Dublin Institute of Technology
ARROW@DIT

Other resources

School of Mechanical and Transport Engineering

2011-05-29

Just Let Me Fly

Jim McGovern
Dublin Institute of Technology, jim.mcgovern@dit.ie

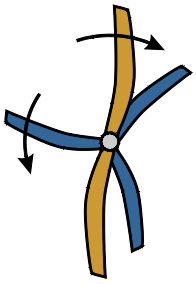
Follow this and additional works at: http://arrow.dit.ie/engschmecoth

Part of the Playwriting Commons

Recommended Citation
McGovern, Jim, "Just Let Me Fly" (2011). *Other resources.* Paper 11.
http://arrow.dit.ie/engschmecoth/11

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Mechanical and Transport Engineering at ARROW@DIT. It has been accepted for inclusion in Other resources by an authorized administrator of ARROW@DIT. For more information, please contact yvonne.desmond@dit.ie, arrow.admin@dit.ie.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.



Just Let Me Fly

a play by

Jim McGovern

Just Let Me Fly by Jim McGovern is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.
Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at
http://www.fun-engineering.net/just-let-me-fly.html.

Version 1a 2011.06.08

Table of Contents

Introduction iii

Dedication iv

Characters..... v

Settings vii

Time viii

Scenes 1

Incidental Music 90

Just Let Me Fly 90

Hear Me Fly 91

Stage Plans 92

Casting Requirements 100

Introduction

‘Just Let Me Fly’ is a three-act play that has the subjective ‘feeling’ of being dominated, bullied or repressed as its central theme. The main character, Leonard Twiglet, is a middle-aged Reader in Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Selfridge. The play begins in the spring of 2003 and ends in the autumn of 2004. In that period Leonard experiences a crisis that, without his realizing it, has been building up for years.

The play also takes an irreverent, sometimes dryly humorous look at some engineering, academic and commercial attitudes and practices. A department of Aeronautical Engineering in a university is just a human microcosm. The microcosm could equally well be a bus garage, a library, a private enterprise, a school yard or a civil service department. However, for those without any nerdish-technocrat sympathies the play might just be one to miss!

Dedication

This play is dedicated to all aviation engineers and to all the pioneers and dreamers of aviation including:

Leonardo da Vinci 1452 - 1519

Alexander Graham Bell 1847 - 1922

Otto Lilienthal 1848 - 1896

Henry Royce 1862 - 1933

Wilbur Wright 1867 - 1912

Orville Wright 1871 - 1948

Louis Bleriot 1872 - 1936

Thomas Selfridge 1882 - 1908

Igor Sikorski 1889 - 1972

Amelia Earhart 1897 - 1937

Charles Lindbergh 1902 - 1974

Howard Hughes 1905 - 1976

Frank Whittle 1907 - 1996

Characters

LEONARD Twiglet	*A middle-aged Reader in Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Selfridge*
ALEX Graybell	*Middle-aged Head of the Department of Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Selfridge*
ZEBEDEE Marlin	*Research student working with Leonard*
IVOR Villright	*A retired Professor of Aviation Mechanics at KTY University, Hong Kong*
AMELIA Redhart	A *Senior Lecturer in Aeronautical Engineering*
NOEL Easterly	O*ne of Alex's graduate students*
ISABELLE Swan	*Final year undergraduate*
TOMMY Corsicski	*Final year undergraduate*
LARRY Foot	*An engineering manager at Armend Airpower (voice only)*
ANNE Twiglet	*Leonard's wife*
OFFICIAL	*Registration official*
FRANCIS Whittler	*A Senior Lecturer in Aeronautical Engineering*
ROBERT Burnside	*Lecturer in Airframes, a Scotsman*
ANDY	*Departmental messenger*
LE BOEUF	*Professor at ENCIRC, France (voice only)*
RECEPTIONIST	*Telephone receptionist (voice only)*
EUGENE	*Lecturer (voice only)*
ROSEMARY	*Alex's secretary (voice only)*
STUDENT	*Student in the audience*

PERSON 1	*Person in registration line (no scripted lines)*
PERSON 2	*Person in registration line (no scripted lines)*

Settings

The principal location is the Department of Aeronautical Engineering at the University of Selfridge. Selfridge could be any university town or city in the Republic of Ireland or the UK.

Prof. Alex Graybell's office (**I-1**, **II-1**, **III-2**, **III-5**)

Departmental staff common room (**I-2**, **III-1**)

A niche in a university restaurant (**I-3**)

Leonard's office (**II-2**, **II-5**)

Front area of a lecture theatre (**II-3**)

Leonard and Anne's bedroom (**II-4**)

The registration area for the Minneapolis International Aeronautical Conference at the Stilton Hotel (**II-6**)

A lobby in the Stilton Hotel (**II-7**)

Leonard's house, then a park (**III-3**)

Amelia's office (**III-4**)

Leonard's new office at the National Aviation Authority (**III-6**)

Time

March 2003 to September 2004

Act I

Scene 1

Tuesday 11th March 2003

[Prof. Alex Graybell's office. The stage contains a small part of the lobby outside Alex's office at stage left. The office itself fills the remainder of the space and the door from the lobby is open. There is a desk with a computer monitor at stage right. A large calendar on the wall shows the year and the month: 2003, March. There is a sofa against the wall inside the office at stage left. ***ALEX****, seated on a swivel chair, is typing on his computer while referring to some notes from time to time.* ***NOEL*** *arrives jauntily and enters Alex's office through the open door.]*

NOEL: Hi Alex.

ALEX: Morning Noel.

NOEL: Did you get any feedback yet from Theo about the Athens paper abstract?

ALEX: Theo said the abstract was fine and that he could have the paper reviewed provided we get it to him by Thursday. I assured him we would have it in. I'm editing and rearranging our last Bowring report to make it fit the requirements.

NOEL: That's great. I'll do the diagrams and whatever else you need. Just e-mail the draft up to me when you're ready.

ALEX: Dave Triplet will only let us add his name and his Bowring Incorporated affiliation if we can convince him that we're giving nothing away, so you'll need to *normalize* the graphs.

NOEL: No problem, Alex. The graphs won't contain any information anyone could use. I'll see you later.

*[**NOEL** leaves Alex's office through the open door, just as **LEONARD** arrives. **ALEX** resumes typing.]*

NOEL: Hi Leonard.

LEONARD: Hi Noel.

*[**LEONARD** knocks on the open door and enters. **ALEX** keeps typing and barely looks over at **LEONARD**.]*

LEONARD: Hi Alex, would you have a few minutes? I need you to sign a few requisitions for Zebedee's research project.

ALEX: I'm busy right now getting a paper out for a conference.

LEONARD: That's OK, can we set a time? It shouldn't take more than five minutes and we need these items urgently. When would suit you?

ALEX: Tomorrow, after coffee. *[Continues working at his computer.]*

LEONARD: OK, thanks.

*[Exit **LEONARD**. After a while, the phone rings and **ALEX** presses a button to answer it using the loudspeaker.]*

ALEX: Yes Rosemary.

[ENCIRC is pronounced awn-seerque]

ROSEMARY: *[From the phone's loudspeaker]* A Professor le Boeuf of ENCIRC, France, would like to speak to you. He didn't give his first name.

ALEX: Thanks. I'll talk to him … Alex Graybell speaking.

LE BOEUF: *[From the phone's loudspeaker, with a strong French accent]* Good afternoon, Pruff-ess-air Graybell. My name is le Boeuf. I ave given my details to your secretary. I am hinterested in ze conferawnce int-hightled G-A-err-say-S-zero-four. Could you please give me some hinformation about zis?

*[As **ALEX** replies, **FRANCIS** enters casually and makes himself comfortable on the sofa. **ALEX** sees him but doesn't interrupt his phone conversation.]*

ALEX: It's called JERCS-oh-four—Jet Engine Research Consortium Symposium, two-thousand-and-four.

LE BOEUF: I see, JERCS-oh-four … and you are ze directeur?

ALEX: I am the Head of Aeronautical Engineering and founder of the Jet Engine Research Consortium, JERC, and we are organizing the international symposium JERCS-oh-four, which will take place from the 21st to the 24th of June, 2004.

LE BOEUF: Where will it be?

ALEX: Here in the Aeronautical Engineering Department of US.

LE BOEUF: US?

ALEX: The University of Selfridge.

LE BOEUF: And who will take part in ze samposium?

ALEX: The symposium is for members of the Jet Engine Research Consortium and other world-class experts.

LE BOEUF: What top-eeks are included?

ALEX: The scope is very broad-ranging, but propeller propulsion technology is excluded.

LE BOEUF: I see. Here at ENCIRC we are working on jet engines in associ-a-cion with Airbush Industries. *[**FRANCIS** perks up noticeably.]* Is zere an application form?

ALEX: No, but if you are interested in participating I can transfer you to my colleague Dr. Amelia Redhart, who is the JERCS-oh-four coordinator.

LE BOEUF: Yes, I would be hinterested.

ALEX: Amelia can arrange for you to attend, or perhaps give a presentation. *[Looking directly at **FRANCIS**, who nods his assent enthusiastically]* Our members are always interested in keeping up with developments involving Airbush Industries.

LE BOEUF: I see. Please transfer me to Dr. Amelia Redhart.

ALEX: Just a moment, I'll try now …

AMELIA: *[From the phone's loudspeaker]* Amelia Redhart speaking …

ALEX: Hello Amelia, Alex here. I have a possible presenter for JERCS-oh-four on an outside line. It's a Professor le Boeuf of ENCIRC France. They're working on jet engines with Airbush, so it might be interesting to have him give a presentation.

AMELIA: Thanks Alex, I'll talk to him. *[**ALEX** transfers the call.]*

ALEX: *[To **FRANCIS**]* Did you play yesterday afternoon, or was the weather too bad?

FRANCIS: We played nine holes in the rain and I spent the rest of the afternoon networking at the clubhouse. I had a few drinks with Bob Winstroke.

ALEX: *[Enthusiastically]* Yeah?

FRANCIS: He offered you and me a round at Weldon Park next Tuesday, followed by lunch in the Welbury.

ALEX: That's nice!

FRANCIS: I said I thought we could both make it and that I would confirm with his secretary.

ALEX: Nice one Francis! I'll get Noel to take my tutorial with the fourth-years.

FRANCIS: I have the third-years at eleven on Tuesdays, but I've already covered enough of the course.

ALEX: No problem, just …

FRANCIS: I'll offer the slot to Amelia or Leonard—otherwise I'll tell the class to study a revision handout. Is that OK with you?

ALEX: Francis, if you need to cancel a lecture or two just do it—there's no need to check with me each time.

FRANCIS: Right then, I'll put in the call to Bob Winstroke's secretary.

ALEX: Good. I'm just working on a paper for Athens. I'm basing it on our last Bowring report. What do you think?

FRANCIS: That's a smart move, Alex. It's a good idea to go public now on our association with Bowring, but be careful not to go into specifics.

ALEX: Noel will redo the graphs so they only show the trends, without any actual values.

FRANCIS: Sure! That's the way to do it. I'll call Dave Triplet at Bowring to reassure him.

ALEX: We've had a string of enquiries for our own JERCS-oh-four. That call from ENCIRC was the second one today. You've been doing a great PR job Francis!

FRANCIS: Don't mention it. Did anything come up about our jet engine lab extension at the University Board meeting yesterday?

ALEX: It was deferred! The meeting went on, and on—Fuzziwig was in flying form.

FRANCIS: As usual!

ALEX: I held out to the end in the hope of raising our lab extension under AOB, but by the time we reached AOB people were hell bent on getting out and Fuzziwig said there was no time left to discuss it.

FRANCIS: I'd keep up the pressure if I were you, Alex, but in a *very polite* way. Fuzziwig has it in his power to help us out. *[Gets up to leave.]*

ALEX: I phoned his secretary this morning to ask for a meeting with him. She said she'd get back to me.

FRANCIS: If you need me I'll be in my office for an hour or so, putting some questions together for my Aerodynamics exam. It's a month overdue at this stage. *[Gets up to leave.]*

ALEX: Don't worry about that, Francis. I'll see you later.

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 2

Wednesday 12th March 2003

[Departmental staff common room. ***ALEX****,* ***FRANCIS****,* ***AMELIA****,* ***NOEL*** *and* ***ROBERT*** *are sitting around a large table drinking from their assorted mugs of coffee or tea.* ***NOEL*** *has a plate with two scones, two foil-wrapped portions of butter and a knife and is avidly preparing the scones for his own consumption. A paper bag from the scones is also on the table.* ***LEONARD*** *is preparing his tea with a tea bag at a counter at the back.]*

ROBERT: Were you out of your bed too late to eat your porridge this morning Noel?

NOEL: I never eat the stuff.

ALEX: It's well known that Robert eats a heated concoction of oats and other whole foods for his breakfast. It would keep a racehorse going for a day.

ROBERT: Aye, and for a second day if needs be. And I'm always prepared to share the recipe with my friends.

*[****LEONARD*** *sits down at the table with his mug of tea.]*

LEONARD: That's right—I've tried it—the infamous Burnside breakfast.

AMELIA: Do tell us more!

LEONARD: Put half a *cup* of porridge oats—*[holding up his mug:]* not a mug like this—that would be about two cups—half a *cup* of coarse muesli and two cups of water in a large bowl. Cook in the microwave for about five minutes. Isn't that it Robert?

ROBERT: More-or-less. You could add salt or milk to taste. For a real treat I eat it with buttermilk.

LEONARD: I'd recommend it highly … to anyone with the digestive system of a goat!

ROBERT: *[With mock indignation]* I hope you're not comparing me to a goat!

NOEL: Well I just don't have time in the mornings so I'm sticking with my buttered scones.

AMELIA: Excuse my changing the subject: Royce Hawker, the second-year class rep, has asked me to see if we could do something about the timing of assignment submission dates: there are four items due for the end of term next week.

ALEX: What are the four, Amelia?

AMELIA: A fluids lab report, a design assignment, an essay on the Engineer in Society and a programming assignment.

FRANCIS: *[With slight indignation]* They've already had three weeks to submit their fluids lab reports, so I don't have much sympathy for them.

ALEX: Francis is right. The *real* problem is that the Computer Science people are giving assignments that take up too much time.

*[**FRANCIS** reaches across the table and takes up the paper bag that had held Noel's scones. He opens it wide and grips it using the thumb, index and middle fingers of his right hand (the index and middle fingers on the inside) keeping the ring and little fingers behind the bag. The trick he is preparing will involve using his ring and little fingers to flick the bag from behind—giving the impression that something has landed in it.]*

LEONARD: I think we should do what we can to ease the pressure, nonetheless.

*[**FRANCIS** throws an imaginary ball high into the air using his left hand and deftly catches it in the paper bag, which he flicks from behind with his ring and little fingers to simulate the landing of the ball in the bag. He repeats this trick once more as the conversation continues.]*

AMELIA: I'll ask Linus Freedoors if he could move the programming assignment hand-in date to early next term.

*[As the conversation continues, **FRANCIS** throws the imaginary ball to **NOEL** across the table and **NOEL** catches it. **FRANCIS** indicates he wants **NOEL** to throw it back and **NOEL** obliges. **FRANCIS** catches it in the bag.]*

LEONARD: And I'll talk to Lillian Tallow to see if she could relax the essay deadline somewhat.

*[**FRANCIS** forms a neck of the bag opening and blows into the bag to inflate it.]*

ALEX: OK, I'll leave it to the two of you to sort something out.

*[**FRANCIS** bursts the bag with a loud bang and drops it on the table. Both **FRANCIS** and **ALEX** stand up to leave.]*

LEONARD: Sorry Alex, we were to have a meeting after coffee.

ALEX: I can't now; I have to go to a lecture. In fact I'm busy all day. I have a meeting with Fuzziwig in the afternoon to discuss the jet engine lab extension.

*[Exit **ALEX** and **FRANCIS**. **LEONARD** appears annoyed.]*

ROBERT: Alex's meeting with President Fablock this afternoon is an important one—the site development plan is being finalized. He's pressing hard for the jet engine lab extension to be moved up higher on the priority list.

LEONARD: *[Having returned to normal]* I know that. I just hope he doesn't slip up and call the President 'Fuzziwig' to his face. We'd be rightly in the soup then.

