

Airport Novella

Tom Comitta

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AIRPORT NOVELLA

1

Manchek nodded.

He nodded to the projectionist in the back. "First picture."
"The van," Comroe said. Manchek nodded.

"Perhaps the pilot should narrate." Manchek nodded and looked at Wilson, who got up and walked to the front of the room, wiping his hands nervously on his pants.

Wilson nodded and swallowed. The room lights went down and the projector whirred to life.

For a moment, Stone looked surprised, and then he nodded. Hall nodded. "What is it?"

There was a short pause. Norman nodded. "It may be alive."
"Possible," Harry said, nodding.

The group looked at each other, nodded.

Burton nodded. "Crazy," he said. "Stark raving mad."

"It's exciting, all right."

Norman nodded.

"Almost astonished, in fact," Burton nodded. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Tina nodding vigorously. Harry looked skeptical.

Stone nodded, staring out the window. To her astonishment, Allison saw her husband nod quietly.

“What do we do?” Burton nodded.

Stone nodded to the equipment in the back.

“Will that still work?”

Stone nodded.

Burton said to Stone, “And what have you found in the capsule?”

He nodded to a stack of pink uniforms in one corner.

They nodded.

Burton nodded. “Any idea what this means?”

The others nodded.

Jackson swallowed, and nodded. He seemed afraid to speak.

“We had to give you a transfusion.”

He nodded, accepting this quite calmly. “Yeah. Like I said, I had it before. All these needles stuck in you”—he nodded to the intravenous lines—“and all the blood going into you... I was doing a bottle a day. You know them bottles it comes in?”

Hall nodded. No wonder the man was acid.

Hall nodded, and left. He walked over to the teleprinter and watched as it typed. He looked and nodded, satisfied.

Stone nodded and turned to Hall, who told of the tests carried out on his two patients.

Stone nodded.

“Some of them died instantly, and the others...”

Burton nodded. “One other survived.” He nodded to the crib next to Jackson.

“So much for theory,” Norman said.

Leavitt nodded; Stone turned back to the isolation chamber and removed a glass dish from the light microscope. “And I have to do it myself?”

Burton nodded.

Hall nodded. "It makes sense," he said.

Leavitt nodded. "I hope we're not too late," Leavitt said, watching the computer console screen impatiently.

Stone nodded.

Norman nodded. "Any sign of Captain Barnes?"

Hall nodded. He nodded to a door across the room.



Anderson nodded and flicked the switch just inside the door. Langdon squinted into the light and finally nodded.

The bald man nodded. "Slipped on the ice. A week ago. Still hurts like hell."

Langdon nodded, accustomed to the comments.

Katherine nodded.

Their heads nodded in unison.

Langdon nodded and lowered his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. "You sure you're ready?"

She nodded. "This thing has a *name*?"

Langdon nodded. "It's one of the most secretive icons of the ancient world."

Trish nodded. "In all of history?"

Katherine nodded enthusiastically. "Like a flock of birds or a school of fish moving as one."

Dr. Abaddon fell silent for several long moments and then began slowly nodding as if Katherine might have a point.

A few seconds later, the old dean finally nodded.

Sato nodded. "Yes, basically that's right."

Langdon nodded.

"Chief," Sato said, turning away from Langdon, "can you get us a closer look at the painting?"

Anderson nodded.

“Do you see anything?”

Katherine nodded blankly.

Langdon nodded, feeling a chill as he looked up.

Fache nodded without even looking.

Sato gave a grim smile and nodded to Anderson. “Chief, follow me, please. I’d like a word in private.”

Anderson nodded and swallowed hard.

Langdon hesitated and then nodded.

“Did you see that?” Sato asked, also staring with alarm at the wall.

Langdon nodded, his pulse quickening. *What did I just see?*

Fache nodded. “Go on.”

Katherine was right behind him. She nodded.

Nuñez nodded vigorously, doing his best to play along. “I’m sorry, sir. The Architect told me not to tell a soul!”

The dean nodded. “Yes, Peter told me the same thing.”

Langdon nodded. He nodded in frustration.

Nuñez nodded. “I think he would prefer you obey my wishes.”

Fache nodded. “Devil worship...”

Warren Bellamy—Architect of the Capitol—stepped across the threshold and thanked Nuñez with a polite nod.

Nuñez’s pulse quickened.

Langdon nodded, exasperated.

Katherine nodded, too embarrassed to speak.

She nodded.

He turned to her, “I don’t get it.” Collet gave a curt nod and spun the laptop toward Fache.

Langdon nodded absently and took a few steps toward the bench. "It's flawless," Langdon said, nodding as his thoughts churned.

Trish nodded. "Welcome to the world of digitized text."

Sophie gave a curt nod.

Langdon nodded, dumbstruck.

Anderson studied the blueprint for a moment, nodded.

Langdon nodded and made his way over to the kitchen phone. He aimed his light inside, stared for a long, puzzled moment, and then nodded to Sato. "He's in the SUV."

Agent Hartmann gave a quick nod, pulled out the Escalade keys, and headed for the door.

The guard nodded. "Identification, please."

The chauffeur looked surprised. "I'm sorry, didn't Ms. Solomon call ahead?"

The guard nodded, stealing a glance at the television.

"Shoot the lock," she said, nodding toward the key plate beneath the lever.

