

PUMPKIN
By Nate Eppler

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CHARACTERS

BECKY, a passenger on a crashing plane

the FLIGHT ATTENDANT

a HUSBAND

a WIFE

a somewhat ANGRY LADY from the back of the plane

a NICE LADY mostly reading a magazine

a BLOGGER

a TWEETER

and a Pumpkin

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A plane at cruising altitude. BECKY, a HUSBAND, a WIFE, a NICE LADY, a BLOGGER, and a TWEETER. Also, there is a pumpkin. Then we hear that 'Oh shit this plane is going down' noise. Because this plane is going down. A FLIGHT ATTENDANT enters.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I don't want to alarm anyone, but is there a pilot on board?

The general gasps and low-level freak out that go along with that kind of question from a flight attendant.

BECKY

What happened to the pilot?

HUSBAND

I'm not a pilot!

BLOGGER

I'm not either! I'm a journalist!

WIFE

Is the pilot okay, honey?

HUSBAND

Of course not honey, obviously the pilot is dead or something terrible, the flight attendant's not gonna come in and ask us is there a pilot if the pilot is fine!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(to BECKY) Ma'am are you a pilot?

BECKY

No, I'm not a pilot-

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Is there a pilot on board?

TWEETER

Well I don't see a pilot but this guy's a pumpkin.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Great! Crisis averted, everyone. This pumpkin is going to fly our plane.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT picks up the pumpkin.

BECKY

Wait-

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Thank you for your attention. Please enjoy the remainder of your flight.

BECKY

Stop - What are you doing with that pumpkin?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm taking him to the cockpit.

BECKY

Why?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ma'am? Ma'am? Ma'am? This plane isn't going to fly itself, ma'am.

BECKY

You're giving the controls to this pumpkin?

HUSBAND

Hey what's your problem, lady? It's like this lady doesn't want to see this pumpkin succeed.

WIFE

Honey, honey, honey, why doesn't she want to see this pumpkin succeed?

HUSBAND

She *wants* us to crash.

BECKY

No I want us to *not* crash, that's why-

HUSBAND

Then let this pumpkin get to work. This is the pumpkin we picked to get the job done.

BECKY

When did we pick?

HUSBAND

SORE LOSER. YOU'RE A SORE LOSER.

WIFE

She's a sore loser, honey.

BECKY

Did you pick this pumpkin?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

What pumpkin?

BECKY

That pumpkin, the pumpkin you're holding!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ma'am, I'm trying to work here. Do you think I don't have responsibilities? I'm in charge of the cabin and the lavatory I don't really concern myself with what happens in the cockpit.

BECKY

You're on a plane that is crashing.

HUSBAND

I want to say something can I say something I want to say something: Now that we've picked this pumpkin I want to give this pumpkin the benefit of the doubt.

His WIFE applauds

BECKY

That pumpkin is a pumpkin.

HUSBAND

I understand why you'd say that but where you see "a pumpkin" I see a devil-may-care outsider who might just be crazy enough to get the job done. Are "pilots" with all of their "specialized knowledge" and "ability to fly and land planes" the only people allowed at the controls? I hope not. That's not the kind of plane I want to die in. So why *not* this pumpkin? Just because nobody's tried it before doesn't mean it won't work.

WIFE

Somebody has to do that job! Is he a pumpkin, yes, obviously, but I voted for him *in spite* of that not *because* of it! No one would vote for just *any* pumpkin, who would vote for a random pumpkin, no one, obviously, so, I voted for *this* pumpkin, see? It's the simplest thing in the world.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT puts a little pilot hat on the pumpkin.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Here we go. Now he looks like a pilot. That makes you feel better right?

BECKY

It's a pumpkin. How did we end up with a pumpkin flying this plane?

BLOGGER

Well, okay, so, she pointed out the pumpkin.

TWEETER

Yeah but it was like an ironic reflex like *Maybe this pumpkin is a pilot* when obviously this pumpkin is a pumpkin. I was enjoying the dissonance of that. I mean look, he's a pumpkin. I mean yes they put that little hat on him or whatever but I still see a pumpkin.

HUSBAND

HE'S A PILOT.

BECKY

What do you do?

TWEETER

I tweet professionally. I'm internet famous. It's a whole thing.

BLOGGER

I'm a journalist.

TWEETER

He's a blogger.

BLOGGER

It's a kind of journalist.

TWEETER

It's not. Hashtag sorrynotsorry.

