

# *Sunshine Express*

By Sarah Quick

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We're all aboard the Sunshine Express, a coach tour to Florida from the Great White North that sees dreams realized and lives unfurled as we meet a multitude of characters all hoping to pack up their parkas and top up their tans.

### Characters

Sandy.....Easy-going Tour Rep - 30's or 40's  
Tommy.....Friendly Bus Driver – 40's or 50's  
Brenda.....Long-suffering Wife 40's  
Alan.....Stuck-in-a-rut Hubby 40's

The four actors also play the many other characters on the bus including;

Rita & Ruthie – Feisty octogenarian sisters  
Colonel – Very loud military man, late 70s  
Sheila and Connie – BFFs, early 60's  
Frank – laid back Cockney old boy, 70's  
Andris – Latvian, early 80's  
Gordon & Lilith – Annoying couple, late 60's  
Arthur & Alice – Deaf as posts but happy with it, 80's  
Ray – Cranky bus driver  
Also, Mary & Fred, Ena & Stanley, Customs Officials, Diner Waitress, Burt the Lounge Singer and all the employees at Charlie Cheedol Charters!

## Act 1 Scene 1

*A busy office. The phones ring constantly and are answered by a motley crew of Charlie Cheedol employees;*

Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you? That's right madam, we leave every Saturday from October to May down to sunny Florida. *(beat)* Well, no I can't guarantee the sunny part...but I'll guarantee you that it'll be sunnier than here...

Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you? You're looking at page 6 of the brochure. Ah, yes – the Sunshine Express. You'd like to travel down to Florida with us would you madam? Right, I'll just need to take some details...

Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you? Doris! Hello...is it March already *(laughs)*. You're booking with us again are you? Same time same place...of course. Thirty years! Never! There should be some sort of award. *(laughs) (beat)* Of course, yes, yes I'll be sure to ask Mr Cheedol Jr if there is an award...

Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you? 10 days madam. 8 nights at the Sand-dollar Hotel. *(pause)* The other two nights are on the coach. *(pause)* That's right, you sleep on the move...Oh, I'm sure you will. We want to get you there as quick as we can...

RECEPTIONIST 1 ... We can do stays of three months madam, no problem. Is this your first time booking with Charlie Cheedol Charters. Your seventh, excellent. And you want to use some of you Cheedollars, of course...

RECEPTIONIST 2 ... we pride ourselves on excellence in motorcoach travel, madam. We take you where your imagination can't. That's right, St Petersburg, madam...

RECEPTIONIST 3 ... and again, thank you for booking with Charlie Cheedol Charters. *(pause)* I said *(Louder)* Thank you for booking with Charlie Cheedol Charters *(louder)* Charlie Cheedol Charters. That's who you've booked with madam. I said... YOU HAVE YOURSELF A NICE DAY. Bye now, bye-bye.

RECEPTIONIST 4 ... They are all there in the brochure, Sir. Ride Through the Rockies, Memories of Manitoba, Country Music Cavalcade, The Sunshine Express...that's right, Sir, you peruse your particulars and I'll be right here when you need me. Ta ta!

It's busy today!

RECEPTIONIST 1 The brochure just went out.

RECEPTIONIST 4 Yeah, but still...

RECEPTIONIST 3 They switched it up this year though. Instead of Zoomer they put it in Food and Drink at the LCBO.

RECEPTIONIST 4 Ahhhh, I see. I've only been on since lunch and I've booked six Wonder of Wisconsin's, three Cruise the Caribbean's, twelve 'yours to discover' mystery day trips and 18 Sunshine Express's. Or should that be Expressi? 18 Sunshine Expressi.

RECEPTIONIST 1 That's more than you did all last week.

RECEPTIONIST 4 I know! I'm a selling machine...in a selling frenzy! Dispatching old people across North America and beyond.

RECEPTIONIST 2 We don't call them old people...they're mature travellers.

RECEPTIONIST 4 I feel like I'm on a roll but I've got to leave you to it Sweetie. The return coach has just circumnavigated Fleaverton and so Tommy called to say they're eta 20 minutes and I'm to meet them with the cakes.

*Phone rings*

RECEPTIONIST 1 We need you here!

RECEPTIONIST 4 I can't - you know what'll happen if they don't get their disembarkation treat.

RECEPTIONIST 2 43 angry pensioners in mutiny over muffins.

RECEPTIONIST 4 We don't need a repeat of the 1992 Cinnamon Roll Riots.

RECEPTIONIST 1 Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you?

*Phone rings.*

RECEPTIONIST 2 Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you?

RECEPTIONIST 1 Certainly Sir, what would you like to know?

RECEPTIONIST 3 Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you?

RECEPTIONIST 2 Two tickets on the May 22<sup>nd</sup> trip? Fabulous!

RECEPTIONIST 4 (*looks at his watch & decides to help*) Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you?

RECEPTIONIST 3 The Sunshine Express is certainly our most popular vacation.

RECEPTIONIST 4 A Sunshine Express booking, no problem Sir.

RECEPTIONIST 1 The coach leaves at 10am on a Saturday morning.

RECEPTIONIST 2 You'll arrive at your destination at 3pm on the Sunday.

RECEPTIONIST 3 You can stay 10 days, 17 days or pretty much as long as you like!

RECEPTIONIST 4 And you're going to be with us for 6 weeks, excellent.

RECEPTIONIST 1 We have 3 choices of destination within Florida.

RECEPTIONIST 2 All of the destinations are awesome Madam.

RECEPTIONIST 3 I would highly recommend the Sand-dollar. That's a Charlie Cheedol property and the staff are amazing.

RECEPTIONIST 4 Your first time at the Sand-dollar! Ooooooh you're going to love it!

RECEPTIONIST 1 Yes, very peaceful...as relaxing as you want it to be.

RECEPTIONIST 4 Oh yes, very lively – we also call it the St Pete's Party Place!

RECEPTIONIST 3 There are day trips...erm daily.

RECEPTIONIST 2 There's lots to do.

RECEPTIONIST 1 Evening activities.

