

## TURBULENCE

I was in a restaurant. A group of women were in the table in front me. I angled my chair so that I could watch and listen.

–He took me on this special flight. It was sort of a training flight. But everyone was already trained. There were just checking them out. And all the passengers were people who knew someone in the airlines. They took us to this island. It had this great runway to test the pilots. It also had these luxury accommodations where we were able to stay for free.

Her friends eagerly listened to her. They all wished that it could be them who was taking the flight rather than their friend. This was what sex meant to them all. That flight to paradise. They didn't want to question the feeling unless it might fade. It was like holding on to your seat as the airliner landed. Any more and she would panic out of her skin.

–They train them to listen to noises. One sound is an engine going out.

–What does it sound like if all the engines go out?

–Not very good at all.

They all laughed.

They didn't dare question her feelings. She couldn't. They knew that this was the basement of their longing. They couldn't really understand what it would mean to breakdown. But if someone gave them this dream and then took it away, they wouldn't know what to do. Since she actually had it handed it to her, she felt the most pressure, the most doubt. She thought that it made her strong to have it all in the flesh. That is what she felt when she was with him. She thought that she was sexy. She was just bloody scared.

When he was gone, she always thought the worst. And she waited and waited for him to come back. She wanted to develop her own career. But she was getting terrible at concentrating. She was glad that she didn't drink too much. This would be a time of temptation. On those long weeks when he was gone, she could feel herself coming apart. She spent a lot of time with her friends so she didn't have to think about the feeling that were coming over her. By the time that she arrived back home at night, there was just enough time to get ready for bed. That made it ideal. He'd try to call every night. And she would wait for that tuck under the covers. The dreamy phone kiss. She wanted more. What could she ask for?

I'd seen her at the gate. She seemed to be the only interesting person on the plane. By fate, we ended up setting next to each other. I read her as a wildcat ready to take her first steps. But her experience had slowed her pace. Even before the plane had taken off, she told me about her upcoming marriage to a pilot.

–He's the perfect Southern gentleman. You know the whole deal. How he opens the door for a woman.

She told me that she was from a small town in Alabama. Pine Forest or something.

–We found this lovely home just outside of Atlanta. I'm so excited. I can't contain myself.

–You're going to move in together now.

–Not exactly. I'm just getting together for him for a talk.

She averted eye contact.

>> We're just having some problems. But I don't want to think about that.

She became all cheery.

–How come you were in Chicago?

–I got a job up there for a few months. Just until we get married and move in together.

She made it a point to emphasize her happiness. Each word seemed so precise.

I knew the city had awakened a maturity in her. But those thoughts were somewhat a threat to her bliss in Atlanta. As long as she was so reserved, it seemed difficult to get her to talk. I felt sort of stupid getting her to have things to say.

The plane had been delayed on the runway. We braced ourselves as it started to take flight. She looked over at me and smiled.

–I's been the worst day for me. My earlier flight was canceled. Then they overbooked the next one. I've been at the airport for the whole day.

I wondered what it would be like spending the rest of my life with her. Her easy-going style made it simple to give in to nostalgia.

–You have a great smile.

I seemed to mumble my complement. She appeared not to notice what I said.

–I wonder what it must be like to live your whole life in just a few seconds. That brings out something special in people.

They came around and brought us drinks. I just had an orange juice.

–I really need a good drink. After all the shit that I've been through today. And I have even weathered the storm yet.

She offered me her peanuts.

–I really don't like peanuts. I'm from the South, but peanuts aren't my thing.

She just beamed as she smiled. I gobbled up the two small packages. I pretended that this was my dinner.

–I had a meal while I was sitting in the airport. Although I don't think that is setting right with me.

She proceeded to tell me a long story about her father's ordeal in the lumber business. He was eventually bought out by a larger company. Part of the settlement was that he was given a position in the parent company.

–I don't think that was the best thing for him. He didn't like working for someone else. That's where I get my independent string. My Daddy's like no other. That's what I first saw in Ron. Although I'm not too sure. Ron's just had everything given to him. Things like that don't really make you the best person.

I wondered about her own background. She was trading all her dreams for him. Dreams that could barely raise themselves above the tip of the tallest pine tree.

