

IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINE

A Zine About Airports

Badlung Press

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AIRPORT POEMS



Cavin Bryce Gonzalez

walked through a gate
saw you and turned
around walked
through another gate
saw you and
turned around
turned around
a lot that day
and every day
after

*

i wonder what motivates
pilots to be pilots
is it the leather jacket
old 90's TV shows
or what maybe it's
the freedom the
open air pretending
not to be human
acting like a
cloud

*

only ever ridden in
a plane once i
remember the fear
pure fear like God
was there with me
watching waiting
for me to flinch

Love And Passion on an Earthbound Facility Symbolizing and Facilitating Flight



Catherine Sinow

He and I coexisted on the same flight, specifically United Flight UA2704 from LaGuardia Airport (LGA) in Queens to George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH). We were in the same metal tube for a full three hours and 45 minutes, both separately loitering at LaGuardia Terminal B gate A3 before that, progressing through the very same TSA. It was unfortunate that we only met subsequently in IAH Terminal C while waiting for our respective flights, mine Delta DL45 to Salt Lake City International Airport (SLC) (my home) and his Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL), American Airlines AA8402, where he was going for an anime convention (he makes his home with two roommates and a pet snake, named Liz [short for Lizard, but it's a snake], in Brooklyn).

His name is the strong, elegant, and most importantly, androgynous, Julian. We encountered one another next to Best Buy Express Automated Kiosk; he was purchasing a phone charging device and I took notice of his appearance. I greeted him and noticed that our voices looked salubrious together in synesthetic mind space. Julian resembled one of the Boston Bombers, the hot one, the one who they kept alive and put on the cover of Rolling Stone and straight onto death row after that. Me? My name is Audrey and I look like Kaitlin Bennett, the "gun girl" who carried a rifle at her Kent State graduation. (My appearance goes well with my younger sister's who looks like Michelle Carter, the girl who convinced her boyfriend to kill himself.) It was, as they say, love at first sight.

We shared our preferences to make certain that we were compatible. He said that in lieu of music, he only listened to field recordings of the insides of casinos. It started with the dedicated album by Adrian Rew and then

when that became prosaic, he started producing his own recordings, travelling to casinos in his 2015 white Hyundai Sonata and compiling his own library of over a week's worth of the cacophonous sounds. He releases these recordings via podcast which also includes discussions with cultural critics and those who work in the casino industry. He claims he will likely switch to a different hobby soon, such as only listening to music on cylinder records. This rapid switch is because he has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). I found him to be compatible with my highly specific cultural hobbies: I'm a zealous film connoisseur who consumes many styles, from Non-camera Animation all the way to New French Extremity. My preferred genre is one I named myself: Thriller Taking Place In An Expensive House (TTPIAEH). I maintain that The Invitation is the epitome of this genre and I have published quite a few essays on the film. I also lead an active Discord group on the subject and we discuss movies such as The Gift, Gone Girl, Get Out, 기생충 (Parasite), and Ex Machina, along with certain Black Mirror episodes. The films must take place in a house that is mid-century modern or a later style as I enjoy feeling wealthy upon viewing.

Once we had established compatibility, Julian and I sampled perfume at Jo Malone London to smell how we always dreamed our partners of smelling. We stopped by Benefit Cosmetics Automated Kiosk to purchase concealer to cover up some of our blemishes so our photos together would appear mint (I only photograph on film and I am a staunch opponent of editing; my photography is influenced by the cinematic genre of Dogme 95). We picked out what our wedding rings might be at Swarovski and considered La Salsa, Brewster Beer Garden, and Pick Up Stix for lunch before settling on an airport favorite, Potbelly Sandwich Shop. It was designed to look congenially local with antique photos of Houston adorning the wall. Julian had his suspicions, though, and using the power of an Apple smart device we discovered the chain is based in Chicago.

We made out in the shiny silver bathrooms: the mens', womens', and Family. We slathered lips as we zipped across those weird strips of floor that move quickly. We whispered in each others' ears about how we wanted to make love on those fast floor strips. The tall ceilings of George Bush Intercontinental Airport were like a giant uterus. Perhaps it could belong to Laura Bush, we mused. We had a philosophical discussion while gazing through a vast window onto the tarmac, wondering what it meant to be within an airport named after a president who swore in Justice Clarence Thomas, a man accused of sexual harrassment. And how about a president who signed in the long-needed Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? Was this an airport that accommodated the disabled well? We twirled one anothers' hair as a speaker announced a delay on Delta DL66 to Kansas City International Airport (MCI). We mourned that we would never get to join the Mile High Club together because I knew that although I had been resistant to the idea in the past, this man embodied the idea of all airports and that joining the Mile High Club with him would be a conceptually transcendent experience that I was fully open to. But in the end, earthbound bathrooms would have to do.

After four exquisite hours together it was time for him to board American Airlines AA8402 to Atlanta for the anime convention. As a parting gift he gave me a chapbook in his backpack. It was the unfinished novel of his dead friend, whose parents named him PureMoods after the CD he was conceived to. Julian prints and proselytizes this novel, called *We've Replaced Your Lungs with a Musical Instrument—Now Breathe*, on his own time and dime. It's a postmodern novel about the upcoming AI singularity and every sentence takes up at least half a page and contains at least four cultural references. PureMoods died one year ago after being shocked by a faulty electric spiralizer.