BECKY

Do you want to say something here?

NICE LADY

No.

BLOGGER

I'm a journalist.

NICE LADY

I'm a pilot.

TWEETER

Hashtag plottwist.

BECKY

You're a pilot! Why didn't you say anything before?

NICE LADY

They're not gonna let me fly this plane.

BECKY

Yes they are hey hey hey she's a pilot.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Who is?

BECKY

Her.

HUSBAND

Okay yeah but she's, and I could be wrong here, but I think that she's an African-American lady.

WIFE

Oh gosh look at that yeah she definitely is. I don't usually see color but now that you mention it.

HUSBAND

I mean, I'm not racist but, when you think of pilot do you think of a black lady? Like I'm going to say pilot and then you tell me who popped into your head. *Pilot*. Was it a black lady?

WIFE

No.

NICE LADY

I told you.

WIFE

If a thing doesn't look like I see it in my head, sometimes I can't see it at all.

The NICE LADY goes back to reading her magazine. A somewhat ANGRY LADY appears from the back of the plane.

ANGRY LADY

Oh shit! Here she is! I suppose you forgot about the back of the plane! Why am I not surprised? We are not second class citizens! We are just waiting for the opportunity to claw our way into first class seats! Although it is much harder to save up for those seats since the mannequin factory is down to two shifts and I no longer have my humble yet fulfilling job providing me with a steady stream of cash. I am not a stereotype. I am part of an area of this plane that is routinely double-reverse logjammed by the fat cats in the cockpit and I am glad that we got us a pumpkin pilot now! Take that first class! See how it feels! I'm from the back, 100%! 100% back of the plane! You think I care if first class goes down in flames?

NICE LADY

In a plane crash, first class and coach land at the same time.

ANGRY LADY

Okay, that is a fair point and one I had not considered until this exact moment. But you have to understand for a long time there all I was doing was working third shift in a very disorienting mannequin factory frequently scared to death that the mannequins would come to life overnight.

TWEETER

Hashtag Today's Special.

ANGRY LADY

I've been listening to like kind of a lot of weird radio shows and my head is filled with a bunch of confusing conspiracy theories and also we don't got peanuts back there or nothing really, so. I'm like, iron deprived *at least* and mad as hell about it!

The WIFE applauds.

WIFE

Thank you for your service.

HUSBAND

No, honey, that's not- No-

WIFE

Oh-

ANGRY LADY

I'm not talking for clapping ma'am. Ya'll ain't seen the last of me. **THE BACK OF THE PLANE REMEMBERS.**

ANGRY LADY exits into the back.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Okay so I would like to remind everyone that although the crisis has been averted because of this heroic pumpkin pilot, the fasten seatbelt sign is still illuminated. So let's stay in our seats unless there is an emergency.

BECKY

This is an emergency! The plane is still crashing!

WIFE

UGHHH! I am so tired of hearing about this crashing plane! Yes! The plane is crashing, yes we're all on it, yes the ground is hurtling towards us at hundreds of miles an hour, yes our bodies will be turned to bloody pulp by the impact of the crash, or we'll be impaled by the twisted metal wreckage, or we'll be burned to death in the ensuing fire, or we'll all just die from fear, like

WIFE cont.

explode, but from fear, we know all that, yes! Yes, we're all going to die! Can we stop talking about it because UGHHH. The pumpkin is flying the plane now I think we can all agree that it's time for this plane to heal.

BECKY

It is a pumpkin.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Okay, let's take some time to unwind some the things I'm hearing. Fake news. Fake news. This is fake news. This is unverifiable fake news and unfair propaganda. He's not going to fly the plane by himself. Did you think we were going to let the pumpkin fly the plane all by himself?

BECKY

Yes I thought that everyone thought that.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Of course he's not going to fly the plane by himself. That's absurd. Do you know how many knobs and gizmos are in a cockpit? This pumpkin doesn't even have hands.

TWEETER

Hashtag pumpkin hands.

BECKY

He doesn't have hands because he's a pumpkin.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yes, exactly. So this pumpkin is going to have all the help he needs to land this plane safely. That's why this pumpkin has hired this lamp to navigate.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT holds up a lamp.

BECKY

What are you doing?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm introducing the plane to their navigator. I think we can all breathe a sigh of relief.

BECKY

THAT IS A LAMP.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I KNOW. This is a deeply divided plane, but I think we can all agree this is a lamp.