–It was strange to fall in love with a pilot. Scary in fact. Think about it. He's never in one place. Even though he has a home, he has an excuse to get away. At first, I thought that would be great. I could have my own life. And when Ron was home, we could share. And I still think that. It's just that I don't want him to have too much life while he's away.

I listened. She wanted to tell me her story.

–Ron is quite a guy. That’s what attracted me to him in the first place. I met him while he was still in the Air Force. He had this swashbuckling quality. He loved to face danger straight on. That had a real appeal to a Southern girl. To be rescued by a hero.

>>But all that heroics has its own distractions. At times, I think that Ron thinks that he doesn’t need me. It’s almost as if he tests himself.

She clearly wanted to tell me more.

–This flight is getting a little rough.

–It’s nothing to worry about. These planes can really take a lot.

I had visions of wind shears cutting the plane in two. She could only think of knights in these shining armors.

–Ron’s told me the world about flying.

I could feel the both of us being taken up in this whirlwind. I just held to my seat. I could sense the passing through of a barrier. The need to reveal more.

–I wish Ron understood me half as much as he understands the mysteries of flight. I think that’s just what it is. Like the mysteries of love, or the mysteries of a woman.

She stared at me, and then again became lost in her story.

–Once you learn about the sky, some of that mystery goes away. But then there’s still this struggle with who you are. As if you see yourself looking back at you. You’re wrestling with yourself in the sky.

>>That may be his excuse. That there’s so much of him up here and so little down there. In fact, I feel even closer to him when I’m in this plane.

She moved her hand to grip her arm rest. She could see that she was moving closer to my arm. She again looked over and smiled. I was trying to get the gist of the story. At that point, the plane almost leaped in sky. We both laughed.

–Part of me is afraid of meeting Ron. He’s going to pick me up at the airport. We have a long drive back to our place. I can find out what’s been going on with him.

>>Ron got together with a woman. I don’t know how far things went. He claims that he was drinking. That he just ended up passed out in her hotel room. She’s a flight attendant. Someone that’s he’s talked about before. Always called her nasty and brash. But down deep, that’s what he goes for. He’s just taken me to protect his reputation. I don’t really think that. But I’m all wondering about it now.

>>Ron loves to party. He never lets it interfere with his work. But when he’s off, he knows how to have a good time. I think that’s why I fell for him. I’m a friendly girl. But I’m afraid to let go. But after a few drinks. It was never much before I started to hang out with Ron. But I just found him so cute. I think that my conservative upbringing held me back. But on first impressions, Ron reminded me of my Dad. And I just lost it.

>>But it wasn’t until this party that I actually could do anything. I’d freeze up when I was around him. But I got so trashed at this party. And Ron just seemed so dashing. I’m not one to kiss and tell. You know the whole thing.

She blushed. I brushed my hand along hers and then brought it back to my side of the arm rest. I deftly covered my “mistake”. She paused for a few moments as if to include me in

her experience. The plane took one of those dives during this pause. I just held on and looked at her.

–Ron tells me that this is nothing to worry about. He just has some horror stories from his days in the Force. It’s almost as if he went looking for trouble.

I heard this crackling noise in the plane. She gave me the weirdest look.

–You know what that means.

I looked confused.

–We’re going to crash.

Then she started laughing. She touched my arm.

–You’re going to be OK.

I wanted her hand to linger there. If she could dwell on her problem with Ron. And then realize what was happening to him had nothing to do with this.

–I think that’s why Ron gets the way he does. He lives a full life up here that has nothing to do with us. I wish that I had something like that. I have him. And he leads separate lives.

The turbulence was getting worse. But we rode it like an amusement ride. Then there was this sharp jolt that was followed by a quick dive.

–This is your Captain. You have nothing to worry about. We’re going to try to get you out of this as soon as possible.

In the distance, I could see an electrical storm. I did not feel entirely reassured. I just wanted to get out of this as soon as I could.

I wanted her to pull my hand over to her and hold it.

–You’ll be better soon.

Maybe to fall asleep on her shoulder.