RECEPTIONIST 2 Karaoke

RECEPTIONIST 3 Sing-a-longs

RECEPTIONIST 4 Line Dancing

RECEPTIONIST 1 Progressive Euchre

RECEPTIONIST 2 Movie nights

RECEPTIONIST 3    Bingo

RECEPTIONIST 2    There is Bingo, of course

RECEPTIONIST 4    Of course there's Bingo!

RECEPTIONIST 1    Oh, yes, there's definitely Bingo.

RECEPTIONIST 4    And le Piece de la resistance-

RECEPTIONIST 1    The bus will take you to a different restaurant each evening.

RECEPTIONIST 4    -Happy Hour!

RECEPTIONIST 3    Yes Sir, every evening.

RECEPTIONIST 2    The bus leaves after happy hour, which is from 5 til 6.

RECEPTIONIST 4    Happy hour! Complimentary cocktails.

RECEPTIONIST 1    Yes Sir, the Sand-dollar has a complimentary happy hour every evening in the Pavillion Room

RECEPTIONIST 4    Whatever you'd like!

RECEPTIONIST 2    The Pavillion room is also where you'll go to get your complimentary continental breakfast.

RECEPTIONIST 4    As much as you can!

RECEPTIONIST 3    Breakfast is available every morning between 6am and 8am.

RECEPTIONIST 1    All of our properties offer the continental breakfast but the Sand-dollar is the only Charlie Cheedol property that has a happy hour.

RECEPTIONIST 4    Oh, if I were you I'd go ballistic on the Baileys, pound the Peach Schnapps, skip the restaurant trip and head straight for Karaoke!

RECEPTIONIST 1    You'd like to go ahead and book that then?

RECEPTIONIST 2    Sounds good, I think you'll have a wonderful time!

RECEPTIONIST 1    I'll put you through to Liz to book that.

RECEPTIONIST 3    Great – I'm just going to put you through to accounts and they'll take your payment details.

RECEPTIONIST 4 Right well, talking money makes me blush so I'm going to put you through to accounts to consult about cashola.

RECEPTIONIST 3 Thankyou Sir. It was my pleasure...

RECEPTIONIST 2 Here at Charlie Cheedol Charters we're always happy to help.

RECEPTIONIST 1 Have a great trip. Bye bye now!

RECEPTIONIST 4 You have a lovely day too, enjoy your trip and remember, here at Charlie Cheedol Charters we are ready and waiting to get you off at a moments notice. (*hangs up – the others are staring at him*)  
What!? It's in the Cheedol Chandbook. It's 'a salutation of parting to a satisfied customer'  
Right, cakes. Can I tempt you?

RECEPTIONIST 2 Tempt away!

RECEPTIONIST 4 I picked them up from 'Pastries and Pies' this morning and there's a Pecan buttermilk with your name on it...actually it's not your name it's my thumbprint but Darryl in accounts was eyeing it longingly so I had to do something.

RECEPTIONIST 2 I wonder if I should conjure up some hot chocolate for the old dears too – might make coming home to -27 a bit more palatable.

RECEPTIONIST 1 You know it is worth it, that extra 'bit'. One lady this morning said it was our attention to detail that kept her coming back. She especially liked that the car windshields had had all the snow removed for when they got home.

RECEPTIONIST 2 Ahhh

RECEPTIONIST 3 Our hard work does not go unrecognized.

RECEPTIONIST 4 (*Basques in the glory before remembering...*) Damn it!

RECEPTIONIST 1 What?

RECEPTIONIST 4 Got to dash...Idiot!

RECEPTIONIST 2 What's the matter?

RECEPTIONIST 4 Nothing!

*Phone rings*

RECEPTIONIST 3 You forgot the windshields didn't you!?

RECEPTIONIST 4 Phone's ringing...

*Exits*

RECEPTIONIST 3 Charlie Cheedol Charters, how can I help you? Hello Mrs Eccles. Jean, how are you?  
We're sad you're not travelling with us this year. Ahh, the Sand-dollar won't be the same without you. Yes, I've got those tickets here. All confirmed and printed ready for them to collect. Yes, Alan and Brenda. Ahh, I think that's great...I love surprises!

*LX Fade to Black*

## **Act 1 Scene 2**

*Tommy the Driver is helping people off the Sunshine Express after another successful trip down South. He accepts tips at various intervals.*

TOMMY There you go...mind your feet.  
That's right, you hold on to me Ma'am.  
Thank you Sir, you're a gentleman.  
Ooh, you remembered your duty free eh? That's me s.o.l then I guess. That's alright...you enjoy.  
Ooops, steady on. Drink yours on the way did you Pam?  
Doug's getting your bags out, won't be a second.  
That's it, careful now.  
Thank you, I'm glad you had a good time.  
There you are. Yes, see you next year.  
Much obliged. You have yourself a good day now eh?  
Any more for any more?  
Oh there she is, saving the best for last weren't they Gwen? Ted was off near the front...look he's got your bags already, over there. Bye now.

SANDY That's everyone.

TOMMY Not bad Sandy, eh? Another load home safe and sound.

SANDY In a large part thanks to you Tommy lad, good on you!

TOMMY It was a good drive I thought.



SANDY Ooh, I got a thumping headache twenty minutes into Georgia and it didn't leave 'til Toledo.  
Bye now! You be careful, it's slippery. I will!  
They seemed to be happy though.  
Yep. See you next year.  
It was a good trip 'n' all. Weather was nice.

TOMMY You were lucky, the last group had frost!

SANDY I heard! In Florida!

TOMMY In Febuary.

SANDY I would not have been a happy camper, that's for sure.

TOMMY And they seemed like a nice group, eh?

SANDY Smashing. Dead friendly. There were two sisters who were new and seemed a bit shy.

TOMMY Were they?

SANDY They were not. By the second day they were heading up a campaign to get part of the public beach turned nudist!

TOMMY They gave it their all, eh?

