

## Plane Ride

I'm Emma. Not Popular Emma. Not Nerdy Emma. Just plain old, brown hair, green eyed Emma who stays holed up in her room reading books and watching movies made in a century in which she wasn't even born, distancing herself from the rest of society. I'm the girl who has more vinyl records than I have hairs on my head and more VCR tapes than the sky has stars. Everyone thinks my obsession with all things vintage is motivated by the want to be "hipster". I don't. I wouldn't say it's motivated by anything. I just treasure the memories so much, I've grown to treasure the items also.

I plop into the seat next to Luke, who has his headphones on and is bopping his head to some hit song that's always on the radio. Typical Luke. Won't let down his façade in front of his dear twin sister for the fear of being discovered the few people on the plane who couldn't care less about our family issues.

"Luke," I say, nudging him. He pulls off his headphones and looks at me. "Stop pretending. Please."

He stares at me for a moment, and I can almost see the gears turning in his head. I can almost imagine what he's thinking. He's wondering how I know, if anyone else knew, if his mask of contentment wasn't as perfected as he thought it was.

"Why do you care?"

"You're my little brother, Luke. I have to care."

"Not a valid answer." he says, pulling his headphones back on, but I pull them back off.

“You want a valid answer?” I say, getting slightly annoyed. “I care because it hurts to see you like this. You’re not yourself anymore.”

“I’m not myself?” he repeats, his voice rising with his temper. “How do you know who I am when you claim that I don’t?”

“Because *you* know this isn’t who you are!” I yell, exasperated. “You know that you don’t do drink and party every night and do drugs because you think they’re cool.”

“I don’t do it because I think it’s cool!” he shouts. People are staring.

“Then why do you do it?” I demand.

“To fit in. So people don’t see me as that poor kid with the dead dad and so I don’t have to *feel* like that poor kid with the dead dad. It’s as if I keep pretending, I’ll convince myself that it’s true.”

“Then why do you have to pretend in front of me?” I try to yell, but it comes out as barely a whisper. He’s the only family I have left, and he has his secrets locked away from me.

“Because,” he says. “I thought if I would pretend in front of you, I could convince you too.”

That’s when I burst out into tears.

I wish they didn’t go to the store that night. The groceries didn’t cost their lives. I wish the guy hadn’t been driving around drunk. I wish his car didn’t collide with them. I wish the impact didn’t kill them. I wish I had my parents right beside me, comforting me, wiping away my tears. But if they were, the tears wouldn’t have been there.

I remember my dad putting marshmallows on my hot chocolate and drizzling them with caramel. He always made the best hot chocolate. The kind that made you look forward to winter. He also sparked my love for vinyl and VCR old movies and books. He said that vinyl sounds sweeter than honey and that any iPod could never sound that amazing. He showed me all these amazing movies that could never compare to the movies they have now. My favorite movie is Rebel Without A Cause. If he was still alive, he would introduce me to more of those movies, but he's not. I can still watch them (I can get them when we land in California), but I'd still like his input on how much he loves or hates a certain character and why he loves or hates that character.

I miss my mom, also. Of course I do. I think my mom's death was about as hard for Luke as my dad's was for me. He was closer to my mom than I was and I regret it. I regret not spending enough time with my mother before she left us. But, a little part of me is actually *glad* I didn't spend that time with her. Because it would be a whole lot easier to just let go.

"I'm sorry," he says softly, wrapping me in a hug. "I didn't know I was hurting you."

After a few minutes, I pull away from his embrace because it's slightly uncomfortable with the armrest in between us. I sigh and slouch back into my seat, staring out the plane window, looking at the view. It's slightly terrifying, actually, so I pull down the shade and stare at that instead. I try to force myself not to think of my parents but that doesn't work, so I try to force myself to believe they're alive. That doesn't work either. I can't make a lie out of the depression I've been sinking into for the past 5 months. If I could, I would've done it a long time ago.

Soon enough, I fall asleep. I am awoken to the sound of the flight attendant and multiple groans around me.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have started our descent in preparation for landing."

I stretch and look at Luke, who has his head cocked back and is snoring like a pig. I nudge him hard with my shoulder, but then I realize that Luke sleeps like a rock. I shake him violently by the shoulders until his eyes snap open, alarmed.

“We’re about to land in California.” I inform him when he looks at me questioningly as he wonders why I woke him up from his precious sleep.

I’m actually relieved when we finally arrive in California. I’m tired of being suffocated by huge buildings and squinting at the blinding lights. I’m tired of New York. I miss California, my home. Where I grew up, where my parents died, but home nonetheless.