–The little bumps in the road make you stronger. I don’t want you to think that Ron is the only guy that I’ve ever been with. But I just feel so comfortable with him. I do admit that we have our spats. When I’m with him, I drink more than I’d like to. Although I’d love to drink more than that right now.

She was getting a little wild. The following turbulence was intensely jarring. This was our roller coaster. Just as we caught our breaths, the plane would jerk forward.

–This isn’t what I had in mind.

## SOARING

If you can leave the body, the soul finds its rightful home. In the heavens. The separation is often agonizing. All the baggage that we have built up over time just spills out. We want to run in the streets and scream. Create havoc. Destroy. Rip apart our skin.

You have to give in to all these feelings. You will explode in yourself. Our of yourself. You are in the process of escaping.

–I think that this is getting too much for me to take.

–I’m starting to feel sick—the peanuts.

–This is one of those moments that nothing can make you feel better.

I asked the attendant for a soda water.

## **DIVORCE**

The final moments of separation are the worst. The body does not want to give up its supposed ownership of the soul. If you imagine your most intense experiences. All your pleasures. The worst pain. Add all this together. Now take away all of that. The nothing. The pangs of emptiness. That is the divorce of the soul from the self. Let go.

My every concentration was directed toward her. Even the disturbing turbulence was reaction to my focus.

–I don't know if I have it in my heart to forgive. I guess it depends on what really happened. I'm not the forgiving type. You are who you are. Honest. You accept that or you don't. I have this suspicion that Ron's games have been going on a while. Nothing systematic or that. He's just been taking the opportunities when they present themselves. If I let it go, then this is just the beginning. But I feel so great with him. I don't want to end it.

>>I just wish that I had a greater affect on him than I do.

–It will turn out for the best.

I really didn't say that. I just wanted to play along. To be Ron. But Ron wouldn't be phased by this minor turbulence. That's why she admired him. He was so much a product of his situation. And he was forever rising above it. But just enough that he never had to admit his own role in all of it. They were just going through some turbulence.

## **DISCOVERY**

Our cosmic turbulence is just the beginning for a deeper revelation. We escape ourselves completely. We float in air. Where there had been disturbance, there is now only smooth currents. We enter the flow.

Part of her was pushing Ron to the very adventure that she feared in herself. She knew that Ron was hardly the match for her if she gave in to her more savage desires. She needed restraint. That was what she had learned from her father. All his confidence submitted to this fundamental law. That was why her mother had tolerated him. They both stood rock steady upon this agreement.

In the sky, what is steady is this creation. This plane makes an order in the sky. Even among disturbance, its path is the only thing that makes sense. The plane is messing with a natural order. It is totally artificial in its belief. It challenges the heavens.

–Sometimes I wonder if we were ever meant to fly. I really think that it changes the brain. Gets us away from the gravity that keeps us rooted. I know all this sounds crazy. But it's just a feeling that I have.

She again laughed.

## **CROSSING OVER**

When we encounter a place of such power and clarity, there is at first a resistance. Then all we can do is surrender to the inevitable.

–I think that Ron wanted me to have an affair. That’s why he was always so open about everything. He just seemed immersed in sex. Before we were together. And now I suspect even now. Sure there was the good natured fun of guys going to strip clubs. I think that there was more to it than that.

>>For us, sometimes it had nothing to do with romance. It was more like a sport. He enjoyed the taste. The sense of contest. That he was always pushing himself to more pleasure. He often lacked for tenderness. He cherished me because he wanted me there. He wanted me when he needed me there. Part of him wanted something new. He couldn’t break up with me. That would just destroy his upstanding character. The good officer. The respected pilot. He had to catch me. He could never be with an adulterer.

>>He wanted my thirst for sex to be the same as his. That way, when he withdrew his affections, I would be hooked and have to seek it elsewhere. The only thing is that I’m not built the way that he is. That goes against all my upbringing. I’m passionate. But passion is part of my character. I’m not playing a game. So sex isn’t just about my appetites. It’s about all of me. My person.

>>That’s too much for him. That’s why he’s carrying on the way he is. He says it was all a mistake. But he needs to grow up. This is his wake up call. I just hope that it isn’t too late.