Julian and I were kissing until he walked into the accordion tunnel. Our lips were even together as he scanned his ticket.

It has been three months since our airport amour. Julian and I have yet to unite again but we are always sure to “like” each others’ posts on social media and update one another on which philosophers we’ve been reading. Sometimes we email each other delicious looking flight sequences we’ve found (last week he sent me details about a flight from San Francisco International Airport [SFO] to Nashville International Airport [BNA] with a three-hour connect in Boise Airport [BOI]—incredible). When the dreaded time comes that I enter an airport with a new love, perhaps on a journey to Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport (ANC) for a romantic Alaskan getaway, I’m not sure what I’ll do. Perhaps my new love will learn of Julian and know that he is a part of the fabric of my mind, a person who has permanently combined with airports in a conceptual, not necessarily sexual, way. I can only hope my future love accepts this variety of polyamory.

Santa Fe



Zac Smith

I'm at the Santa Fe airport. It's really small. Like, four large rooms. Two bathrooms. Maybe some other secret bathrooms. There's usually secret bathrooms in places. I'm sitting by the car rental kiosk. I'm waiting for the car rental kiosk people to change shifts. The person at the desk doesn't want to help me because her shift is almost over. She said the next guy could help me. I don't really understand but it's fine. I tell her I get it. I think about the secret bathrooms. I think about people secretly taking a shit in a secret bathroom. She leaves through a little door behind the kiosk. The next guy isn't here yet. Maybe he's in the secret bathroom. I take a shit in the normal bathroom. The lights turn off automatically. I wave my arms while taking a shit. The shit stops coming out of my butt because of the waving. The lights turn back on. I try to shit some more but the shit is stuck in my buttocks. I try to relax. I think about airplanes. I think about secret bathrooms. I think about renting a car and driving to downtown Santa Fe. I feel like the shit is about to start coming out again. I wave one arm slowly to trigger the light sensor thing. The shit doesn't get interrupted by the wave. The bathroom smells like wild sage and shit. It's my shit - I made the shit smell. I stop shitting and wipe the shit off my buttocks and flush the shit and paper down the toilet and pull up my pants and wash the small bits of shit off of my hands and look in the mirror and I feel like I've perfected some special skill. I feel better prepared to live the rest of my life because I can wave and shit at the same time now, whenever I need to. I feel very good about it. I leave the bathroom and I see the woman from the car kiosk coming out of the other bathroom. She smiles and waves. What the fuck.

Music for Music for Airports for Airports



KKUURRTT

Listening to brian eno's *music for airports* in an airport like that's almost exactly what it was designed for even though the record was released years before the walkman became ubiquitous with music as a listenable part of any traveler's whimsy (1978). Imagining someone with a walkman buying ambient brian eno tapes at their local indie record shop just for their personal airline travel is too ridiculous an image to conjure up, so I don't, and instead focus on the soothingly pleasant, but mildly ignorable zen soundscapes designed specifically to calm the nerves of those alive in the late-seventies, a time long before I was born, before my parents had met each other, even. They would start partying and fall in love in 1979 with lots of cocaine and house parties, both of which were likely soundtracked by brian eno's production work for david bowie and roxy music and genesis and devo and talking heads etc. Ambient music (re-invented for airports by people like yours truly thanks to steve jobs turning walkmen into personal computers, something eno couldn't have begun to dream would be a possibility while making *music for airports* more as a metaphor than a literal representation of how these songs were meant to be played) is meant to be calming, and for naturally anxious people (me) the travel from city to city via flying machine certainly exacerbates the need for some kind of control in an environment where they have absolutely none, except for what comes through the headphones attached to their walkmen (and perhaps what they put in their stomachs before flying 3,000 miles to see family. The holidays ARE always hard, so why do we torture ourselves by travelling anywhere for them? Let's make up a new holiday like brian eno day where we all just gift each other calming space to think and be instead of presents nobody can really afford). I wonder how many other people are listening to this same record right this very moment or

if it's too old or on the money or spotify's official 'calm travel' playlist does the trick even though the selectors of this very playlist were likely inspired by the record running through my ear speakers without doing so much as to acknowledge it properly in name or programming. The record ends before the plane is set to board and I don't know what to put on next, so I settle for whatever spotify suggests next. It's not nearly as satisfying.

Ambient : 1.

Two Dream Stories Involving Airports



Eli S. Evans

1. Anne Broehm the Farter

J and I have gotten off the bus that was taking us to the airport. It was because of me – suddenly, I realized that we needed to disembark precisely here to return the keys, and such was my urgency in hurrying for the open door before it closed and we missed our opportunity that J followed me without thinking twice, and it was only after the two of us were standing out there on the sidewalk and the bus had disappeared in the distance that it dawned on us that in fact we wouldn't be able to return the keys until after we'd gone to the airport. Moreover, now we'd have to wait for the next bus, and neither of us had any idea for how long. After some time had passed, I remembered the app on my telephone by way of which one could check on the buses, and estimate the duration of one's wait for any given bus on the basis of one's location relative to the current location of that particular bus. J was standing very close to me looking over my shoulder while I searched the number – 6, as I recall – of the airport bus. The data loaded, and our hearts sank. The bus was nearby, as the proverbial crow flies, but because of the circuitousness of its route, which would yet double back on itself before coming our way, it was likely not going to arrive soon enough to get us to the airport in time to make our flight, what with all the various and sundry delays one encounters, at an airport, between sliding glass doors and jetway.

