



# In the Air

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In a Plane on my way to I don't know I guess where ever the people hijacking the plane want?

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We set sail from Genoa, Italy about an hour ago with nothing but open water all around us. I'm more than shocked I got on this boat but there is no way to drive back home and flying the friendly skies wasn't appealing after the last forty hours. Is it a boat or a ship and does that matter? Frank was behind the wheel as Emma showed me how to trim the sail. Her mother Irena was forward tying something down. With luck and a good wind, we would be in Lisbon, Spain soon. Frank says there's nothing like sailing the open waters. We would sail the forty-two-foot boat for the next six days then back to Florida. Taking a trip with the parents of my girlfriend might not sound like fun, but it was better than the trip to catch up with them. Well, I guess I'm getting ahead of myself. I should start with my plans.

First class is an interesting way to travel. I'm underage, so I can't drink, and the flight attendants all know I'm not some rich guy so no extra nuts. About a month after we were rescued from our tropical island paradise the cruise-line made an offer to settle. My dad said I should take what they were offering, and mom agreed if they paid me with a cashier's check. I took a check for four-hundred-thousand dollars and went straight to the bank. Most of the others decided to sue. Just days ago, word came around the cruise company filed for bankruptcy. There I was with enough cash to pay for school, but all I could think about was Emma. We spoke every night. Her father was planning on a trip to the Mediterranean. They would stay sailing around for about a week. It was supposed to be a family trip, but Emma's sister was on another job, and her brother hated the open water. Chad was an assistant manager at a motel Six near Fort Myers, Florida. Frank offered me a place on his crew, but sailing sounded like suicide.

Three days after she left, I realized I made a mistake. I think Frank was trying to see what kind of man I am. Just maybe I could be man enough in his eyes to date his daughter. Most of all I passed up on the chance to spend time with Emma. I woke up that morning and came down the stairs to a waiting bag and my mom standing there with my passport. She said, "*there's a flight leaving for Italy in a few hours. If you don't go, you'll regret it. Thomas don't live with regrets.*" I wondered what she meant by that. It sounded like she regretted something but her and dad met in elementary school and married right out of college. Did she regret being with him all these years? I thought about that as I got on the plane. My flight was a little under thirteen hours long,

but I would get there a few days before them. A few days in Italy a place where I don't speak the language sounded like fun. I closed my eyes and thought about the island and her.

We were in our hut on the bed we made with her on top and the sun rising from behind her in what was going to be another warm day. I could remember the touch of her bare skin, her scent, and our heat as we made love with both measured temperance and reckless abandon. Most of all I could remember thinking how this was one of those perfect moments that don't come around every day, the kind when over we look back on with a mix of longing and fondness. Maybe this was the exact moment I knew I loved her. A voice said, "*she must be something.*" I opened my eyes and looked to the person sitting next to me. She was older maybe in her forties and looking down at my crotch, and yes little Tommy was printing in my pants. I quickly pulled out the tray from my side and said, "*oh god I am so sorry.*" She said, "*don't be I remember being in love.*" Her name was Iris, and I was off on her age by about thirty years. She was on her way to the small town in Italy where her husband was born in with his ashes. I don't know why but I told her my story and I mean the whole story including the sex. I told her things I could never tell my mom or dad. Maybe it was how earnest she was about my erection or the idea I would never see her again, but it felt right to talk to her.

About ten hours into the flight something felt wrong. The plane should have been over land by now but all I could see was water, and the sun was in the wrong place. Iris was going into great and nauseating detail on how her husband liked his blowjobs when I noticed the flight attendants were missing and god how I wanted to be rescued. Hearing how a near eighty-year-old man liked having a finger in his backside while his wife went down on him was enough to make me want to see what jumping out a plane would be like. The pilot made an announcement, "*this is your captain, we are having difficulty, and we may have to divert to another airport. This is nothing to worry about we will still get everyone to their destinations, and anyone with a connecting flight will have their arrangements made for them by the airline.*" Iris was in mid-face thrust with her left hand demonstrating her backdoor action when she stopped and said, "*that doesn't sound right. No airline would do anything like that.*" She pulled out her iPhone and checked a compass app showing we were going south and not east.

