

A photograph of the Stonehenge monument in England, featuring large grey stone structures arranged in their characteristic circular formation. The scene is set against a vibrant sunset sky with shades of orange, red, and pink. The foreground is a lush green field.

THE THREE MAGICKS

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MAGIC IS REAL. MERLIN IS HIDING IT

Andrew Littler

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I woke up with an oxygen mask dangling in front of me.

“Oh, bloody hell,” I heard from the seat beside me.

“Bloody hell indeed,” I replied.

A portion of the plane's cabin was now on their feet, wandering and bumping about the aisles between us, and a small portion still had their oxygen masks on. There was nothing to really worry about, but the air of panic was hard to deny.

“Miss,” I heard from a few rows in front of me, *“there is nothing to worry about it... it's just air pressure, miss, I—”* someone got in the way of the rest of the conversation, but I figured I know where it was headed.

I can't blame her, really, flying is scary enough, and that isn't

even considering the gigantic metal tube we are all stuck inside of. I took the opportunity the commotion afforded me to get to the washroom before anyone else was comfortable enough to form a line.

I did my business, washed my hands and splashed my face a few times in anemic attempt to catch my own thoughts. With as much noise and commotion as this turbulence had caused, it made holding my head on straight more of a feat than usual.

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—please make sure your seat backs and tray tables are in their full upright positions and that your seatbelts are securely fastened and all carry-on luggage is stowed underneath the seat in front of you, or in the other head bins—

pscht

I hobbled back to my seat, hip checking a few men in sweatpants and got to securely fastening my catty-on luggage. I grabbed all the books I had stuffed in the eat envelope in front of me, my laptop, and whatever pens I could find. With one headphone loose, I spent the next half an hour with Gran's bag on my lap, and it's leather folds leaving an embarrassingly resilient impression on my forehead.

Welcome to London read the cartoon pirate that was printed along one-too many-windows that lead to Terminal 3 at London Heathrow airport. It was busy, as was to be expected, but no one quite felt in a hurry, we were just in the mood to meander to and fro, and to and fro we meandered.

"Uh..." I uttered to myself, realizing then and there that I was going to have to actually make a decision; realizing then and now that I had been on auto-pilot for the past however long.

"Right, yes, of course," I uttered to myself, trying to shake my head of whatever amount of fog was sitting in there and headed

down the non-EU passport queue.

I have an iffy relationship with airports (if you can even call it that), but my job asks me to visit them often enough that I cannot help but have an impression on a few of them. They each have their eccentricities, but each existed in a world of their own: half in, half out; half homely enough to fit the city, half uncomfortable enough to keep the homeless from making the foyers their home.

This didn't always work, but it's why every airport felt like every other airport, and why every other airport felt as bleached and grey as every other airport. Some had their distinctive qualities, like the apocalyptic paintings in Denver, the wooden totems at Vancouver, or the wave pool at Munich, but I'm convinced those exist mostly to remind people they took the right plane.

Whether you get a Durian McFlurry in Singapore, camembert donuts in Germany, or the McPatatas in Mexico, you are still eating at a McDonald's.

I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"Pardon?" I asked, turning around to see it was the seat beside me, he was also waiting for his luggage.

"Did they ever give us our breakfast?"

"Goddamnit, I don't think they did," I replied, then recognizing what that feeling in the bottom of my stomach was.

We continued to exist within each others periphery as we waited until our luggage came by. It was no less awkward than one would expect.

"Where you coming here from?"

"Toronto, yourself?" When you are waiting for your luggage, everything looks like your luggage.

"Same," he said, yawning a bit of a yawn and trying to get whatever his coffee mug had left in it.

His eyebrows perked up when a blue, 100L spinner bag came

by; mine perked up when a much smaller, hard case one did. He offered to grab mine, too, and I was too tired to bother to say now.

"You come here often?" He asked.

"Not especially," I answered.

"Mind if I ask you to grab something for breakfast? Not even my treat, my bosses. I just..." he scratched an itch on the side of his head, "don't like to eat alone. And we can bond over a shared traumatic experience," he then handed me my bag.

I was tired, buried my face into my hand and tried to rub out the shape of my Gran's bag, scratching at a spot of moisture sitting in my hair.

"Yeah," I yawned, pushed my glasses up the ridge of my nose and yawned again. Of course I could afford breakfast, I could probably even get reimbursed by Air Canada, too, but a free meal is a free meal, and I still had to figure out what the rest of my day was going to look like.

"Yeah, sure," I repeated, not entirely sure if my previous answer had made it past my yawn.

There are three types of people at the airport - those that have to budget their airplane trips, those that do not, and those that spend their time in the secret VIP airport lounges no one knows about. The former of the three do not use luggage with wheels, and the latter of the three do not have to bother.

"Oriël?" He asked. It was the first thing either of us said in however long.

"Y-yeah, sure, sounds good," he lead me past a whiskey shop, a luggage shop, and an oddly played oyster bar to a little purple square on the departure lounge map I had saved on my phone. I was sitting at a solid 87% battery life and I felt like the Queen of fucking England.

We found seats right away and ordered two coffees and two

waters right away, so at least I knew this guy was on my wavelength.