Was J angry? Something was festering there between us, though I'm not sure "anger" is the word for it. There was certainly a feeling that he was about to unleash his wrath upon me, as he would from time to time back when we were best friends and even, for a time, college roommates. I tried to improve the situation, which was

in any event completely hopeless, by revealing to him, for his voyeuristic pleasure and I suppose also to remind him of my own virility, a number of indecent messages I'd recently exchanged with Anne Broehm, an acquaintance from high school whose boyfriend, in that long ago time, was the grandson of a well-known politician. I showed him a couple of the pictures, lascivious though not quite pornographic, that she had taken of herself and sent to me during our exchange of these indecent messages, and revealed to him that I'd been surprised, now that I had gotten to know her, by her penchant for making fart jokes. We'd be sending updates regarding our relative conditions of undress and arousal, maybe a photograph here and there as evidence, and then, boom, out of nowhere she'd hit me with a fart joke.

As it turned out, I was not the only the one with something to reveal with respect to Anne Broehm, whose indecencies with J had been not just of the virtual sort. There were hotel rooms in the afternoon, when he was supposed to be at work, and stealings away to the guest bedroom in the middle of parties at which his own wife was present. J recounted how on five separate occasions Anne had farted while his face had been in or underneath her ass. Four times, he'd allowed it to pass – no pun intended – but at the fifth he drew the line. After that fifth fart, blown straight up his nostrils, practically, while he'd been nursing on her left buttock with his nose necessarily buried in the intergluteal cleft, he'd refused to see her again. In an effort to keep his mind off the fact that it was because of me that we were going to miss our flight, and thereby deflect or at the very least further delay his wrath, I asked J what he thought all of this said about him, to which inquiry replied: "I suppose that I love the female ass but am disgusted by the actual living human body of which it forms a part, a paradox I would argue only appears paradoxical."

I was relieved when J did not ask what I thought it said about me that I dreamed this strange scene just several hours after discussing with my wife over chicken

dinner the possibility that the university by which J's wife is employed might close and the fact that, so deeply do I resent J for his lack of interest in carrying our old friendship forward into middle age, I almost hoped it did.

2. Gorilla killers

In the dream, I was driving serpentine mountain roads with my parents' friend C- in the passenger seat. My parents and C-'s husband were in another car behind us, occasionally visible in the rearview mirror but more often than not somewhere out of view. We traversed various ecosystems during the course of our journey from wherever we had been to the city that was our destination: first something icy and wintry, then something out of an old spaghetti western, and finally something tropical, an overabundance of vegetation and water flowing in streams and rivers and rivulets alongside and sometimes across the road. C- was talking incessantly, as she does in waking life, and distracted and irritated by the constant chatter, and distracted by my irritation as well, I drove straight into a sharp curve in the road. By the time I realized what was happening and yanked the steering wheel to the right it was too late; we were skidding off into overgrowth beside the road, ricocheting off trees and bouncing through ruts. C- and I came out of it miraculously unharmed, but when we took stock of the situation outside the car, we discovered that we had plowed through a whoop of gorillas, killing several in the process.

The next thing I knew the five of us, C- and I and her husband and my parents who had presumably overtaken us while we maneuvered our damaged vehicle back onto the road, had made it to the city, whatever city it may have been, but we knew that it was only a matter of time before the law caught up to us, or caught onto us, and since in this dreamworld having killed a bunch of apes accidentally was the equivalent of, in waking life, killing a bunch of people, and so C- and I knew we needed to not only get out of town but get out of the country, and quickly. I had the

idea that we should escape to Spain, which everyone agreed was a great idea, but we also understood that by the time we got to the airport an all-points bulletin would surely have been put out for us already, meaning that it would be impossible to pass through security and passport control without being detained. Accordingly, we needed to travel under assumed identities.

It occurred to me that we just might be able to pull it off if we assumed the identities of students currently studying abroad in Spain. But where were we going to find these identities? Leaving our cars parked in a neighborhood of questionable repute, the five of us – C- and I and my parents and C-'s husband – headed into city center to canvas the restaurants and coffee shops in hopes of discovering the identities of people currently studying abroad in Spain by eavesdropping. In fact, it was not as farfetched a plan as it might seem: if someone's high school or college-aged child was studying abroad in Spain, the likelihood of them talking about this at some point during any given conversation over coffee or dinner was no doubt high. For us, then, it would only be a matter of eavesdropping on the right conversations at the right time; the more conversations we eavesdropped on, the better our chances of eavesdropping on the right conversation at the right time, and so upon our arrival in the center of the city, we dispersed. I was on my own, and do not know, nor know whether in the dream I knew, whether the others were on their own, as well, or had remained in, perhaps, nuptial pairs.

