

Cabin Pressure

Zachary M. Alley

CHARACTERS

Donovan, 25

Timothy, 22

TIME

Present, midafternoon

PLACE

Baggage claim area in airport

As lights come up, DONOVAN and TIMOTHY are in chauffeur suits sitting next to each other. People shuffle through the busy area eager to get their bags and be on their way. DONOVAN is sitting up straight and observing the bystanders with interest. TIMOTHY sits hunched over, staring at his phone and texting.

DONOVAN

Timmy.

There is no immediate response.

Hey Timmy.

(waits a few moments, then grabs the phone out of TIMMY's hand)

TIMOTHY

What?! Give that back. What's so important?

DONOVAN

I should be asking you the same thing. This is ridiculous. Who the hell have you been texting this entire time?

TIMOTHY

Kara.

DONOVAN

Kara?

TIMOTHY

Yeah. My girlfriend.

DONOVAN

The same one as before?

TIMOTHY

Yeah. Now will you give me my phone back?

DONOVAN

No. Why don't you just call her?

TIMOTHY

I like texting.

DONOVAN

Isn't it easier to just talk to her? Timmy, your hands are the size of Cocker Spaniels. With more hair. Texting on that little phone has to be a struggle.

TIMOTHY

It isn't. Besides, I like texting more than talking most of the time. Let's me think about what I want to say instead of blurt out whatever pops in my head. There's not as much pressure.

DONOVAN

Pressure is important. It's what shapes you. Makes you who you are. Pressure squeezes us and packs all the soft bits into one solid object. A sturdy rock. People who never had any pressure in their lives are weak. They squirm when you squeeze them. Mash in your hands. Squeeze someone who has dealt with a lot of pressure and they won't budge. You'll just be squeezing until your hands hurt. That's why people like us hold steady. Other people... they're weak Timmy. That's why it's up to us to squeeze them. Harden them up bit by bit.

TIMOTHY

Can I have my phone back?

DONOVAN

You're hopeless. Listen to me and you might learn a thing or two. Now can't you do something besides sitting there on your phone?

TIMOTHY

Like what? We're waiting to pick someone up. Why can't I be on the phone if I'm just waiting? What do you want me to do? Sit here and stare at people like you do? That's boring. And really creepy.

DONOVAN

You're mistaken. Well, maybe not about the creepy part. It can be weird, but it's far from boring. People watching is one of the most exciting things you can do.

TIMOTHY

Yeah. I'm sure staring at people is a blast. Way better than talking to my girlfriend.

DONOVAN

You were texting. Not talking. Look at that family over there.
(gestures toward the family at baggage claim)

TIMOTHY

What's so exciting about them?

DONOVAN

What do you think their story is?

TIMOTHY

What are you talking about?

DONOVAN

Their story. People are easy to figure out if you pay attention. Once you have them figured out, they're all yours. Now look at that kid. Tell me that isn't the smuggest little punk you've ever seen in your life?

TIMOTHY

Looks like a kid to me.

DONOVAN

Really look, Timmy. What do you think about that kid?

TIMOTHY

I guess you're kinda right. He seems sort of bratty.

DONOVAN

Of course I am. Now look at the way that guy looks at the kid. That man hates that little brat. But it is a defeated look. He hates him, but can't do anything about it. For one, he has to stay cool with the kid to keep getting busy with the hot young mom. The kid knows that. Just maybe not on that intimate of a level. He knows something else too. I bet he caught dear old stepdad doing something he shouldn't. Probably another broad. Maybe talking bad about his mom. Or maybe the dude is into some really messed up stuff. That kid has something on the poor man, and he is milking it. That's what I'm telling you Timmy. That kid has the old guy figured out, and now he can do what he wants. He just applies the right amount of pressure. Too much and he loses the guy and has to hope it isn't long before his mom finds another rich sap. Too little and he will lose his dominance. How do you think he got those headphones? What six-year-old needs \$500 headphones to listen to Justin Bieber? Those are blackmail headphones. Same as that kid's fancy iPad. Bribes, I tell ya.

TIMOTHY

Really? How do you know that?

DONOVAN

I don't, Timmy. That's the beauty of people watching. You observe. You deduce.

TIMOTHY

You what?

DONOVAN

The hell do they teach you in those college classes? I didn't finish high school. You're

supposed to be expanding my vocabulary, my injudicious friend.

TIMOTHY

What?

DONOVAN

Exactly. Now get your head together. Says on the arrivals that our passenger just touched down.

TIMOTHY

Good. Now can I get my phone back?

DONOVAN

Of course, Timmy.

(hands phone to TIMOTHY)

You really like this girl, huh?

TIMOTHY

Well...yeah.

(turns head away from DONOVAN)

I love her.

DONOVAN

Have you told her?

TIMOTHY

(continues looking away and smiles, slightly embarrassed)

Yeah. She knows.

DONOVAN

Good. That's brave of you kid. Don't ever be afraid to tell people what you think. If you hate someone's guts, let him know. More importantly, if you love someone you make sure she doesn't forget it. You're good to her, yeah?

TIMOTHY

I try. I mean, I'm strapped on cash, but I take her out when I can. We ate at Marino's the other night. Got wine and everything.

DONOVAN

Excellent. She's a lucky girl. And you're a lucky guy to find someone willing to put up with your dumb self.

TIMOTHY

I'm not dumb, Don. I'm not good at tricking people like you, but I'm plenty smart about other things.

DONOVAN

I know Timmy. I was giving you trouble. If you were dumb I wouldn't bring you along for these jobs. So tell me more about Kara. Anything serious in your future?

TIMOTHY

Well...

(looks down at phone and fiddles with it)

Yeah. Kinda. I mean not anytime soon because of the money, like I said, but I've been saving up. I think I wanna marry her.