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 3

Tuesday 18th March 2003

*[**LEONARD** and Prof. **IVOR** Villright are sitting opposite each other at a small table in a niche in a university restaurant. **LEONARD** is to stage left of the table. They each have a mug of coffee and are having a relaxed conversation. There is a very large poster with a sunny yellow background on the wall behind the table bearing the text:*

'DRAMA SOCIETY
Seville Cervant
18–19 March 2003.']

IVOR: … We're in the business ourselves, so we shouldn't knock the airlines. How are Anne and the children?

LEONARD: Very well, thanks, Ivor. Anne sends her regards. I told her about your seminar yesterday and our meeting today—it's a pity we couldn't all meet-up this time. The boys are both very well—they still keep us busy. Tony is nineteen and Roger is seventeen.

IVOR: They aren't children anymore. It must be six or seven years since I last saw them.

LEONARD: Yes, they have grown up a lot since then. How is Janet?

IVOR: She's in good form and as busy as ever.

LEONARD: Is she still running the bicycle shop?

IVOR: Yes, there are lots of bikes in Hong Kong and she's doing very well. Janet makes a lot more than a university professor *and* she's doing what she loves. Are you still playing the harmonica, Leonard?

LEONARD: Yes, I still play a few tunes. I'm glad to have it. There are so many things words can't express.…

IVOR: I remember the time you played the harmonica at an outing for an aviation engineering conference. I think it was at Purdue University … or was it Champaign Urbana?

LEONARD: It was Champaign Urbana in about 1991. That was a great barbeque. The steaks were amazing!

IVOR: You made a big impression with your music. It was a great ice-breaker.

LEONARD: Music is a universal language.… It leaves broken English in the shade! *[**LEONARD** and **IVOR** both smile and savour the joke.] [Cheerfully:]* Maybe it should be mandatory at *all* international conferences.

IVOR: *[Equally cheerfully]* The session chair could switch over to music whenever a presentation became too dull or incomprehensible. *[In the tone of a session chair, or an airline steward:]* 'Ladies and gentlemen, the microphone has been switched off and you will hear some relaxing music for the remainder of this presentation. Please *try* to look attentive and interested. I'll be taking questions in just *five* more minutes and I would be obliged if you could make some up and have them ready.'

LEONARD: I'm sorry that Alex didn't come along to your seminar yesterday. I *had* reminded him about it. He could have dropped in at the start, to say hello.

IVOR: No problem. I wasn't expecting Alex to attend.

LEONARD: Even today, when we passed him in the corridor, I thought he could have been more welcoming.

IVOR: Don't worry, Leonard. I did notice that Alex was a little abrupt, but he's a busy man with lots of important things on his mind. As a retired professor, I don't carry much sway anymore.

LEONARD: Well, Alex *is* very busy … but he knows your background and reputation.

IVOR: In my seventh year of retirement, I only do the things that interest me. I left status behind a long time ago … and I don't let that bother me. The coffee's not bad here!

LEONARD: I sometimes drop in here rather than going to the staff common room. There's a nice buzz about the place. I find it refreshing. *[Sips his coffee]* …

IVOR: So tell me about APPEAL—what does it represent?

LEONARD: It's not so much a research group as a network of people with an interest in advanced propeller propulsion engineering. It includes the term 'Associates in Learning' in the title because we like the emphasis to be on learning together and sharing information openly. 'APPEAL' stands for 'Advanced Propeller Propulsion Engineering Associates in Learning'—a mouthful, but I like the acronym.

IVOR: Has it many members?

LEONARD: We don't have a formal membership. We host the APPEAL website here in the department. There are currently about one-hundred-and-eighty names on our e-mail circulation list.

IVOR: Who else is involved from here in Aeronautical?

LEONARD: Eugene Condor, from the S-DESIGN group, is the only other staff member on the list and, of course, my graduate students Zebedee Marlin and Howard Silverbirch are involved.

IVOR: Could you include me on the circulation list?

LEONARD: Of course, Ivor, I'll be glad to; ivor-dot-Villright at kty-dot-hwk: is that still your correct e-mail?

IVOR: That's it. I'm working mainly from home these days but I still use the kty-dot-hwk e-mail address..

So, is APPEAL going well?

LEONARD: Yes it is. Some might say it's just advanced propeller propulsion people talking among themselves, but I think it's having an impact.

We're organizing an APPEAL symposium this autumn in Montreal, Quebec. Lou Breliot has an advanced propeller propulsion research team there and he's the chief organizer.

IVOR: I guess you'll be presenting a paper.

LEONARD: Yes, I'll be presenting one on low-noise engines and propellers, co-authored with Howard, my research student, who has just submitted his PhD. My other research student, Zebedee, will present a paper on fuel efficiency advances in turboprop engines and I'm his co-author on that.

IVOR: What's in it for you, Leonard? Why do you put so much work into the area of advanced propeller propulsion engineering?

LEONARD: I know it's not the flavour of the month. In fact, most people see propeller propulsion of any type as something that belongs in history.

IVOR: But not necessarily!

LEONARD: As an engineer I don't like to write-off any option, especially one, like advanced propeller propulsion, that can still offer real benefits.

IVOR: But are you getting any support from industry? Have you got research funds coming in?

LEONARD: I have some equipment funding for Zebedee's project under a grant from US—Alex has to sign-off on all requisitions. I also have a small ongoing research contract with Armend Airpower. Over the last few months I've been in confidential discussions with Airbush Industries about a possible research project.

*[Enter **ANDY** walking from stage right. He is wearing a blue shop coat. **ANDY** stops to stage right of **IVOR** and addresses **LEONARD**, speaking rapidly and cheerfully.]*

ANDY: I just got me coat back from the cleaners. It's the good one; the other one's not as good. That's why I look better every second week. *[Addressing **LEONARD** and **IVOR** and beginning to move on:]* Don't mind me. Me sister works here—she shares a lotto ticket with me every week and I'm just collecting the money for it.

LEONARD: *[To **ANDY**, with a friendly smile]* Good luck with the lotto Andy. I hope you win the big one.

*[**ANDY** continues on his way and exits at stage left.]*

… **LEONARD**: *[To **IVOR**]* Andy is the departmental messenger. He always has some amazing or amusing chat and he's very obliging.

IVOR: I know that Alex Graybell has a lot of work going on with his Jet Engine Research Consortium. He seems to have a sizeable group of active researchers here in the department.

LEONARD: In addition to Alex, four academic staff members are part of JERC, plus their graduate students. Between them all they have about twelve.

IVOR: They have an excellent reputation internationally and a strong network of collaborative links with other research centres around the world.

LEONARD: That's true.

IVOR: It sounds as though APPEAL is in competition with JERC. Is that not a problem for you?

LEONARD: Not really. They have no interest in propeller propulsion and I'm not in the same league when it comes to negotiating funding. They manage to get some really big projects, while I struggle to support one or two graduate students at a time.

IVOR: You're an idealist and an academic.

LEONARD: Yes, I've plenty of ideas and I keep dreaming of implementing them.

IVOR: I admire your spirit Leonard. Lots of important scientific and engineering advances have been made by individuals with that same enthusiasm and drive.

LEONARD: But, of course, for every major success lots of other people have done good work with no recognition whatsoever.

IVOR: That's true. The important thing, it seems to me, is to find satisfaction in the attempt itself and in the smallest successes.

LEONARD: Is that how you did it, Ivor?

IVOR: I've had some very large projects that haven't changed the world in any way, at least in terms of the stated objectives or the direct consequences of the final project report or the impact of the papers that we published.

LEONARD: But you pressed on, nonetheless.

IVOR: We, my students and colleagues and I, did a lot of good work chasing down dead ends and barking up trees. Some of the trees turned out to be giant redwoods and they'll still be there for a long time to come.

LEONARD: But you enjoyed your work, nonetheless.

IVOR: I *loved* it and it is still my life and it's why I'm in such a hurry—I know my time is running out. And that's why I'm very pleased to be working with you in the area of aeronautical fuel efficiency.

LEONARD: I'm very glad to have you.

IVOR: You're still relatively young and you understand this area so well. I'd like to help you to become a professor at the University of Selfridge.

LEONARD: I don't think professorship's on the cards for me here at US: the political situation is adverse. Alex has definite ideas about which staff members he wants to see promoted and which he doesn't.

IVOR: Would you leave the University of Selfridge because of that?

LEONARD: No, never. I like US and I like my work here. Besides, my family links are here in Selfridge. Anne and the boys are happy and wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

IVOR: So, do you find it difficult working with Alex?

LEONARD: Alex isn't the worst: his bark is worse than his bite and he makes a special effort to be *seen* to be treating me correctly. I'm fine here at US—I really like it here.

IVOR: And how do you relate to your colleagues other than Alex?

LEONARD: I get on well with everyone and I don't make any enemies, but I guess I am somewhat of a loner.

IVOR: You are reserved and self-motivated, but you're not a loner!

LEONARD: It's strange, Ivor, just recently I was thinking of what it was here at US that gave me the greatest pleasure over the last seventeen years that I've been here.

IVOR: Was it when you were made Reader?

LEONARD: No, surprisingly it wasn't. It wasn't when I had papers published or had my book about advanced propeller propulsion accepted by OOP.

IVOR: You're keeping me in suspense Leonard. It wasn't the joke you told about the fly in the soup at the prize-giving dinner I attended about ten years ago?

LEONARD: The one about the French waiter with amazing eyesight? who could tell the difference between male and female flies? 'Pardon Monsieur, it is *une* mouche. *She* is femina.'

IVOR: *[As they both smile]* That was the one.

LEONARD: I still tell that joke sometimes. I alternate it with one other joke.

IVOR: I suppose now you'll tell me your other joke as well!

LEONARD: I just did!…

The incident that gave me the greatest pleasure was very simple: Edward Cuton of Physics had a problem with a software program for processing measurements and told me he had lost many weeks of research time because of it.

IVOR: I bet you solved it straight away! An independent opinion is always well-worth having.

LEONARD: Well yes, but I'd like to finish the story in my own way.

IVOR: OK.

LEONARD: Edward brought me straight to his lab and his graduate student answered my questions with an air of churlishness for having to explain his work to someone who knew nothing about the field.

It had to do with the way arrays were dimensioned *[**IVOR** rolls his eyes up to heaven]*—excuse the nerdish technical stuff Ivor. Edward was delighted and thanked me.

*[**ANDY** walks by from stage left.]*

ANDY: *[Addressing **LEONARD** and **IVOR**, speaking quickly]* I'm on me bike—it's painted purple all over—I did it meself. Nobody would want to steal it!

LEONARD: *[With a slight smile]* That was it, my most satisfying moment, so far.

IVOR: You know, if we could bottle that type of satisfaction and give it out to those who needed it we could make amazing progress, in *any* field!

LEONARD: *[Cheerfully, almost beginning to glow]* You're right there Ivor.

IVOR: How do your graduate students fit-in in the department?

LEONARD: Very well. I'm very lucky to have Howard and Zebedee. Neither of them are University of Selfridge graduates, but they are both excellent.

Somehow Alex and the JERC people manage to cream-off the best of our graduates to become research students.

IVOR: And how do your graduate students relate to the JERC graduate students?

LEONARD: There isn't much interaction between them, but they get along fine. The JERC graduate students seem to regard themselves as the elite and socialize mainly within the JERC group.

IVOR: Yes, the JERC people seem to be very sociable. Don't they ever invite you to join them?

LEONARD: When I first came to the Department I was invited to join Alex and a few of the JERC members for lunch at the Eagle's Head, where they often go, but didn't continue with that.

IVOR: I see. We can't choose the people we work with, but we can choose our friends. Perhaps you should take a lead from the JERC people and make time to develop plenty of friends: we all can do with those to help us not to take ourselves too seriously.

LEONARD: I'd like you to meet Zebedee Marlin. If we go back to my office I could call him in for a chat: we still have about half an hour before you need to leave for the airport.

IVOR: I'd like that. I did meet him briefly after the seminar. He seemed like a very bright young man.

LEONARD: He's very smart and I'd like to have him as a co-author on our next paper.

IVOR: Sounds good to me—let's go meet him.

[Lights fade to black]

Act II

Scene 1

Wednesday 9th April 2003

[Alex's office. The door at stage front left is open. ***ALEX*** *is sitting at his desk with a computer monitor at stage right. The large calendar on the wall shows the year and the month: 2003, April.* ***LEONARD*** *is standing facing* ***ALEX****, who has turned on his swivel chair to face* ***LEONARD****. They are both motionless. Before the dialogue begins the first verse of the song 'Just Let Me Fly' is heard, sung to the accompaniment of a harmonica.*

Just let me fly up high
Into the open sky
Up where the wild-birds soar
Freedom's what I adore
Just let me fly away
Don't hold me back today
Just let me fly
Just let me fly
Just let me fly

LEONARD *and* ***ALEX*** *are animated once more.]*

LEONARD: Alex, I was wondering if you could let me know what departmental overheads are to be deducted from my two research accounts?

ALEX: I've been too busy to look into that and I'll be very busy for the coming three or four weeks as well, but I'll sort it out after that.

LEONARD: *[Trying not to show his exasperation]* It's just that I need to know where I stand before I can spend any more funds on equipment items that we need.

ALEX: *[Sternly]* You'll just have to wait until I have time.

LEONARD: There's one other item I have been meaning to raise with you, but didn't get the chance.

ALEX: Well I'm very busy and I don't have time now. Can it wait till next week?

LEONARD: Actually no, Alex, I need to get your approval to attend a propeller propulsion conference in Paris from Tuesday to Thursday of next week.

ALEX: *[Disagreeingly]* Ehhhh …

LEONARD: I have arranged to swap lectures with my colleagues, so the students won't lose out.

ALEX: But we have project presentations next Wednesday. The roster was drawn up this morning and you are required to adjudicate.

LEONARD: Oh!

ALEX: *[With a sense of relief]* In fact, you're chairing one of the sessions.

LEONARD: Alex, I'm sorry about that. When I set up the trip I didn't realize there would be a clash with the project presentations.

ALEX: Well then, don't go!

LEONARD: But Alex, I have already made an arrangement with Larry Foot of Armend Airpower—they're covering my conference fees and travel costs in return for a technical report on any items of interest.

ALEX: *You*'ll have to sort that out Leonard.

LEONARD: I'll arrange for one of my colleagues to cover for me at the project presentations. That's not a prob…

ALEX: Leonard, adjudicating at the project presentations is an *examining function* and you are required to carry it out.

LEONARD: Yes Alex, I know that's true, but at this stage I have made the travel arrangements.

ALEX: No buts, Leonard.

LEONARD: The tickets are economy class and are not refundable … and I can't see how I can get out of my obligation to Armend.

ALEX: *[Sternly]* That's *your* problem Leonard. All I am saying is this: if you do not adjudicate at the project presentations you will be in *serious* derogation of your duty.

LEONARD: Yes Alex.

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 2

Thursday 10th April 2003

[Leonard's office. There is a small desk with a computer monitor at stage right. ***LEONARD*** *is sitting at the desk. He presses a button on the speaker phone and the ringing tone is heard.]*

RECEPTIONIST: *[Over the phone loudspeaker]* Good morning! Armend Airpower.

LEONARD: Hello, may I speak to Mr. Larry Foot please.

RECEPTIONIST: May I say who's calling?

LEONARD: Dr. Leonard Twiglet of the University of Selfridge.

LARRY: *[Over the phone's loudspeaker]* … Good morning Leonard. Larry speaking.

LEONARD: Hello Larry, how is Rita? Has she had the knee done yet?

LARRY: She's well, Leonard. She had it done ten days ago. Still a bit sore, but the new knee-joint is working fine.

LEONARD: That's the human face of engineering Larry—excuse the pun—It's all about helping *people*.

LARRY: It's true Leonard, when you think about it…. That pun's OK with me, but keep away from feet.

LEONARD: Huh?

LARRY: We're sensitive!… Never mind!

LEONARD: Everyone's sensitive Larry. I'm glad Rita's on the mend! Give her my regards.

LARRY: Yes Leonard, I will.

LEONARD: Larry, a problem has come up in relation to the Propeller Propulsion Conference in Paris next week.

LARRY: What is it Leonard?

LEONARD: I have to fulfil an examining function here and I can't get out of it.