SANDY That they did.  
Hello Jane, are you heading back down South already? You left your bag up there? OK, love. What's it got in it? Suduko and candies...ooh that's mine and Tommy's now love, we claimed it as abandoned. No, you're alright I'm only joking with you. I can't eat sweets me anyway...I'm watching my figure. Hey! I heard that Dennis you bugger.

TOMMY So, you're on again next week, eh?

SANDY That's right. Is it you then?

TOMMY It is. Me and your best buddy.

SANDY Not Ray!

TOMMY The one and only.

SANDY Oh, no...not Ray.

TOMMY      He's alright.

SANDY      He's a miserable sod.

TOMMY      He's a good driver.

SANDY      Huh!

TOMMY      Which is not to be sniffed at, negotiating highways in all weathers, 40 odd lives in your hands.

SANDY      You're a good driver...he's a miserable sod.

TOMMY      I've got two days off, then on Thursday I'm scheduled for 'Cranberry Country'; one night at the Rocksand Hotel and back on Friday via the locks; then Sunshine Expressing you all the way to Florida on the Saturday. G'night Sandy.

SANDY      Night Tommy.  
*(she turns to address the audience)* It's a nice crowd we've got next week. I mean, they usually are...but it's nice when you see some familiar faces on your list. Best part of this job, the people. I've been a tour guide with Charlie Cheedol's for 17 years now and I love it!  
 I like getting to know them, finding out what they need. It's all about the customer after all...and they make it easy to care about them. Well, most of them!  
 There were a few people on the list I didn't recognize though...Alan and Brenda Hawkins for one. They had a star beside their name and the word surprise underlined. It gave me a chill. Ever since my mum threw me a family party for my 16<sup>th</sup> and I was caught in flagrante with Trevor Harrison by several aunts and uncles, I've been no fan of the word surprise. I just hoped for Alan and Brenda's sake the surprise was a good one...

### **Act 1 Scene 3**

*Lights up on Alan on the sofa in the living room. The room is not messy but everything is far from its place. It indicates a family home with the sofa being Alan's domain.*

BRENDA      *(OFF shouts)* Alan?

ALAN          *(Shouts)* Yes?

BRENDA      *(Closer shouts)* Alan?

ALAN (Less audible) Humn?

BRENDA (*Enters*) Alan?

ALAN (*nothing*)

BRENDA I've been calling you.

ALAN Have you?

BRENDA It's time you went back to Dr Cooper to get your ears syringed.

ALAN I'd rather be deaf.

BRENDA The school called about Luke.

ALAN What's that Hun?

BRENDA You heard. They want us to come in again. Today.

ALAN (*nothing*)

BRENDA I told them 4.00.

ALAN (*nothing*)

BRENDA That's alright isn't it. I mean you're not-

ALAN (*beat*) Doing anything? I'm not doing anything.

BRENDA I mean, I know you're working tomorrow but-

ALAN -But while they can't give me enough hours to be out of the house full time I'm here and available to do whatever you want.

BRENDA It's not what I want.

ALAN (*beat*) While I am an "underemployed" member of society I get the immense pleasure of listening to their two-bit pseudo-analytic pontifications as to why my son has a 'failure to interact' with his 'fellow classmates'.

BRENDA They're trying to help him – we should be grateful they're taking an interest.

ALAN I wouldn't want to interact with the little snot-weasels either. *Pause (looks at his watch)* 4 o'clock's fine.

BRENDA And Jordy needs picking up from school at three and taking to hockey practise in Bonville, he forgot his jersey but it's by the front door...I'd do it but Sam's got the dentist's at 2.30 and it could take a while-

ALAN Fine.

*There is a pause, then she exits.  
He puts down his book and remembers something.*

ALAN Brenda?

BRENDA *(nothing)*

ALAN Brenda?

BRENDA *(nothing)*

ALAN Brenda?

BRENDA *(enters)* What!?

ALAN Have you seen the TV remote?

BRENDA Ha! I wondered why you were reading! Well, squinting.

ALAN I wasn't squinting

BRENDA What's that?

ALAN Video

BRENDA *(finds another one)*

ALAN DVD

BRENDA This?

ALAN PVR.

BRENDA Aaarrgghh! I don't know! I never watch the bloody thing.

ALAN Ha!

BRENDA I don't!

ALAN Three hours every Sunday, without fail!

BRENDA Three hours when you're still in bed.

ALAN Three hours every Sunday.

BRENDA (*still looking for the remote*) It's the only time I get to myself the whole week. Coronation St is the one pleasure I have. It takes me away to a better place. Up (*she makes him stand up, he has been sitting on the remote*) and when a better place is a rainy, grey, cobbled street in Weatherfield it is not saying much. (*hands him the remote*) Worrying.

ALAN I felt it! I just thought it was another spring gone is all.

BRENDA They've all gone! Long gone. We need a new one.

ALAN We need a new lots of things but that won't happen for a while.

BRENDA A new couch, and one of those trunk things.

ALAN A trunk thing?

BRENDA I've always wanted a trunk thing. Antique-y-looking. Likes it's got lots of stories to tell and you'd keep things in it-

ALAN -really-

BRENDA and add stories of your own.

ALAN We don't need a trunk thingy.

BRENDA I could put all the bits and pieces in it and with that and the new sofa I could invite people round.

ALAN What people?

BRENDA Friends.

ALAN What friends?

BRENDA I had friends. I *have* friends, *we* have friends. We just don't see them any more because we've got no-

ALAN -money-

BRENDA *Time*. We should make more time.

ALAN           We should make more money.

*There is a loud buzzzzzz*

BRENDA       Washing's done

ALAN           Uh-huh.

*Pause*

BRENDA       I'd better put it on to dry then eh?

*Exits*

ALAN           Brenda?

*Beat, enter*

BRENDA       Alan?

ALAN           Did you get the mail when you were out shopping?

BRENDA       I did, it's in one of the grocery bags, don't ask me which one.

ALAN           Oh (*beat*) When you've unpacked them I'd like to see it.

BRENDA       (*sigh*) Why are you going for a world record on bills.

*Exits. He channel hops for about 30 seconds.*

BRENDA       (*popping her head round the door*) Sorry.