Meanwhile, there was a lot going on in the center of the city, but nothing that I can quite put my finger on. Hot dog stands and hotels with broken elevators and gunfights at the O.K. Corral, but a lot more, as well, and also maybe none of those things but simply things of that nature. Soon enough, I overheard someone talking about their son so-and-so who was studying abroad in Spain. I rushed to reunite with the rest of the group, who had between the four of them also managed to come up with the names of various

students currently studying abroad in Spain, enough for each to have an identity to assume.

“To the airport!” someone cried.

We ran, huffing and puffing, back to the neighborhood of questionable repute where we’d left the cars, but when we got there, our horses were gone.

It was then I knew that all was lost.

The Smoking Room

Alice Mason



Taken in the smoking room of a Lithuanian airport. These spaces in airports are some of the strangest places, soulless and filled with smoke and harsh lighting, there's a tangible melancholy to them.

Flying Through an Hourglass



Damien Ark

OMA > LAX > SFO

In that instant, I brought only clothes, and not even a book to pass the time on my flights. An olive-green dress shirt, black slacks, and dress shoes, just in case. Everything else tossed inside of my carryon suitcase, no planning what I'd wear or how long I'd be gone.

The airport was practically empty, and thankfully it forewent playing indie rock muzak so that I could stir within the hole inside of my stomach. All I could hear were faint coughs and the paranoid mumbles of people near them. Once at my gate, I sat down as far away from anyone as I could. Then I could sob into my jacket in peace, sneezing constantly, and not be judged by anyone. I focused on every memory like they were a million pictures thumbtacked to a wall, although my mind couldn't neglect these last few months, watching how his sickness plagued him, and how this was it, the end of everything. Eight days before the flight, I proposed to him, and he said yes. He was supposed to be walking and ready to do dialysis at home by now. I should have been thinking about packing my shit and getting married. Instead, I knew that I was flying right into a vortex of death. It wasn't a matter of if he'd survive, but how much time I'd have before he'd die.

My ticket planted on my backpack. The flight time is stagnant. My plane hasn't even made it here yet. It will be on time, but time couldn't go any faster. I can't just hijack a plane and be there right now. Texts come in. A Catholic priest came by his hospital room to say prayers. He can't speak. He seems scared. They're going to put him on a breathing machine now. I might have my chance to talk to him, but I'll never hear his voice again.

After I've gone through two mini-bags of tissue paper, I ask the lady at the counter of my gate if I can change my seats. "My boyfriend is dying," I muffled, feeling pathetic, exposing myself in so many ways. "And I know that I won't stop crying for these six hours of flying. I can barely breathe, I just, if there's any way, I don't want to sit beside anyone, please."

She changes my seats, prints off new tickets, and I return to where I was previously sitting with more tissues in hand.

A typical commercial plane can fly around five hundred miles or more an hour. Even if I were to hijack the plane, I wouldn't have been able to make it sooner. To have more time to see him in a hospital bed on a breathalyzer, eyes wide open but frozen, all his hair transformed frosted white, not responding to any motion of my hand against his arms or hands, or my kiss on his left shoulder and forehead.

Previously, coming to the airport and flying out to be with him for however long I could was the ultimate catharsis and escape from the filthy racist city of meth and shit where I was living. I'd glue my head to the window as I fidgeted in my seat like an antsy kid while listening to uplifting ambient music, and I'd take pictures of the mountains once I knew I was close, or of the Golden Gate Bridge before landing.

Instead, I had my genitals inspected, I spent eight dollars on trail-mix that I couldn't stomach, and looked out that window, seeing it as one long goodbye, a permanent funeral rite, I'll never fly this way ever again. When I get home, the whole state of California will only be a monolithic tombstone to me.

At LAX, I study people that will be on my flight and place notes on the Inktopad app on my phone. The girl that draws intricate designs of horrifyingly tiny apartments on

the back of her plane ticket. A white businessman reading the Bible next to a rich hipster twink editing pictures of himself on his iPhone. Me, wanting whatever security and luxury they have, but the place I'm going to once I land in San Francisco is two hours away and just a pile of shit to people like them.

SFO > DFW > OMA

Coming back with more than I came with, mostly gifts that I gave him, and only a few trinkets to remember him by. Three years ago, I had bought him a pillow on Etsy, rainbow-colored, with Dungeons and Dragons dice all over it. Now I had it tied to my carryon luggage with a red velvet ribbon, probably used for an Amazon gift I had given him.

Helium balloons of cartoon hearts, not the literal ones that are uglier and die, were taped to machines and clerk desks all over the airport. *Happy Valentine's Day!!!* These three words in every direction that my eyes hovered. Better to die here and now. Hope that the plane blows up, everyone that's in a relationship dies, and I get sucked into the jet engine, leaving nothing left, my pulverized remains spattered all over metal and other mutilated bodies. *Happy Valentine's Day!!!*

I text my brother. They closed the vegan café, I think, or it's not on the Southwest side. I'll have a Slurpee when I land in DFW and just have to live off that.

This time, I have a book. A sword and sorcery novel set in the Dungeons and Dragons universe. It's the story of a wizard's coming of age, beginning with his family and village murdered by a fire-breathing dragon and some batshit insane ten-thousand-year-old mage that can zap people to ash with his wands. I pause on a chapter in which the wizard, now my age, is attempting to survive amid a brutal snowstorm, while killing some bandit fuckers. Back home, it's negative twelve degrees Fahrenheit, and it's

been snowing all week. The sun won't show it's face for a few more months. My boyfriend is the wizard. No, I'm the wizard. The world is the dragon. The medical system in this country is the corrupted mage.