LARRY: Don't worry about it Leonard. These things happen.

LEONARD: What I'm proposing is this: I'll stick with the existing travel arrangements, but I'll take a flight back from Paris on Wednesday morning and I'll fly back there again that evening.

LARRY: OK

LEONARD: That'll allow me enough time to meet my examining obligations.

LARRY: I see, but it's a …

LEONARD: I'm afraid I'll miss the sessions on propeller noise and variable geometry.

LARRY: That's OK Leonard.

LEONARD: You're very good Larry. I apologize for this.

LARRY: No prob…

LEONARD: At least I'll have the proceedings for the sessions I miss and I'll use those in preparing my technical report. Will that be OK with Armend Airpower?

LARRY: Sure Leonard.

LEONARD: Yes?

LARRY: We're very flexible at Armend!

LEONARD: Larry, I appreciate that very much. I'll be in touch after the conference. Bye.

LARRY: Thank you Leonard. Bye!

*[**LEONARD** sorts some papers on his desk. A knock at the door.]*

LEONARD: Come in.… *[**ZEBEDEE** enters]* Ah Zebedee, how are things?

ZEBEDEE: Not good!

LEONARD: Have a seat.

*[**ZEBEDEE** sits down on a chair in front of Leonard's desk.]*

ZEBEDEE: We've been testing the Firegoose-fifty-five engine for two weeks now and we thought we were almost done.

LEONARD: So, what happened?

ZEBEDEE: This morning Peter, the storeman, found a new fuel nozzle in the used-parts bin. We checked it out and discovered it should have been in the Firegoose.

LEONARD: I see.

ZEBEDEE: It looks like we slipped-up in preparing the engine. All five fuel-nozzles were to be changed, but we only did four.

LEONARD: That *is* a problem.

ZEBEDEE: We were so pleased with our results and now they turn out to be worthless.

LEONARD: I know how you feel…. I'm sorry…. You'll have to change the nozzle and clean the engine generally before you can repeat the tests.

ZEBEDEE: I *knew* you'd say that!

LEONARD: It's true that your results are invalid. However, I suggest that you use the results you have to cross-check the new test results as you get them.

ZEBEDEE: Yeah.

LEONARD: The trends should all be the same since four of the five nozzles were operating to specification.

ZEBEDEE: *[Glumly]* I see what you mean. Instead of being *less* than useless, our results are *more* than useless! Or is it the other way around?

LEONARD: *[Somewhat cheerfully]* You have a way with words Zebedee.

ZEBEDEE: I could have taken a week off and gone fishing, or even two. I'm just sick at the thought of having to start over again.

LEONARD: I understand.

ZEBEDEE: I know right well that most of our results will be no different from the last ones. I understand the reasons: integrity and all that stuff … but I just hate the duplicity.

LEONARD: I hate duplicity too … but I think the word you meant was 'duplication'…. Look up 'duplicity' in the dictionary.

ZEBEDEE: *[Crossly]* OK Leonard, OK! It's fine for you!

LEONARD: Zebedee, an old professor of mine used to say: 'In research we make nothing but mistakes, until we make our last.' … You're a good researcher and a good engineer.

ZEBEDEE: I'll start again tomorrow … but I'm taking the rest of the day off and I'm going to a movie.

LEONARD: Which one?

ZEBEDEE: I haven't decided yet, but it won't be a disaster movie and it won't have airplanes in it.

LEONARD: Enjoy it!

ZEBEDEE: Thanks Leonard.

*[**ZEBEDEE** gets up to leave.]*

LEONARD: By the way … there's been a complication in relation to the propeller propulsion conference next week.

ZEBEDEE: What is it, Leonard?

LEONARD: I have to come back here on Wednesday to adjudicate at the final year project presentations, so don't be surprised if you see me.

ZEBEDEE: OK.

LEONARD: I'll be flying back to Paris afterwards and I'll be coming home again on Thursday evening.

ZEBEDEE: That's a lot of travel for a three-hour task … and you'll miss a lot of the conference. I'd be happy to do the adjudication for you!

LEONARD: Thanks Zebedee, but Alex has told me I have to be there in person—I'm chairing a session.

ZEBEDEE: It's a shame.

LEONARD: As it happens, Alex has been rostered for the same adjudication panel. Francis and Amelia are on it too—I'm the only one who's not from JERC.

ZEBEDEE: Then you really are needed—for balance!

LEONARD: Maybe so!

ZEBEDEE: Otherwise, any students who weren't doing projects with JERC could get a raw deal.

LEONARD: Yeah, perhaps it's for the best. There was a very good fare from Paris Champ de Blé with CheapAir.con and I took it immediately in case the price would go up.

ZEBEDEE: Champ de Blé—that's somewhere north-east of Compiegne.

LEONARD: Yes, I think so.

ZEBEDEE: You'll spend more time on the connecting bus than on the plane!

LEONARD: That's OK. People might say disparaging things about CheapAir.con, but at least the extra flights won't hit my research account too hard.

ZEBEDEE: You sure don't waste any research money, Leonard. Bye then.

LEONARD: Bye Zebedee. [exit **ZEBEDEE**.]

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 3

Wednesday 16th April 2003

[Front area of a lecture theatre. There are four chairs behind a table to stage right. ***LEONARD****,* ***ALEX*** *and* ***AMELIA*** *are sitting in the three chairs nearest centre stage. In front of Leonard there are a glass and a spoon, which serve as a bell. There is a lectern to the other side of centre stage. A large plain area on the back wall serves as a screen for a video projector.]*

LEONARD: *[Leaning towards the other two]* It's 2:00 p.m. Alex. Should I wait another while for Francis to arrive?

ALEX: Francis phoned to say he couldn't make it, so we'll proceed without him. Go ahead Leonard.

LEONARD: OK. *[Stands up]* Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the first session of the Final Year Project Presentations for two-thousand-and-three.

I would like to specially welcome the third year students who are present. You will have your turn next year and I'm sure you will be impressed by the excellent project work that has been done by the final-years.

The adjudicators for this session are Professor Alex Graybell, Head of Department, Dr. Amelia Redhart and myself, Leonard Twiglet. I'll take the presentations in the published order. Please be ready to come up immediately when I call out your name.

You will have eight minutes to make your presentation, followed by four minutes for questions.

… **LEONARD**: I will let you know when seven minutes have elapsed and I would ask you to finish-up within a minute after that.… Tommy Corsicski please.

*[**TOMMY** comes up to the lectern from within the audience and when he gets there shows his first slide. When he is settled, **LEONARD** indicates that he can begin and looks at his watch to start timing the presentation. In the course of the presentations **LEONARD**, **AMELIA** and **ALEX** make occasional notes].*

Advanced Fore Aft Rotors (AFAR)

Tommy Corsicski
16th April 2003

Supervisor: Dr. Leonard Twiglet

Advanced Propeller Propulsion Engineering
Associates in Learning

Slide 1

TOMMY: My name is Tommy Corsicski. My project is entitled ‘Advanced Fore Aft Rotors’—AFAR for short—and is supervised by Dr. Leonard Twiglet of Advanced Propeller Propulsion Engineering Associates in Learning, which is known as APPEAL.

… **TOMMY**: This year, 2003, is likely to see the last scheduled flights of Contwine, the only commercial supersonic passenger aircraft.

It's well known that such aircraft are not cost-effective and have noise problems. Therefore, it seems, no direct replacement for Contwine is likely in the near future.

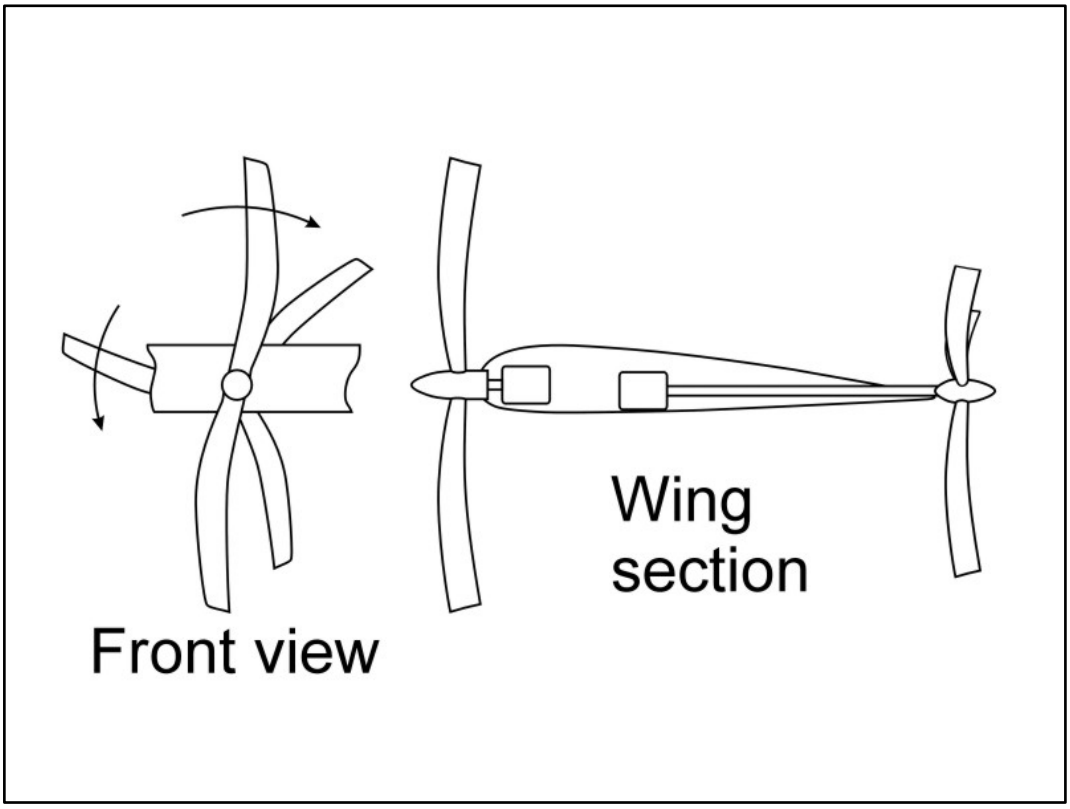
Clearly, wide-bodied subsonic jet aircraft have won-out in the marketplace.

However, there are good reasons to believe that wide-bodied, subsonic, *advanced propeller-propulsion aircraft*

ALEX: *[Gazes away towards stage right and gasps a cough that has the sound]* Rubbish!

TOMMY: … can provide strong competition, especially for short routes where the flying time is less than one-and-a-half hours.

[Shows his second slide.]



Slide 2

… **TOMMY**: This slide shows a new configuration of advanced fore aft rotors, which is being developed by Leonard Twiglet and other members of APPEAL. The main features of AFAR are the following *[Glances occasionally at a card in his hand as he describes the features]*:

- Multiple fore aft rotors, as shown, of progressively varying sizes are installed on each wing.

… **TOMMY**:

- The aft rotor propellers are smaller and run faster than the fore rotor propellers. This is to maximize efficiency.
- Each fore rotor has two blades while each aft rotor has three blades—airflow disturbances and noise are minimized by this arrangement.
- The podless construction allows shorter wings to be used.
- Backswept, scimitar-shaped propeller blades minimize bending stresses.

The features are summarized on this slide: *[Shows his third slide.]*

AFAR Features

- Multiple fore aft rotors on each wing
- Counter-rotating fore and aft rotors
- Aft rotor propellers are smaller and run faster than fore rotor propellers
- Fore rotors have 2 blades; aft three
- Podless construction—shorter wings
- Backswept (scimitar-shaped) blades

Slide 3

… **TOMMY**: In my project I have examined and quantified the main benefits of AFAR and calculated the ideal running speeds for lift-off, cruising and landing.

LEONARD: *[Taps the glass with the spoon]* Tommy, you have one minute left.

*[**TOMMY** shows his fourth slide.]*

AFAR Conclusions

- 20% more thrust and 26% more lift
- Noise levels about 10 decibels lower than with *any* jet engine

Slide 4

TOMMY: My main conclusions are:

Advanced fore aft rotors can provide 20% more thrust and 26% more lift than current-technology propellers.

In addition, noise levels should be about ten decibels lower than with *any* jet engine.

Thank you for your attention.

LEONARD: Thank you Tommy. I'll take some questions ... ***[ALEX** immediately indicates that he has a question]* Alex.

ALEX: Galesock and Windrox have written a review of aircraft noise abatement. Did you take that into account in your work?

TOMMY: No. I didn't come across that one … but I have made use of an excellent review of aircraft noise by Brahms, Busby and Whistle.

ALEX: *[Gruffly]* You should get it through the library.

TOMMY: Yes, I'll do that.

ALEX: Why did you not show any engines in your slide?

TOMMY: *[Having taken a few seconds to display his second slide]* My diagram shows that the fore and aft rotors are separately driven by hydraulic motors within the wing profile.

ALEX: *[Somewhat impatiently]* I know that, but engines are required and you haven't shown any engines.

TOMMY: I've focused on the advanced fore aft rotors. The engine or engines would be located elsewhere and I didn't look into that aspect.

ALEX: You can't just leave out the engines!

TOMMY: One hundred years ago, in December 1903, the Wright brothers had one engine that drove two propellers. In a sense, our design is going back to that concept—there can be multip…

ALEX: You still haven't answered my question!

LEONARD: Please let Tommy finish.

TOMMY: There can be multiple fore aft rotor sets per engine unit.

ALEX: *[Impatiently]* But you can't …

*[**ALEX** is clearly willing to continue further.]*

LEONARD: Sorry Alex…. Thank you for that answer, Tommy. I'll just take one more question, on a different aspect.

*[**AMELIA** indicates that she has a question.]*

AMELIA: I have a question.

LEONARD: Amelia.

AMELIA: It appears that there are several innovative concepts in the description you have given of the advanced fore aft rotors. Have any patents been taken out?

TOMMY: No. My understanding is that no funds were available for patenting and that Dr. Leonard Twiglet took the decision to publish the details openly.

LEONARD: Yes, that's correct. Thank you Tommy. *[Starts to clap, as do **AMELIA**, **ALEX** (without enthusiasm) and the entire audience.]*

[When the clapping subsides:] Isabelle Swan please.

*[**TOMMY** returns to the audience.]*

*[**ISABELLE** comes up to the lectern,* shows her first slide and *glances at **LEONARD**, who indicates that she should begin.]*

Fast Aircraft
for Stratospheric Tourism

Isabelle Swan
16th April 2003

Supervisor: Dr. Francis Whittler

Airlyce Stratotourism Inc.
Concepts Division, Bowring Inc.
Jet Engine Research Consortium

Slide 1

ISABELLE: *[Perkily throughout the presentation]* Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is Isabelle Swan. The title of my project is 'Fast Aircraft for Stratospheric Tourism.' My supervisor is Dr. Francis Whittler, who unfortunately can't be here today. I wish him good luck in the tournament at Selfridge Golf Club.

I would also like to thank Mr. Brendan Luheaven of Airlyce Stratotourism and Dr. Helga Engellicht, Chief Engineer of the Bowring Concepts Division, for all their help and encouragement.

The work I am doing is associated with Dr. Whittler's feasibility study contract for a fast stratospheric aircraft. *[Shows her second slide]*

Bowring—	Mach 4
Fast	Altitude 37 km
Aircraft for	421 passengers
Stratospheric	2 jet engines
Tourism	1 rocket engine

Slide 2

… **ISABELLE**: Dr. Engellicht has been responsible for the development of the Bowring FAST design. This is sometimes referred to as B-FAST, for Bowring Fast Aircraft for Stratospheric Tourism … or just FAST for short.

This aircraft will fly at an altitude of thirty-seven kilometres, carrying four hundred and twenty one passengers. FAST will have two jet engines and one rocket engine.

In working on my project to come up with an improved aircraft concept for Airlyce Stratotourism I have been allowed to propose any changes I wished to the current B-FAST design and to investigate their implications. *[Shows her third slide]*

Fast
Aircraft for
Stratospheric
Tourism with
Enhanced
ROI

Mach 4
Altitude 37 km
1019–1336 pass.
4 jet engines
2 rocket engines

Slide 3

… **ISABELLE**: Therefore, I have called my modified design FASTER.… FASTER stands for Fast Aircraft for Stratospheric Tourism with Enhanced ROI.… ROI, of course, stands for Return on Investment.