ALAN           (*mutes TV*) What?

BRENDA       It's your birthday. I'm sorry. I just...I'm lucky if I know what month it is at the moment what with the kids needing rides here there and everywhere and the laundry and Luke and you being here...a lot...which is great! Sorry.

ALAN           Doesn't matter. Not exactly one to celebrate is it?

*Beat*

BRENDA       Oh you're 40! Oh god...what is wrong with me?

ALAN           It's fine, look, lots of cards. You don't worry just go and finish the laundry or whatever...

BRENDA Thanks (*exits*)

*Alan continues to watch the TV while opening his cards*

ALAN (*first card*) Agh, Brian, you dirty perv. (*next card*) Middle age is when age starts to show around your middle. Happy 40<sup>th</sup> ...indeed. (*third card- he reads it, turns the TV off, reads it again*) Brenda?

BRENDA (*nothing*)

ALAN Brenda?

BRENDA (*nothing*)

ALAN Brenda?

BRENDA (*enters*) What!?

*They exchange a look*

BRENDA I'm sorry. 'What can I do for you Birthday Boy!?'

*He hands her the card*

BRENDA Who's it from

ALAN Gramma Jean

BRENDA Is she still alive?

ALAN It would appear so...although not intact with all of her marbles according to that.

BRENDA What's she saying?

ALAN Read it. (*pause*) She wants us to go on a holiday.

BRENDA A holiday? Us? Where?

ALAN Read it. (*pause*) Some daft coach trip that she usually goes on.

BRENDA Why isn't she going?

ALAN It says (*pause*) She's not feeling up to it this year.

BRENDA And she wants us to go instead?

ALAN Are you reading it?!

BRENDA Yes, I am! But I don't understand.

ALAN She wants us to take a coach trip that she usually goes on because she's not feeling up to it.

BRENDA We'd never be able to afford it.

ALAN She's paying.

BRENDA She's paying?! But why?

ALAN I don't know just read it!

BRENDA Alright! Shhuusshhhhhhh.

*She reads the letter*

V/O Dear Alan,  
I hope this letter finds you well and 'Congratulations' on turning 40.  
I realize that with the current economy and the demands placed on you by your family it will not be easy to celebrate this important milestone and in that regard I would like to help.  
For many years now I have taken an annual trip down to Florida with Charlie Cheedol Charters. As a loyal customer I have been rewarded each year with Cheedollars - Sadly I cannot use them as my health, or rather my thieving, corrupt bastard of an insurance company (excuse my French), dictates that I stay in Canada for the winter.  
However, it is my intent that they be used to send you and the delightful Brenda on such a vacation this year.

BRENDA Just you and me?

ALAN That's what it says.

BRENDA What about the kids? What, she thinks we can just go waltzing off to Florida and leave our responsibilities, eh?

V/O I have arranged for the two younger children to be looked after by Brenda's sister.

BRENDA No way! There is no way Val agreed to that! I can barely persuade her to take them for 2 hours on a Wednesday!



V/O Valerie was delighted to be able to help out knowing the stresses you are currently dealing with. I am aware of the piano lessons on Monday, hockey Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, Volleyball on Tuesday and Wednesday, Tai Kwan Do on Saturday and Drama on Sunday and will guarantee that these commitments shall be met.

BRENDA How on earth does she know all this?

V/O I am facebook friends with Samantha...*who* has informed me that she is rather worried about an upcoming science test and as a result I have arranged for my neighbour's son to tutor her in your absence.

BRENDA Science test?

ALAN (*shrugs*)

BRENDA Why did we not know about the science test?!

ALAN We're not on facebook.

BRENDA This is insane – she knows more about our kids than we do!

ALAN When they tell you to look out for internet predators they don't suggest they could come in the form of a kindly old lady.  
And what about Jordy? Fine, the other two are sorted but he's not that easy is he, I don't suppose she found anyone bending over backwards to have a hormonal 15 year old boy in their house. And, we're not leaving him here!

BRENDA We can't go.

ALAN Not after last time. And I don't trust those new friends he's hanging out with.

BRENDA It's impossible.

ALAN We're not going.

BRENDA It's a shame. It is, but we can't go and leave him here.

V/O As for Jordy, I was rather hoping you would allow me to look after him myself. I would be glad of the company and your mother has offered to help out as much as I need.

BRENDA (*gasp*)

ALAN We are definitely not going.

BRENDA But she's gone to so much trouble, we can hardly say no!

ALAN Only because she's made it virtually impossible to! She may as well have made it her last dying wish!

V/O I wouldn't call it my last dying wish...but rather you'd be making an old lady very happy.

BRENDA Ahhhh. I can't believe it! Did you think she'd ever do something like this?

ALAN It's absurd.

BRENDA it's sweet.

ALAN It's embarrassing. 'the stresses we're under' what stresses? She's saying that we're not coping.

BRENDA She's not. She's acknowledging that it must be difficult to cope.

ALAN We're fine. What stresses?

BRENDA Everything. The kids, Luke, your job, money.

ALAN We're fine. *(pause)* We're coping. Aren't we.

BRENDA We are. Just. But...It's not great is it? We're not having fun are we? The kids aren't having fun.

ALAN Well that's life. You can't always have fun.

BRENDA Maybe not. But it's not much of a life if you're not enjoying it is it? She's not saying we're doing anything wrong...she's just trying to do something nice.  
It might be good for us to spend some time together, without everything else.  
And, the kids'll probably benefit from a change of scenery.  
I can't remember the last time we had a holiday, eh?

ALAN Are you saying you want to go.

BRENDA I think I am.

ALAN On a coach trip...with old people.

BRENDA Alan!

ALAN Well, it will be. 40 versions of Gramma Jean no doubt.

BRENDA Not necessarily. I'm sure younger people like us go on the trips too.

ALAN (*looks sceptical*)

BRENDA Who cares anyway – it'll make us feel young for a change!

ALAN Huh.

BRENDA Just think about it...for me.

ALAN For you?

BRENDA For me.

