



MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE WONDERS OF AIR TRAVEL

By Joy Chen

When I was growing up, my experience of the wider world was limited to the images on television. I had never ventured beyond the confines of my city, save for long bus rides to visit relatives out of town. I dreamed of what it would be like to travel around the world and wondered if it was as romantic as movies had portrayed it. When I finally had a chance to embark on an in-

ternational exchange programme with my school, I jumped at the opportunity. On the long-awaited night of departure, I dragged my luggage across the slick waxed floors of the airport to meet my teachers and classmates, saying a tearful goodbye to my family right before we entered the departure hall for my very first plane ride.



First, we needed to clear the customs and immigration stations, enduring the snaking lines of weary-eyed travellers within velvet rope barriers, inching forward every so often with our bags in tow. A security officer yawned as he stared at the display after scanning my luggage. Before long, we were strolling across the carpeted tunnel of the jet bridge with a magnificent view of the metal behemoth that would take us across the ocean. In the glare of the airport floodlights,

the magnitude of the airplane was intimidating, and I felt butterflies in my stomach. Stepping into the cabin, the stewardesses greeted us warmly, assisting us with our luggage and settling us into our seats. Their sweet perfume lingered briefly in the air as they sashayed up and down the aisles, maintaining perfect poise. From their chirpy demeanour and professionalism, I immediately felt at ease in their presence onboard.



As the plane chugged along the tarmac towards the runway, the intercom intermittently squawked with messages from the captain to passengers and crew members.

Soon, the plane began to taxi in preparation for takeoff, and the indiscernible whirring sounds of machinery bellowed from the ²chassis beneath us. As the plane chugged along the tarmac towards the runway, the intercom intermittently squawked with messages from the captain to passengers and crew members. Although I could barely decipher the words from the radio static, the confidence in the pilot's suave ³cadence reassured me that we were in good hands. With a sudden jolt, the plane's jet engines kicked into gear, and the forward momentum thrust us against the backs of our seats as we ascended towards the skies, causing me to gulp from sheer thrill, while holding tightly onto the seatbelt fastened across my waist. Excitement radiated from deep within my abdomen, and I felt a strange triumphant sensation growing, as if I were embarking on a great adventure.

Eventually, the plane levelled out, and cool air from the atmosphere began ⁴permeating the cabin. Taking a deep breath, I noticed the air seemed thinner, with a sophisticated aftertaste. A glance outside my window revealed the pitch dark of the night sky, and it was as if everyone on this plane were in a cosy cocoon, away from the rest of the world. ⁵Nestled in the hull of this powerful aircraft, I could hear the noise of the rushing air outside the powerful aircraft gradually reducing to a mild hum, as it ⁶melded with the soft murmurings of the passengers, enveloping me in a gentle blanket of sound. I sank deep into my seat, luxuriating in the warmth of the plush fabric, taking comfort in the companionship of my fellow travellers. I attempted to read a book, but I was tired, and soon fell into a deep slumber.



Word Bank:

1 behemoth:

something that is extremely large and often extremely powerful

2 chassis:

the frame of a vehicle, usually including the wheels and engine, onto which the metal covering is fixed

3 cadence:

the regular rise and fall of the voice

4 permeating:

spreading through something and being present in every part of it

5 nestled:

rested yourself or part of your body in a warm, comfortable and protected position

6 melded:

caused something to combine with something else

7 roused:

woke someone up or made someone more active or excited

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I was gently awakened by the soft glow of sunlight on my eyelids, pleasantly surprised that I had slept soundly through the night. The view from my window was marvellous in the stark daylight, with white fluffy clouds bursting from the baby blue backdrop of the sky. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee ⁷roused my spirits as stewardesses delivered breakfast sets down the aisles with their pushcarts. The airplane food served was simple fare but delicious nevertheless, with two

slices of bread, crispy turkey bacon strips, scrambled eggs and crunchy apple cubes.

We landed shortly after, and I went on to enjoy a memorable exchange experience with my schoolmates. While I would continue to enjoy many more plane rides later in my life, none would inspire the sense of thrill and wonder of my very first flight.