FASTER would be capable of carrying one thousand and nineteen passengers instead of four hundred and twenty one.

This could be increased to one thousand three hundred and thirty six by further restricting legroom, reducing the oxygen level in the passenger cabin by 13% and adding some helium to counteract possible deep vein thrombosis.

I’m quite sure the tourists won’t mind sounding like Donald Duck because of the helium. It might even add some levity to the experience!

… **ISABELLE**: There would be four jet engines instead of two and two rocket engines instead of one.

You could say that I have taken some of the Bowring concepts and made them even more Bowring … but I don't mean to dwell on any particular manufacturer because they all have their own strategies to maximize ROI.

In my report I have presented analyses and calculations relating to structural integrity and the cooling of the airframe.

I have examined fuel and oxygen usage throughout a projected five-hour stratospheric tour. ***[LEONARD** is keeping an eye on his watch.]*

In addition, I have looked at the return on investment over the 10-year design-life of FASTER.

Of course, the ROI could be much higher if FASTER continued to be used *beyond* the end of its design life … and did not experience any major technical malfunction or failure.

LEONARD: *[Taps the glass with the spoon]* Isabelle, you have one minute left.

ISABELLE: In my project I have shown how a proposed aircraft design for stratospheric tourism could evolve further in the competitive marketplace.

FASTER could yield up to 71 cents per kilogram paying passenger deadweight hour—including all turnaround time. Thank you!

LEONARD: Are there any questions for Isabelle?… While you're thinking, I have just one quick question: what is the maximum g-force to which the stratospheric tourists would be subjected?

ISABELLE: I didn't look into that aspect—I think it might be about 1.5 or 2 *g*.… That's probably as much as the airframe could withstand without breaking up.

LEONARD: Thank you…. Amelia.

AMELIA: Isabelle, have you carried out a literature survey on the topic of stratospheric flight?

ISABELLE: Yes. Dr. Whittler paid for a literature search that yielded one thousand titles, with abstracts.

AMELIA: I see. Very good Isabelle!

ISABELLE: I have about five hundred pages of printout with the details, but I haven't had a chance to look through it yet.

LEONARD: I'll take just one more question … from the back.

STUDENT: *[At the back of the audience, speaking quite loudly]* Could you please clarify what you meant by the expression involving 'paying passengers' and 'deadweight.'

ISABELLE: That's the potential *profitability* in cents per kilogram paying passenger deadweight hour.

In simple terms it is the net profit that could be made per hour for each kilogram of payload associated with a paying passenger. This payload is the sum of the weight of the passenger and the weight of their checked-in and carry-on baggage.

LEONARD: Thank you Isabelle…. *[To the audience]* Please show your appreciation in the usual way. *[Begins to clap, as do **AMELIA**, **ALEX**, the **STUDENT** at the back and the entire audience.]*

*[**ISABELLE** returns to the audience.]*

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 4

Night of Wednesday 23rd April 2003

[Leonard and Anne's bedroom, dim lighting. There is a double bed at centre stage. The rear of the bed is inclined or propped-up so that the audience can see the characters' faces and the characters can project their voices towards the audience. The time, as if from a projector clock, is visible in large characters above the bed. It is displayed as ***AM 1:54*** *and remains static. Leonard is wearing a pyjamas and Anne is wearing a nightdress. They are asleep, but Leonard is slightly restless. The bedclothes on top of them are invisible. Before the dialogue begins, bars 1 to 16 of 'Just Let Me Fly' are heard, played on a harmonica.]*

[A recorded dialogue of past events features ***ALEX****'s,* ***AMELIA****'s,* ***ROBERT****'s,* ***EUGENE****'s and* ***LEONARD****'s voices.* ***LEONARD*** *speaks his present thoughts directly and clearly while maintaining his slightly restless state in bed.]*

LEONARD: *[Speaking with his eyes closed]* I'm at a faculty meeting with all my academic colleagues. This is the research reports agenda item and Alex has been asked to give a summary of our activities in Aero.

He can hardly know anything of what we are at in Advanced Propeller Propulsion Engineering Associates in Learning. I was expecting him to contact me in relation to our activities for this, but he hasn't done so. Curious.

ALEX'S VOICE: Leonard Twiglet has been pressing on with his *[Struggles slightly but obviously with the long title]* Advanced Propeller Propulsion Engineering Associates in Learning. He has been in discussions with Airbush and has an important meeting coming up with them next month *[**LEONARD** sits bolt upright with his eyes wide open.]*

LEONARD: *[Wide awake and astonished; quite loudly]* How did he know that?

ANNE: *[Woken by **LEONARD**'s sudden movement]* It's all right Leonard. It's only a dream. *[Reaches an arm over and touches Leonard.]* Never mind.

LEONARD: *[Slowly at first]* Yes, I'm OK.… Sorry ... sorry Anne. *[Lies down again and turns onto his side to sleep]* Good night love.

*[The lights fade to black and the clock display vanishes. The lights fade back to dim, the clock display shows a new time, **AM 2:35**, and **LEONARD** is again sleeping, slightly restlessly. Bars 1 to 8 of 'Just Let Me Fly' are heard played on a harmonica before the next dialogue begins.]*

LEONARD'S VOICE: Alex, I was wondering if there have been any developments in relation to funding for the propeller-testing tunnel for teaching?

ALEX'S VOICE: *[Crossly]* There's no point in asking me that again Leonard, because there are no funds available. You are the only one of my staff who is always *[**LEONARD** moves uncomfortably in his bed]* complaining.

LEONARD'S VOICE: Sorry Alex, I'm not complaining!

ALEX'S VOICE: I'm glad to hear it—for once. *[The 'Just Let Me Fly' refrain (bars 25 and 26) is heard once, played on a harmonica. The lights fade to black.]*

*[The lights fade back to dim and the clock display shows a new time as **AM 3:11**. **LEONARD** is again sleeping, slightly restlessly]*

LEONARD: *[Eyes closed]* I was talking to Francis under a tree on a campus footpath when Alex arrived.

[Birds are heard chirping lightly.]

ALEX'S VOICE: Leonard, I must have a chat with you about the allocation of the equipment-replacement budget.

LEONARD'S VOICE: OK Alex, no problem.

LEONARD: *[Matter-of-factly]* Alex never did speak to me about that allocation, but it came up at the next departmental meeting….

ALEX'S VOICE: I have discussed the equipment-replacement budget with each of you individually and have decided to allocate the funds as follows … *[**LEONARD** turns over uncomfortably. The 'Just Let Me Fly' refrain (bars 25 and 26) is heard once, played on a harmonica, and the lights fade to black.]*

*[The lights fade back to dim, the clock display shows a new time, **AM 4:23**, and **LEONARD** is again sleeping, slightly restlessly.]*

*[**LEONARD** gets out of bed and walks to stage left in a somewhat trance-like state. He faces the audience and talks in a very matter-of-fact tone.]*

LEONARD: I'm at a departmental strategic planning 'away day.' Each academic has the opportunity to stand up and describe the changes he or she would like to see to our programmes.

Alex is expecting me to make a case for a greater emphasis on advanced propeller propulsion in our courses, which he will resist, of course. I'm thinking of using this occasion to talk directly to my colleagues and to make a plea for more inclusiveness and acceptance of differences.

My heart is thumping. I'm finding it very difficult to pay attention to Amelia, who is speaking now …

AMELIA'S VOICE: This slide shows the syllabus of the proposed environmental impact module. It reflects the new …

LEONARD: … and I don't know if I have the nerve or the courage to do it. I feel stiff and tense. Relax your shoulders! *[Lifts and relaxes his shoulders]*

My stomach is jittery. Breathe deeply! *[Inhales deeply]*

But can I put it into words? Will they understand and not take it the wrong way? Let your arms hang loose! *[Moves his hands and arms loosely as they hang at his sides]*.

[Walks back slowly to his bed and lies down.]

[Eyes closed] I'm here, I'm standing up in front of my academic colleagues of the Department of Aeronautical Engineering.

LEONARD'S VOICE: The aspect of our Aeronautical Engineering programme that I want to address is how we interact as colleagues.

LEONARD: *[Exhaling]* Breathe!

LEONARD'S VOICE: *[With a slight tremble at first]* Our department is dominated by one large research group, the JERC group headed by Alex. That leaves just four of us, and our graduate students, who work in much smaller groups.

Of course, some of the members of JERC are active in other groups as well.

LEONARD: Alex is refusing to look at me. Breathe! *[Breathes in]* I have started and I will not be intimidated. Breathe!

LEONARD'S VOICE: I am proud to have such a renowned and successful group as JERC within the Aero Department.

However, those of us who are not members of JERC can sometimes feel somewhat excluded.

LEONARD: With the exception of Alex, my colleagues are listening, but they're not responding. I don't know what they think. Alex's gaze is fixed straight ahead. He hasn't looked at me once. Breathe!

LEONARD'S VOICE: I would like to see much more inclusiveness and acceptance of diversity within the department. We need to find a way around the 'majority rules' principle.

… **LEONARD'S VOICE**:

True democracy respects individuality and diversity. The challenge is for us to put in place systems to support and implement those things.… Competition is healthy, but sometimes I feel as though I am being ex .. *[very quietly:]* clu … *[strongly:] discouraged*!

LEONARD: Don't get into self-pity—be positive!

LEONARD'S VOICE: Could we not move ahead with a greater sense of our *common* goals and our *diverse* interests and abilities? … As well as fostering and encouraging teamwork and … creativity, could we value and truly liberate individuality?

LEONARD: I sat down and nobody made any comment. Maxwell made the next presentation about topic changes for the third and fourth year design courses.

That evening I had a short conversation with Eugene.

EUGENE'S VOICE: Leonard, I understand how you feel. I'm not part of JERC either, but I don't have an issue about it.

LEONARD: The next day I was alone … taking my post from my pigeonhole *[going through the motions of taking some envelopes in his hands and glancing (eyes closed) at them, while still lying down:]* when Alex arrived. He made one comment and left.

ALEX'S VOICE: *[Crossly]* Your statements at the away day yesterday were a *disgrace*! *[**LEONARD** performs the action of dropping the envelopes back into the box in exasperation.]*

[The 'Just Let Me Fly' refrain (bars 25 and 26) is heard once, played on a harmonica, as Leonard inhales deeply and exhales slowly. The clock display vanishes and the lights fade to black.]

[After a short pause the lights fade up to dim and a new clock time appears, ***AM 5:12****.* ***LEONARD*** *is standing to the left of centre stage in his pyjamas with one foot on a skateboard*[†]*. He scoots or attempts to scoot somewhat clumsily on the skateboard a very small distance towards stage left, lit by a spotlight. He picks up the skateboard and walks to a position just short of stage left. With the skateboard in his hands he faces the audience and talks.]*

LEONARD: As I was walking across the concourse in Selfridge Railway Station this morning a pigeon swooped for a titbit on the ground.

It skidded for about a body length on the polished floor. Its wings were already fully stowed when it touched down. *[Performs a landing action on an imaginary surface in the air with the skateboard. The rear wheels touch down first and the front wheels touch down only at the end of the movement.]*

As it slid, its two feet were flat on the floor and its body seemed tilted backwards. All its weight was on its heels.…

[†] The skateboard sketch within Act II Scene 4 needs to be produced with great care to ensure the safety of the actor playing Leonard and to ensure that the skateboard cannot fly off the front of the stage. No stunts are required.

… **LEONARD**: I don't think it was doing it to impress. It may just have forgotten that the polished granite was slippery for its claws; but it was a station pigeon and I don't think so. *[Positions the skateboard on the ground.]*

[Addresses the audience] No … I think the pigeon wanted the *double* satisfaction of the thrill and the titbit.

[Positions himself and scoots or attempts to scoot off stage at stage left.]

[The first six notes of 'Just Let Me Fly' (bars 1 to 4) are heard, played on a harmonica. Before the end of the long last note, there is a loud clattering sound like a pile of saucepans and lids falling on a hard floor. ***ANNE*** *is startled and sits up. The lights fade to black.]*

Scene 5

Friday 2nd May 2003

*[Leonard's office. **LEONARD** is sitting at his desk working. He picks up the phone, presses a quick dial key and waits until Anne answers.]*

LEONARD: Hi Anne, Leonard here … I'm still working on my presentation and, as usual, it's taking longer than I expected.… Yes, I know … It's almost ready now, but I also want to print out some transparencies in case I need them. Sometimes there can be problems with reading the CD or with the video projector. It shouldn't take more than an hour for me to finish everything.… Don't wait up for me. How did Roger get on today? … Good.… Is Tony in?… OK, bye love.

*[**LEONARD** resumes working and after another short while there is a knock at the door and Noel steps in.]*

NOEL: Hello Leonard, I just noticed your light on as I was leaving. I was going to turn out the lights, but I'll leave that to you now.

LEONARD: No problem Noel. I'm putting the final touches to my presentation for the Minneapolis International Aeronautical Engineering Conference next week.

NOEL: I've been doing the same. Alex and I had a paper accepted and we'll both be going. Alex will do the presentation.

LEONARD: Are you flying through New York?

NOEL: No, we're going via Chicago. We'll see you at the conference.

LEONARD: Yes I'll see you there. Have a nice trip.

*[Exit **NOEL**. **LEONARD** gets up and begins to walk back and forth. He stops and speaks his thoughts out loud.]*

I could be in trouble with Alex again! I haven't told him I am going or asked his permission. I should have told him, but it's too late now—the next time I see Alex we'll both be in Minneapolis.… At least I've all my lectures covered!

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 6

Monday 5th May 2003

*[The registration area for the International Aeronautical Engineering Conference at the Stilton Hotel in Minneapolis. An **OFFICIAL** is sitting behind a table carrying out registrations. There is a line of three persons in front of the table and **LEONARD** is the third of these. Registration is proceeding and the first person in the line, **PERSON 1**, walks away. **ALEX** and **NOEL** arrive behind **LEONARD**. **NOEL** recognizes **LEONARD** straight away and **ALEX** is taken by surprise.]*

NOEL: Hello Leonard … *[**LEONARD** turns around]* you got here before us!

LEONARD: Hello Noel … hello Alex.

ALEX: Hello Leonard.

NOEL: Leonard and I were both working on our presentations very late last Friday night. I left at about eleven and Leonard was still there. At what time did you finish up Leonard?

LEONARD: I'd say it was about midnight. And some people think we academics have an easy life!

NOEL: It's not easy, but as academics and as graduate students we like what we're doing. Where are you staying, Leonard?

LEONARD: At the Holiday Lodge, three blocks away. Where are you staying?

NOEL: We're here at the Stilton.

LEONARD: It's well for those with lucrative research contracts.

NOEL: You should join up with JERC where all the fun is—right Alex?

ALEX: Yes we do have fun, but Leonard likes doing his own thing with APPEAL.

LEONARD: I put a high value on academic freedom and diversity of opinions, but I'm not against having fun, or collaborating wherever we can.

NOEL: We'll be going down town later for a few drinks—call us here at the hotel if you would like to join us.

LEONARD: Thanks for the offer.

*[**PERSON 2**, ahead of Leonard in the line, walks away.]*

OFFICIAL: May I have your name sir?

LEONARD: Leonard Twiglet of the University of Selfridge.

*[The **OFFICIAL** looks through a list and finds Leonard's name.]*

OFFICIAL: Aeronautical Engineering Department. Your section is called 'Appeal'—is that correct?

LEONARD: Well yes, it's a research grouping. The full title is Advanced Propeller Propulsion Engineering Associates in Learning.

OFFICIAL: Um hum. Thank you Dr. Twiglet. Here is your documentation pack. Have a nice day!

LEONARD: Thank you.

*[**LEONARD** moves away, looking back to **NOEL** and **ALEX**.]*

… **LEONARD**: I'll be seeing you during the week.

NOEL: Bye Leonard.

ALEX: Bye Leonard.

OFFICIAL: May I have your name sir?

ALEX: Professor Alex Graybell of the University of Selfridge and this is Mr. Noel Easterly, my graduate student.

OFFICIAL: Um hum.

ALEX: *[as the official locates the names on a list]* We are joint authors of a paper and I'll be doing the presentation.

OFFICIAL: Um hum. You are both from the Jet Engine Research Consortium at the University of Selfridge.