"You come here often, then?" I asked, using my finely tuned womanly skills to figure out if he comes here often. "And what is a *brasserie*?" Noticing the 'grande brasserie' part of the restaurant's title, "I am not nearly Canadian enough to understand a lick of French."

"It just means *French restaurant*, or *restaurant in a French style*, so... well, it's just a *big French restaurant*."

"French makes everything sound so fancy."

He laughed, I laughed back.

"So," I asked with half of my laugh still on my face, "what do I call you, other than *Isle Seat*, I mean."

He laughed again.

"I've been called Fredo my entire life, so we can go with that. It's a name my parents brought here from Tenali."

"Well my name is Maddison."

I whipped open my menu with one hand and portioned some creme and sugar to my coffee with the other. It felt nice to speak words that were more than 'yes' or 'no,' and at more a rate than an intermittent one.

By the time the wait staff had arrived, I had already finished my coffee. This was less a condemnation on the staff than it was how well my nap on the plane was.

"I'll take the beetroot, artichoke and squash risotto, thanks," I said in more of a rushed tone than I had meant.

"And I will take the lemon sole *meunière*, and a glass of Sauvignon blanc."

"Oh! Right," when Fredo offered me a meal, I was not sure that drinks at six in the morning counted. "I'll have the same."

"Would you prefer a bottle, then?" asked the waitstaff.

"Sure, a bottle, then," Fredo answered.

"*Merci*," the waitstaff said and waked off with our orders.

Fredo shrugged, "it's happy hour somewhere in the world. So,

Maddison, what are you doing around here, then?"

"I want to surprise some friends," I said instinctively, "I think. I don't know, this whole trip was rather... out of the blue. Found a week free and, well, here I am."

"What do you do otherwise, then? If you don't mind my asking, that is."

"Librarian, nothing... exciting. It pays fine enough, but no one ever thinks it actually calls for a degree. Yourself?"

"A little bit of this, a little bit of that," Fredo replied with no less dismissal than was appropriate for conversation with a stranger.

Sure, I nodded.

Our waitstaff took this slight pause as an opportunity to deliver our meals and pour our wines. I liked wine fine enough, but I was mostly looking for something to take this buzz off that coffee wasn't and wasn't going to make me look trashy at the same time.

I could tell that he was trying to decide whether or not the question on the tip of his tongue was one worth asking. He tilted his head more than a few times, and more than a few of them were accompanied by a jaw left slightly ajar, and a forefinger slightly aloft.

"Just spit it out," I said, "ask me why I need a degree."

Fredo was a darker skinned gentleman, and even that being the case, the embarrassment was shining on his cheekbones.

"... okay, what do you need a degree for?"

I replied first with a grin, and then an answer: "my classes centered around three topics, the philosophy of librarianship; the business and management aspects of a library; and turning raw information into searchable information. If I don't know something, I need to know how to know about something."

"Like Google, but for things other than cats."

"But also," I replied, "about cats."

Fredo and I sat together drinking our wine and more coffee refills than we had anticipated needing as our lack of sleep caught up. I finished the meal with an apple tart, he finished it with a phone call.

Fredo left me with a few twenties and headed out quietly. My courtesies now relieved of their duty, I pulled out my phone and checked my news feeds while finishing my risotto. Over another refill of coffee, I looked up *Ye Olde Ferrie Inn* and found which cab to take where, when, and for how much.

I woke up at the very end of a two and a half hour taxi ride with the same great timing I grew up with as we pulled down the last stretch of Ashes Lane, and turned into Ferrie Lane. It was a homely area and as we drove past the dogwood trees and the window baskets, it looked to host homely neighbourhood, too. It wasn't the goddamn Nile or anything, but the River Wye was still a quaint looking one.

The nondescript sedan parked right between the little hut and the little stairway to *Ye Olde Ferrie Inn*. I hope I didn't snore. Or bore him with details about this places historically erroneous used of the word *ye*.

The first thing I saw when lead to my front door was an a chalkboard sign hanging on my front door with some thickened twine that read *Doward* in a font that was just homely enough to not look like it was trying way too hard to look homely. I clicked the handle closed and tossed my hardcase luggage with enough faith in it that my clothes will not break.

It bounced and skidded enough on the plaid comforter for me to find myself jealous of it, so I sorted as much of my clothes and toiletries as I could before succumbing to the everlasting allure of a professionally made bed.

It felt very good.

I dug through my luggage to find anything with a wire that needed to be connected, my Queenly 87% was already down to 62% and that was not going to last until tomorrow morning. I reached my way around bed legs and nightstand corners to find that I only had brought one European power converter, and while it sufficed, it did not do so with much aplomb.

Next was the small library I kept on my person when travelling: *Historia regum Britanniae* and *A Once and Future King*; one for research, the other to re-read for the second dozenth time, and one to—

—wait, what?

I had done this routine so damn often that I not only could I tell which book I was touching by their pages cut alone, I could also tell that three books was more than two. It was a small book, but when I grabbed it carried an impossible weight.

“The Quick and Thorough Hùștorı of Mągıç^{oo}ꝛø,...