Even though I'm only in the Dallas airport for an hour, I can't help but spend the entire time pacing around it, hoping to see my parents or my sister out of nowhere. Here I am, leaving one home, coming to another, and flying back to another, all these places I've lived and been displaced. The airports are an island between them.

I see the bar I once sat at years ago, drinking a DIPA, watching a Golden State basketball game while texting him, excited for my flight – yes, they're gonna win, another championship, babe! There is the seat I was sitting in when I texted him. Now when I sit in it, I can scroll through, find those texts, and relive it with the scathing image of death. Last year, Golden State's loss was an embarrassment, everyone seemed to have gotten totally fucked by injuries, and people made horrible, selfish decisions. Durant dead as fuck. Klay dead as fuck. Then my boyfriend dead as fuck. Dad barely alive after heart surgery. Some virus has consumed the planet, and I guess everything is dying.

Why does the DFW airport feel more like a home than my home in Texas ever did? Always returning there for a connecting flight that'd take me to the forests or to my boyfriend in the state I'd always want to live in. The Omaha airport is a cold and silent carcass. It's rarely full, which means that the only good thing the Omaha airport provides is a somewhat safe space for crying and mourning.

Happy Valentine's Day!!!

OMA > SAN > SFO

The San Diego Airport is tiny, trashy, and filled with people. My seat creaks as I wait at my gate to get

on my next flight. But I don't mind. The shitty chargers that don't charge and the screaming babies don't matter. I sit like an anime character on my chair, reading manga, listening to dungeon synth music, and feeling happy that I'll see him soon, even though he's in the hospital. We will watch The Witcher together. I'll just sit with him and hold his hand. We will talk about gay shit, stupid shit, our future. I can kiss him again.

Over the cramped space and hundreds of people smothered together, I see ports, I see glistening water and beautiful homes. Maybe we could live here someday.

OMA > LGA

It's crazy, Jon. I could wear a yarmulke here without getting hate-crime'd.

I should be happy. But I still want to get sucked into a jet engine.

I'm wearing you over my neck.

Fucking boring ass airport. I think of texting you, but I know I can't.

No texts from you ever again.

No 'Glad you're safe.'

No 'See you soon.'

No 'I love you.'

Detroit Airport in Route to London

1 & 2



John Dorsey

#1

12 hours sitting in a plastic chair
across from a p.f. chang's
will turn anyone into a prisoner of war.

#2

the security guards look at you
like you want to be there

as you look out longingly
at the last beautiful girl
you may ever see
eating french fries
out of a suitcase.

In The Bathroom Stall Where Larry Craig Was Buried



Scott Gannis

I spent New Year's Day 2017 getting drunk in Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, hoping my flight would crash. It had been snowing since Christmas, and like any suicide risk wincing through a holiday alone, I was stuck on Larry Craig and cops and Morris Berman and death.

Similar to success or happiness or getting sober, my flight was delayed.

If you're stupid enough, or depressed enough, or flying at 6:00 am in a failed state, you can bootleg a fifth of Old Crow past TSA in your carry-on. You can then seek out the most famous airport stall in the United States, and proceed to swig bourbon on the toilet. And then you can think of your dead mother, and think about what she'd think of you.

"Tell me what you're reading," she had said, not long before it all happened. "Make it happy stuff or skip it."

I told her about Buddhism and getting out of Minneapolis and how Morris Berman said that life has a tragic dimension, and no amount of Oprah or Tony Robbins can change that. To hide from sadness—and one way or another, that's what Americans struggle mightily to do—is to remain a child all your life.

"I remember when you were a child," she had slurred and wheezed, eight years of Roxicodone and chemotherapy turning her into broken radiator covered in feverish sweat. "But that was 20 years ago. Now you're 23."

In Larry Craig's stall, I was now 24 and dreading my return to New York City, where I had no friends, no money,

no literary successes, and no choice but to keep grinding it out. After I settled her medical debt and the bank took the house, I had to go somewhere but there was nowhere to go.

Why New York? well, why a stall in Minneapolis? A childish urge. Denying that life is tragedy. An inability to do what adults do and give up on your dreams.

Cops are bad and Senator Larry Craig was also bad and public sex is whatever, but a cop arresting a United States Senator for soliciting sex in the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport is—if not good—then certainly not bad.

Larry Craig, like the airport that ended his political career, sucked. That he was arrested for soliciting a suck, or perhaps a fuck, in a bathroom stall wouldn't bring back thousands of dead Iraqis or undo homophobic legislation, but Larry Craig's bathroom stall hinted at divine justice.

I bet his first thought, once he realized it was a sting and not a soon-to-be orgasm, was that he blew it. Not his load, but the manicured life of a US Senator calcifying power over several decades. In Larry Craig's stall, where his foot-tapping and wide-stance erased years of toil from ranch hand to Senate leadership, I slurped and burped and thought about how I was the son of a farmhand who—like every ambitious kid in flyover country—needed to get out, but didn't know how, didn't know how to turn myself into Larry Craig before the stall.