ALEX: That's correct.

OFFICIAL: These are your documentation packs … *[handing a pack to **ALEX**]* Professor Graybell …

ALEX: Thank you.

OFFICIAL: and … *[handing a pack to **NOEL**]* Mr. Easterly.

NOEL: Thank you.

OFFICIAL: Have a nice day!

NOEL: Thanks, you too.

OFFICIAL: Um hum.

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 7

Wednesday 7th May 2003

[A lobby in the Stilton Hotel. ***ALEX*** *and* ***NOEL*** *enter from the stage left in jocose mood. They each have a bag that could contain a small amount of sports gear.* ***LEONARD*** *enters moments later from stage right carrying a notebook computer satchel over his shoulder.]*

ALEX: *[With a sense of bravado]* … So I just said to the bursar: '10% overhead, *maximum!*, in writing in a memo from you by noon tomorrow or I close down the contract.' … He gave me the memo, fixing the university overhead at 10%, and *that* was the end of it.

LEONARD: Good morning folks!

ALEX and **NOEL**: Good morning Leonard.

NOEL: We met a former project student of yours yesterday evening at the Advanced Jet Propulsion reception.

LEONARD: Who was it?

NOEL: Linda Bergman. She's working for Blox Avionics in Seattle and she was asking for you.

LEONARD: Yes, I remember Linda and I'm sorry I missed her.

ALEX: Too bad!

NOEL: She was leaving for home straight after the reception, but Alex has arranged to go to see her at Blox the next time he's in the States.

LEONARD: Linda was a good student. I'm sure she's doing well.

NOEL: Have you tried the leisure centre here Leonard? We‘re just coming back from there.

LEONARD: No I haven’t.

NOEL: You’d be impressed. It has everything, even a mini spin dryer for your swimming trunks on the way out.

LEONARD: I’d like to try it. Is it open to non-residents?

ALEX: Yes, as a non-resident conference attendee you can use the facilities for ten dollars a time. We can use it any time for free.

LEONARD: I’ll bring my swimming trunks tomorrow morning. I’m presenting my paper today at 9:00 a.m. at the Propeller Propulsion 2 session. I’m on my way there now to get set up.

ALEX: We haven’t had breakfast yet so I don’t think we’ll make it to your paper. We’ll be at Compressor and Turbine Design 3 this morning. And I’ll be presenting our paper at Gas Flow 1 this afternoon.

LEONARD: I’ll come along for your paper, but I’ll need to go back to Propeller Propulsion 3 immediately afterwards as there are some papers to be presented there that I don’t want to miss.

NOEL: We’ll see you later so. Good luck with your presentation!

LEONARD: Thanks. Bye.

ALEX: Bye Leonard.

[Lights fade to black]

Act III

Scene 1

Monday 12th May 2003

*[Departmental staff common room. **ALEX**, **FRANCIS**, **AMELIA**, **NOEL**, **ROBERT** and **LEONARD** are sitting around the large table drinking from their assorted mugs of coffee or tea].*

ROBERT: *[Addressing **NOEL**, **LEONARD** and, less specifically, **ALEX**]* And how were the holidays in Minneapolis? The department was almost deserted here last week.

*[**ALEX** frowns with displeasure, but remains silent.]*

NOEL: I can't speak for Leonard, but Alex and I came back exhausted—it was a hard week's work, although we did our best to enjoy ourselves as well—right Alex?

ALEX: Right Noel—JERC people always have fun.

NOEL: At the end of the conference Alex and I took a detour to visit Theo Delight at Noter Daym. Theo will be chairing the Advanced Jet Engines sessions at JERCS-oh-four.

LEONARD: Well, I came straight back after the conference and I'm still feeling tired, even though I arrived home on Saturday morning.

FRANCIS: I'm no stranger to jet lag, so I can sympathize with you all—and maybe *I'll* receive more sympathy too, the next time I come back from a trip.

LEONARD: It's hard, listening to technical papers all day. Perhaps our students, especially the first years, who have the most lectures, feel the same way. Maybe we need to take more account of that.

FRANCIS: I never sit through papers all day long at a conference. I always have more important things to do.

NOEL: We'll have to take some tips from you, Francis.

FRANCIS: I'm *very* selective about what presentations I attend. Which reminds me, I have a few phone calls to make.

*[**FRANCIS** gets up and exits. **ALEX** also gets up to leave.]*

ALEX: Leonard, could you call into my office after coffee—I'd like to have a word with you.

LEONARD: *[As **ALEX** leaves]* OK Alex, I'll be in in a few minutes.

AMELIA: I think we could all learn from Francis. He never seems to push himself too hard, yet he gets the business done and collects lots of kudos.

LEONARD: Business is the operative word as far as Francis is concerned, JERC business.

NOEL: I admire Francis for it. He gives me very good support as a research student.… And Alex is very supportive too.

ROBERT: I don't think Alex was impressed with my jibing about Minneapolis.

AMELIA: It never pays to upset the boss, but he'll get over it.

LEONARD: A non-JERC wouldn't get away with it so easily.

ROBERT: Maybe not.

*[**ANDY** arrives carrying a heavy cardboard box full of student handouts (about four reams of A4 paper) and puts it down on the table near **LEONARD**.]*

ANDY: Leonard, I got all the copies done. Robin Stapley of Central Copying let me do them while he was on his tea break. There they are! The originals are on top in the folder.

LEONARD: Thanks Andy. You're great! I appreciate that. I have a lecture with the second-years at noon and I'll be able to give them out.

ANDY: *[Addressing **LEONARD**, **NOEL**, **ROBERT** and **AMELIA**, speaking quickly as usual]* I'm going to Rome for me holidays. Unless I win the lotto I won't have any money so I'm going to *roam* around Selfridge for a week. And I'll go to the south of Francis Avenue to get a tan if the sun comes out.

NOEL: *[Getting up to go, as do all the others]* I suppose you're going to *grease* your hair as well.

*[**LEONARD** picks up his box of handouts.]*

ANDY: I never put grease in me hair, but I know where there's a good barbershop. They have a special offer on Tuesdays …

[Lights fade to black]

Scene 2

Monday 12th May 2003

[Alex's office. The office door at stage front left is slightly open. The large calendar on the wall shows the year and the month: 2003, May. A printer with a letter in the output tray is evident. ***ALEX*** *is working on some papers and making some changes or annotations on them with a biro.* ***LEONARD*** *arrives, carrying his box of handouts, and knocks on the door.]*

ALEX: *[Loudly]* Come in!

LEONARD: Hi Alex, you wanted to see me?

ALEX: Yes Leonard. Come in and close the door.

*[**LEONARD** comes in and closes the door. After hesitating slightly he sits down awkwardly on a chair opposite Alex with the box of handouts on his lap.]*

ALEX: Leonard, I have written a letter to the personnel office and I have called you in to inform you of that fact. Last week you were absent without leave.

*[**LEONARD** is utterly taken aback. He struggles to compose himself and find words to express himself.]*

LEONARD: As you know, Alex, I was at Minneapolis last week and presented a paper there. Strictly, according to the rules, I should have asked your permission.

ALEX: You are fully aware of the rules.

LEONARD: I'm sorry for that, but the reason was that I find it so difficult to talk to you. It never seemed to be the right time to ask and I kept putting it off and in the end it was time to go and I hadn't done it.

ALEX: That's no excuse!

LEONARD: With term coming to an end, I was only due to give two lectures last week anyway. I did a swap with Eugene to cover the material in advance and Howard, my graduate student, looked after my lab sessions.

ALEX: That is not the point, Leonard.

LEONARD: I shouldn't have gone without asking your permission, but it wasn't the type of thing that would justify a letter to the personnel office.

ALEX: You know the rules Leonard and *you* chose to break them.

LEONARD: If it was someone from JERC this problem would never have arisen. You would have known what their plans were and there probably wouldn't even have been any need for them to ask.

ALEX: The fact is that you absented yourself without leave. You left me open to criticism on the basis that there were insufficient academic staff present in the department during term time. Nobody else did that.

LEONARD: A letter like that *[Leonard glances over at the printer]* would be used where somebody had been in serious breach of their duties over a period of time and had already received several warnings.

… **LEONARD**: This is not that type of situation. I have always done my work diligently and conscientiously. This was the only occasion that I have been absent without leave.

It wouldn't have happened if I'd been able to communicate more freely with you.

ALEX: *[Coldly]* None of the other academic staff have any difficulties with the way I run the department. This letter notes the *fact* that you were absent without leave and you should take it as a warning not to do that type of thing again.

*[**LEONARD** is holding back tears at this point.]*

LEONARD: I was wrong to go to Minneapolis without permission. You have a right to be angry with me and to tell me off, but please Alex do not send off that letter. I will not do it again.

*[**ALEX** allows a few seconds to elapse.]*

ALEX: *[Sternly]* OK Leonard, I will tear up the letter, this time.

LEONARD: Thanks Alex.

*[Exit **LEONARD**, carrying the heavy box of handouts and struggling to re-adjust his face to normal. The lights fade to black.]*

Scene 3

May to September 2003

[Leonard's house, then a park. The stage, which contains just a chair and a bench seat and has a plain background, is completely black. The melody 'Just Let Me Fly' is heard, played on a harmonica. As the music plays, the names of the months May, June, July and August, in turn, appear briefly with the year, 2003, in large red letters on the background (a video projector can be used for this effect). A few moments after August has briefly appeared the music fades out. The stage and the background are completely black and the dialogue begins.]

ANNE: *[Calling]* Leonard…. *[Calling loudly and anxiously]* Leonard!

LEONARD: *[Loudly]* I'm down here.

*[After a slight pause the lights come up, revealing **ANNE** at stage right and **LEONARD** at stage left sitting on a chair with his hands together and his forearms on his thighs. His gaze is initially downwards.]*

LEONARD: I'm all right.

ANNE: *[Almost weeping]* After your call I told Kevin I had a problem at home and he let me off. I was worried about you. I had a very uneasy feeling.

LEONARD: Thanks Anne. I'm very down.... I'm in a muddle and I'm not getting anything done. Working at home is no better than working at the office. I'm finding it hard to think any positive thoughts at all.

ANNE: Let's go for a walk in the park. It will do us both good and we'll get some fresh air.

LEONARD: OK.

*[**LEONARD** and **ANNE** stroll side-by-side and talk.]*

ANNE: Let's go to Hillbay Beach next Sunday. The forecast is good and I'm sure the boys will be happy to come along. They have always loved Hillbay Beach since they were toddlers.

LEONARD: OK. That's fine with me. I don't mind doing the driving.

ANNE: We could bring a picnic and make a full day of it.

LEONARD: Right. That's fine.

ANNE: Let's sit by the pond to watch the ducks.… *[They sit down on a bench and look towards the audience at the ducks. Some occasional duck sounds are heard in the course of the dialogue.]*

Would you like to bring the picnic stove to heat some soup or make some coffee later?

LEONARD: If you like.

ANNE: We could leave at nine, or maybe even eight.

LEONARD: OK.

ANNE: Which would you prefer?

LEONARD: Huh?

ANNE: Would you prefer to leave at eight or at nine?

LEONARD: Oh, whichever. I don't mind. Whenever you like.

ANNE: Leonard, try to show some enthusiasm.

LEONARD: I can't find much of that.

ANNE: Don't focus on your work all the time. Think of us.

LEONARD: That's just it. I'm not able to focus on my work either. I have no interest in it anymore and no sense of what I want to get done. My confidence is shattered and I keep asking myself have I been bullied by Alex over the years.

He's not a bad person and he hasn't done anything terrible, but why have I been feeling so devastated?

ANNE: There's no point torturing yourself about that. *[**LEONARD** watches a duck intently.]* You can't change the past and you probably can't change the attitudes or behaviour of others very much. *[**LEONARD** is still watching the duck, which moves to a different position.]* What you can do is change your own attitude and make the choices that you are free to make.

LEONARD: ... Just watch that duck as its head bobs up out of the water.

ANNE: Yes it's lovely—and so peaceful.

LEONARD: Yes, but look carefully. When its head comes up, watch for the water rolling off its head and its back.

*[**LEONARD** and **ANNE** watch the duck as its head bobs up twice.]*

ANNE: I don't see any water rolling off its head or its back.

LEONARD: Exactly. Nor do I. Isn't that just amazing!

ANNE: Well yes.

*[**LEONARD** continues watching the ducks for a time. **ANNE** looks around her.]*

LEONARD: *[Closes his eyes and shakes his head from side to side and the sound he makes could be laughing or crying]*. Huh, huh, huh ... duck feathers!

*[**ANNE** looks at Leonard quizzically.]*

[Eyes open] Duck feathers are amazing *[**ANNE** looks at Leonard with an even more quizzical look]* ... but you're not an engineer and you can't appreciate that in the same way.

ANNE: Maybe not, but I like watching them.

LEONARD: I was just thinking of an old Marx brothers movie. Groucho used the word 'viaduct' and one of the brothers heard it as 'Why a duck?'…That's how we communicate sometimes—you and I … and everyone! Communication can be so difficult to master, even for the best of friends.

ANNE: I'm glad to see you haven't lost your *odd* sense of humour. Let's move on.

[They continue with their walk. After a slight pause the lights go dim. The name of the month, September, and the year, 2003, appear in large red letters on the dark background. The sung version of 'Just Let Me Fly,' verse 2 with harmonica accompaniment, is heard.]

Just let me be a bird
I know it sounds absurd
Let loose is all I need
Give me fresh air to breathe
Just let me zig and zag
No need to shout or brag
Just let me fly
Just let me fly
Just let me fly

[The lights fade to black.]

Scene 4

Thursday 18th September 2003

[Amelia's office, which is like Leonard's, but of the opposite hand. There is a small desk with a computer monitor at stage left. There is a chair in front of Amelia's desk. ***AMELIA*** *is sitting at her desk and talking on the phone.* ***LEONARD*** *knocks at the door.]*

AMELIA: *[On the phone]* Excuse me, there's someone at the door. *[Towards the door:]* Come in!

*[**LEONARD**, who doesn't hear Amelia's voice, knocks again and opens the door hesitantly.* ***AMELIA*** *beckons to* ***LEONARD*** *to come in and sit down.]*

[On the phone] Thanks for your help; I knew it would be a long shot. But if you do come across any meteorological publications that touch on the contribution of aviation to the hole in the ozone layer, please let me know. By the way, are you going to the sustainability seminar on September 25th, next Wednesday evening?… It's in the Academy Hall.… I might see you there so. Thanks George. Goodbye. *[Puts down the phone.]*

Leonard.

LEONARD: Sorry to disturb you Amelia. I didn't know you were on the phone. I've just had an incident with Alex and I needed to talk to someone.

AMELIA: Sit down Leonard. What happened?

LEONARD: *[As he sits down]* Not much really, I suppose.… I knocked on Alex's door and walked straight in and told him that he had treated me very badly over many years. That's as far as I got. Alex roared at me: 'Get … out … of … my … office!'

I said 'OK Alex, but I think we need to talk about this and I'm ready to do that at any time.' He replied: 'You are pathetic! Get … out!' and I left.

AMELIA: Did he say that?

LEONARD: Yes.… I trust you, Amelia … and I know that Alex trusts you.… I don't know where to turn now.

AMELIA: We're all colleagues, Leonard, and I'll help if I can.

LEONARD: I like the people here at US, even Alex, although I don't like the way he treats me sometimes. And yet I feel crushed, stifled, suppressed. I just don't want to be here. It's not just now, it had been building up for quite a long time, but I didn't know it.

AMELIA: Is there anything you want me to do?

LEONARD: I don't think so. What could anybody do?… *I* didn't even know I had a problem.

AMELIA: I can see that there has been a break-down in communication, but I don't want to make any judgement about it.

LEONARD: Yes, I understand. I don't suppose I would want to either if I were in your position.

AMELIA: Alex has his own hang-ups.… We all do.… Maybe he sometimes feels threatened by you.…

LEONARD: Why should he?

AMELIA: I don't know.… But if you could keep that in mind it might help you in your dealings with him. He's a good person.

LEONARD: I know that Alex has his good points and can be very supportive … of some people.… It was only after an incident, involving the Minneapolis International Aeronautical Engineering Conference, that something hit me like a ton of bricks and I felt flattened.… I lost all interest in everything to do with my job.