ALAN Alright, I'll *think* about it.

BRENDA (*squeals*) I wonder whereabouts in Florida it is? I've never been to Florida.

ALAN I've never been anywhere foreign.

BRENDA Do you think they'll have activities?

ALAN Hopefully not.

BRENDA They do! Look, they're playing Bingo.

ALAN Oh, no. Not Bingo.

BRENDA And look at that beach!

ALAN Anything but Bingo!

BRENDA We'll need sun-tan lotion.

ALAN Oh, here we go.

BRENDA And flip flops.

ALAN I'll need new shorts...*if* we end up going.

BRENDA True, your old ones are so tight you'd give some of the old ladies heart attacks. I'll get online now and order you some.

ALAN Hold up. I said I had to think about it.

BRENDA Right...would a beer help you think?

ALAN It usually does.

BRENDA Right...(starts to exit) Oh, Alan, (excited) Happy Birthday!

*Lights fade out*

## **Act 1 Scene 4**

*Spotlight fades up and Alan becomes Charlie Cheedol*

CHARLIE Ahoy there all you travel fans! I'm Charlie Cheedol the Second Jr. inviting you to board one of our luxury charters and experience the trip of a lifetime. From the moment you step on board a Charlie Cheedol Charter we want you to feel like one of the family. Experienced drivers will ensure you reach your dream destination safely and friendly tour guides will be on hand to assist with all your needs. Every coach is equipped with televisions for those wishing to view our new-release movie selection, each seat reclines a full six and a half inches for your comfort and, for your convenience, we even have a washroom on board. We have dozens of destinations for you to choose from and each resort is chosen specifically for the discerning vacationista. Call one of our friendly booking staff today and find out where your next adventure will take you. At Charlie Cheedol Charters we're always happy to tell you where to go.

(OFF) Cut!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## **Act 1 Scene 5**

SANDY They were the last to arrive at the depot. Alan and Brenda. I said to Tommy 'They're not on Charlie Cheedle time yet! Still on the old Greenwich meantime.' It's coz they've not been before you see. They didn't realize that if we say coach leaves at 7.30, every buggers back on it and ready to go come 7.15. Last one on gets a slow handclap. Rita and Ruthie were first on at 6.00 but they live 2 hours North so it's understandable. Frank only lives the other side of the park and he was here 10 minutes after them. He likes to see everyone else arrive. I like Frank. He's been travelling with us for 10 years now, ever since his wife died. He's always very well turned out, a new pair of crisp, white trainers for every trip.

The rest all came in dribs and drabs. Which is nice. They've always got some stories to tell if they're regulars or you can take a few minutes to get to know them if they're not.

There was a palpable excitement as they saw the last two arrive. I persuaded them against a slow handclap and soon we were all aboard.

They seemed nice enough. Alan and Brenda. A bit quiet perhaps...reticent? But 7.30's early for a lot of people.

BRENDA Do you want the window or the aisle?

ALAN Is one of them going to be comfortable?

BRENDA Don't start. Just get in.

ALAN I want the aisle.

BRENDA Alright! I'll get in. There, you happy?

ALAN *(A look, no he's not happy!)* Did you see them all when we got on? Looking at watches, we're 5 minutes early! *(Looks around him, everyone's smiling.)* Hi. Hello.

RITA Hello, I'm Rita. This is my sister Ruthie. This is our 14<sup>th</sup> trip together on the Sunshine Express,eh!

ALAN Con-gratulations?

SHEILA And I'm Sheila and this is my BFF Connie. We're the party gals. That's Ena and Stanley at the front. And Frank's on his own down there, bless. Hiya Frank! You alright?

FRANK Yeah, Sheila darling I'm happy as Larry mate, happy as Larry.

SHEILA And, of course the Colonel and Kathy behind you.

COLONEL John Sanders, nice to meet you, everyone calls me the Colonel. Colonel Sanders! Ha, ha! Welcome aboard the crazy bus! We've got Alice and Arthur over there, both as deaf as a doornail. Isn't that right Alice? *(thumbs up)* And, my mate Andris behind them, he's from one of those Baltic countries...can't understand a word he says.

ANDRIS I am from Latvia. Lived in Canada for 56 years now. You will enjoy the trip. Sun, sea, sand...you know.

COLONEL And, this couple over here are first timers too!

LILITH I'm Lilith.

GORDON Gordon. Exciting isn't it?

LILITH We're so excited!

GORDON I've been saving the latest Grisham for the occasion.

LILITH I caught him trying to read it.

GORDON She did.

LILITH I did!

GORDON Several times!

LILITH But he's glad I stopped him now!

GORDON I am. Mind you, Lilith is best part of half-way through her Maeve Binchy.

LILITH I am...but I've got a Dick Francis in my emergency rations.

GORDON Naughty!

LILITH I know I know. I'm in a book club and I'm supposed to be reading something off the list but I just don't fancy them.

GORDON They're old.

LILITH We're not!

GORDON Not you lot, the books.

LILITH True. I mean there are some new ones but I've no interest. I suggested some Dick but Maureen Anchors said she wasn't partial and she's sort of self-appointed president so everything has to have a 'book-club' approved sticker on it.

GORDON They do! Oprah's Book Club they all say on the front.

LILITH Not that that's our book club. I'm not in Oprah's book club. Imagine! Our book club doesn't really have a name. It's just an offshoot of Wednesday's aquafit really.

GORDON Oh look he's closed the doors.

ALAN Thank Christ!

BRENDA Alan!

ALAN Please tell me you brought the ear plugs.

BRENDA I did.

ALAN 28 hours. I might actually go insane.

TOMMY Alright guys and gals. We're all here so let's get this show on the road shall we? Can you hear me at the back.

ALICE Is he speaking?

COLONEL Bit louder.

TOMMY Can you hear me now love.

ALICE *(pause)* Is he speaking?

COLONEL She's really deaf.

ANDRIS Alice, its Andris. Can you hear me?

ALICE *(nothing)*

COLONEL There's no way she's gonna hear you. Not if you stood next to her with a megaphone. Right Alice *(thumbs up)*.

