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about 1000 words

Turbulence

Three rows up, in the seats closest to the concourse window, a young man sits with his arm across the back of his lover's shoulders. He pulls his blond haired partner close. They kiss. She rests her head on the man's chest and he squeezes her more firmly.

Three rows back, Kevin exhales deeply. His head drops back against the seat before turning to Jason, eyes rolling, and head shaking. "Look at them," Kevin whispers. "Can you imagine what all these people will think if we kiss like that right now?"

Jason's eyes meet Kevin's and he smiles. Mickey Mouse ears are slanted on his bald head, a memento from their vacation. He shrugs and opens his mouth moving his tongue rapidly in and out like a snake which culminates in him licking his lips and laughing.

"You're such a butt-face," Kevin says.

Without a word, Jason smiles and turns his attention back to the concourse window to watch the planes taxi, park, take-off, and land.

Kevin laughs, but he doesn't turn away. It isn't a chiseled body or superior intellect that makes him appreciate his partner. Those things faded long ago in a battle lost to fried chicken, World of Warcraft, and too many pints of Stella Artois. It's the way Jason communicates with Kevin without speaking, his protective nature, and the way he looks at him; that look that always says I love you. Kevin's head leans towards Jason's shoulder but stops short. He straightens up and sighs as he joins Jason in plane watching. Though, his eyes keep returning to the couple, sitting and spontaneously sucking face. *I wish. I can't even touch my partner without the world's scrutiny and disgust.*

The passing thirty-two minutes eat away at Kevin's mental constitution. He tosses and turns in the uncomfortable chairs at gate twenty-three. The leather is loose and worn with no back support. Because the seat bottom lacks rigidity, there is no way to lay across them. The boarding announcement from the flight attendant brings much needed relief. Kevin and Jason are one step closer to home.

"What seats are we in?" Kevin asks.

"24 A & B," Jason Replies. "Here we are." He lowers the collapsible handle on the couple's carry-on and places it into the overhead compartment.

Kevin makes his way into the window seat.

Jason sits beside him in the middle seat. "You sure you don't want to sit here?" Jason says.

Kevin replies, "Nope. The seat is all yours." He laughs. A pack drops into the empty seat next to Jason. Kevin's head snaps to the sound.

A tall man places his carry-on into the overhead compartment. He looks at Kevin and Jason briefly as he closes the overhead hatch. He releases the straps holding the top flap of his pack and takes out a bottle of water and the most current edition of the *American Conservative* and places them in the seat back in front of him.

Kevin's facial expression shifts. The lines in his forehead become more prominent and his eyes more focused. He turns to Jason, then leans his head back against the head-rest. *Just great.* An elbow pokes Kevin's ribcage.

"It's okay." Jason moved his lips to form the words but did not speak them aloud. He nods.

Soon after, the plane is at cruising altitude. The seatbelt light disappears and a queue forms for the bathroom. Kevin fades in and out of consciousness. His head sinks forward only for him to wake mid fall and catch it. Jason's shoulder is a tempting resting place. However, he would not do it. Only one type of person reads a right winged magazine like that, and after such a happy vacation in the Magic Kingdom he has no desire to see the ugly side of anyone. Eventually, Kevin places his forehead on the seat back in front of him and surrenders to the Sandman's embrace.

Following a ding in the cabin, the Captain's voice came over the intercom. "Good evening ladies and gentlemen. This is your Captain speaking. We are making our initial descent into Seattle. Unfortunately, the air at the lower altitude will be very choppy. For

your safety, we will turn on the seat belt sign and ask that you return to your seats and buckle up. We thank you in advance for your patience. We'll have you through this in no time at all. Flight attendants, prepare the cabin for arrival."

The plane rumbles as it dips suddenly. Kevin's heart rate soars. *It's like a roller coaster. Think roller coaster.* The sudden drops increased in intensity and frequency. Kevin grips the arm rest tightly; the muscles in his arm flexing. His shallow breathing is heavy and apparent.

Jason places his hand over Kevin's, rubbing his thumb over his partner's. He says, "We're almost home, babe."

Kevin nods. He closes his eyes and takes deep breaths. Releasing the arm rest, he grips Jason's hand; fingers intertwined. He gave no care to what the man in the aisle seat was thinking. He gave no care to what anybody was thinking. In this moment, his partner is the only other person in existence. There is one final thud as the landing gear touches the runway. Kevin feels relief. He is still holding Jason's hand. He doesn't let go. The seat belt sign vanishes. A chorus of metallic clanking fills the air as the passengers unbuckle their seat belts. Kevin releases Jason's hand and shifts his focus to their neighbor in the aisle seat.

"That was a rough one," says the man.

"Definitely," Jason replies.

"When I travel with my husband Stan, we avoid flying. Stan hates turbulence." The man says. "Couldn't help but hear that this is home for you two. Welcome home."

"Thank you," Kevin says. "Same to you."