

The Trip Home

Grade: 9
Fiction

I looked myself once over in the mirror. My dark brown hair pulled back in a loose ponytail. I looked so much older, liked I had been away from home 15 years rather than three. It felt like 15 years, my subconscious murmurs. Above all my brown eyes that have looked lost for the last three years had a little spark of hope.

Three years ago, my parents made the decision to move our family from America to London. My father, originally from London, jumped at the chance to return for this big CEO position. A decision that I would hold against them. I was thirteen when we moved I was just developing a social life. Most importantly my best friend Liv was there in our home town (Houston, Texas). Liv and I have been together since preschool. She taught me how to do my hair and nails. I taught her how to ride four-wheelers and sing at the top of her lungs, even if we sounded terrible. I miss her so much.

"Sydney the cars waiting" my older brother Riley called.

"I'm coming" I shout excitement filling my vessel

I walk down stairs to find my family awaiting me their luggage already packed. A pang of jealousy shoots through me as always. We all clambered into the car, my mind began to wander back to my jealousy. They look like the perfect family with piercing blue eyes and sandy blonde hair. My brother and father are lean but muscular, my mother close behind. She's tall but hollowly. I fall short by a mile, literally, I'm short with brown hair and brown eyes. I'm plain in comparison some would argue that I was adopted, then they would see my grandma Elizabeth and curse the thought. I was the spitting image of my maternal grandmother.

The car ride seems never ending with the silence and the rain constantly beating against the car. My parents tapping furiously at their laptops paying my brother and I no attention. They were always like this constantly worried about work. WORK, WORK, WORK! They lived it, breathed it, and dreamt it.

"When we get there Riley you and your father will get the main luggage. Then take it to get tags so it can be transported by the luggage department. Sydney and I will grab the Carry-ons as well as get our tickets." my mother spoke in monotone. We all nodded in agreement not even making eye contact. We didn't use to be like this. We use to laugh and joke. We drifted apart these last few years, now all we do is bicker and ignore each other. I know I certainly didn't help the situation, for the first year and a half I used every excuse to start a fight. I was just so furious, I felt betrayed, like they were doing this to me out of malice. I thought my brother would feel the same, he was the popular one who had everything to lose. He felt that way for what seemed like two seconds then he flourished, made all these friends and left me behind too.

There stood the very place that had brought me to my misery and would now take me back to my happiness, the airport. My family exited the car gracefully however I

stumbled a bit. We began to execute my mother's plan, my father and brother hurried off to do their part. I grabbed my bulging purple and teal backpack, along with my brothers almost identical to mine except for it being all dark Navy Blue. I followed my mother struggling to keep up with her hustled pace which, she achieved with ease due to her long legs. Her one stride equal to three of mine. When we reach the ticket station I'm huffing and puffing. I swing my brothers bag to the other arm giving a break to the former one. Using her index finger, she brutally typed information into the screen. After a beep or two the machine spit out four tickets. Mother whipped out her blackberry, shoved Dad's bag into my arms and began to text, while doing this she turned on her heels and began to advance toward the escalator. I followed silently, well except for my harsh breathing. Most of it was drowned out by the raucous around us.

Strangers constantly bumped into my shoulders. I said a silent prayer of thanks once I saw my mother stop at the end of the Security line. After mere minutes my brother and father appeared at our sides, taking their bags from my arms and swinging them onto their backs. The bottoms of my feet began to burn from standing for so long, the worst part was that we weren't even close to the front. My family didn't exhibit any signs of impatience. After a while I began to count how many people had a hat on to pass time. Then after about a million hours we were up, placing our bags, shoes, and anything metal in a container. I stepped through the metal detector my heart racing, I was nervous I really despise these things, they make me feel like I've done something wrong. We made our way through without a hitch keeping a quick pace to our gate and took a seat. The chairs were deathly uncomfortable. Mother passed out our tickets accordingly then we played the waiting game. I texted Liv telling her about where we were and how I can't wait to see her, I finished with "I'll text you when I land"

I started to doze when they finally started calling people aboard. I handed the very cheer flight attendant my ticket. "Welcome aboard, your seat will be D23" she said with too much delight as she waved me through. I made my journey down the slanted tunnel, the cold air biting my cheeks. I entered the plane answering with a nod and a smile to the captain and his crews welcome. I began to travel down the narrow aisle examining the seat numbers until I came across seat D23. I let out a sigh and slipped my backpack off sliding the cabin above the seat open. I raised my bag above my head trying to place it inside but even on my tippy toes it's not enough

"Here let me help you" at those words the bag slid easily into a cabin. I turned curious to see who the handsome voice belonged to. Oh man, his features didn't disappoint. He stood tall, I only coming to his shoulder, his shaggy light brown hair falling just above his honest green eyes. He couldn't be more than a few years older than myself. "Hi"

"Hi...err... thanks" I say, my voice higher than I would have liked, with a smile admiring his face.

