

Jake settled in the overpriced seat on the plane and closed his eyes until someone tapped him.

“Sorry, I ....”

She pointed at the empty seat, and he stood. The plane moved, and she clutched his arm, whimpering. Accepted a drink, but dropped the brown, icy liquid on Jake.

“Sorry,” she said, “terrified of flying.”

He distracted her with a humiliating story about an online dating experience when a match never showed. She laughed, and, disembarking, they exchanged numbers.

A text chimed: *Love you, Jake.*

She scowled and walked away.

“Wait, Lola, that’s my mom.”

She returned, and he kissed her.



Author's Note:

For once, I ended up with a genre I thought I knew how to write without having to research things. The problem was, I knew how to write it. There might be enemies to lovers or friends to lovers, or some other “meet cute” moment, but the inevitable story always has the same format of: fall in love, break up, resolution, and then the happily ever after moment.

No biggie, I got this. Then, as I sat there thinking about it, I realized I did not, in fact, have this. I didn’t even slightly have this. In 100 words, I needed to incorporate all the things that

make romance a romance, and because the genre given was rom-com, it had to be funny. I bemoaned the situation to one of my online writing groups. I demanded to know why they didn't talk me out of this absurd idea of writing 25 micro stories with random genres, actions, and words thrown at me. They chuckled.

I closed my computer and did something useful, like mopping the floor. A chore, Dear Reader, I despise. Then I guarded the said clean floor lest anyone dare walk upon it until it was dry, all while ruminating about the situation I'd gotten myself into. The only thing I knew for sure was that there would be 0 meet-anything at a coffee shop. Why do you ask? Because that's one of the most basic meet-cutes ever. Instead, I thought of the one place I'd never seen the "meet cute" moment happen, and I landed on an airplane.

I've been on an airplane many times in my life. I've survived driving 300 miles around a storm, only for women to be screaming and babies crying while the pilot is assuring everyone we'll be fine while the drink cart rolled down the aisle, and the stewards shouted at us to ignore it while they buckled themselves into their seats. That wild turbulence caused us to return to the airport so they could refuel and attempt to drive over the storm instead of around it.

We've been on an overseas flight where the plane started dripping onto the seat my husband was sitting in. The stewardess taped a trash bag to the ceiling to work as a rain protectant. Once, a woman on our flight ate chicken nuggets, even though they always make her sick. Another time we got stuck sitting on a plane for an hour while we waited for the US customs to open so they could send agents in to arrest a wanted felon on the plane. We've even been on a plane that couldn't land at its destination because of fog, and detoured to another part of Australia where we couldn't disembark because we'd crossed international water and they didn't have immigration guards at said airport. We went from a jumbo jet to a propeller plane when we moved to the island. Our youngest glanced out the window and shouted, "I can see the Great Wall of China!"

Everyone rushed to look out windows, although we were flying over the Bass Strait, which is nowhere near Asia. That would be the same flight where the same child said, "The wheel on my side is out. How about your side, brother?" The eldest declared that the wheel on his side

was not out, and someone three rows ahead of us moaned. A few seconds later, relief swept through the plane when he said, "Don't worry, it's out now."

We've had an awful lot of crazy adventures on airplanes and in airports. In fact, we tell most people who ask that my husband and I met at an airport. Which isn't a lie, it's just not the entire truth. I didn't think it would be that difficult to write a rom-com on a plane.

Remember the saying about pride coming before the fall? Yep, I forgot about that for a minute. You see, my first version of this story met the rom-com needs. It followed the whole meet-cute, fall in love, break-up, rectify and live happily ever after. Except I forgot the action, and the required word.

The absolute horror! I scrambled to rewrite, and had poor Jake entering Starbucks, which caused a five-minute laughing spree for me. A coffee shop. Absolutely not! I realized, with a bit of culling and rearranging, I could keep my original story and add in the missing parts. Which is how I got to the story above, and why Jake had an online dating mishap.

Can you believe this is the fiftieth micro story I've shared with all of you?

The Reluctant Author