WIFE

She's right honey, that is a lamp.

I'm so glad that lamp is here.

HUSBAND

That lamp makes me feel better.

WIFE

Why is there a lamp in a plane?

BECKY

We can't fly in the dark, lady!

HUSBAND

We wouldn't be able to see where we're going!

WIFE

It is a lamp. Would you let a lamp drive a car?

BECKY

Ooh that's a good point. I don't know that I would let a lamp drive a car.

HUSBAND

We're not in a car, honey, we're in a plane.

WIFE

Oh, that's right we are in a plane.

HUSBAND

Ha! She doesn't even know she's on a plane!

BLOGGER

Whose side are you on?

BECKY

No one's. I'm a journalist.

BLOGGER

You see what's happening, right?

BECKY

Yeah, there's a, it's the pumpkin thing.

BLOGGER

Yes. The pumpkin thing. Are you going to do something about it?

BECKY

BLOGGER

Do you think I should? Do you think it's my responsibility as the Fourth Estate to seek out the truth, speak out about injustice, and defend the national interest instead of transmitting information pertaining to a narrow spectrum determined by the corporate class that pays for the machinery?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh my God the Reichstag's on fire! Wait no sorry I mean the lavatory's on fire. Why did I say *Reichstag*? That's a Freudian slip worth Googling later and unpacking on the car ride home.

WIFE

Is something on fire?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Wait- Nope- It's out now. Crisis averted.

WIFE

Thank you, pumpkin!

HUSBAND

If it weren't for the pumpkin the whole plane would have burned down. Now nothing bad can happen to us!

BECKY

Other than the plane is crashing and the pilot is still a pumpkin.

NICE LADY

This plane was crashing before that pumpkin got here. Let's not forget that part, okay?

Everybody looks at the NICE LADY.

NICE LADY

Truth hurts, motherfuckers.

The NICE LADY goes back to her magazine.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Due to the lavatory fire, we're going to have to round up all the journalists and murder them.

BLOGGER

What?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Sorry- I meant to say protect them. I said murder, but obviously didn't mean it, don't listen to my words, look at what's in my heart, I meant we have to murder all the- *protect* all the journalists.

The ANGRY LADY reenters. She's wearing a Pro-Pumpkin Hat now.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Great- Can you take him into the back for murdering? No- Sorry- For protection-ing?

ANGRY LADY

Yep. What? I told you I was looking for work and they were hiring. This job is like a hundred times better than the mannequin factory. That pumpkin understands me and my plight. Alright, let's go.

BLOGGER

What are you doing? Help me!

TWEETER

In a minute- I'm trying to compose the perfect tweet.

BLOGGER

How can you tweet at a time like this?

TWEETER

If it's you first, it's me next. When the tweet's all that's left of you, the wording counts.

BLOGGER

You know what? Now that I really think about it, maybe I'm not exactly a journalist.

The ANGRY LADY takes the BLOGGER in the back of the plane.

BECKY

You can't do that!

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

The pumpkin is very popular right now. He could stand in the middle of the aisle and shoot you and he wouldn't lose voters. I mean not *you* you, you *someone*. Anyone. Generally. If he had to.

The FLIGHT ATTENDANT starts handing out forms.

BECKY

What are these?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh this is sort of a registration form so that you can identify yourself and answer a few questions about your favorite movies and your religion and what Harry Potter House you belong in and your ethnic background and what you're thinking about you know all sort of random things like

FLIGHT ATTENDANT cont.

maybe pumpkins for example, or lamps, or pumpkins and lamps, and then I'll collect them and we'll decide which people on the plane need additional protection.

WIFE

"Are you or have you ever been a person who questioned the pumpkin."

HUSBAND

"Have you ever mocked the pumpkin even if it was only in your mind."

TWEETER

I am so screwed.

WIFE

"Do you have shame-slash-sense of decency? If so, please explain and report for protection."

TWEETER

Yeah, I'm gonna go ahead and just send myself to the back.

TWEETER exits.

BECKY

No- Stop-Wait- No- You have to slow down, it's not fair, I'm still trying to react to the lamp thing but then there was the fire and then you took away the journalist and now you're registering passengers and now I'm like *four things behind*- While I'm outraged about a thing there's suddenly a new thing to be outraged about and then I can barely even respond to it because I'm already outraged about the outrage I was outraged about in the first place. It's like I'm out-outraged.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Oh, I'm sure it will end eventually.

