

## Fleam

I was already late for my flight, so I had extra reason to hope my tuck was good enough to make it through security unmolested. After I passed through the scanner, I looked at the outline of a person on the results screen. Instead of the all too familiar highlight over the crotch, the figure's entire body flashed red. Of course, someone at the DHS must have decided that showing a yellow light over the crotch of every trans woman was somewhat undignified, but that didn't negate their duty to molest us for daring to travel via airplane.

I was already formulating an indignant tweet in my mind when a TSA agent beckoned at me to step aside. "Please wait here. We will instruct you on how to proceed, ma'am."

I sighed. "Okay, how long will this take? My flight just started boarding."

Impassive, the agent said, "just follow our instructions, ma'am. I'm going to lead you to a private exam room."

The agent led me out past the security kiosks, and towards what looked like a featureless gray wall. As we approached, I made out a door, differentiated from the wall by only a hair-thin seam and a keyhole. I did not have the time for whatever this was.

"Look," I said, "I'm a transsexual. Your scan probably just flagged my genitals. This happens pretty much every time I go through security. You can just pat me down here if you want, I don't care what gender the person who does it is."

"Please just follow our instructions, ma'am. Come along." As I went through the doorway, I had a sudden shock of vertigo as he led me into an abyss of gray. In a few seconds, my eyes adjusted, and I took a hallway with gray carpeted ceiling, floor, and walls, differentiated only by fluorescent panel lights and more regularly-placed door seams.

Eventually, he opened one of the doors and led me into a windowless room with a chair, a small waste bin, some cabinets, and, of course, more gray carpeting. A certificate on one wall showed the TSA logo, and read *Certified Security Exam Room*. Instead of the terminal's intermingled smells of sweat and coffee, the room's odor was an odd mix of antiseptics and something plasticky I couldn't quite place.

He unlocked one of the cabinets, and withdrew a clipboard with a form already attached and a pen hanging by a string.

"Please fill this out while you wait," he said, then he exited the room.

I grabbed the pen, and immediately noticed it was rough with bite marks. Great. I started on the form:

**Legal Name:** \*\*\*\*\* Elston

**Date of Birth:** 11/04/1996

**Legal Sex:** M

**Flight:** United 502

**Height:** 5'11"

**Blood Type:** O+

...

Wait, blood type? What kind of form was this? I needed to figure out what was going on. I put down the clipboard and went to the door, but there was no handle, only a keyhole. I knocked, but the carpeting muffled any sound. Shouting with frustration, I tried throwing myself against the door, but I was unable to move the door.

I checked for my phone. Shit, I didn't even get to grab it after going through security. I started looking around the room more closely, trying to get a clue what was going on. I tried the cabinets, but they were locked. I used a foot pedal to open the little trash can and peered inside. There were crumpled blue vinyl gloves, antiseptic prep pads, cotton balls with reddish-brown stains, and used gauze. What the fuck was this place?

The door swung open and I spun around. The same agent was back. "Did you complete your form, ma'am? We heard you calling."

"Look," I said, "I don't care if I miss my flight. I don't know what the problem is, please just let me leave."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. We detected a problem with your blood," the agent replied.

"With my blood? What does that even mean? Do you think I have drugs in my blood or something? How do you even detect that?" I asked. Scrambling for any possible explanation, I thought back to my latest bloodwork, looking for an answer. Vitamin D deficiency, somewhat low iron, everything else within the normal ranges.

The agent picked up the clipboard from where I left it, and leafed through the pages of the form.

"If you had completed this form, you might have a better idea of your options," the agent said. "Unfortunately, you've been uncooperative, so we're going to need you to take a seat."

"Look, I don't care what you need. I think— no, I *know* I have rights. You can't just hold me here." I tried to push my way past the agent.

"Yes, we can," the agent replied as he grabbed me by the shoulders and pushed me back down into the seat. I didn't truly start panicking, though, until the agent took a metal object out of his pocket. It was a small wrought iron cylinder that fit into the agent's palm, with the exception of a spike protruding from one side.

"We would normally use a needle," the agent said, "but due to supply chain issues we have had to use alternate means to draw blood. We apologize for any pain or discomfort." In a split second, the agent pulled up my shirt, and shoved the spike into my belly.

As I saw the blood begin spilling out, for some reason my first thought was that he hadn't sanitized the area beforehand. Then the agent put his head down to the wound and began to suck. I screamed for seconds or maybe hours until I saw two people in TSA uniforms come and pull the agent off me, and finally my world faded to white.

When I woke up, the agent and the two men were gone. Instead, another agent, this time with a yellow bar reading "SUPERVISOR" on his name tag, was standing above me.

“We’re so sorry for the inconvenience, sir,” the supervisor said, “we regret our agent’s unprofessional behavior.”

“Just let me leave,” I said.

“Absolutely, sir,” he said, “the scanner detected hormonal abnormalities in your blood, which required us to conduct a blood test before your flight for safety purposes. Had you indicated your gender status prior to passing through security, we could have screened you as a male with transgenderism, which would have allowed us to use the correct hormonal profile. Of course, our agent’s behavior was completely uncalled for, and rest assured that he will be disciplined according to the relevant codes of conduct.”

I felt a muted indignance at his explanation, but I had no energy left to protest or argue. Using the sides of my chair, I raised myself to a standing position. Still lightheaded, I used one of the walls for support as I slowly made my way towards the end of the hall with an exit sign. As I took a step, I felt a spasm of pain from my abdomen, and for a second I felt the agent’s lips sucking on my belly.

“Again, our apologies, sir. Please do update your documents to avoid any further inconvenience.”