2015

Destination: Bed

Carly Shick
T-minus 26 hours till destination:

Head over the toilet, I fight the urge to let go. There are better places I'd rather be than here. My stomach flips as if it is performing a gymnastics routine. The push came again and I shake as my body rids itself of burning stomach acid. I'm surrounded by bright red bathroom stalls that seem too eager to greet me and I am not feeling too enthusiastic to greet back. Here I am kneeling in the Barcelona Airport Spain, about 5,533 miles away from home. Far from my mother, my father, and most importantly my own bed. My brand new queen-sized bed is always willing to comfort me and I yearn for its presence at the moment. I decide that my incentive for the day will be to reunite with my soft, sleek, fluffy bed.

“Carly? You sick, yes? Need you anything?” The voice breaks my daydreaming as my sweet Spanish mother asks in broken English from outside the stall door. She is always concerned and the wrinkles on her face show it. This lady is my best friend’s mother, and in my eyes, my own fill-in mother while here in Barcelona for a few more hours.

“No, gracias,” I say as another wave of shakes take over my body. I flew here to Barcelona alone to spend Christmas break with my best friend and her family. Both being sixteen years of age, this trip seemed like a wonderful idea to my young adventurous heart. It allowed for the possibilities of meeting new people, experiencing different lifestyles, and living out any opportunity that came my way.

The travel time for the way there took fifteen hours. Not too bad. Here I am anticipating what will be twenty-four hours' worth of travel time with layovers and me alone journeying home. My body shakes again.

Thirty thousand feet in the air is not my ideal place to be vomiting and I am extremely determined not to have that happen. I sit on the cold ground of the brightly illuminated bathroom, taking deep breaths and composing myself. Do I have food poisoning? No, I barely ate last night. Do I have the flu? No...I have been feeling pretty
great. I took a moment to breathe and compose myself enough to grab the bright red stall, climb to standing position, and make it out of the bathroom.

On my way out, I glance at the mirror. Bad idea. There I catch sight of a pale, clammy face with tangled crazy hair, and even worse I see a girl who is not ready to fly. The shakes attack me. My body tremors with each step I take. Outside the bathroom my best friend and her family wait to embrace me in their arms. I'm wrapped in warmth from the family but my body feels so cold. I smile to convince my Spanish mother not to worry. I am going to be all right.

T-minus 25 ½ hours till destination:

After the hug, it is time to leave them and pass through security. As if on cue, my stomach cartwheels and I cannot move, only breathe. The nausea sends acid to the lower part of my throat but I decide to ignore it and push onward. I lug my heavy carry on over my shoulder shakily and slowly trudge to the line entrance. Inhale, exhale. I will be fine. Turning around, I give my Spanish family one last forceful smile of reassurance before I walk into the security line.

Standing in line, I begin to panic. The image of my face in the bathroom mirror flashes in my memory and I realize I could be mistaken for an unsteady, shaky, cold-sweating drug addict. Oh God get me through this line without anything happening. There are no drugs in this system, just sickness. While barely lifting my bag enough to place it in a grey container, I take off my shoes and stride up to the agents waiting. One lady looks me in the eye and waves me through the metal detector. No alarms go off. I'm good. I'm not a danger to anyone. Leaning over to get my stuff, I get a tap on the shoulder. I turn to find the suspicious eyes of the agent lady and her mouth that states something about a search. My stomach drops and does little flips again. Sweat begins to form on my pale white brow line but I accept what is to happen.

Apparently, I am what they call a “random search”. They are required to do them every certain number of people. Today is my day. There I am, a sick sweating teenage girl who just wants her bed, getting a pat down. I hold a sob back, not from fright or fear, but
from this barrier that is restraining me from comfort. *Yes that is my arm. Yes that is my other arm. You have checked the two legs. Can I please go!* There is still a look of concern on the Agent's face, but she allows me to have my dignity back and gives me the nod. Once free I grab my things and bathroom hop, puking once or twice all the way to my terminal.

