

Airport Proposal

by Lori Lee Palmer

For as long as she could remember, Genevieve loved to go to the airport. Whether she was going on a trip herself, seeing someone off, or picking someone up; the sound of plane engines triggered hopefulness and an infinity of possibilities. Watching jets take off into the bright blue yonder encouraged her dreams of the future.

When Genevieve and Joe began dating as teenagers, they would often go to the airport and ride around on the terminal trains. They liked to sit at Starbucks, drink coffee, and people watch.

“Gen...” (She hated when he called her Gen) “See that woman traveling alone? She looks sad. She must be traveling for a funeral. Who do you think died?”

“Both of her parents, in a tragic car accident. She’s crying because she found out they left all their money to Daisy, their beloved Lhaso Apso.”

“Ha, good one! See those two men whispering? I think they’re speaking a foreign language. They must be spies.”

Joe always thinks foreigners are spies. I wish he had more imagination. Genevieve said nothing and gave Joe a halfhearted smile.

As they watched the sunset from the top floor of the airport parking garage one spring evening, Joe got down on his knee on the concrete floor, held out a diamond ring between his thumb and forefinger, looked up at Genevieve and asked, “Will you marry me?”

Genevieve gasped, and her heart skipped a beat before pounding rapidly in her chest. She looked around to see if anyone was watching, and then pulled Joe up. She held his hands between her own but didn’t touch the ring. “Oh, Joe.” She sighed, and tears ran down her face.

“What? Why? I thought this was what you wanted.” Joe pulled his hands away from Genevieve’s grasp, shoved them in his pockets, and backed away from her.

“It’s too soon. We’re too young. I want more,” Genevieve tried to explain.

What happened next? Did Joe angrily leave the parking garage, and cause her to take an Uber home? Did he cry and try to convince her to marry him? Genevieve imagined the various scenarios which could

have happened, rather than the one that actually did: Her accepting his proposal, getting married, and then divorcing two years later.

She looked out over the tarmac, thinking of how different her life would have been if she hadn’t said yes. Why did she assume she had no choice? Why did she unthinkingly go along with what he wanted? She could have saved herself three years of emotional ups and downs and the ultimate fallout of her ruined credit due to Joe’s gambling addiction. Sure, they had some good times, but what if she could go back, say no, and wipe the slate clean? If only it were so easy.

She watched the planes take off and land, looking for a Delta plane coming in from the west. Brandon was flying in from Houston, and she always liked to arrive at the airport early and watch the activity in the sky. She’d have plenty of time to make it down to Starbucks to meet him since he’d be the last one off the plane. Pilots always were.

After she and Joe split up, Genevieve continued going to the airport to watch the planes. The routine soothed her confused state of mind. One day when she was having coffee at Starbucks, a handsome young pilot caught her eye and she stared at him so long he asked, “Do I know you?”

“Would you like to?” she answered. They began a conversation, and he was almost late for his flight. He asked for her number and took her out for a romantic dinner the following weekend.

As she watched for Brandon from their usual table, she looked down at the diamond ring on her finger, twirled it around, and admired its sparkle. She saw him as soon as he turned the corner, looking handsome as ever in his uniform. Brandon’s face lit up when he saw her, and he flashed her a big smile. All of her hopes for the future were pinned on this man, and she couldn’t be happier. ✨

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