"No problem" he replied his voice deep however still tainted by boyhood. "My name is Ryan" he extended his hand "looks like we will be spending the next 8 hours together." I happily took his hand, heat crawled up my arm.

"Sydney and looks like it" I try to sound indifferent but in my head I'm shouting EEEEEEEHH!! I take my window seat shimmying out of my coat. I look in front of me at the cute old couple exchanging "I love you's" then I am overcome with the pleasure I take in the feeling of Ryan's presence beside me.

"So, Sydney what brought you to London?"

"My parents work, you?"

"Had an interview with a college"

"Did you like the college London had to offer?"

"I haven't made a decision yet, which is ok, I still have a year to choose" he said it more as if he was telling that to himself. His mind deep in thought. "So why are you leaving London?" he asked, snapping out of it.

"My mothers work calls for her to be in the states, they thought it would be easier if my father just traveled to London when he needed to. Most of his work could be done over the phone or through the computer. They Also thought it would be better for my brother and I to have our grandparents close by, when my mother is on her book tour. She's a Writer. Sorry I didn't mean to talk your ear off" I cast my gaze down cursing myself.

"No don't be, trust me I don't ask questions I don't want to hear about. Also, I hear these plane trips can be quite therapeutic." I look up shocked, his sweet response triggering a smile to breakout on my face and a chuckle to be released matching his own. "They sound like quite the power couple."

"Oh, trust me you don't know the half of it." we talked for hours about anything and everything, from our complicated family lives to our favorite books and color, I dare say we may even have flirted a bit. As it turns out his parents are the opposite of mine, they're too involved, pushing him to go to some fancy college he has no interest in. We talked for so long I slowly slipped into a deep sleep.

"POP, POP!" *screaming*

My body jumped awake becoming painfully tense. I look at Ryan, his expression matching mine, shock etched into his face and his are eyes wide. Our eyes met, we asked a silent question neither of us had the answer to. *What is happening?* We looked around everyone had the same question on their faces. A masked man marches down the aisle with a gun held to a flight attendant's head. Her eyes are closed, she's crying and her body is trembling. Everyone gasped.

"EVERYONE LISTEN UP" We flinched at the rough sound of his voice. "PASS YOUR DEVICES TO THE AISLE SEAT HOLDER WE WILL BE COLLECTING EVERYTHING, IF CAUGHT WITH ONE LATTER, YOU WILL BE SHOT." No one made a move. "NOW!" Everyone moved at once. My hands shook as I searched for my cell. Ryan grabbed my hand steadying it.

"We're going to be Ok" He smiled weakly and grabbed my cell from my coat pocket. "Anything else?" I shook my head. Another masked man walked around with a bucket collecting our belongings. Ryan tossed them in quickly and the man moved on.

"EVERYONE STAY SEATED AND DON'T MOVE." This was all some bad dream, soon we'll wake up.

"Why are they doing this?" Panic shook my voice, Ryan squeezed my hand that he never let go of.

"I don't know" he said solemnly. People around us were crying silently. Where is my family? Frozen with the fear of the guards walking up and down the aisle my body refuses to look.

"Their ok, I stole a quick glance earlier." he said as if reading my mind. I rested my head on his shoulder unsure of what to say. The minutes crawled by slowly.

"HAY YOU! WHAT'S THAT?" My heat staled, he's coming right at us. Then stops short, aimed the gun, Fired! Even with popped ears I could hear the screams surrounding us. Tears spilled down my cheeks. He killed him. The elderly woman in front of us moans in agony, holding her husband's body. I squeezed my eyes shut as sobs rock my body. Ryan's body stiffened even more, if that's possible. My eyes spring open. I rip a breath into my lungs.

"Don't be afraid little girl." the gunman whispered to me inches away. My nostrils flared struggling to take in air. I flinched away as he extended his arm and wiped a tear from my cheek. Satisfied he looked at me once more then walked off, my body shuddered. A killer just touched me. I replayed the moment repeatedly, tears silently leaking out of my eyes, Ryan tracing patterns on the back of my hand silently comforting me. Hours ticked by repeated banging and screaming came from the front of the plane. The leader of the group of masked men called the two men patrolling the aisle to the front of the plane. Everyone began to mumble amongst each other. Feeling a sudden burst of courage, I leaned over Ryan and looked up the aisle. They're in the cockpit. Ryan flung me back into my seat giving me a look as if I was crazy.