Goethe said that man errs as he strives, but I bet he grew up in a house with books. Try becoming a novelist when an Applebee's menu, even an airport Applebee's menu around the corner from Larry Craig's public indecency, constitutes literature.

I had already checked. They weren't open. It wasn't

even 7:00 am.

I slugged from my smuggled bourbon. The last time I'd been in this airport I'd seen a man drink an entire two liter of Diet Coke when he found out he couldn't bring it on the plane. He knew where he was headed. He knew about security. He chanced it anyway. Man errs as he strives.

My mother never understood the impulse, the point of creating art, the point of striving for anything beyond financial security. "I want to inflict myself on the world," I would tell her, as if unpublished screenplays and lit mag rejections weren't just inflicting myself on my self, weren't just delusion exercises for lifelong children. I finished the bottle. I dropped it on the floor where Larry Craig's career ended. For poor people and sad people and hungry people, New York had always been a tease, a promise, a revision. The Midwest was dotted with folks who wanted to leave but couldn't or wouldn't, who refused to strive or were too beat down to risk erring, and yet people like Larry Craig could inflict untold damage on untold lives and still refuse to resign from the senate, could ride out his term as the guy who tried to rail a stranger in a piss-soaked, shit-caked airport bathroom and still earmark money for pet projects and pull enough salary to buy back my childhood home, but no, nah, it wasn't enough for Larry Craig, it never is, the Larry Craigs can't stop because they always get what they want and even if they don't, they change what you think they want and pretend they weren't soliciting sex in a bathroom stall. It took decades for Larry Craig to err when he strived, and he still ended up a millionaire lobbyist, and I still ended up drunk on the toilet, swallowing my grief in big bourbon gulps and wishing I could be anyone other than who I actually am, even if it meant being more like Larry Craig.

I sighed and stood up and washed my hands and bit the inside of my cheek.

An announcement rang out. We'd be boarding soon.

THE INTERNATIONAL TERMINAL



M. J. Arcangelini

Over echoing loudspeakers
announcements, in languages
I can't identify,
alternate information,
some in a sort of barely
audible English,
distorted by electronics
and the vast cavern
of the terminal.

A strange world is waiting
at the other end of a
10 hour flight.
Already I can hear
fellow passengers speaking
in a French too fast for me
to begin to understand.

Flying east from California
daylight cedes to night
and passes through it
until we land in Paris,
to find daylight, again.
Night abbreviated to a
comma between countries
with a zap of time zones
and this foreign terminal
even more profoundly
puzzling than home.

i once saw nicolas cage in an airport



Tex Gresham

this was in houston. usually when you see celebrities moving through baggage or to their terminal or out to a parked limo or black suv, you see a crowd of eager faces desperate to touch the skin or smell the wind of a figure they've only seen through the distance of space and time, projected flatly on a screen of their choice. never the flesh.

but when i saw nicolas cage--nic as he asked me to call him later on the phone--he was alone.

i don't know if it was because no one recognized him. or if it was because the air he gave off wasn't an attractant, but a deterrent. like he was either really wasted or really fucking depressed--or maybe both. but i'm the kind of guy who sees that energy and moves toward it like a bat to one of those bright blue zappers only white trash people have.

he was sitting in a peet's coffee shop, trying to find a spot to plug in his phone. no security around him. just nic cage. i had one of those power block things. i'd bought it thinking i would shoot a documentary about my dad being a comedian using only my phone and so i would need a backup battery thing for long shooting days. so far, i've only used it to charge my phone at disneyland and the dentist office.

i pull it out, walk up to nic cage, and say:

"i don't think they have plugs in here. you can use this."

he looks up at me like a dog in a shelter that doesn't want to be adopted. he takes the power block from my hands lightly.

"is this one of those charging pack things?"

"power block."

"whatever."

"whatever, yes. it is."

"very cool, man. very cool."

he plugs his phone in. i grab a coffee. nic cage already has one. a part of me was hoping he wouldn't so i could come back with a coffee and melt the ice. maybe we could have like a really deep conversation. he'd see how talented i was or whatever and maybe he'd help me slide my foot into a career i've been trying for my whole life.

i grab my coffee, take a seat at the table two tables down from his. we sit like this for a while. silent except for every now and then when nic cage would let out a frustrated growl or huff at something he can't believe. he bounces his leg like an add kid on coke.

i get out my laptop, start typing away at this very thing you're reading. and it's at this part that he turns to me and says:

"hey... hey... wanna hear my impression of rodney dangerfield doing an impression of jerry seinfeld?"

"rodney dangerfield."

"yeah, man. doing jerry seinfeld."

"okay."

nic cage sits up real straight, adjusts his neckline like rodney dangerfield, clears his throat. an invisible mic's suddenly in his hands. his face lights up. lugubrious and smug. he looks around at an invisible crowd. and goes:

"hey, what's the deal with airport bathrooms? my wife spends more time in them than she does with me. what's the deal with getting no respect?"

and then he switches it off. his jerry-masked rodney gone. back to his slumped, depressed nature. but he looks at me, waits. inspects my eyes and mouth. desperate for me to give him something, anything.

"is this for an audition?"

"i don't audition."

the intercom announces my flight.

"that's me."

this crushes him more. "oh... i'm not charged yet."

"keep it. i'm good."