**T-minus 25 hours till destination**

A chair. A simple, blue chair. This terminal has many chairs, but I am fixated on the closest one I can collapse into. *Not as comfortable as my bed, but it will suffice.* Exhaustion hits and the nausea seems to stop. I curl up in the chair and gaze blankly into the distant terminals. *I feel okay. I can make it home.* It is then that a young man, with a perfectly chiseled face and adorable brown curls atop his head, asks if he may sit next to me. *Why yes you can. You can sit next to me any day!*

"Uh...yeah, sure," I quickly respond, feeling embarrassed for my unheard thoughts. We exchange names and discuss where we are from. This young man, of eighteen years, is from the Netherlands, and at the time is unlike any man I have ever met before. All of a sudden I begin to shake and my body kicks back into the nausea routine. *Why now?! Why did this wonderful specimen of a man have to sit directly next to me? Carly, you have to hold on till we can find a bathroom. JUST HOLD ON.* My inner thoughts attack me almost as much as my stomach does.

I turn towards my new friend and smile, asking if he could watch my things while I find a bathroom. He smiles back and says "Yes." If I was not so clammy and pale-faced from dehydration my cheeks would be pure red from blushing.

The bathroom is near enough but disappointment begins when I see a little sign blocking the way that says it is being cleaned. My stomach and heart drop at the same time. Tears form in my eyes but I fight back against the disappointment and walk back to the seat. There is a look of confusion on the young man's face when I come back only after being gone a minute. "It was closed for cleaning," I say. He just nods, smiles a charming smile, and begins to talk about his life. I engage politely and stare deeply into those beautiful brown eyes. The only thing that could be better is if I could actually enjoy
the moment. Instead, my brain is having an inner monologue going a little something like this:

You need to puke. Hello, Carly? Bathroom, not boy! Yes, his eyes are great and he is so exotic compared to you, but seriously your stomach is out of control. Okay maybe just be honest with him about how sick you are.

“I’m not feeling too well,” I blurt out in the midst of his talking. Embarrassment hits and I gave another one of my unconvincing smiles, which he laughs at.

“Well that is just cute!” he says. “Hey, what is your seat number? Maybe I can switch with someone. That way we can sit together and the flight won’t be so bad for you.”

My brain is in awe that a young man can look at this half dead, stricken with sickness, American zombie-girl and think she is cute enough to sit by. My stomach rattles again. It is then that I realize if vomit were to eject from my mouth, the last thing I want is for a gorgeous man to witness such a horrid thing; or worse, be caught in the crossfire. Managing my gag impulse I am able to respond, “No maybe we shouldn’t. You know how they are particular about seating. Thanks though, it was a good idea.” Good job for escaping that one Carly.

**T-minus 24 hours to destination**

The plane begins to board and my dreamy Dutch friend lugs my carry-on bag for me. I could get used to something like this. My seat destination arrives before his and my heart saddens when he gives me my bag, smiles, and continues his trek farther down to wherever his seat is located. Goodbye for now my Dutch man. I shall see you soon!

It is a small plane with two blue set of seats on either side of a middle aisle. The plane is departing from Barcelona and headed to Paris. It is from Paris that I will take a flight to Atlanta, Georgia and from there fly home to Portland. I take a seat in a fluffy chair and my body relaxes. Not as good as my bed, but not too bad for a plane seat. With each breath I can taste the stuffy salty air of the cabin and it sets me off into shaking. Just then a little old Spanish lady sits next to me. She looks about sixty years of age with grey streaks in her hair. She is wearing an adorable floral dress with a cardigan and radiates such
warmth it puts my heart at ease before liftoff. I begin to imagine that this woman is a mother of three, traveling the world to see her now grown and successful children. It feels wonderful to think that there is a well-practiced mother on the plane and that she is seated next to me. Mothers deal with throw up all the time, right? Carly, you might have just scored.

The plane hits the runway and begins moving as my stomach decides to join in. To stop from shaking I grip the arm rests, close my eyes, and promise myself to not to throw up during the lift off. My eyes stay shut till I hear the *DING* of the seat belt sign going off. I am now free to roam the cabin. I made it through lift off without any ejection of fluids. Success! As if to poke fun at me, my stomach clenches and my body receives the dreaded feeling once again. Looking in the pocket of the seat in front for barf bags, my reward is none. Panic sets in to join the trembling of my body.

