite. You used to wear a knit cap.

JEREMY That's right!

MR. BROWN Pulled down over your ears.

JEREMY (excited) Right! Wait! I still have the cap. (opens his bag and searches) You're gonna love it. I'm almost ready. (Puts on the knit cap, pulls it way down) What do you think?

MR. BROWN It's you!

JEREMY And I used to keep my arms crossed over my chest, like this.
(Does so)

MR. BROWN Of course! And you used to making mooing sounds whenever I started the class.

JEREMY Gosh, you do remember me! I can't believe it. I'm flattered.

MR. BROWN Who could ever forget your mooing, Jeremy?

JEREMY It was like this. (He moos) (smiling) Right? (Moos again) Am I right?
Was that it?

MR. BROWN My god, man, you haven't lost it! The memories just come flooding back.

JEREMY And I used to mutter under my breath whenever you came into second class.

MR. BROWN Exactly. "Here comes Farmer Brown. Here comes Farmer Brown."
And on special days it was "Here come Mr. Brown, the Farmer."

JEREMY God, that used to crack up the class so much.

MR. BROWN Why wouldn't it, being so very witty. I recall now spending the first ten minutes of every class trying to restore order.

JEREMY You weren't very good at that, were you? Order.

MR. BROWN No, I wasn't. That's true, Jeremy. Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that I hadn't expected to be a policeman, instead of a teacher, when I went into the profession. A policeman with no club, no handcuffs, and no gun. What other profession would expect someone to do the job without the tools?

JEREMY I guess it goes with the teaching territory.

MR. BROWN Not in a sane world, it doesn't.

JEREMY I'd never want to be a high school teacher.

MR. BROWN And you'd be so good too!

JEREMY You think so?

MR. BROWN You could restore order by calling the farm critters together. You know, like this. (Does a hog-calling noise) That's for pigs, in case it isn't very clear. (sniffing) What's that odor?

JEREMY Odor?

MR. BROWN Don't you smell it?

JEREMY Maybe.

MR. BROWN Ooo, it's awful. What is that?

JEREMY . . . It's me.

MR. BROWN It's you?

JEREMY Yeah, it's probably my gangrene. I guess I've gotten used to the smell.

MR. BROWN I beg your pardon?

JEREMY I had a little accident. Actually it was a pretty big accident. I got hit by a train.

MR. BROWN What does one say?

JEREMY Twice.

MR. BROWN You got hit by a train twice?

JEREMY On these tracks behind my house. Where I lived before I got my divorce. Well, it's a long story, but the train wasn't supposed to be there, but it was. Thank god, it only got me a little bit the first time.

MR. BROWN And the second time?

JEREMY It wasn't supposed to be there then, either.

MR. BROWN Didn't you read the train schedule?

JEREMY Naw, I never liked reading all that much.

MR. BROWN I didn't mean for pleasure. Merely because you happened to live next to train tracks.

JEREMY Anyway, it's just a little gangrene. On my knee. Do you want to see it?

MR. BROWN Maybe another time.

JEREMY It's really ugly. You sure you don't want to see it?

MR. BROWN No, thank you.

JEREMY Come on. How many times do you get to see gangrene in your life?
(fiddling with his pant leg)

MR. BROWN It's really quite all right!

JEREMY It doesn't seem to want to go away.

MR. BROWN Have you had it looked at?

JEREMY You can't trust those doctors. That's what my old man always said.

MR. BROWN But for gangrene? Are you sure that's what it is?

JEREMY Maybe it's something else. Could you tell if I showed it to you?

MR. BROWN No!

JEREMY And I've got this abscess behind my back tooth. (Sticks his fingers in his mouth) (mumbling) It's weally sore.

MR. BROWN What?

JEREMY It's really sore back here. (feeling around in his mouth) Ouch! God, that hurts!

MR. BROWN Maybe you shouldn't touch it then.

JEREMY It just keeps coming back and coming back. What are you supposed to do? My kids get 'em too.

MR. BROWN (resigned) You're kids get 'em too.

JEREMY These abscesses.

MR. BROWN How about the gangrene? Do they get that as well?

JEREMY Oh, no, I keep 'em off those train tracks. . . . Or I did. Their mother has custody now.

MR. BROWN Of all *three* kids, yes?

JEREMY All four.

MR. BROWN Of course.

MR. BROWN You're wife — your ex-wife — is very religious, isn't she?

JEREMY Right. How did you know?

MR. BROWN Call me psychic.