"thanks." and he says it just like he does in the movies. like he's slipped out of whatever depression he's in to let me know he'll be around a little longer.

i take a quick last look at him in the peet's coffee shop. alone. flicking through his phone like everything he sees is bad news and worse news. and then i leave.

a week later i get a call from a number i don't recognize. i usually answer these because they're usually scams or people i don't want to talk to, and i usually always tell them that if they call me again i will have them killed. it used to be a joke, but now i sound really

serious when i say it. but when i answer and say hello, nic cage says:

“hey.”

like we’re old buds or something.

“hi.”

“it’s nic.”

“yeah, i know.”

“oh... well i just wanted to let you know that i’m back in an airport again and my phone died. and i remembered i had that charge thing you gave me. so i wanted to call and thank you again.”

“how’d you get my number?”

“you wrote it in white out on the back of this charging thing.”

“power block.”

“whatever.”

eventually, he stops calling.

Terminal Interludes



James Kramer

Here there is limitless potential. Every surface radiates light. Faux marble looking pillow soft and opulent enough to seem depthless. Airports are more than. Transcendental portals. The ground literally moves beneath your feet. You glide like some majestic creature. Like the Pope gliding past his tired and weary, like absolute royalty. waving at a passing child and their hand abandons their mothers to wave back. I'm like the fucking queen here.

I have always believed in the unparalleled possibility of airports. They are miraculous spaces, filled with infinite choice and unbridled gratification. Actually, I've have never bought anything from duty free. The largest item I've purchased was a discounted pack of wasabi peas. But I still like that all the stores are there. They suggest a private club, a secret that only we chosen few are allowed in on. There are opportunities here, the brightly lit counters sing, to be taken advantage of.

I have flown all over China. I've been in airports vast and vacant. Domed hangers where pollution gathers like displaced clouds. waiting areas composed of Tsingtao beer and Mongolian noodles. Tannoys cancelling flights for "some reasons", with others willing to charge through Tsunamis to get drunken businessmen home on schedule.

On a flight from Dalian, I waited next to a teacher from Glasgow, who told me that he'd meant to stay in China for a year. Then he got married, got used to the good pay. When we arrived back in Beijing I called Eric and we met outside of the Canadian Embassy. By the armed guards and security tower I bought three grams of laxative-intense cocaine. I then went home and woke my wife up, repeating

“We’ve got to get out of here, we have to get out” while cutting up the first line.

I want, just for once, to drink in an airport bar. Rather, I want to sit on an airport barstool and be asked *where I’m heading, where it is I’m going to*. I want to explain, narrative. Vent. If still a smoker, I could cram myself into their own tiny, plastic box. A terminal zoo. Even they’re not taking in there. Eyes straight ahead and inert, everything hunched, everything sagging. No, I want to be asked by a complete stranger, *what’s your story then?* And I want to be selfish and unempathetic and tell them. Take up hours of their time and not even ask in reply, and *yours?*

Because I do ask. I ask all the time. Like the woman with dolphin coloured hair on a flight from Harbin to Shanghai. I listened as she told me how she was a visiting professor. I heard about how fascinating she found the etymology of Chinese gendered pronouns and when I busted out a phrase, listened politely to her ruin my affront to bilingualism. I buried my shame and guilt at being a failure of integration, while nodding politely and saying *no go on, it’s fascinating*.

I paid attention to the drunk from Hangzhou as he explained the ideological flaws of western democracy, and while I might have agreed in part with what he said, I said nothing of the desire to gouge out his tongue if he kept breathing on me, his breath sour and astringent.

I don’t think the airport bar I’m looking for exists, or ever has done. It’s not a *McFreindlies*, a *Bubble Tea-Joy*. The tables are not lined with plastic wrap to make them durable and wipe easy. The wine doesn’t taste dusty and old. Families aren’t welcome. Only people traveling alone pause and drink. I’ve not even built this place from multifarious TV, or film. I don’t relate it to a single show, or episode. It’s just an idea I’ve always grown up with. That this is what airports are for. This is what

they are capable of. I want to find this airport bar, sit and order. Then when you come over to me we'll wait the customary few moments, let the silence air itself out. Then you'll ask, a question borne most likely out of boredom, and I'll tell you.

I've lived overseas for a decade now. worked one shitty job after another. A glorified actor impersonating teachers, medical experts, even a CEO. Every time you've seen a foreign face on domestic Chinese advertising, I'm part of that disingenuous cartel. I am the ultimate professional with absolutely nil transferable skills. I manage to be everything and nothing.

And so then after years of pollution, of mutual exploitation, I'll tell you how I'm going to try and make a go of it back at home. Work in a country that has never embraced me, in what sector, industry or role who even knows. Wherever I'm going back to, it's by starting at the bottom. What I've done here, what I have become has negative currency. Once again, I'll be rewriting myself. Thought to what and from where, I have zero clue.

And I'm scared. Because for the first year at least I'm going at this alone. I'll have to get used to a permanent screen between me and them. I don't want to watch my son grow via a phone. I'm desperate not to spend my nights watching my wife's sleeping, as seven hours of difference drags us apart. Her words slurred, features so pixilated that I can't even read her lips. And I'm scared that I'll find nothing. That this isn't just a bridge, a difficult time for us to collectively get through. That it feels more like the beginning of losing them. How long till she questions why she's committing her future to a person who spends his life pretending to be different, better men? A facsimile husband. A cut out European doll.