AMELIA: Would it help if I talked to Alex?

LEONARD: I don't know. I don't think so. It's probably much too late for that to make a difference. I have just read a book about assertiveness and I was determined to confront Alex, but I don't think it will get me anywhere—not at this stage. I feel like handing in my resignation right now.

AMELIA: Take your time to sort things out in your own mind and don't do anything rash.

LEONARD: Don't worry … I'll count to ten and give myself a chance to calm down.

AMELIA: Think of your family as well, Leonard, and talk to Anne about it.

LEONARD: It has an impact on them. Anne has been very concerned about me since I lost all interest in being here and I fear it could affect the boys as well.

AMELIA: I don't know what the answer is—you will have to find that. Today is not a decision day for you. Any decisions you make need a calm mind and plenty of time to think them through.

I don't want to take sides, but fairness of treatment for everybody is important to me too.

LEONARD: *[Getting up to leave]* Thanks Amelia. Thanks for your time and your advice.

AMELIA: You're welcome.

*[The lights fade to black as **LEONARD** leaves. A rendition of 'Just Let Me Fly,' bars 1 to 16 played on a harmonica, is heard.]*

Scene 5

Monday 29th September 2003

[Alex's office. The door at stage front left is slightly open. Alex is sitting behind his desk. The large calendar on the wall shows the year and the month: 2003, September. ***AMELIA*** *is sitting on a chair in front of Alex's desk.* ***LEONARD*** *arrives and knocks on the door.]*

ALEX: Come in.

*[**LEONARD** enters.]*

LEONARD: Morning folks.

*[**AMELIA** smiles good morning.]*

ALEX: Morning Leonard. Have a seat on the sofa.
*[**LEONARD** takes his seat without reclining into it.]*
Amelia tells me you wanted to clear the air about some issues and that's why we have arranged this meeting. I'm here to listen to what you have to say. For my own part there isn't anything in particular I want to raise.

LEONARD: Thanks Alex ... and thanks Amelia. I think it is important to clear the air. I don't want to get into accusations and arguments. I'm only interested in moving forward in a positive way.

ALEX: I've no problem with that. As far as I am aware, we are all moving forward in a positive way.

LEONARD: I thought I might try to describe how I have felt, as distinct from what might have occurred or didn't occur.… I have found it difficult over the years to have a comfortable working relationship with you Alex. *[**ALEX** frowns, but doesn't say anything.]*

I know you probably don't agree, but I have felt that I have been treated less favourably than some of my colleagues or haven't had the same influence as they have had.

ALEX: *[With a very serious tone]* I have always treated all of my staff fairly and impartially.

LEONARD: Well I just think that in some cases I haven't stood up for myself the way I should have.… Either I have let things go without comment and have felt frustrated or I have expressed my opinion and been criticized as a complainer … I'm in a minority around here … I'm not the only one, I know that … but it's just that sometimes I just want to be treated the same as other people even though I am different.…

What I'd like is that I could get on with you in such a way that we were both comfortable with.… Just a few little things could make a big difference. They wouldn't have to be big things to make a huge difference to me … and they wouldn't make a huge difference to you either.

… **LEONARD**: I know we never have enough resources to go around and I don't always see things the same way as you and some of my colleagues. If I had a sense that you could take me as you find me … and not find too much fault with that … and not feel that I was launching an attack any time I said something that you disagreed with or criticized you.… Because I don't always react well to being criticized myself.

AMELIA: I know that Leonard has felt very frustrated at times. Perhaps we're so deeply involved with JERC that we don't notice any difficulties that others who are not part of JERC may have. I think it all comes down to better communication.

ALEX: Well I'm a *team* player. I have supported Leonard in many ways and I have not got in the way of his research.

[Addressing Leonard] You are free to do whatever research you wish and I don't meddle with that.

You do your job well and I recognize that, but I'm the one who has the responsibility of running the department.

AMELIA: I respect and value you both and if there's any way that we can make Leonard feel more at ease I would like to do that. Why don't you both shake hands and let's call it a new start.

LEONARD: *[Getting up immediately and walking over to shake hands with **ALEX** across Alex's desk]* Yes, I'm glad to shake hands … *[shaking hands with ALEX]*.

… **LEONARD**: Alex, the last time you shook hands with me was after I got Reader … I was surprised … because I had been wondering if you *would* shake hands with me.

ALEX: It just shows how wrong you can be. I support you Leonard. I'd be happy to work with you in common areas of research … It's up to you …

AMELIA: *[Standing up to leave]* I have to go and meet one of my project students. Have my seat Leonard.… I'll leave you two to wind up the discussion.

ALEX: OK Amelia.

LEONARD: *[Sitting down]* Thanks very much Amelia. *[Exit **AMELIA**.]*

There is an area where I think we *definitely* should be collaborating. That's in relation to the Sprat and Whiteflea APU—the Auxiliary Power Unit.

ALEX: Well I'm not sure.… That's on hold at the moment.… I haven't been able to recruit anybody with the ability to work on it. Sprat and Whiteflea were to fund two research assistants, but they're hard …

LEONARD: That's exactly it. You succeeded in getting Sprat and Whiteflea to provide the APU—that was a coup! I had tried very hard to get them to give us an APU for research and teaching and didn't succeed. Now *you* have it and it's just sitting there.

ALEX: That's not the case. The technicians will be setting it up shortly.

LEONARD: I once worked in a company that built auxiliary power units and I could get up to speed again very quickly. I'd be happy to work on that with you and train in the two research assistants. APUs are equally relevant to jet aircraft and propeller propulsion aircraft.

ALEX: That's fine.… If you're prepared to do that, I'm sure I can recruit two fresh graduate assistants.

LEONARD: That sounds very good. What I suggest is that I recruit one assistant and you recruit one … we can work together on that … for interviews and so on … and that they are both paid from the Sprat and Whiteflea project. *[Alex is frowning again]* I'd just need a small budget to cover consumables for the testing programme …

ALEX: I'm afraid the APU is part of a JERC project.… You can work with us and we will give you acknowledgement on any papers that *we* produce based on the work. The two graduate assistants would be part of JERC and the APU project is being managed by Francis and myself.

The budget has to remain entirely under JERC control. We did a lot of work to negotiate getting that APU from Sprat and Whiteflea.… I expect we'll find some suitable graduate assistants within a matter of months.… If we need to, we can get the supervisory expertise from elsewhere within the consortium.

LEONARD: The way I see it, this could be a win-win situation for both of us.… It's just that … there would have to be a *something* in it for me as well.

ALEX: It's in your own hands Leonard. It's *you* who will have to decide if you want to play ball …

[The lights fade to black.]

Scene 6

Friday 24th September 2004

[Leonard's new office at the National Aviation Authority. Twelve months have elapsed. There is a large window at the rear with only a bright blue sky visible outside. Leonard's desk is at a diagonal angle. A neat computer monitor is situated to one side of the desk. ***LEONARD*** *is sitting behind the desk and is writing. In the sidewall at stage left there is a closed door. Between the door and Leonard's desk there is a round table with two chairs. The music 'Hear Me Fly' is heard in the background, played on a harmonica, and fades out during the early part of the dialogue. After a short while there is a knock at the door.]*

LEONARD: Come in. *[****ZEBEDEE*** *comes in.]* Ah Zebedee!

*[****LEONARD*** *walks over to* ***ZEBEDEE*** *and shakes his hand.]*

ZEBEDEE: Hello Leonard. I like your new office!

LEONARD: Have a seat Zebedee. *[Shows* ***ZEBEDEE*** *to a chair at the table and sits down himself.]* I was delighted to hear you were calling-in to see me. Congratulations again on the conferral of your PhD. I really enjoyed the occasion, but we hardly had a chance to talk.

ZEBEDEE: Thanks Leonard for all your help and support. You were the best supervisor, a dab hand.

LEONARD: That's a *real* compliment.

ZEBEDEE: I guess I had it in the bag before you left. You made a great choice in nominating Professor Will Burdock of PIT as my external examiner.

LEONARD: Will is one of the highest authorities in the field of advanced propeller propulsion. He has very high standards and I would not have proposed him if I wasn't sure that your work was up to those standards.

ZEBEDEE: Will Burdock was the right man alright! I was delighted to meet him at the viva and to find that he had such a deep understanding of my thesis and the work I had done.

LEONARD: Yes, it would have been hard for Alex to veto my recommendation for such a highly qualified and respected external examiner from PIT. You can be very proud of *your* achievement.

ZEBEDEE: Amelia was great too as the internal examiner. The PhD viva was such a contrast to the grilling I had from Alex at the one-year progress-report stage.

LEONARD: I learned a few things in my long years as an academic. Some of them might come in handy here at the National Aviation Authority.

ZEBEDEE: I think you took everyone at US by surprise when you announced you were leaving for a job with the NAA.

LEONARD: I suppose I did.

ZEBEDEE: You took Professor Villright by surprise too.

LEONARD: I guess so.

ZEBEDEE: I've worked on two further papers with him since the paper that we wrote with him last year. He had worried about you because, it seems, you hadn't been corresponding with him as you used to. He told me in an e-mail recently how delighted he was that you had been in touch with him again.

LEONARD: Yes, I know. I had turned down or even ignored various requests from Ivor to collaborate on research papers. He's a good man, but he can be very pushy and, for a time, I just didn't know how to deal with that.… It seems you may have continued where I left off.

ZEBEDEE: I've been learning quite a lot from Professor Villright and I have a few extra publications on my CV as well, thanks to his encouragement and collaboration. The people at Armend Airpower were impressed by the fact that I had published in some of the leading journals.

LEONARD: Yes, congratulations on getting the job with Armend! How are you finding it, working there?

ZEBEDEE: It's been quite easy up to now, but I have the impression that their expectations of me will increase as I get to know more about the business.

LEONARD: You're probably right there, but you're well able for the challenge.

ZEBEDEE: Perhaps you always wanted to work for the National Aviation Authority.

LEONARD: Actually, it's something I had never even considered. I expected that I would be staying at the University of Selfridge until retirement.

ZEBEDEE: How come, so?

LEONARD: I guess I wanted more than I had there.

ZEBEDEE: You're not greedy Leonard, and you're not unreasonable.

LEONARD: It was as though I needed double satisfaction, but it couldn't be. Maybe it was my mid-life crisis.

ZEBEDEE: What do you mean Leonard?

LEONARD: Quite suddenly I lost interest in being at US. That shocked me and surprised me and left me feeling helpless. I couldn't see any solution to the problem and I went through a difficult period.

ZEBEDEE: When was that?

LEONARD: Mainly since the Minneapolis International Compressor Engineering Conference.

ZEBEDEE: If you were having a difficult period, you kept it well under wraps, as I wasn't aware of it.

LEONARD: I got through that largely because of the support and patience of my family.

We never know how prepared we are for what life may throw at us. Sometimes we can fly through the greatest challenges and sometimes a very little thing can trip us up—excuse the mixed metaphor and the cliché.

ZEBEDEE: I know what you mean, Leonard. It's like hitting an air pocket at just the wrong moment.

LEONARD: Zebedee, I hope it never happens, but if you ever feel really, really low and can see no way forward, hold on there. Hold on by the minute, by the hour, by the day, by the month … whatever time it takes. Hold on there at rock bottom and keep holding on until it begins to pass. Hold on through every, single, wave. Go through it for us … all the people who understand in some way … who care, but can't express or communicate that caring.

ZEBEDEE: *[Pause]* Message received and understood.

LEONARD: How did JERCS-oh-four-work out?

ZEBEDEE: It went very well! Francis and Amelia did most of the organizational work for it. At the end of the week Alex announced that there would be a new Bowring Engineering Laboratory for Jet Aircraft Research, BELJAR, and that Bowring were donating ten million dollars for it.

LEONARD: Alex did well; I have to hand it to him!

ZEBEDEE: Not only that, but through a Professor Le Boeuf of ENCIRC in France, who is now a member of the JERC consortium, Airbush are putting in four million euro for extra instrumentation.

LEONARD: Bowring and Airbush in one lab called BELJAR. That's just amazing!—Bob Winstroke and the high flyers at Selfridge Golf Club must be very envious of Alex.

ZEBEDEE: Well, it is a world-class achievement!

LEONARD: Yes, we can feel very proud of JERC.

ZEBEDEE: Francis did well too. Airmyleon has established a new chair of Jet Engine Technologies at US and he got it.

LEONARD: I guess Francis earned it with all his work for JERC over the years.

ZEBEDEE: So, is that the end of APPEAL?

LEONARD: I'm afraid so at the University of Selfridge.

ZEBEDEE: The end of APPEAL!

LEONARD: … but Lou Breliot of Quebec University, who ran the APPEAL symposium we attended in Montreal last Autumn, has taken the helm.

ZEBEDEE: And how are you getting on in *your* new job? Have you settled in?

LEONARD: I'm doing fine. I've been here for seven months now. There are some big issues that need to be addressed and, although I'm not going to change the world, I'm making a contribution.

ZEBEDEE: But do you like it?

LEONARD: Yes. There are plenty of things that I like about it. The people are nice here.

I work from 8:45 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening, with an hour for lunch. I have thirty-one days of annual leave, plus public holidays and a few privilege days at Christmas—far more than I ever took at the University of Selfridge.

ZEBEDEE: Do you miss US and the Aeronautical Engineering Department?

LEONARD: Yes I do.

ZEBEDEE: Perhaps you felt included-out and you couldn't be yourself.

LEONARD: Perhaps.

ZEBEDEE: Sometimes it felt like that for the non-JERC grad students. The JERC grad students could be rather condensending *[sic]*.

LEONARD: 'Con - den - sending' ... that's a new word ... 'Condescending' is the usual word, but yours comes from 'condense' and 'ending' ... *[distractedly]* making small ... *[with a brief ambiguous smile]* I'm rambling.… How's the fishing going?

ZEBEDEE: Great! I've been away on a few weekends recently. I love it.

LEONARD: You have patience and perseverance, Zebedee. That's what gives you the edge.

ZEBEDEE: I try to get inside the minds of the fish and to understand their needs … and their fears.

LEONARD: Well *that* will certainly give you the edge … in your career.

ZEBEDEE: Some fish swim in shoals for support or protection and some, like us, seek out new waters on our own. That's OK isn't it?

LEONARD: It sure is! We don't have to swim with basking sharks if we don't want to … or fly with them either!

ZEBEDEE: So what do you do with all your spare time?

LEONARD: I'm doing a few things I never did before. For example, I'm giving an evening class in harmonica playing in my local community college. I'm enjoying that and we have some good fun.

ZEBEDEE: Sounds great!

LEONARD: A bit hard on the ears at times, but they're all making progress.

ZEBEDEE: Well, I'd better get going. I have a meeting to go to about a new engine.

LEONARD: *[As they both get up]* Thanks for calling-in Zebedee.

ZEBEDEE: I'm very proud to have been your student Leonard … and to be an aluminus *[sic]* of US.

LEONARD: It has been my pleasure and an honour … and the word is 'alumnus.'

ZEBEDEE: *[Mockingly]* You're *still* teaching me!

LEONARD: *[Smiling]* It's two-way. We're both *still* learning and that's important. *[The music 'Hear Me Fly' fades in, played on a harmonica.]* I hope you'll keep in touch.

ZEBEDEE: Yes indeed. I have to fly!