In a shaky quiet voice I turn towards the sweet looking motherly figure beside me and say “Perdoname.” Which I later find out stands for forgive me as opposed to pardon me in Spanish. I continue with “Estoy mal,” I am sick. I am more than sick. Throw up will be exploding from my mouth very soon. I want my bed. Please motherly Spanish figure, help me.

From those brief words, the comforting eyes give me the once over as if understanding what is going on with my body and she responds with, “Un momento!” Just like that she grabs her purse, digs around, and whips out what seems to be a perfect cylindrical plastic barf bag that beckons to be filled with fluid. I beam with joy as the burning sensation in my throat commences. Somehow I manage a “Gracias” before I eject what little there is in my stomach. A soft, sweet hand rubs my back and I know I am in the care of a kind-hearted woman.

After the ejection of fluids, a flight attendant escorts my body to the bathroom to allow myself to be put back together. I look even worse than I did earlier going through security. With no such pride or satisfaction I hold my see through barf bag for the world to see as I walk amidst the aisle way. People begin to turn away, and I hold tightly to the bag hoping no odors escape. The farther back I trek
into the plane, the more embarrassment becomes of me. Please don’t let cute hot Dutch boy see me. Please no. My mind pleads with the inevitable. Dark brown eyes lock with mine and he sees me. All of me. I smile at him as if not noticing the bag of tan warm fluid in my hands. My life is done. I want to not be on this plane! I want to curl up and hibernate in my bed.

Cold water feels good on the face as I clean myself up in the tiny bathroom. I find safety here, but I know the comfort of the bathroom is not an escape from the unavoidable walk back to my seat. How can I go back? I have just imitated a Price Is Right show girl, but instead of showing off a car or a new set of golf clubs, I have showed off my stomach fluids for the whole plane to see. Carly focus on the destination ahead: cozy bed. I cling to the thought, slide open the door, and book it to my seat without making any eye contact. Once there I am given a Sprite in order to replenish the missing fluid in my body and I drift off to sleep on the shoulder of the sweet Spanish woman.

T-Minus 19 hours to destination:
Everything turns into a cloudy haze as one hour meshes with another. I can barely recall hiking the Paris airport to catch my transfer flight. I sleep the whole flight across the Atlantic. Whether it is embarrassment from the day’s events or just pure exhaustion, my eyes do not want to open and face the world. One thought sticks with me. Need bed.

T- minus 6 Hours to destination:
I reach the Atlanta airport and am met with the smell of fried food, deep fried food. Hunger hits, but oily food is the last thing my stomach needs. After hiking one terminal, going through customs, and taking a subway of some sort to my last terminal, I make it to the last leg of the journey. It feels as if the weight of a thousand dumbbells lifts from my heart. One last flight till my destination. Go Carly Go! I decide it is now time to call my mother. My arm aches holding up the phone and I relay the day’s events while hearing very little of her frantic worry spouting from the earpiece. One memory
that sticks with me is my last words to her before I hang up. "Hey mom, can you make sure my bed is ready for me? Thanks." After hanging up I grab my carry-on bag, take a shaky breath and almost laugh out loud thinking back to the events of the day as I walk onto the last flight.

T-Minus 0 hours. Destination reached:
I have made it. The trauma of the travel time traverses in my memory. No more embarrassing moment with cute Dutch man, no more sickness, only the warmth of my sheets and the bounce of my bed to take away the past day’s events. I doze for the half hour car ride home, unable to answer my parents’ questions filled with worry and concerns. My brain only has one thought. I am jostled awake as home appears. Without remembering the walk I show up in front of my white bedroom door, trembling as if the weight of the world is on my shoulders. Stepping inside the dim lit room I feel a wash of relief. My bed beckons me with one corner pulled down in anticipation of my arrival. I slide my body in the sheets and feel the warm soft touch of the blankets taking away the aches from my body and the emotional pains from the day. My bed at that moment is better for me than any boyfriend or exotic man could be. Destination reached, bed acquired.