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No Nerves

Ana Barkley

I can't think of anything except that I don't feel nervous. At least not yet. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be thinking about in this moment. Maybe I'm officially unafraid of flying. I wouldn't know, considering this is my first time on a plane. I should just appreciate the beauty of this night while I can. Staring out this window makes me feel like an astronaut. I have always dreamed of being an astronaut, so it makes me feel a little hopeful.

Hopeful for what? I ponder this until Nate leans over to me.

"Hey, I gotta take a leak. Stay cool."

He leaves his ugly navy blue fedora on the seat for some reason. I keep telling him that it's a chick repellent but I think his grandfather gave that to him, so I could understand why he latches onto it. Nate's grandfather is the only person that
60 has ever really been there for him and treated him like he's an actual individual. I know Nate will miss him. Or at least his grandfather will miss Nate.

I look around at these people in the cabin and reflect on the monotony of people in general. The concept of people is so dull. People are so twisted. Manipulative. Only interested in themselves. My ex-girlfriend especially. People are mistakes. People are my biggest mistakes.

"I paid Eva an extra hundred because I know Charles will be a nightmare. But at least I left him the iPad." A woman in front of me snickers to her meat head of a husband.

She is especially disgusting. Her hair is dyed red with blonde splotches. Her leather skin is painted with cosmetics that probably cost an obscene amount of money. And here she is, chortling with the father of her child about leaving their kid

behind while they escape to an exotic getaway. He says nothing. He's reading about baseball and steroids in a Sports Illustrated. What a douche. I wish I was making this up.

Nate slips back into his seat.

"I'm starting to sweat." He tosses his red curly hair with both hands.

"Where?"

"Uh... everywhere?"

"Well stop."

"I'm trying god damn it!" He's starting to lose his cool. He's always been hot-headed. But I've always been patient, which is why we make a great duo. Nate makes up for it with the enthusiasm and ambition that I lack. He leans back and wipes his hands on his basketball shorts.

"How much longer?"

"I don't know, an hour?"

"Shit." I can see the panic across his face.

"Just go to sleep. It'll be fine," I assure him. "I'll wake you up."

"I can't fucking sleep," he retorts bitterly. At this point I decide it's best to end this conversation before he starts a scene.

For the next ten minutes he shakes his leg, taps his fingers, and wipes the sweat from his face until he attempts to make small talk.

"Did your mom give you any money?"

"Hell no. You know my mom."

"No one gave you money?"

"Nope. You?"

"My dad gave me 100 dollars. I'll be glad to waste that bastard's money any day. He's just going to buy coke with it."

Both of Nate's parents have their destructive vices. His

mom is an actual hooker who will probably die tomorrow from meth. Last time he talked to her a few weeks ago, she was hooked on this insane Russian drug called Krokodil that eats your flesh and makes you a walking zombie. He said she had a giant hole in her forearm that looked like ground beef.

It's ridiculous how messed up both his parents are compared to him. It's as if Nate's the adult. Once he told me that all he ever wanted in life was a real mom and a real dad that "did normal parent things." I told him I would give him my childhood if I could. It was a really special moment.

"So this guy right here? He's got about a kerbillion dollars in the bank from a butter company he inherited." We make up bullshit stories about people and their lives to pass the time.

"What's it called?" I ask. Nate looks better, but still a little on edge.

"I don't know, fucking, Dad's Butter or some shit." We snicker like we did when we were in primary school.

62 "Right, so he's a billionaire. His wife's name's Sheila but she's actually from China."

"No, Paraguay."

"Where the fuck is Paraguay?"

"By Brazil."

"Fine, Paraguay. She-" The flight attendant passes us and asks us if we would like somerefreshments.

"No thanks," We say in unison.

"What time is it?" He asks me after she's well down the aisle. I check my watch.

"It's quarter 'til midnight."

"Ready?"

"Yeah man, ready as ever." He looks around as if he's

"You sure?"

"Absolutely." No nerves even now.

"We're fucking nuts. I swear I love you."

He tackles me into a hug for what felt like half of my life before he kicks the back of the seat in front of us, igniting the bomb on the inside of his shoe. The meat head turns around, ready to kill Nate. Nate smiles wildly at me and lets out the most genuine laugh I've heard from him in years.

"See you in Hell, man!" Nate yells as flames envelop his freckled face and the cabin erupts into a cacophonous chorus of blood-curdling screams.

The Purpose of Gods

Rachel Burns

When the sun first hit the Nile
the whole world must have sung a song,
its deified notes tasting of gold-
of lapis, alabaster, myrrh-
sweetness and luxury and deep, soul-rich sensuality.
That song is dying on a heated breeze,
weaving and whistling through split pillars,
caressing rough half-faces melted by the elements.
The air hums in lost places with the ghosts of voices,
raised and praising, mimicries of the First Song.
These ghosts are not enough, the gods have agreed;
humans have forgotten grandeur.
Ra bows low, sinking into the Earth,
carrying humanity's borrowed glory,
pulling with him the last refrains of that First Song
as he retires to where the other gods have gone to die,
and a silent ripple disturbs sunless delta waters.