

*Excerpt from:*

It's Called Terminal *What?*

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High class people, middle class people, low class people. No class people. People oblivious to everybody else. People too interested in everybody else. People not interested in anything. People. A lot of people. All packed into this one small area. Gate 17 A. Flight to nowhere. Delayed because of shitty weather in nowhere.

The PA system interrupted my thought.

“Mr. Logan, please see the attendant at the check in counter, Mr. Logan to the check in counter.”

An older man a few seats to my left stood, his briefcase in hand, and made his way through the strewn about suitcases and backpacks, eventually arriving at his final destination. I turned my focus back to the people filling the gate waiting area. Her over there, she just had her boobs redone. This guy here, he's having an affair. That poor kid over there, his family doesn't want him to come home. The lady next to me had been sleeping since I sat down. She was rather large, with freckles, orange hair, and glasses. And she refused to share the armrests. Her Walkman was too loud; I could hear the whiney voice of whoever sings “Girls Just Wanna Have Fun”. Her head began to nod to the side and for a moment I thought it was going to come to rest on my shoulder. I panicked. There were no other seats. I watched as that mop of tangled orange hair moved closer to my shoulder. Another PA.

“Mr. Miller, please see the attendant at the check in counter, Mr. Miller to the check in counter.”

I stood, rather quickly, grabbed my duffle bag, and moved. As I followed the same path I had watched Mr. Logan take a few moments earlier, I chanced a glance back at Carrot Top. She had tilted significantly towards the seat I had just occupied. She was still asleep.

“Boarding pass please.”

I imagined having to say that line over and over. She must hate her job. She hadn't looked at me when she spoke, but when I failed to produce my pass quick enough, she raised her eyes from her computer and looked at me.

“Your boarding pass, sir.”

I reached into the side pocket of my duffle bag, and pulled out a few pieces of paper. I put them all on the counter. She looked from the papers on her counter to me, then back to the papers. She grabbed a corner out of the stack, and pulled. It was the boarding pass. She glanced at it for a moment, and she turned back to the computer.

I turned to face the people behind me, filling the gate area. Carrot Top was still leaned over into what had been my seat, and a nervous young woman stood next to her, probably contemplating how to best squeeze herself into what was left of that seat. I smiled and turned back towards the counter.

Counter Lady was still typing, and I looked to the scrolling marquee on the board behind her. Still delayed. Now an hour and a half.

“Here you are. Thank you Mr. Miller. Hopefully the delay won't last too long.”

And back to her computer she went.

I took the pass, and the other papers I had placed on the counter, and returned them to my bag. As I turned towards my seat, I realized I didn't have one anymore. The young woman had apparently given up, and my seat was still unoccupied. But no one was going to

be sitting there as long as Carrot Top slept. I looked across the busy pathway just beyond the gate. Starbucks, Burger King, a bar, and restrooms. Everything you could ever need, all located conveniently in 200 square feet. I looked back at the marquee. An hour and forty five minutes. God damn airlines. Just fly through the storm. I'd rather be waiting because the thing crashed. That's a reason worth waiting for.

Three out of ten people say they would rather not travel than have to fly.

I turned my attention back to the people around me. I could imagine some of the people around me now, panicking inside their heads, forced to travel for probably numerous reasons. I'm sure they wouldn't mind if the delay lasted forever.

I moved across the wasteland of luggage and sleeping passengers towards the pathway. I stood at the edge, watching the traffic speed by. I wondered where these people were going. Or how many of them even knew where they were going. Some exotic island. To that one resort on the coast. The one with long, white-sand beaches, and a pool the size of Texas. Yeah, that's where they're going.

I couldn't bring myself to enter the traffic. I didn't want to go where they were going, but I felt that if I stepped into their path, I'd be hurled forward along with them without a choice. Or maybe it'd be backwards. I don't know how you would tell. There was a break in the flow of people, so I forced myself forward, off the secure carpet of the gate area and onto the cold tile superhighway.

I crossed towards the Starbucks. I reached the end of the line, and took in my surroundings. Take equal part persons and equal part coffee. Add ice and chocolate, blend until smooth. Top with whipped cream, and consume. I couldn't imagine the people working here being much happier than Counter Lady. She said the same thing over and over;

these people here were right there with her, only making the same thing over and over. My gaze shifted to the menu on the wall behind the counter. Blueberries & Crème Frappuccino Blended Crème, Double Chocolate Chip Frappuccino Blended Crème, Dulce de Leche Frappuccino Blended Crème. I couldn't order anything.

I turned and faced Gate 17 A. Behind Counter Lady, the marquee so politely informed me that the delay was now two and a half hours.

Christ.

I scanned the rows of people until I found my old seat. Carrot Top was still exercising her control over her tiny lands. For some reason, at that moment, I wanted nothing more than to be able to settle back down into that hard, dark chair. That was comfort. That was where I belonged. I looked up and down the pathway before me, and suddenly realized that, in an airport, no one belongs. No one here is meant to stay here. We're all just going through.

A lady bumped into my elbow as she attempted to move past me into the line. She had bags falling off her shoulders, and her hair was disheveled. Her coat was shifted to her left, and her purse dangled just above her elbow.

"Sorry, excuse me."

I nodded, and took a step away, giving her space she seemed to desperately need. She could use that trip to that one resort with the beach, I thought.

My gaze turned back to Gate 17 A, but too many people were passing by, and I couldn't find my seat.

"I'm sorry, you weren't in line, were you?"

I turned back to face the woman who had just bumped into me. She apparently only

just realized that I had been close enough to the line to maybe be in it. Her tired green eyes met mine, and in a quiet voice I assured her I was not. She turned back towards the front of the line, and I left the coffee shop.