

*Act Two***Prologue**

1973

*Technicolour***Robert and two businessmen, Daniel and Roy. Roy is smoking.**

**Roy** Good to see you. Have a seat.

**Robert** Thanks.

**Roy** How's the baby?

**Robert** Oh, you – ?

**Roy** Daniel mentioned there was a baby. A baby girl.

**Robert** Right, yes.

**Daniel** Wonderful.

**Roy** Wonderful. And your wife?

**Robert** Very happy obviously, well we both are.

**Roy** Very happy. You both are.

**Daniel** Perfect.

**Roy** Perfect. So. Robert. You're wondering why you're here? When does the main UK airline call in a Cambridge boffin like you? Well, our bods predict that in thirty years time they'll be thousands of planes in the sky, flying people all over the place, which makes us happy of course, because there's a lot of money to be made.

**Robert** Yes.

**Roy** But there are increasing concerns.

**Daniel** Questions.

**Roy** Sorry?

**Daniel** Questions, I think Roy.

**Roy** Questions, exactly, about what the effect will be of all this air travel? With the emissions. Into the atmosphere.

**Robert** Right.

**Roy** People are starting to get worried.

**Daniel** Curious.

**Roy** People are starting to become *curious* about what burning all that fuel might do. To the world.

**Daniel** The environment.

**Roy** The *environment*. So we thought we'd get an expert in who could do a study.

Look into your crystal ball and tell us what's going to happen. So what do you think? Is it possible?

**Robert** Well. We'd . . . we'd need to model the world on a scale no one's done before. And . . . well . . . I don't want to be rude, but obviously you're hoping for a negative answer here aren't you?

**Daniel** No no.

**Roy** A what?

**Daniel** He means do we want him to get us the result which says these fumes are doing no harm at all? Should he fix it?

**Roy** Ah. No. Robert, you do your science and you tell us what you find.

We won't interfere at all.

**Robert** No interference.

**Daniel** None.

**Robert** Right.

**Roy** And this is only the first phase. If this project seems promising, we're authorised to commission further work, over the next ten years.

**Robert** Really?

**Roy** Absolutely. Because your results might not just be useful for us, but many similar organisations. The motor industry, oil companies. They would all be very interested in promising results.

**Robert** What do you mean promising?

**Roy** Results that seem to be useful.

**Daniel** Meaningful.

**Roy** Right. *Meaningful*. I need a coffee.

**Robert** Well I'm sure it's possible to achieve a certain clarity, but this is a very new subject, there's no real way of knowing how quantifiable in real terms the . . .

**Roy** This would be the fee.

**Robert** Right.

*He reads it.*

That's . . . Oh. Yes. That's good. I'm sure we could make a start with that.

**Roy** No. Robert.

That's not the budget.

The project will have a separate budget.

That's your fee.

That's for you. To keep.

**Daniel** And remember there's potential for a good deal more of this to come. I would imagine someone like you, in your position, academic, young family. This could make a real difference.

**Robert** Yes.

**Roy** Why don't you take it away and have a good old think?