We sat in wonderful, terrifying silence for a full ten minutes when an announcement said, *“when we get to the airport you will depart the plane to awaiting buses. You will do as we say or die.”* Iris said, *“now that sounds like an airline.”* Another announcement said, *“all Jews report to the back of the plane.”* Iris tucked her Star of David into her shirt. I said, *“your ring.”* Instead of a diamond wedding ring, she had one with something in Hebrew carved into the band. She took the ring off and swallowed it saying, *“my parents were asked to stand in line with their parents back in Poland, and only they got out alive.”* A man walked down the aisle with some sort of zipgun. For all we knew it wasn't even real. Another man wearing a balaclava searched the overhead compartments. He came to us and stopped. He pulled an urn out of a bag and asked, *“who does this belong to?”* On the side of the satin-silver urn was a Star of David. Iris gave me a death grip as she stared at her husband's urn. I said, *“they are my father's ashes.”* The last thing I remember was the butt of the man's gun coming at my face.

When I woke up my face was a throbbing, aching pain, and Iris was gone. There was blood on the seat next to me, but it could have been mine. I was also missing a tooth. On the floor in the aisle was Iris's Star of David. The plane started to buck with turbulence as we flew further south. I was out for about ten minutes. In times of stress, idiocy runs through my mind. I thought about how much I paid for this flight and would they charge me for the extra experience of the hijacking. The sun was almost gone, and there was a strange light just outside the plane, and my thought was, *“this must be the aliens come to join in on the fun.”* The light was from an F18 fighter jet. I know it was American because of the flag on it and it was close enough to see the name of the pilot on the side, a Captain James “Smarty” Smart. The scent of something wonderful filled my space. I turned and accidentally looked down the open shirt of one of the flight attendants. Her name tag said, June and she was a tan goddess that smelled like something on a summer day in a place I could never afford to be.

June told me what kind of plane it was and how they were telling the pilot they would shoot us down if we didn't turn. We were heading toward an aircraft carrier. Trying not to stare

at her amazing breasts I asked, “*would they really do that?*” She sat down next to me and whispered, “*they might not have any choice. It could be the two-hundred twenty souls on the plane versus the thousands aboard the ship.*” Another plane was visible on the right side. The man with the gun said, “*get up and cover yourself, whore.*” Before June could act, he slapped her then picked her up, turned her around and pushed her down the aisle.

Something felt off about the slap. Another one of the masked men picked up a woman from her seat by her hair and ripped her shirt open. I turned my head, but I could hear her crying, and I could see their reflection in the glass of my window. He said something about an American whore and let her go. She sat down trying to cover herself with her ripped shirt. I took off my jacket and gave it to her. She nodded without saying a word. The man sitting next to her didn’t move an inch. When I sat down, I saw June with the maybe gun guy. Her shirt was all the way open with the hand of the man that slapped her touching her nearly bare chest as she laughed. The man with the mask had his mask off and looked more mid-western than middle-eastern. I thought about how the men that spoke did so in a cartoonish accent like something from a bad movie or a television show.

The man with the might be gun came back and said, “*we will be landing soon, and your troubles will just begin unless you do as you are told.*” He stopped at the woman who I gave my jacket to and asked, “*where did you get that whore?*” Before I could say it was from me, the guy sitting next to her pointed at me. The gunman looked over at me as he picked up the woman. He said, “*she’s going to teach you a lesson in not interfering.*” He pulled off the jacket and the rest of her shirt. Without the ripped shirt in nothing but a padded bra and skirt, she looked more like a little girl than a woman. She started to cry saying she was only fourteen and please don’t. The gunman looked her up and down then he looked at the man that was sitting next to her. I would later find out Gregory Victor had run away with young Jasmine Martin kidnapping her so he could take her to a place that wouldn’t question their relationship. A forty-something man running away with a fourteen-year-old girl. From down the aisle, a woman said, “*let the whore go. We have to get ready.*” She was covered from head to toe in what I think they call a hijab, but it was too tight, and I could see the name tag as well as Jane’s ample bustline.