I felt it was too late for all of us. The plane went through a trough. The recovery only slammed it into a deeper depression. I was hanging on. She put her hand on my arm to reassure me. But even she was breaking under the pressure. She saw all this as related to the mess with Ron. She was accepting the punishment for her lax tolerance. In her fear, she faced the palpable quality of her own hunger. In her heart, she knew the violent character of her own appetites. A few drinks had primed her. And now the turbulence was breaking down what resistance she had.

## **SURRENDER**

Our salvation is letting go the forces of the heavens. Taking pleasure in our flight, we hope to return to our everyday experience. But this separates us from the soul’s origins. We are driven by a stronger longing for our aerial home.

She didn’t want to betray her commitment to Ron. Perhaps, she had said too much. She hoped that her talk with Ron could reassure. She didn’t want to commit to too much before she hit the ground.

–This drink is making me light-headed. That and all this turbulence. I’m being shaken around like a cocktail. You haven’t told me too much about yourself.

–I’ve been doing some writing. I’ve been a student–grad school. And now I’m heading south.

Why didn’t I have a better story? I did. But I didn’t want to share my quest with her. For the moment, all that seemed pointless.

–Are you with someone?

–Not at the moment.

If this was our lives, everything came down to the trip on the plane, then she was my life. She knew this, and this is why she primed me for information.

–What if we never got out of this? If this was our terminal flight, how would we think of things differently.

–I thought that was why you were telling me these stories. Confession.

–And you’ll absolve me.

–Or encourage you to new ones.

Her story seemed the issue. That was why I needed her to continue on. But how far could she go under the circumstances. What would make her the bad girl. How could she open up her pursuit of passion. She felt that she was facing her mortality for simply questioning Ron’s reputation. She had never been so frank with her doubts. She had doubted him all along. She gave in to the nostalgia of dinner dates and flowers. To question him would be to end her belief in chivalry. This was the foundation for her view of romance. A man didn’t just give of himself. He gave part of the world to his woman. But the world was rotten. She was afraid to embrace this corruption. That would only make her subject to her passions. Passion always needed to be subsumed to character. This was his shortcoming. He had hidden behind his role. The airline pilot. The officer. But it was all a mask. Just something that gave him allowance to pursue his own appetites.

She was becoming part of something that she hated. She had primed her friends on all her dreams. Her biggest dreams just seemed to be a lie. She started to hate herself. It wasn’t her talking. It was the drink.

## FLOATING

We head into the heavens and don’t look back to the earth. We have transcended pleasure. We discover a new purity.

Both our fear and the turbulence were remaking our bodies. I could feel this massive disassociation from the self. I let myself float in the void. I looked over at her while I seemed to lose consciousness. I was immersed in this intoxication. We flowed together. Deeper than a kiss, I could feel her spirit move in and out of me. I relaxed in the current.

The wash overcame. But she was part of my internal feelings.

–We left our bodies behind.

But there was something that was so physical about it all. My initial attraction to her became satisfied. There was a kiss in this danger.

–I don’t feel any shame about my feelings. I don’t want to leave Ron. But I no longer feel that I exist only for him. I wonder if we can survive together if I have these kinds of doubts.

–It’s just the turbulence talking.

–I am the turbulence.

Whatever we had experienced before was a light preview of what we were now facing. This was beyond fear. Just a naked anticipation for it all to end. I could feel the life again

sucked from me. From a light-headedness, I drifted into unconsciousness. I just gave way. I went out.

When I revived, she was holding my hand.

–I thought that we were going to lose you.

–No, I’m OK. I need some water.

The internal lights were going on and off like crazy.

–What is going on?

–I don’t have the least idea.

I squeezed her hand. She was my nurse. We both were going through the same thing. But she seemed better for wear.

I could feel the kiss warm my body.

–You needed resuscitation.

–It was a mistake. Nothing really happened. She came over to my room because she needed to borrow my scissors. I have that little kit. She asked me if I wanted drink. She had some in her room. It was a cheap motel. It wasn’t s if they had a bar or room service. And I drank too much. I just passed out.

–While she was in you room.

–I went to her room. She had her drinks there.

–You just went over to her room. Thinking nothing of it.

–I was trying to be nice. To be a gentleman.