"What are you doing?" he whispered.

"They're here for a reason the sooner we find out, "why", the more likely it is that we will make it out of this alive." I looked around "we're all alone up here it's up to us to do something."

Ryan chewed on my words a minute, weighing the options in his head, then gave a slight nod of understanding. "Ya got a plan or are you just full of courageous notions?"

he said teasingly and smiled. My heart stopped. It was then that I knew that smile was and always will be just for me. I smiled brightly, leaned in and whispered my plan in his ear. We went to work quickly, Ryan talking to those around us trying to bring us together.

"Riley" I whispered. His shoulders tensed at once. I wondered about my family, were they even worried about me as I was them.

"Sid be quiet" his voice shook, he hasn't called me that in so long.

"Riley this is important did you put that-"

"Sid our lives our more important right now." he said still not looking at me.

"Just listen will ya, my makeup bag, did you put it in your carry on."

"Yes" he said with a sigh. Perfect! My mother had asked me to hold her phone a while back never thinking to ask for it back. She had her work phone, that's all that mattered I thought bitterly. We would use the cell to contact the authorities once close to land. The question was how would I get the phone. We needed a diversion. I began to wheeze loudly. Ryan whipped around brows frowning.

"WHAT'S GOING ON OUT HERE" One of the Terrorists approached. I commanded my body to go limp.

"Medicine...makeup bag." I said between gasps

"She needs her medicine" Ryan made a move to get up, a gun appeared at his shoulder "She needs it or she's going to die...a high hostage count that's what you want isn't it?" the man scoffed.

"Then what do you want?" At this the leader just chuckled

"Get her the medicine and shut her up." He turned around going back to the cockpit "You, watch them" he pointed at one of his men. Ryan relaxed a little and stood up.

"Here let me help" I heard Riley say "I'm her brother" in a flash they had my makeup bag I looked at Riley shocked to find concern in his eyes 'be careful he mouthed'. I took one of my vitamins. Once Ryan and Riley took their seats the gunman traveled to the back of the plane. My hand slipped over the sophisticated features of the iPhone and I sighed. I looked at Ryan and he was shaking, I touched his arm. He looked at me fright claimed all his features 'Bomb' he mouthed. I suddenly felt very nauseous. What are we going to do? I looked down at the cell and gasped, we had service. Carefully I slid up my window shade and sure enough there was land beneath us. All the gunmen were now in the cockpit. Ryan secretly tried to get a look inside the cockpit, they must have caught him cause soon enough the curtains at the start of the aisle slid shut. All the sudden people started moving to the back of the plane. A man crept around whispering in everyone's ear.

"What's going on" Ryan whispered to the stranger. They exchanged a few words intangible to my ears. Ryan grabbed my hand and pulled me to the back of the plane "He's an air marshal" I nodded.

"Does he have a plan? Does he know about the bomb?" I said the last word the softest.

"Yes, he knows about the...Bomb... I don't know if he has a plan" his eyes sparkled "I have an idea-" Hands grabbed me. They swung me around and engulfed my body. Riley, Riley's hugging me. I melted into the hug and soon two other bodies were hugging us. I looked up and parents had tears in their eyes. We separated and looked at each other, they all seemed as stunned as I was. We never hug anymore.

"Are you both ok?" my mother looked us once over. Her eyes falling on me "I was so worried when I heard you wheezing-"

"Mom ..." I like the taste of that word. "I was faking, we needed a diversion." Her brows frowned. "I'll explain later but now we need to focus on the matters at hand" I turned on my heels. Ryan was smiling, that certain way, at me again. We Gave quick introductions, fill in my family, and listened to Ryan's' brilliant plan.

I had just finished securing the seat belt when I looked up and admired our work. We had arranged all the seat belt creating an obstacle course the enemy would have to walk though if they were to get to us. Ryan finished putting in the last luggage bag sealing the marshal in a little shelter. The marshal gave a nob of thanks to Ryan as he continued to talk to his colleagues on the phone in a hushed tone. With the marshal now hidden in his shelter it would make it possible for him to pick off the Terrorists as they made their way to us. The back of the plane was the storage, we emptied the cupboards and placed the children in there for their protection. Now we wait.