DONOVAN

My little Timmy? A married man? What happened to the bar hopping stud who used to bring home a different dame every weekend? You used to be a master swordsman.

TIMOTHY

I wasn't like that. Not on purpose. And I dunno. Kara is different.

DONOVAN

I'm just messing with you. And it sounds like you really have it for this girl. Too bad you don't have enough to save up for a ring. That's serious cheese you know, if you want to impress her. And you aren't going to be able to afford your own place with her either. You need to be a breadwinner, Timmy. School might get you there eventually, but if Kara is a worthwhile girl there's going to be other guys going after her. Not some neighborhood boys like us. Guys with money. Smarts. People who can provide for a lady.

TIMOTHY

I'm getting there. It just takes time. With school and dad not letting me get another job outside the shop and all. She wants to get out of the city like me. Get a nice little place together. Maybe open up a business of my own in a small town once I finish my business classes. The whole deal. That's gonna be us. And Kara won't leave me. She isn't like that.

She loves me and doesn't care about that stuff. She isn't like the girls you go after.

DONOVAN

Easy tiger. I only mate with the classiest of women. Ask your sister.

TIMOTHY

Shut up. You know, I'll bust your face if you start that talk again.

DONOVAN

Simmer down, buddy. You know I have nothing but respect for your sister and her womanly figure. Plus, I have some good news for you. What if I told you that we can take away a good haul from this job? Enough to get Kara a nice rock and still have a little stash to help you stay on your feet in a starter place outside the city. At least pay for your classes. This one job is going to fast-track you, kid. That faraway dream you have with your lady? That can be next week.

TIMOTHY

No. I told you I'm not doing that stuff anymore. You told me this was honest work.

(stands up)

I'll leave right now. I mean it.

DONOVAN

Relax. Stop making a damn scene. Look, this is easy. Real easy. And not some petty grab. I'm talking twenty large. For each of us.

TIMOTHY

No way. I'm not doing it. You always trick me into this stuff, but not this time. You know I'm keeping my nose clean now.

DONOVAN

It's too late for that, Timmy. In minutes the spoiled daughter of some big shot is going to walk down here chatting into her phone and barely glancing at us through sunglasses that cost more than your car. I'm going to hold a sign that says her name. You're going to get her designer luggage. We're going to the limo. You're driving us to the bank. I've called ahead and they have forty grand available for our guest to withdraw. I'm going to walk her in the bank, make sure she calmly gets the cash, and then take her back to the car. We're going to take the money off her hands and drop her off somewhere to buy us time. No one gets hurt. Daddy will buy her a few cars or purses to make up for her traumatic experience.

You get to buy a ring so big that Kara won't be able to win a fight with you for years. No hassle. Easy money.

TIMOTHY

I don't know. I'm not kidnapping someone. Not some innocent girl. What if we get caught? What if something bad happens?

DONOVAN

That's why I brought you. So nothing goes wrong. You have a good head on your shoulders and know how to handle yourself. Keep your shades and hat on and she won't be able to I.D. you. You just have to drive anyway.

TIMOTHY

(pauses a moment)

No. No, I'm not doing it.

DONOVAN

I'm going through with this. With or without you. You have about two minutes to make up your mind. Get twenty grand and set yourself up nicely for that cozy future you want with your blushing bride by doing one last job. Or let your friend, practically your brother, me, who has been taking care of you since we were kids, do this alone and hope for the best.

TIMOTHY

This isn't fair! You can't trap me like this! I didn't ask for this. I made a promise to myself. I wasn't doing this shit anymore. I'm trying to be an honest man and grow up. You should try it, too! Get serious and stop messing around with this stuff. Do something with yourself.

Settle down. Find something to live for instead of getting cash from one job to set you up for the next one. If this is what you want to do with your life, fine. Leave me out of it, Donovan. I mean it.

DONOVAN

(Stands up and gets in TIMOTHY'S face. After a tense moment, he sits down with a sigh of defeat.)

You're right. Seriously kid...you're right. I don't have a Kara. I don't have a reason to do this differently. You made a promise to yourself, and that's damn important. You may be in a tough spot, but you have your word. And if that's all you have it's still better than most. We'll just help the girl with her luggage and drop her off. I mean it. I hope Kara does wait for you. I really hope you're right about her. She is lucky to have a guy like you. This money...that's the easy way out. You always were stubborn. Keep your nose to the grind and eventually you'll get enough money, or finish your school, or catch a lucky break. All these years of spinning your tires and you still won't take the short cut. You're a good kid.

That may not amount to much now, but it has to count for something.

TIMOTHY

Thanks. That means a lot.

(pauses for a moment while thinking)

You really think I'll make it? That I'll get out and make a good life for Kara?

DONOVAN

Honestly Timmy...I don't know. I'm not gonna lie, it's hard. A lot harder than you think. That's why so many guys like us get stuck here. Most people don't get an opportunity to break out. Here I am setting up an easy way out, but it's for the wrong reasons. Something will work out for you, I'm sure. It just might take a while. Don't give up though. You've waited this long. What's a few more years?

TIMOTHY

Years? Yeah. Yeah, I've waited awhile. And I guess it will be awhile longer. But I'll get there eventually, right?

DONOVAN

I hope so, Timmy. You deserve it. You got a long journey ahead of you, bud.

(DONOVAN looks over and straightens his jacket while standing up.)

Well, there's our girl. Time to give this honest work thing a shot.

TIMOTHY

Hey, Don?

DONOVAN

Yeah, Timmy?

TIMOTHY

Can we really get twenty each from this? And you promise nothing happens to the girl?

(DONOVAN smiles at TIMOTHY.)

(Blackout)