ALICE *(returns thumbs up with no idea but lots of enthusiasm)*

TOMMY Alright then, moving on-

ALICE -Is he speaking?

ANDRIS/ COLONEL Noooooo.

ALICE Oakey Cokey.

TOMMY Right, I'm Tommy. As some of you will know. Hands up if you're new. Both hands up if you're looking forward to Florida eh?

*Brenda sticks both hands up. Alan doesn't. He gets a poke in the ribs and reluctantly raises both hands.*

TOMMY Give everyone a little wave...and tell us your names.

BRENDA Hi I'm Brenda.

ALAN Alan.

TOMMY Great! Well, as I said I'm Tommy, you can put your hands down again now Alan, and I'm your driver. Sandy here will be your tour guide and make sure you have everything you need, and I'll also be sharing the driving with Ray who's in our room at the back there.  
We've got movies for you to watch and on channels one and two you can listen to Sirius satellite radio. There's hundreds of channels to choose from but I'm thinking you lot will want to start off with some heavy rock eh? No!? AC/DC? No!? Well you let us know what you want and we'll get it for you isn't that right Sandy?

SANDY That's right Tommy. Anything we can do for you just shout.

TOMMY Only don't let Sandy listen to Michael Bolton too long or she starts to get frisky!

SANDY I do not, you cheeky sod!

TOMMY I've seen it in the rear-view mirror.

SANDY That is untrue ladies and gents, I do not get, nor ever have gotten, frisky to Michael Bolton...Michael Buble maybe-

TOMMY Wahaay! The truth comes out! Right now I'm not doing the first stint this morning so I'm just going to head back to my den and have a hot tub while I watch my big screen TV and I'll leave you in the capable hands of Ray, or 'our little Ray of sunshine' as Sandra calls him, don't you Sandy?

SANDY Never.

ALAN Well the comedy leaves a lot to be desired.

BRENDA I like him. I think he's very friendly. They all are eh?

ALAN Yeah, I could pretty much do without 'friendly'

SANDY And this, ladies and gents is Ray.

RAY (*dismissive*) Hiya



SANDY        And Ray says a big hello to everybody. Ok. Before we get started we just have a few points to raise-

RAY            -No drinks, no chips, no food or drink allowed.

SANDY        You can have water, of course. And candies for diabetics, should you need them. Right Ray?

RAY            Right (*beat*) But no pretending to be diabetic just so you can have a picnic.

SANDY        OK. As Tommy said...before he abandoned me...we've got four movies for you on the way down. Do we know what they are Ray?

RAY            Yup.

SANDY        And what are they?

RAY            I'm not telling them until they've bought the headphones.

SANDY        Oh, ha! Ray you are a card.

RAY            (*nothing*)

SANDY        Right, well. They're all first run, box-office hits. I'll be round to see if you'd like headphones, you can use your own of course, I see most of you have them. Right! Anything else Ray.

RAY            No food or drink on the coach.

SANDY        I think we've said that.

RAY            Right. Let's get going. Erm, enjoy the ride.

BRENDA       This is exciting.

ALAN          Is it?

BRENDA        Oh come on, you're here now. The seats are pretty good aren't they? Look, you've got loads of room. And movies, you love movies, eh!

ALAN          I haven't got any headphones.

BRENDA        They're two bucks! I'll treat you to them eh?

ALAN          No point, they'll probably be crap.

RITA (earphones on) Hey CONNIE. ARE YOU LISTENING TO TWO? TURN TO TWO.

MARY Fred. (Pause) Fred?

FRED Huh?

MARY Did you bring your sunglasses?

FRED Nope.

LILITH Can I get anything for anyone whilst I'm up here having a rummage?

RAY May I just remind you that as we're in motion you should refrain from moving around and restrict activity such as standing and walking to when we are on straight roads.  
Like now madam.  
Madam.  
Woman standing?

LILLITH Oh! My Suduko's in my toiletry bag though. I usually put it in my purse but I thought I'd better visit the washroom before the journey so I put it in my toiletry bag.

RAY Nevertheless, Madam, straight roads only please. Can you take your seat...while I try and get the mental image of your Suduko habits out of my brain. Thankyou.

ENA Stanley. Humbug?

STANLEY (*refuses*)

RITA (earphones on) I can't hear you Connie. I'VE GOT HEADPHONES ON. YES TWO. CHANNEL TWO.

MARY Fred. (Pause) Fred?

FRED Huh?

MARY Did you bring your razor?

FRED Nope.

SANDY All in all the trip was off to a good start. We made good time through Toronto and Burlington. Made a few more pick ups in Stoney Creek and Woodstock, all of whom were on time so things were going very smoothly. It was a clear

day on the roads, cold enough to remind you where you were headed but no snow, ice or freezing rain forecast. Even Ray seemed like he was in a good mood.

RAY I like this movie.

SANDY Do you Ray!?

RAY Marley and Me.

SANDY Ooh, the one with the dog! Ahhhh.

RAY I wouldn't kick yer one Jennifer Anniston out of bed for farting.

SANDY Lovely Ray.  
At Ingersoll everyone got off for lunch. Most of them rapidly formed a queue at the Tim Hortons the others went and perused the Wendy's menu...and then joined the back of the line-up for Timmys – the time for adventure was not yet upon us!

RAY Hey, you!

LILITH Me?

RAY You.

LILITH Lilith.

RAY Is that a coffee.?

LILITH No, it's a Hazelnut Cappucini with a hint of butter caramel.

RAY Cuppucini?

LILITH It's a blend of their hot smoothie and a cappuccino.

RAY From Tim Hortons?

LILITH I just love their coffee.

RAY Then why didn't you order one?

LILITH Sorry?

RAY            You can't drink it on here. No food, no drink, no coffee cocktails. Water only. I don't allow any coffee on board especially nothing from the frappacino, lattemocha family because they stain even worse...it's the froth.

LILITH        Right, of course, sorry.