Silence and fear consumed the air, everyone flinched as we heard the curtains screech as they slid open. The gunmen cursed. "POP! POP! POP!" gunfire made our ears ring. I heard a whimper out of my left ear, looking over I saw a little girl shaking with sobs. The gunfire stopped. A woman screamed and the girl ran down the aisle. NO! I ran after her on instinct I slipped through Ryan's grasp as he tried to hold me back.

"SYDNEY!" He screamed behind me. I didn't stop till I reached the girl at the curtain. I went to turn on my heels when hands wrapped around my waist and neck, I shoved the little girl forward as hard as I could. I gasped as I was ripped harshly behind the curtain and thrown to the floor.

I moved to try and stand looking up but was met by the barrel of a gun. "Get up" my full attention on the gun I stand slowly, his voice seemed so far away. A loud noise came from behind the curtain, he ripped me up by my hair I cringed. He used me as a body shield, throwing back the curtain he pressed the barrel to my temple. I opened my eyes to see the marshal pointing a gun at me. My eyes flickered to my family, my

parents had tears in their eyes. They care! Then my eyes went to Ryan's face his body rigid with tension. They came to rest on the little girl in her mother's arms, my body let out a sigh of relief. I don't know how but somehow, I managed a smile as I gazed at the little girl.

"Put down the gun!" the marshal shouted, I felt the man's body behind me shake with laughter.

"You wouldn't shoot an innocent girl, would you? No, you won't" he said pressing the barrel harder into my skull

"I don't want to believe me but... it would be for the greater good... no offense kid" acknowledging me with sad eyes "So put the gun down"

"So, the end justifies the means. Huh how-" POP! I clenched my eyes shut, his hold on me loosened, I dropped to my knees. Everyone was screaming and a hand reached out to me then disappeared.

"DON'T TOUCH HER!" I lifted my chin to see my dad push the Marshal away from me and swung at him. Ryan held him back "YOU SHOT ME DAUGHTER!" I went to say something then my mom and brother were right in front of me eyes wide, tears sliding freely down their cheeks. My eyes begged to shut, I followed their eyes down to right above my right breast. That's blood, my blood. I couldn't handle it anymore and gave into temptation allowing my eyes to slam shut.

My eyes began to flutter open. My throat dry. My lips were in a similar position, they were painfully chapped. The sun burning my eyes not allowing them to fully open, I go to raise my right arm to shield my eyes. A burning hot pain shoots through me, tears leak down my temples as my eyes spring open, I choke on a moan. I look around Ryan is standing in the doorway, relief consuming him.

"Call her parents, she's awake" he shouted at the nurses and came to stand by my bed. "Hi" he said and that smile is back.

".... Hi." I croak. He grabs water from the side table and helps me adjust to take a drink. I cringe in pain, I take a delicious drink and look up, he's just smiling at me.

"Wha-" before I can finish he swoops down and his lips meet mine, fitting perfectly, heat rushes through me. All too soon it ends he stands up and we smile at each other.

"I look forward to getting to know you miss Sydney Randall." He says then walks off just as my family floods the room. After all the fretting and our 'I love you's' they finally tell me about what happened after I had passed out. Dad and the Marshal had to land the plane after finding the captains dead. We made it safely to the ground and bomb squad defused the Bomb. Then my grandparents and Liv came and tears leaked down my cheeks it finally registered that I'm home.

I looked myself over in the mirror my brown hair curled and falling to my shoulders. my white dress hugged my waist but volumized at the hips. I didn't see all the differences between my family and I when I looked in the mirror anymore, now I just saw how regal I looked, I felt perfect even though butterflies moved around painfully in my stomach.

"Are you ready my dear?" I turned to find my dad, looking dashing in a tux.

"yeah, Dad I'm ready" we smiled at each other, I think back to that day 8 years ago, when we had been on that plane. For the first time feeling grateful that day was my family's wakeup call. We are closer than ever now. It also brought me and the love of my life together. I looked down at the red carpet littered with pedals "Don't let me fall."

"Never" my dad chuckled. I look down the aisle and there he is with that smile that's only for me, my nerves are gone. As I walk down towards him, love radiated off both of us. My Dad kisses me on the cheek then Hugs Ryan placing my hand in his. We turn and face each other and suddenly we are the only ones in the room.

"Hi" I said with so much love in my heart.

"Hi" Ryan says admiration filling in his eyes. I look deep into his eyes not even hearing the pastor's words and it seems neither does he. We say silent vows to each other with our eyes, completing them with outspoken 'I do's' His lips find mine and I know that he is my forever.