JEREMY I'm thinking about being born again myself, for the kids' sake. How about you? You got kids? I don't recall if you mentioned them or not.

MR. BROWN You really should have that abscess looked at, Jeremy. All your abscesses. And the gangrene too. Wouldn't want you to lose your knee, or your mouth.

JEREMY Don't have any insurance at the moment.

MR. BROWN (shakes his head)

JEREMY What about you? Still teaching?

MR. BROWN What do you think?

JEREMY What do I think? I don't know.

MR. BROWN Go ahead, guess.

JEREMY Let me see. . . . You're still at Central High. Only you're the principal now. Right? The kids come in when they're bad and you whack 'em good. (Laughs)

MR. BROWN But corporal punishment is illegal, Jeremy. Surely you know that.

JEREMY But you still whack 'em a little bit, I bet. Just so you don't leave any bruises or scars.

MR. BROWN The way you do with your own kids?

JEREMY (doesn't answer)

MR. BROWN No, you're wrong, Jeremy. I'm not the principal at Central High. I'm not even at Central High. In fact, I'm not even teaching anymore.

JEREMY No? What happened?

MR. BROWN I left the "profession."

JEREMY Really? Why?

MR. BROWN I forget if it was immediately after I had the pleasure of having you in my class, or if it was a few semesters later, after a series of other Jeremys and Tonyas and other smartass lamebrains with a whole slew of different names.

JEREMY What did you do that for? We need teachers.

MR. BROWN Do we? How civic-minded you've become. No doubt because you're a father now. Jeremy, the Responsible Citizen.

JEREMY Somebody's got to educate our kids.

MR. BROWN Only it's no longer me out there on the front lines, putting up with the rude, brain-dead overpopulating larvae of various religious and cultural persuasions who wouldn't know self-control or common sense if it came in a candy bar.

(Pause)

JEREMY Ever miss it?

MR. BROWN No, Jeremy, I don't miss it. Is that clear enough? Irony is a delicate plant, wasted on the desert air.

JEREMY So what do you do now then?

MR. BROWN (harshly) None of your business!

JEREMY Wow!

MR. BROWN I don't want you showing up where I work, asking me to fix the punctuation in your next job resume.

JEREMY I wasn't planning to show up.

ATTENDANT (behind them, to unseen passengers, with a tray of paper cups)
Coffee? Tea? What would you like, M'am?

MR. BROWN Oh, there's the attendant.

JEREMY Well, it was really nice running into you like this, Mr. Brown. We got to talk after all these years. Clear the air.

MR. BROWN Yes, talk clears the air, doesn't it, Jeremy? Mr. Hepplewhite. Talk soothes the past and helps a person to let go at last.

JEREMY Yeah, I think that's true, now that I'm older. You have to let go of the past. . . . I forgive you for that D, Mr. Brown.

MR. BROWN Do you? You know something, Jeremy — that ass won't wipe.

JEREMY What?

ATTENDANT (to Mr. Brown) What would you like, sir? A beverage?

MR. BROWN Yes, I'd like a beverage. Do you have any bleach?

ATTENDANT Bleach?

MR. BROWN Or battery acid?

JEREMY Battery acid?

MR. BROWN No? I guess I'll have to settle for this then, won't I? (Takes a paper cup from the attendant's tray) I forgive you too, Jeremy. (Splashes the water-colored beverage in JEREMY'S face)

JEREMY (reacting) Oh! My god!

MR. BROWN Indeed, I forgive you twice. (Takes another cup and pours it on JEREMY'S head)

JEREMY What are you doing?

MR. BROWN I'm baptizing you, Jeremy. Baptizing you! So you can start over, completely free of sin! You want to be born again, don't you? Don't you?

JEREMY Hey, that's cold!

MR. BROWN Be glad it isn't hot, Jeremy, scalding hot. Be very glad!

JEREMY Stop it! Stop it!

MR. BROWN But I'm restoring order, Jeremy. Just restoring order—in the universe! (Throws the paper cup at JEREMY, storms up the "aisle.")

ATTENDANT Are you all right, sir?

MR. BROWN No! (pointing to JEREMY) He groped me!

JEREMY (soaked, discombobulated) What?

ATTENDANT (severely to JEREMY) Sit down, sir! Sit down! (sweetly to unseen passenger) And what would you like, Miss? A soft drink? (Glares back at JEREMY) I'll deal with *you* in a minute, Mister!

BLACKOUT