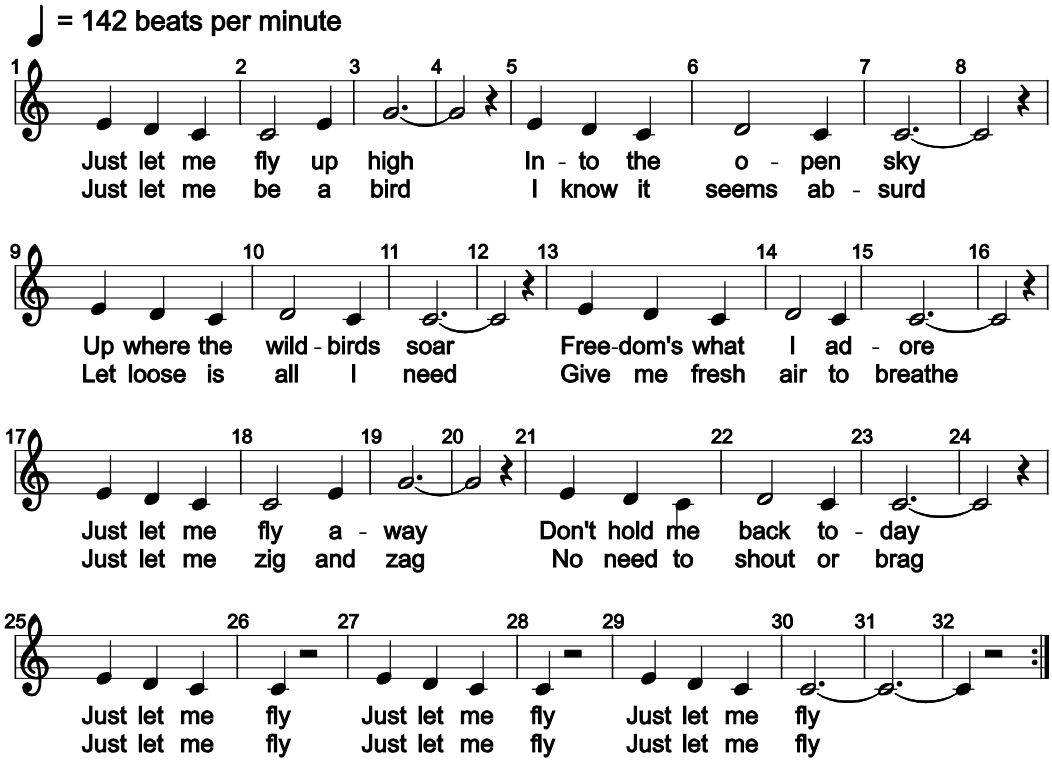
*[**LEONARD** and **ZEBEDEE** continue to say farewell and shake hands, inaudibly. **LEONARD** lets **ZEBEDEE** out and the lights fade to black as the music plays out or fades out.]*