–You never touched her.

–No. We did get little drunk. And smutty. She had a mouth on her. Telling the dirtiest stories. But I never did anything with her.

–You didn’t kiss her.

–She tried.

–Each stage of denial ends up being a stage of avowal. That is how you work a confession. You build up the chain of denial until you come to the one fact that breaks down your accused. Along the way you build up the evidence.

–How much liquor did she have in the room.

–Enough.

–Enough for two.

–I guess. She had real bottles. Not the stuff that they give you on the planes. So there was enough for two.

–You work with her.

–Did. I used to work with her.

–She’s not the girl that you told me about. The one that used to break up marriages.

–Not her.

–I thought that girl quit.

–She quit too?



–Who quit?

–The girl who gave blow jobs.

–You’re getting me confused.

–Would it be cheating if she kissed you?

–It wasn’t like that.

–But if it was.

–You’re asking too many questions.

–You didn’t sleep with her.

–I didn’t sleep with her.

–But you used to tell me those stories about her. About that one pilot who went down on her in the washroom.

–I think it was the galley.

–You think. You just remember the details of the sex. I mean if you had the chance. If she was naked in front of you. You wouldn’t think about touching her?

–No.

–And you were both dressed?

–Yeah.

–Sure?

–I think that we were. No, I’m sure.

–It was her room. She didn’t want to get comfortable.

–She did change her dress. She put on a sweat shirt.

–Just a sweatshirt.

–Jeans.

–Did she change in front of you?

–No. She was wearing jeans.

–Until she took them off.

–OK, she was just in a sweatshirt. A long sweatshirt.

–Sitting cross-legged on the bed.

–Maybe.

–You don’t remember.

–I remember.

–She’s got great legs. You’ve told me that before. That’s why your friend ate her out. He couldn’t get enough just touching her legs. Just feeling her up. Am I getting you hot just talking about it. You can feel your hand running up those smooth legs. Reaching inside her panties. And when you feel inside of her, that’s when you get a little aroused. I know how you like pussy. Just that smell. The word.. The touch. It’s more ice in your drink. Another round. And it’s the drink talking. Another drink. You don’t know the difference,. It could be me, it could be her.

>>>You want to touch me now. Just as I tell you your story. And you’ve got your teeth on her panties pulling them down. And when she spreads her legs, you just bury yourself inside her. And the more that she gets excited, you get excited. And she’s screaming in passion. Waking up everyone in that cheap motel. And you want her just like that. You don’t even pull down your pants completely. You’re inside her with your incredible charm. The two of you banging away.

That's who you are.

>>You didn't got there to talk. You went there to fuck her. You knew that she would be a quick fuck. And once you're a little bit inside, why not go all the way. It's just training for your future wife. Keeps you in practice. If I don't give it to you, someone else will.

>>And when you get back to me, you'll just be raring and willing to go. And I'll open up like an angel and take you in.

>>The night is lonely. You don't want to stop at one. You keep it going. Virile chap. Each time that she climaxes, you want more of the same. And you polish off all the liquor that she has. You don't have a flight the next day. You don't even head back to your room. Why not a quickie in the morning. You join her in the shower. I'm surprised that you can even stand up after your little exploit. But now you want me to bend over so that you can finish the job. Whatever venom is still floating down there in you.

I loved the performance. The zeal of a district attorney. But it seemed all the more potent because we were floating up here together. Could she hold to her composure on the ground. What if our flight had to touch down early. And they put us up in hotel rooms. With room service. Would I crawl over to her room?

Which story was mine and which was hers? We competed for the biggest revelation.

There was some crying and more screaming in the plane. Everyone was now afraid. The Captain could not quiet us down.

–I never meant for any of this to happen. This is my lesson to myself.

–I'm not part of your education.

–I need you. I'm not myself without you.

She sat on the bed across from me. She had just finished off a box of twinkies.

–Are you sure that you didn't want one?

We both laughed. She stretched out and massaged her legs. Then she sat at the edge of the bed.

–Come over here.

–What do you want?

She held me close.

–That was quite a scare.

As the pilot brought the plane down, we all cheered.

–He's going to be waiting for me.

–That was quite a landing.