SANDY        It's alright, Lilith, don't rush love. You enjoy it, we're ahead of schedule anyway. Tell them about the next stop Ray and then for goodness sake go and swap with Tommy.

RAY            Right, listen to me. Can I have your attention please? I'd just like to reiterate the no food or beverage policy-

SANDY        -Oh hell! But, speaking of beverages you'll be pleased to hear that the next stop is Duty Free! Yaaayyyy! I thought you'd like that one eh! As well as an extensive collection of alcohol they also sell make-up, chocolate and perfume.

RAY            They spray you with free samples of the perfume if you ask...so don't.

SANDY        Some people are allergic is all-

RAY            -By doing so you could make someone very sick...I will be very sick.

ALAN          Seems as good a reason as any to start wearing perfume!

BRENDA       Alan! (*beat*) Maybe a quick squirt of 'Poison', eh!

## Act 1 Scene 6

SANDY        Oh Tommy, thank goodness!

TOMMY        How is everyone doing? Ready for the next leg eh?

SANDY        Ray was just telling them that we'll be stopping at duty free before we cross the border.

TOMMY        Ah, got you all excited did he eh?

SANDY        Something like that.

TOMMY        What the hell, you only live once eh? A bottle of tequila for the sun-downer after a hard day's sight-seeing eh? That's right! Make the most of your retirement, I'm gonna that's for sure! I'm going to enjoy myself as much as

possible 'til the day I die. Only, when I die I wanna make sure I go nice and calmly, in my sleep, like my dad did eh?...not shouting and screaming like his passengers. Eh? Eh?

SANDY Tommy!

TOMMY Alright then, we're off!

MARY Fred. (Pause) Fred?

FRED Huh?

MARY Did you bring your sunhat?

FRED Nope.

TOMMY We made good time to Duty Free and after a brief stop we were on to the border. Not my favourite part of the journey that's for sure eh? There's always a feeling of you're not sure what's gonna happen. One of the customs guys is huge, he looks like he's some sort of ultimate fighter with nothing better to do than to shoot someone and the other one's trying to make up for his buddy by being a bloody comedian.

CUSTOMS 1 Can I see your passports? So what's this then, some kind of swingers coach?

CUSTOMS 2 Passport. Alright, listen up. I'm going to ask this once and I want to hear the truth, I will not ask again but the dogs will find out if you're lying. Does anybody have any food in their bags?

CUSTOMS 1 All Canadian passports here? Next stop hedonism, am I right?

CUSTOMS 2 I am specifically interested in fruit. Does anybody have any fruit in their bags? I will not ask again. Does anyone have fruit in their bags?

CUSTOMS 1 See your passport sir? When was the last time you were arrested ma'am?

CUSTOMS 2 No fruit of any description? I will remind you it is a federal offence to smuggle fruit into the United States.

TOMMY I'm sitting there, minding my own eh? Wondering how long we'll be there this time. Knowing that they will tear a coach apart if they feel so inclined. When I hear

RITA Oooooohhhh. I've got a lemon.

TOMMY I've got a lemon. Four words that are guaranteed to strike fear into my heart at the border.

SHEILA What's going on?

COLONEL Rita's got a lemon.

SHEILA Oh. *(to Arthur)* Rita's got a lemon.

ARTHUR A what?

ANDRIS A lemon.

ARTHUR Huh?

ANDRIS A lemon.

ARTHUR Ohhh. *(to Lilith)* Rita's got a lemon.

LILITH Rita's got a lemon?

GORDON Oh hell.

LILITH Is that bad?

GORDON It's not good.

LILITH Oh.

GORDON Did you not hear him asking about food?

LILITH I didn't.

GORDON It's serious stuff eh?

LILITH Is it? I've got a chunky Kit Kat in my fanny pack, should I tell him?

GORDON No! Keep your head down. It's all Rita at the moment.

CUSTOMS 2 Step up here ma'am. You have a lemon?

RITA Yes, for my gin and tonic.

CUSTOMS 2 You're drinking liquor ma'am?

RITA No! For my G & T when we get there. We unpack first don't we Ruthie?

RUTHIE We do.

RITA We're sisters.

RUTHIE I'm her sister.

RITA Then, while Ruthie makes the bathroom feel like home, I fix us some G&Ts.

RUTHIE I told you not to bring it.

RITA Did you?

RUTHIE I said 'They take us to Publix as soon as we arrive' I said 'Buy your lemon there.'

RUTH But I need a gin and tonic before I get to Publix!

TOMMY Luckily at that point, the customs officers were distracted by a 98 Nissan Sentra with missing hubcaps and, after a bit of racial profiling, determined that the occupants of that were more likely to send the terror alert from Yellow to Orange than Rita and her lemon. Once I'd determined that the situation was in hand we swapped drivers and I left the coach in the capable hands of Ray who manoeuvred it through Detroit

### **Act 1 Scene 7**

ENA Stanley. Wethers?

STANLEY (*refuses*)

RITA (*Laughing away to herself, listening to some comedy*)

COLONEL What's she listening to Ruthie?

RUTHIE Eh?

COLONEL Rita. What's she listening to?

RUTHIE Oh. What are you listening to?

RITA (*shouts*) What? I can't hear you, I've got headphones on.

RUTHIE What are you listening to?

RITA           It's a comedian. The comedy radio. Channel two. TURN TO CHANNEL TWO.

RUTHIE        Mary, Rita says turn to channel two.

MARY           Fred, Fred, did you bring the headphones.

FRED           No.

COLONEL      Frank's asleep borrow his.

MARY           Fred. (Pause) Fred?

FRED           Huh?

MARY           Then what did you bring your bloody suitcase for?

FRED           *(beat)* Your shoes I think.

RAY            Right folks we're stopping here for 45 minutes. There is a hometown buffet 'Gloria's' for you to eat at.

ALICE          Is he talking?

ALL            Noooo.

RAY            Now listen up. When you get to the till some of the regulars will give you coupons.

RUTHIE        Coupons?

RITA            Coupons!

ARTHUR        What's that?

RITA            He said you'll get coupons, Arthur.