The guy with the might be gun picked me up by my shirt and said, “*OK, helpful guy you are going to help us.*” He pushed me down the aisle past people as they tried not to look at us. There was one little girl maybe six-years-old in a cream-colored dress with shiny black shoes who was just watching as if this was all just a live action show. She waved as we passed and the guy with the gun waved back. Near the back of the plane, an access door was open to the cargo below. In the cargo hold, I found Iris along with the bodies of everyone they could identify as Jewish. Someone had stabbed then beat her to death. To add insult, they dumped her husband’s ashes on her. In a locked section in the back, there were vacuumed sealed bricks of something. They told me as soon as we land a truck would pull beside the plane and I would move the cash to the truck. The airline was moving about twenty-million dollars for a bank in Italy from the federal reserve. This was unusual, but with the threat of Brexit, many were worried about the Euro tanking and are betting on the power of the all mighty dollar.

One of the men handcuffed me to a rail as the others changed back into the clothing they were wearing when they got on the plane. The man with the might not be a gun unlocked me and told me to get ready to land. Let’s just say there is a reason you don’t fly in the cargo hold of a jet. The landing was rough, and I hit my arm leaving a deep bruise. The plane rolled to a stop, and one of the men opened the door saying, “*here they come.*” A truck pulled up, and a ting sound echoed in the hold. The truck sped past as another ting sound. I looked over, and the man with what was a fake gun fell back with a hole in his head and his brains spread across the back of the hold. Jane closed the door and said, “*shit, how did they get here so soon.*” Another ting sound and a bead of light came through the side of the plane. I felt something warm spread across my face. I looked at Jane, and she had a gaping hole in her chest, and I was covered in her blood. I ducked down putting my hands on my head and waited to see if I would be shot or saved.

The Algerian People's National Armed Forces were running anti-terrorism drills at what was an old unused airstrip. The hijackers landed in what had to be one of the worst places they

could land. They rushed the plane and took out all but one of the hijackers. They also zip tied me and hauled me off as if I was one of the hijackers. Twenty hours later they released me from a dark hot holding cell and led me to a waiting bus. The little girl in the cream-colored dress was in the window waving, and yes, I waved back. We later found out the plane's crew were staging a hijacking so they could take the cash in the hold. They killed the Jewish passengers to make it look like middle-eastern terrorist hijacked the plane taking the money. The rest of the crew was detained by American naval personnel at the port they drove us to, but the lone man still dressed like a hijacker was never seen or heard from again. I'm willing to bet some people didn't like them trying to blame terrorists for their grand theft. It wasn't a real shock that half of the money vanished from the plane. The ship took us to Naples, Italy debriefing us on the way. The officer that took my statement said how she would never go on a trip with me. I was bad luck, and I couldn't argue with her.

I found a bus tour of Italy and paid for my seat spending the next three days seeing the sights and letting go what happened. We stopped at the small village where Iris's husband was from, and while it sounded corny, I said a little prayer for her and her husband. I didn't know any Jewish prayers so I did what I knew and hoped it wouldn't offend him or his religion. In a small café in Genoa, Italy I was drinking a coffee and watching the street when Emma passed by. She went about ten steps; then she turned around with a shocked look on her face. I got up and took her in my arms and kissed her. I told her, "*I couldn't stay away.*" Walking up behind her was a slightly angry looking Frank. His face lightened when he saw it was me. Later he told me Emma wouldn't shut up about me and was talking about moving to Ohio. He asked, "*so you flew..... how was the trip?*"