The ANGRY LADY re-enters.

ANGRY LADY

Okay, so, you should maybe tell that pumpkin he does not want to go back to the back of the plane. Some things I did not expect to happen happened. Not everybody in the back of the plane is super happy about how we're still crashing and how the pumpkin is, um, whatdya' call him?

BECKY

A pumpkin?

ANGRY LADY

Yes, right, a pumpkin. And so: lots of them back there got real angry and went ahead and declared their own states and it's sort of got all Balkanized. It's mostly white folks back there

ANGRY LADY cont.

and it appears that the sudden lack of a unifying monoculture and ill-defined feelings of displacement have flipped that whole section into crazy town. Part of them back there declared themselves ‘Sovereign Passengers’ and I don’t mean to get judgmental on anybody because we all face the same problems in today’s harsh world of living on airplane gettin’ flown by a big dumb pumpkin, but those dudes seem like *real assholes*.

BECKY

The people in the back are turning against the pumpkin?

ANGRY LADY

Sort of. I really thought things would change under the reign of an outsider pumpkin thrust into the spotlight but the mannequin factory ain’t called yet and mostly I’m still just yelling at people on the internet and disappearing journalists and that’s getting SO BORING.

BECKY

Yes, yes, things aren’t going to change! Unless we do something! I agree with you. We’re on the same side!

ANGRY LADY

I’m gonna be honest with you: You do not wear the shoes of a person I am disposed to empathize with.

BECKY

Then don’t empathize with me! Empathize with this pumpkin. Imagine how this pumpkin must feel! Do you think this pumpkin actually wants to fly this plane? *No fucking way*. If he could feel emotion and wasn’t a hollowed-out orange gourd he would be scared to death! He has no idea how to fly a plane!

ANGRY LADY

What about that lamp, though?

WIFE

Oh my gosh. Honey, honey, honey, maybe the pumpkin isn’t qualified to fly this plane.

HUSBAND

(Suddenly blowing a whistle.) Traitor! Traitor! She has negative thoughts about the pumpkin in her mind! I know! I’ve seen them!

WIFE

What-?

HUSBAND

Honey I’m sorry, but if the back of the plane has split into factions this thing has really taken a turn here and I’m afraid you’re kind of weighing me down. I AM LOYAL TO THE PUMPKIN.

WIFE

What are you doing?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I don't want to use the term "Loyalty Oath" because this isn't that sort of plane, this is more of a mandatory voluntary individual flash-mob that just happens to be vocally pro-pumpkin.

HUSBAND

I AM LOYAL TO THE PUMPKIN.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

See?

HUSBAND

I swear to this sacred sky-oath that to the Pumpkin Leader, supreme commander of this crashing plane-

WIFE

Honey?

HISBAND

Shh- I'm trying to remember it- tothesupremecommanderofthiscrashingplane, I shall render unconditional obedience and that as a brave passenger I shall at all times be prepared to give my life for this oath.

WIFE

Honey? Honey? Honey?

HUSBAND shakes his head 'No' in response.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Alright if all of the pumpkin supporters will step to this side of the plane and everyone else can stand over there and then I'll say *If you're not with us, you're against us* or something exciting like that and then we can really get to work.

They are separated. FLIGHT ATTENDANT, pumpkin, and HUSBAND on one side, WIFE, the ANGRY LADY and the NICE LADY on the other. The NICE LADY keeps reading her magazine.

ANGRY LADY

Well. I didn't think I'd end up on this side.

(to the NICE LADY) Are you a broadly drawn stereotype, too?

NICE LADY

No, I'm a pilot.

ANGRY LADY

No shit? They were looking for a pilot earlier. Not sure if that's irony or just horrifying. Isn't it funny the people you meet on planes?

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Alright, I think that's everybody. Let's get started with The Purge.

BECKY

Stop! Stop! It doesn't have to be like this!

I want us to be in this together I do I really do because we are crashing together and when we finally hit the ground we will certainly all hit together and please don't think of me as a political person or a person with an agenda or who has something against vegetables from the squash family or that I harbor an unwarranted and peculiar distrust of round, smooth, slightly ribbed surfaces with deep yellow to orange coloration, just imagine I am a person with eyes who can still see things clearly, please, I need you to listen to me because I am certain that I am right: this plane is crashing and this pumpkin is a pumpkin.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

It will be fine. What's the worst that can-

The plane crashes.

End of play.