RAY            These coupons allow you to get your dinner for half price.

RUTHIE        Half price?

RITA            Half price!

ARTHUR        What's that?



RITA He said you'll get your dinner half price, Arthur.

RAY Do not use these coupons.

RUTHIE What?

RAY You cannot use these coupons, we have already negotiated a group rate and so, I repeat, you cannot use these coupons.

RUTHIE We can't?

RITA That's a shame!

ARTHUR What's that?

RITA He said you can't use the coupons, Arthur.

ARTHUR Oh.

RITA That's a shame!

RAY Enjoy your dinner.

BRENDA I don't really fancy a buffet.

ALAN What do you mean.

BRENDA Well, we've done nothing but sit down all day. I don't really want to stuff myself with food. How about you?

ALAN I do.

BRENDA Do what?

ALAN Want to stuff myself with food.

BRENDA Do you?

ALAN It's all I've thought about for the last 4 hours. The inane chatter around me and the hypnotic landscape of neon fast food outlets has been made bearable only by the thought of getting off this bus and having some dinner.

BRENDA It's not a bus...it's a coach.

ALAN It's torture.

BRENDA It's fine. Don't be so dramatic. Look, there's a Thai restaurant over there, why don't we try that.

ALAN I haven't got a tie.

BRENDA Not a tie-

ALAN -Besides, we've only got 40 minutes now, which means 30 if I know this lot...the buffet will be quicker. Please Bren?

BRENDA Of course, you're right...don't know what I was thinking.

### Act 1 Scene 8

SANDY How are you holding up Tommy lad?

TOMMY Yeah, not too bad Sandy thanks.

SANDY Did you sleep.

TOMMY A bit. Quiet after they're dinner aren't they.

SANDY It's the buffet.

TOMMY They love it don't they.

SANDY They love all of it. Even the complaining.

TOMMY I like it all too eh? It's a good job for sure.

SANDY There are worse, Tommy lad I'll give you that. There are worse.

TOMMY I've looked for others but I'll be sad to stop this.

SANDY Eh? Why would you stop it? What do you mean you've looked for others?

TOMMY *(nothing)*

SANDY You've looked for other jobs?

TOMMY I'm just being practical San. These coach trips aren't going to be around forever are they?

SANDY Aren't they?

TOMMY        The coach is only at 65%. It used to be full.

SANDY        Yeah but-

TOMMY        -there's too much choice out there now. Resorts and exotic destinations. You can hop on a plane to anywhere these days.

SANDY        I suppose.

TOMMY        People want new and exciting, hip and daring.

SANDY        But, this is great. No hassles, lots of support. It's safe and it's friendly and it's fun...how much do we laugh eh!?

TOMMY        We do! (*pause*) I know that. You know that-

SANDY        -they know that-

TOMMY        but it's a hard sell.

SANDY        It'd be a right shame. I love this job.

TOMMY        I didn't mean to depress you. You're going with some of them on the cruise next week aren't you?

SANDY        I am.

TOMMY        That'll be fun.

SANDY        I can't wait! How long 'til the Kentucky stop?

TOMMY        About an hour.

SANDY        Alright, I'll leave you in peace. I've got a copy of Hello and a Crunchie calling my name! Don't grass me up to Ray!

TOMMY        Don't leave any crumbs then!

*Lights fade and come back up.*

TOMMY        Ok, everyone, listen up. We're stopping here for 30 minutes just so that you can stretch your legs before lights out. There is another Charlie Cheedol Coach here too, make sure you get on the right one. We are coach 007, just remember my striking resemblance to Sean Connery and you'll be alright.

RITA           Where's it going?

TOMMY        It's headed home.

ALAN         Tempting.

BRENDA       No way!

TOMMY        If you don't want to be back in Bonville by morning do not get on the wrong bus.

MARY         We don't want to go back there! Fred, Fred. 007. What was it?

FRED         007.

TOMMY        Everybody hear that? Alice? *(he waves at her)* Did you hear that *(gives her the thumbs up)*

ALICE         *(thumbs up)*

TOMMY        Somebody look after Alice and Arthur please.

SANDY         Fear not! I'm on the case. Right, door side, you're turn, off you go.

ALAN         I hate all this freakin' door side, drivers side nonsense.

BRENDA        It just makes things easier.

ALAN         I feel like I'm back in high school.

## **Act 1 Scene 9**

TOMMY        It's lights down at 11pm. Quiet time it's supposed to be. Although some of the snoring could put wild animals to shame. Have to stop for gas at about 3am. Nobody stirs usually. Just Frank wanting a smoke; Andris, who likes the company and the new guy. Alan?

FRANK         Alright mate?

ALAN         Hello.

ANDRIS        You're not sleeping?

ALAN Not a hope in hell. I don't know if I've ever been more awake. There are 4 of the loudest snorers I've ever heard within 3 rows of me and my head feels like its in a particularly cruel vice. You not sleeping either eh?

ANDRIS I was sleeping. Now I am waking. Again I will sleep.

FRANK I sleep like a baby on these trips me. Mind you, I can sleep anywhere, you know. I learnt that during the war.

ANDRIS Ah, yes, the war. Strange places, strange sounds.

FRANK Right - At least on here you know you're not going to wake up with shrapnel in your arse.

ANDRIS Ya, or bullet in your brain.

ALAN No, I suppose not eh.

FRANK No, I just have Tommy wake me up whenever we stop so as I can have fag.

ALAN Ah.

FRANK Of course I remember when you could smoke on the bus.

ANDRIS I went on one trip about 20 years ago and they handed out free cigarettes for the journey.

FRANK Those were the days eh?

ALAN For sure.

FRANK When they first banned it we used to stop all the time for everyone to have a puff. Used to take 38 hours to get down there instead of 28, can you believe it?

ANDRIS This it is quick it is.

ALAN Ha. 28 hours. Unbelievable.

FRANK They don't stop as much now coz there ain't as many of us. Smokers, you know.

ALAN Ah yes, they all quit I suppose.

FRAN Nah mate. No - They all died.