THE END

Incidental Music

Just Let Me Fly

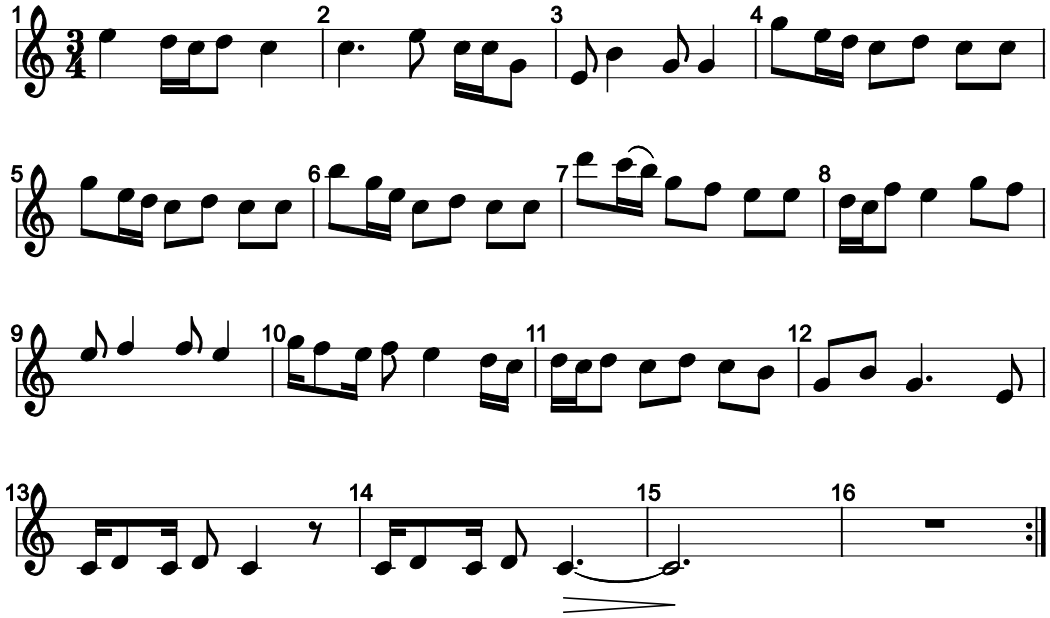
Music and lyrics by Jim McGovern



Hear Me Fly

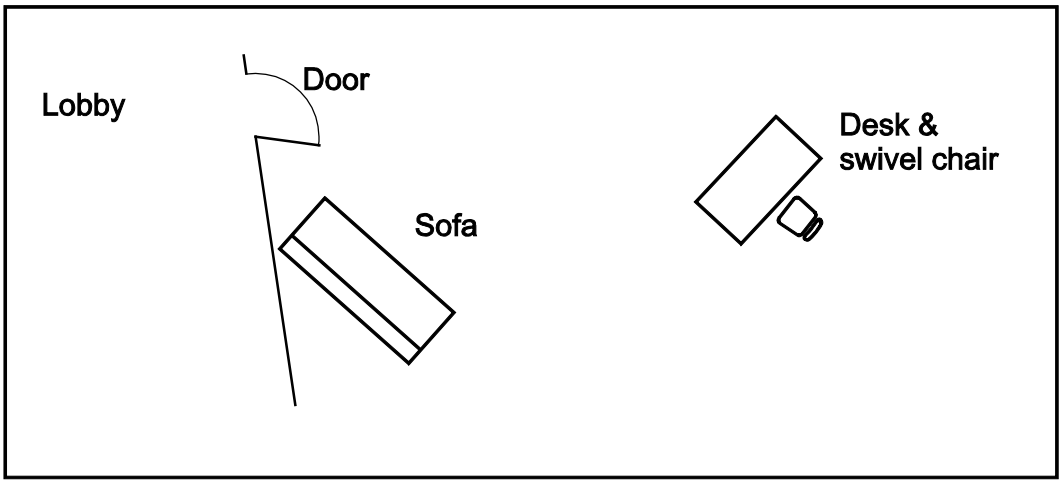
Music by Jim McGovern

♩ = 80 beats per minute



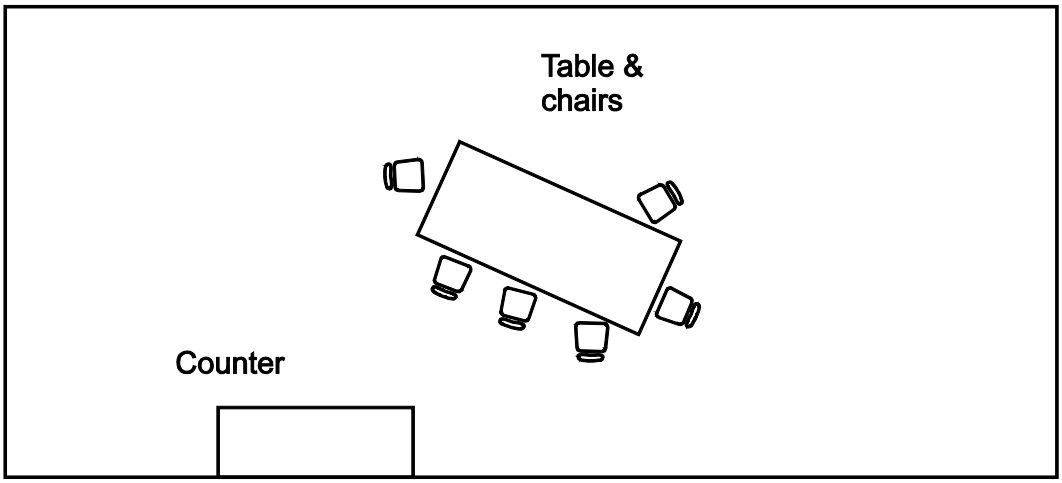
Stage Plans

Front of House



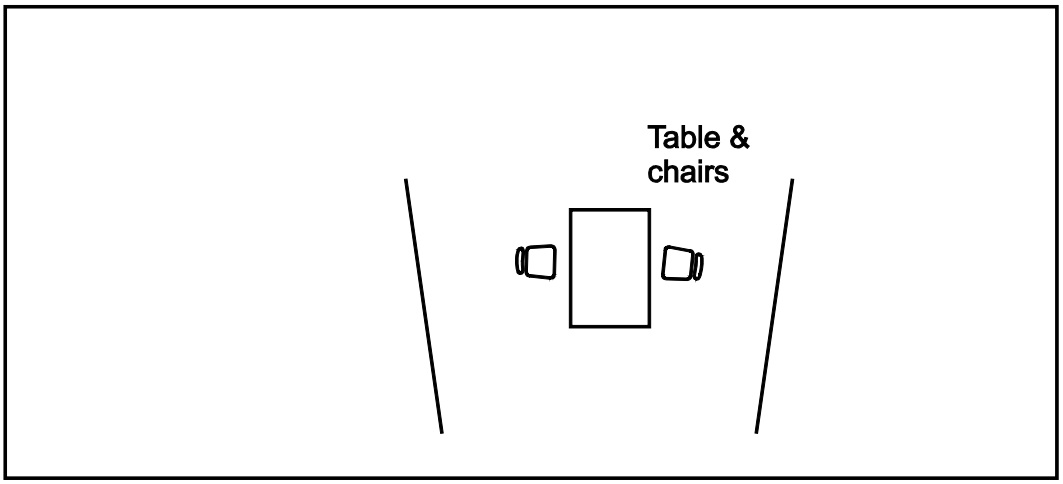
I-1 Prof. Alex Graybell's office

Front of House



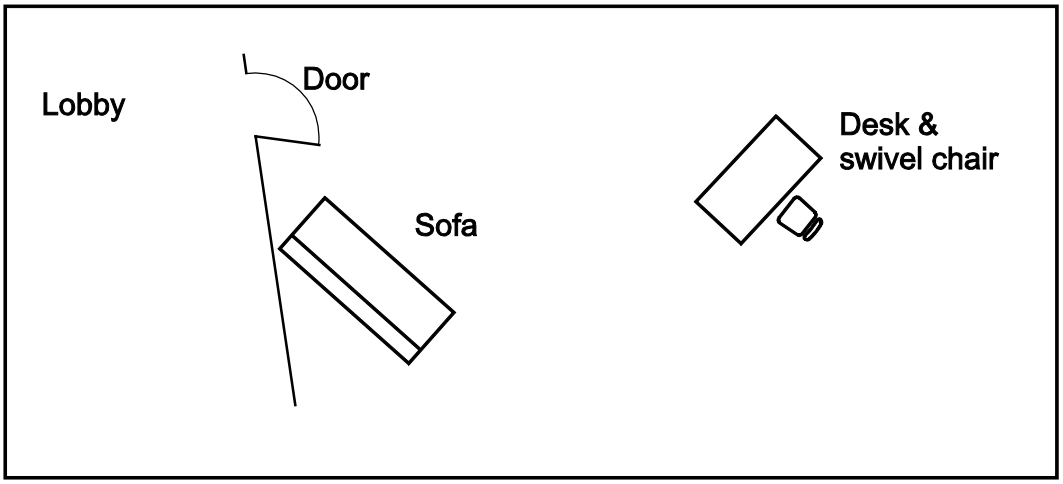
I-2 Departmental staff common room

Front of House



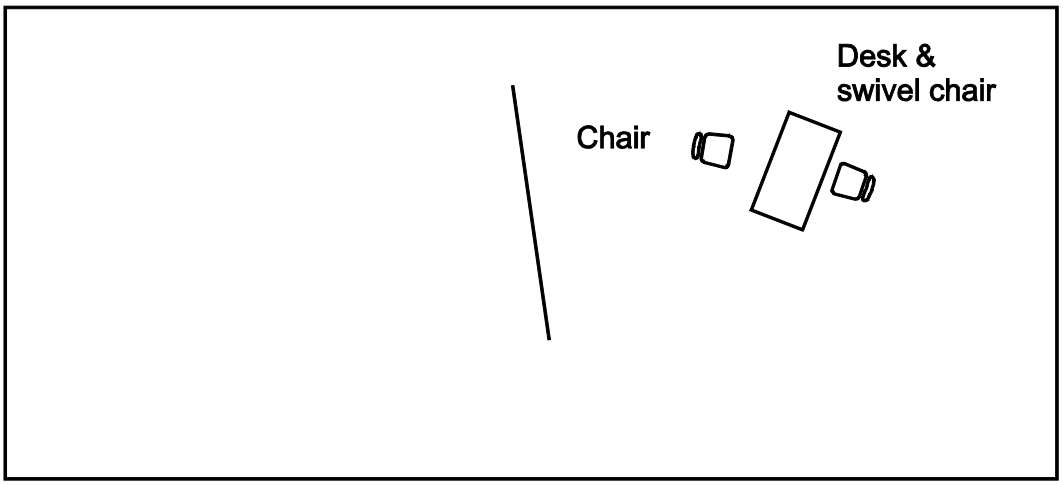
I-3 A niche in a university restaurant

Front of House



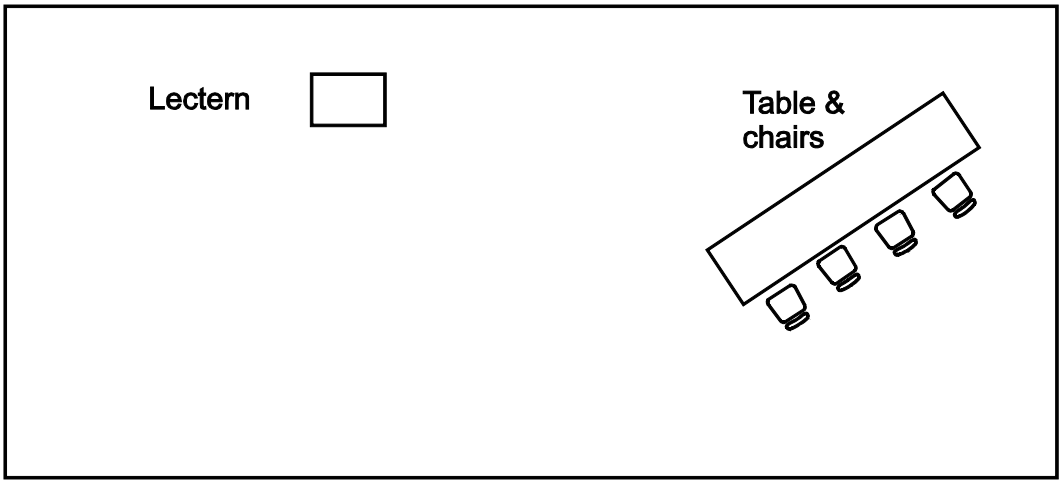
II-1 Prof. Alex Graybell's office

Front of House



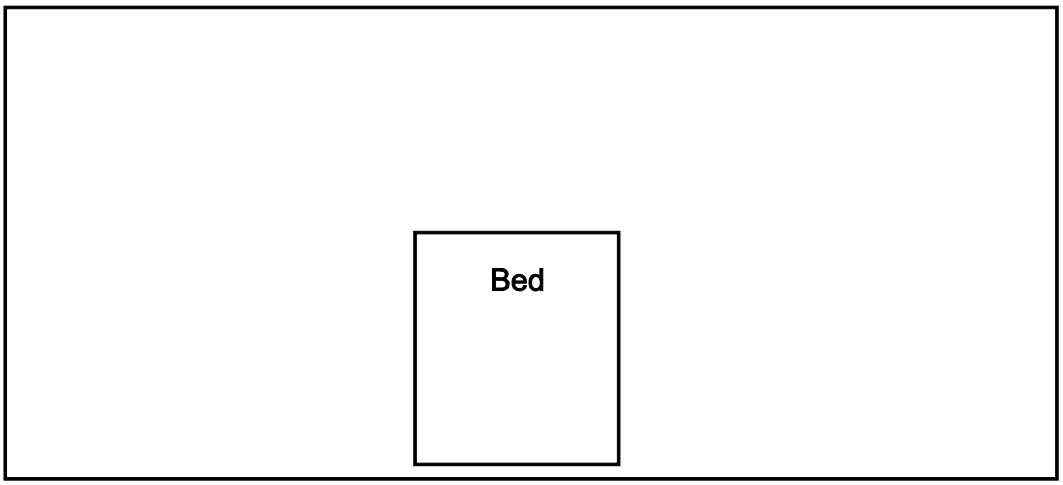
II-2 Leonard's office

Front of House



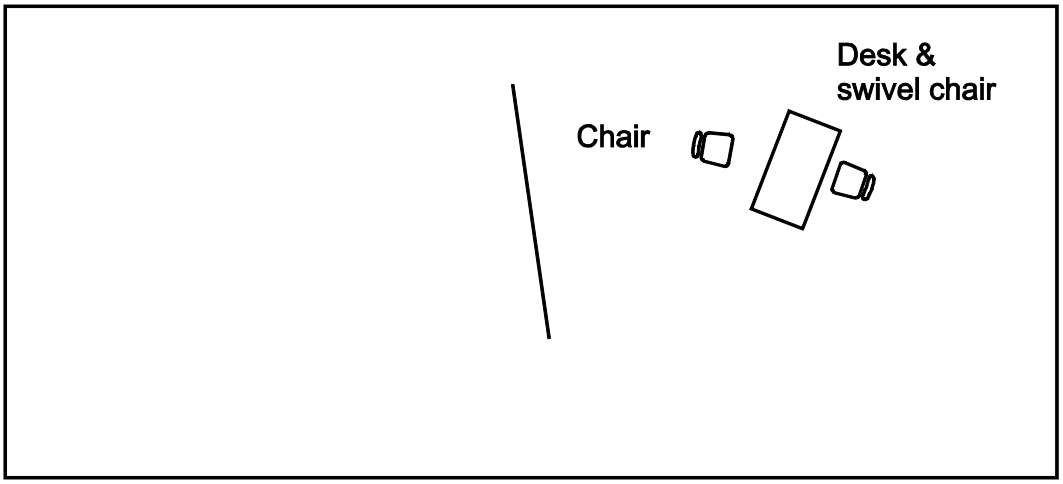
II-3 Front area of a lecture theatre

Front of House



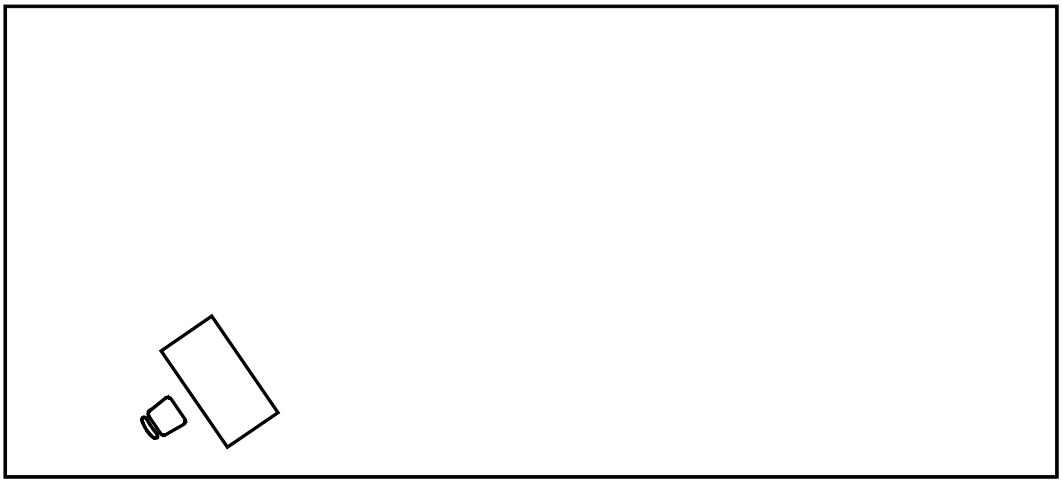
II-4 Leonard and Anne's bedroom

Front of House



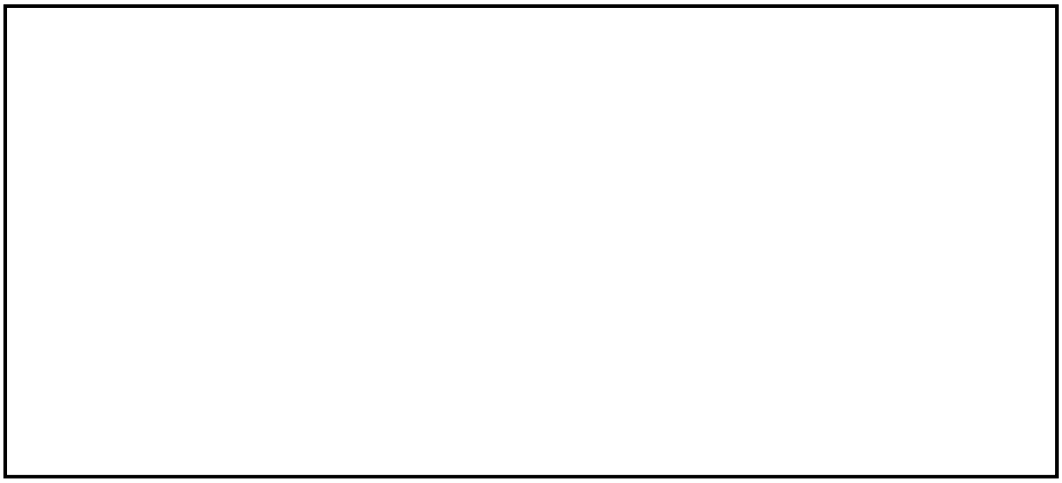
II-5 Leonard's office

Front of House



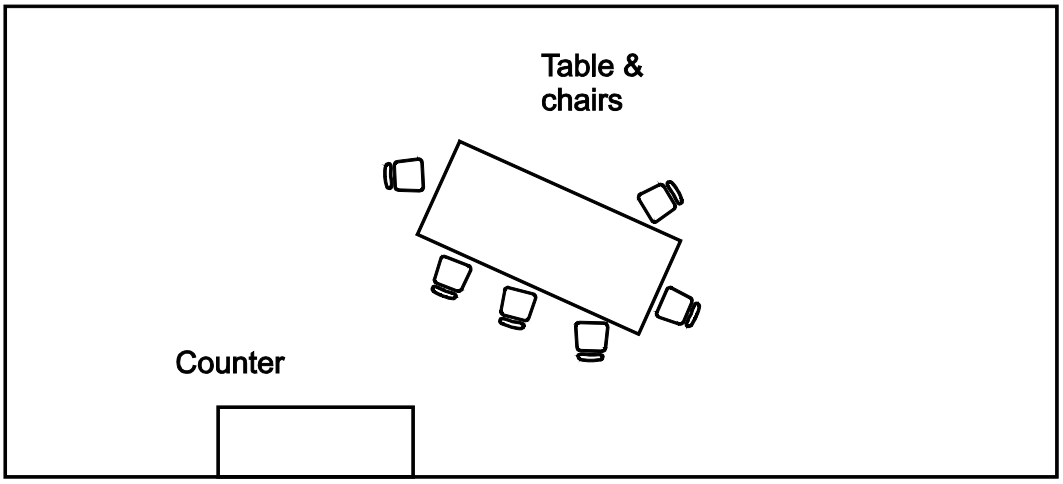
II-6 Registration area

Front of House



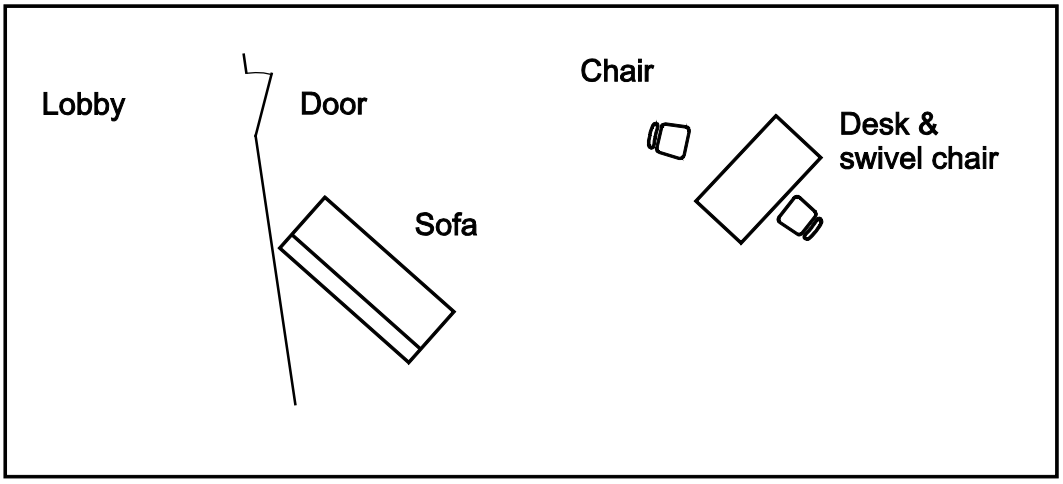
II-7 Lobby

Front of House



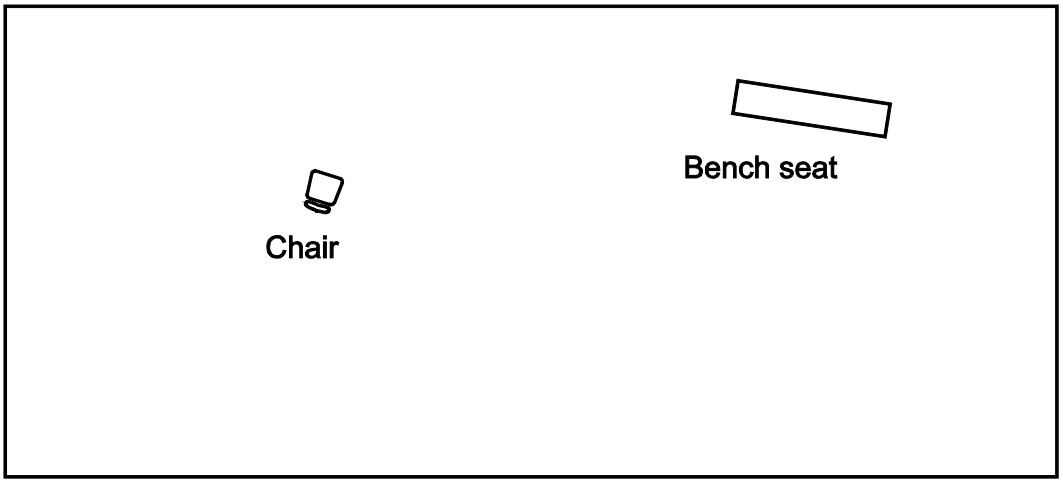
III-1 Departmental staff common room

Front of House



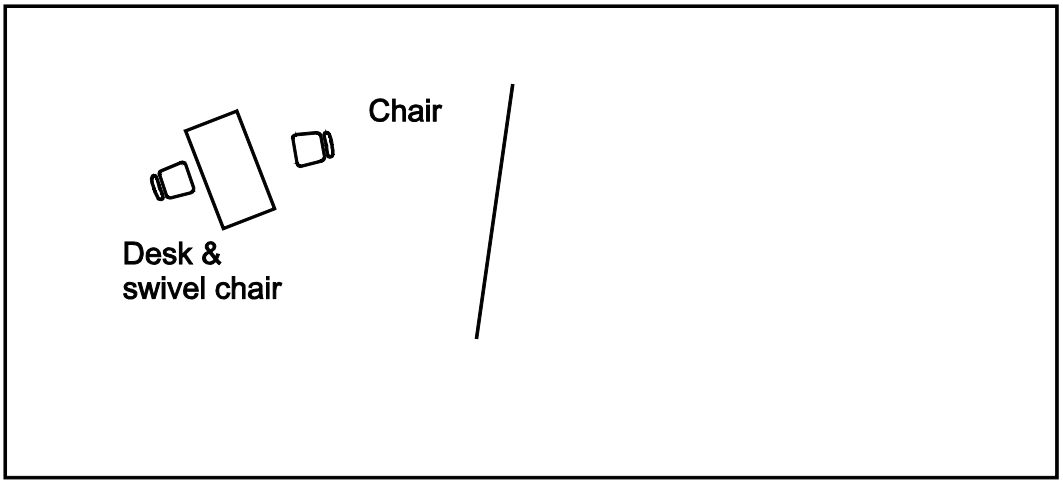
III-2 Prof. Alex Graybell's office

Front of House



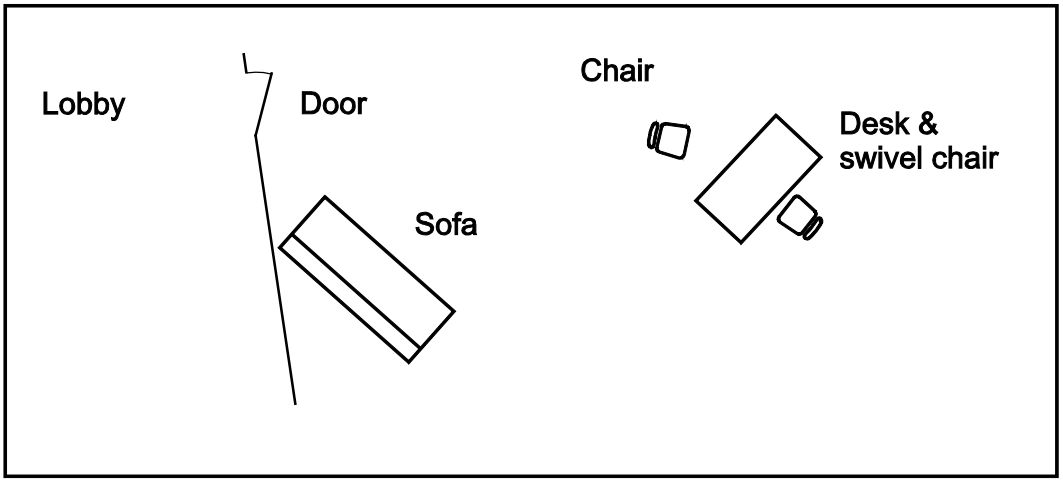
III-3 Leonard's house, then a park

Front of House



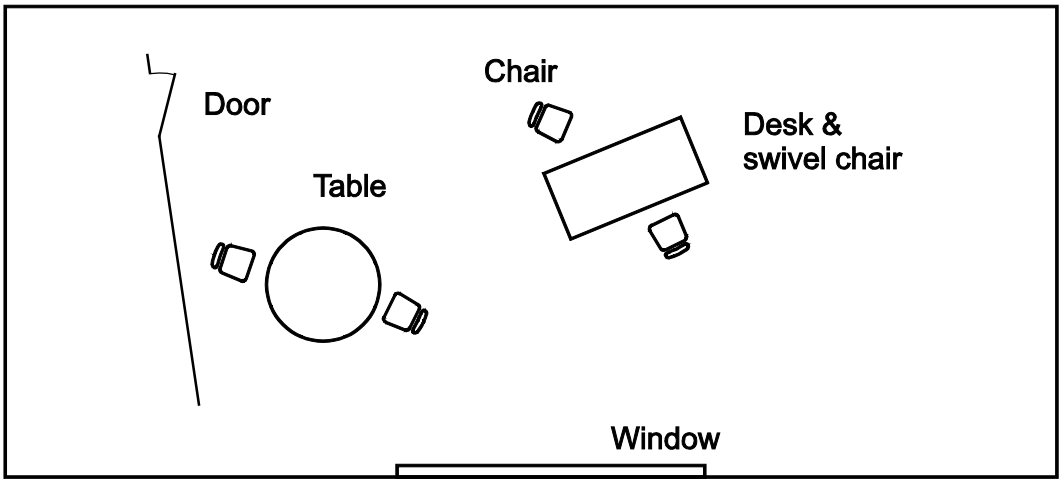
III-4 Amelia's office

Front of House



III-5 Prof. Alex Graybell's office

Front of House



III-6 Leonard's new office at the National Aviation Authority

Casting Requirements

Roles

	Count	M	F	Either
Main Characters Leonard, Alex, Zebedee, Ivor, Amelia, Noel, Isabelle, Tommy	8	6	2	
Supporting Characters Larry, Anne, Official, Francis, Robert, Andy	6	4	1	1
Minor Characters Le Boeuf, Receptionist, Eugene, Rosemary, Student	5	2	1	2
Extras Person 1, Person 2	2			2
	21	12	4	5

Minimum Casting Requirement

	Count
Main Roles	8
Supporting Actors (playing 13 roles)	5
	13