At that point, I'll take my drink from off the counter and look deep into your eyes. I'll ask if you thought I was making a decision that was, if not right,

then perhaps at least noble. I was after all trying, going to give it the one last good fight? I'll want you to answer. Endorse me. See myself for once with your objective outsider's perspective that I am at times a good and relatable person.

If you did that, then I could consider revealing more than I'd anticipated. That I hadn't told them. Never intended to. *Do you know how easy it is with a British passport to just up and run and never be found?* Disappearing is a damn sight easier than people make it out to be, if you've no reason to ever think about going back.

I'd watch your eyes closely, to see if you'd registered what I'd said. Asking yourself if it's the son, or the wife that pains you the most. You'll feel it in your gut. Obfuscating between anger and disappointment, you'll leave feeling strangely crestfallen, wishing that you'd never sat down, never invited me in. You'll pity me a dead and lonely thing.

Once you're gone, I'll finish my drink and order another. I'll sit and wait and consider, that if someone else should be coming along, what two lives I might consider building for them, what two worlds would be best to crumble and mesh together.

I like airports because you can be anything. I'm everyone in the world while I'm here. It's only once back on the plane, will I share with you your sincerity. We'll be lost and afraid together. And if you were to ask me, I'd admit that I have nothing of any value to say.

Cavin Bryce Gonzalez founded Back Patio Press. He lives in Florida with a hound dog. His debut title "I Could Be Your Neighbor, Isn't That Horrifying?" is available for order.

Catherine Sinow resides in Portland, Oregon. She likes airports but detests airplanes, although sitting in the middle seat and drinking Dr. Pepper does help. Consider viewing her spectacular website: catherinesinow.com

Zac Smith is the author of *50 Barn Poems*. Thank you.

KKUURRTT is glad you read his thing. You can find him on twitter at [@wwwkurtcom](https://twitter.com/0wwwkurtcom).

Eli S. Evans has recently or less recently published work, or will shortly publish work, in n+1, e*ratio, X-R-A-Y Lit, Right Hand Pointing (One-Sentence Poetry division), Berfrois, Queen Mob's Teahouse, Eclectica, Obelus, On the Seawall, Drunk Monkeys, and countless other now defunct journals and magazines. He has an obscure little book project coming out possibly in September in collaboration with the obscure little literary magazine *Johnny America*, provided neither he nor the magazine go defunct beforehand.

Alice Mason is an emerging urban photographer with a strong focus on documenting everyday moments, from protests to commutes. Having studied film at university she has experimented with different mediums before finding a passion for photography. Believing there is great beauty to be found in everyday life, none of her photos are staged and instead capture organic scenes of life in the capital. With the majority of her photography being in black and white she pays a lot of attention to light and shade and the roles they play in creating powerful images.

Damien Ark is a self-taught outsider writer that specializes in transgressive LGBTQ+ work. They have no degrees in literature and they've taken no workshops. Their first novel, *Fucked Up*, will be out sometime in 2020 on Expat Press. You can find his work on his Neutral Spaces page and follow/contact him through his Twitter.
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John Dorsey lived for several years in Toledo, Ohio. He is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Teaching the Dead to Sing: The Outlaw's Prayer* (Rose of Sharon Press, 2006), *Sodomy is a City in New Jersey* (American Mettle Books, 2010), *Tombstone Factory* (Epic Rites Press, 2013), *Appalachian Frankenstein* (GTK Press, 2015), *Being the Fire* (Tangerine Press, 2016) and *Shoot the Messenger* (Red Flag Press, 2017), and *Your Daughter's Country* (Blue Horse Press, 2019). His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and the Stanley Hanks Memorial Poetry Prize. He was the winner of the 2019 Terri Award given out at the Poetry Rendezvous. He may be reached at archerevans@yahoo.com.

Scott Gannis is a former forklift operator from Minneapolis, MN. His debut novel, *Very Fine People*, is forthcoming from Atlatl Press. An itinerant depressive, he cycles between the floors of Brooklyn and couches of Minnesota.

M.J. (Michael Joseph) Arcangelini, born 1952 in western Pennsylvania, has resided in northern California since 1979. He began writing poetry at 11. He has published in a lot of little magazines, online journals, & over a dozen anthologies. He is the author of five collections: "With Fingers at the Tips of My Words" 2002, Beautiful Dreamer Press, "Room Enough" 2016, "Waiting for the Wind to Rise" 2018, both from NightBallet Press, "What the Night Keeps" 2019, Stubborn Mule Press, and "A Quiet Ghost," Luchador Press 2020. In 2018, Arcangelini was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Tex Gresham is the author of *Heck, Texas* (Atlatl Press, coming 9/4/20). His work has appeared in Hobart, F(r)iction, The Normal School, BOOTH, and Back Patio Press, among other places. He works and lives in Las Vegas with his partner and kid. www.squeakypig.com

James Kramer is a writer who has lived adjacent to sluice canals in China and England. A featured writer for Left Lion magazine, he's also appeared in *Your Impossible Voice* and *Spittoon*. He's just discovered Twitter is a thing.