Langdon's pulse leaped.

Anderson nodded, inching after her. "Talk about skeletons in your closet."

Everyone inside the office nodded their understanding.

Solomon nodded. Her eyes were red, and she had obviously been crying, but she nodded with a resolute stoicism. "It's the only way we can get Peter back, right?"

Langdon nodded. He nodded in frustration.

The old woman dabbed her tearful eyes and nodded with a resolute calm. "Okay."

Langdon nodded, his expression serious.

The agent nodded and spoke into his transceiver.

Solomon nodded. *Perfect.*

When she told the agent where she wanted to take Bellamy, she expected the man to look surprised, but he simply nodded and opened the passenger door for her, his cold stare revealing nothing. Solomon gave the boy a nod of approval. “Exactly.”

Bellamy nodded, looking dazed, as if nothing mattered anymore. “Yes, I just heard your conversation.”

Solomon nodded, knowing he was right.

“Do you know where you are?”

Langdon nodded weakly, still coughing.

She nodded vigorously, her lungs burning for air.

Langdon nodded. “Near the main altar.”

Then he lowered the skull and gazed out at the assembly around him. America’s most powerful and trusted men gave contented nods of acceptance.

Peter nodded.

The students in the crowd nodded enthusiastically.

Langdon nodded absently.

“And finally?” Peter asked. “What about the staircase?”

Langdon glanced down at the image of the stairs. Langdon nodded, his thoughts drifting now.



I nodded. “Surely. Yes, I remember.”

A sudden great tolling of bells shook through the old abbey. Across the room, Stormy nodded. On the *prie-dieu*, a small book of prayers waited for a kneeling priest.

Chief Porter nodded thoughtfully. “The world sure was good to him.” His vague smile, which seemed to be as

permanent as a tattoo, widened briefly, and he nodded as though in cheerful agreement with something that he'd said to himself.

The chief nodded, and the purple Barney chair squeaked more like a mouse than like a dinosaur. "I better get moving."

I raised my spatula in reply. "Really?"

Atop his tall lanky body, his round face bobbed like a balloon on the end of a string, and I could not tell whether he was nodding in agreement or shaking his head in denial. He might have been doing both.

Smiling and nodding, I was unashamed of this deception. I looked at Stormy. She nodded.

I nodded. I said, "Isn't tomorrow your day off?"

She nodded. "You're right."

"You need to be as calm as possible." I nodded.

She nodded. "Yes. I believe that."

I held out my hand. "Do we have a deal?"

Solemnly, she thought about it, and then she nodded and took my hand. "Deal."



She nodded and departed, allowing me a moment to take in my surroundings. There was just enough wind to set the palm trees in motion, shaggy heads nodding together in some secret communication.

Another man in a tuxedo appeared in due course and escorted me toward the back of the house. Moving along the rosarium with a queenly grace and a smile of royal beneficence, admiring the nodding heads of her colorful subjects, my mother said, "I'm so glad you came to visit, dear."

I said, "Ah," with a noncommittal nod.

I passed two men, a woman, another man. We smiled and nodded.

I nodded.

“Can you tell me what it is?” she said in a tone of gentle remonstrance.

I nodded, for I could not speak.

2

Jeremy was silent for a moment before finally shrugging. She shrugged without answering. “Can I be frank now?”

He shrugged. “Anything that might help me with the history of the cemetery and the town.”

She shrugged. “Shows me what I know. Being that you’re a journalist from the big city.”

He shrugged, acting innocent.

She suddenly remembered that he’d been trying to guess her age yesterday. “Yep,” she said with a shrug.

He gave a sheepish shrug, and she had a sudden vision of what he must have looked like as a small boy. “Hey, I know it’s none of my business, but how did it go with Rodney?”

She hesitated before finally shrugging. “You’re right. It is none of your business.” He could almost hear her shrug.

He gave a sheepish shrug. “I suppose that depends on the perspective.”

Jeremy moved to the refrigerator and pulled two bottles of Coors Light from the six-pack. He twisted one cap off and

then the other before setting a bottle before her. When she saw it, he shrugged. "I hate to drink alone," he said.

She shrugged. "What can I say?"

He shrugged, his voice growing more matter-of-fact as he went on. "Sure," he said with a shrug.

Rachel studied him for a moment before shrugging. They stood together as one song ended and the band began a new one.

She shrugged, her eyes flashing back to Jeremy.

"What are you doing here?"

She smiled weakly and shrugged as she answered. "I came to talk to you, of course."

"About Lexie?"

She didn't answer right away. Instead, she sighed, then said evenly, "Among other things." When his brow furrowed, she shrugged.



"Do you still want to hear about Sam?" he offered.

I shrugged.

"Like I said, it's a long story. And very . . . strange." He raised his eyebrows, measuring my expression with curious eyes. Finally, he shrugged.

I shrugged.

"That's all right," he shrugged. "It can wait."

I sighed. "No harm done," I insisted with a shrug.

He moved. I shrugged.

He shook his head, his face a mask of faux tragedy. "I wanted to talk to you. I can't believe this."

I shrugged. "Oh, well."

Jacob shrugged.

Embry shrugged. "You are so odd, Bella Swan. I feel like I don't know who you are."

I looked up, trying to focus on the left half of her face. I shrugged, wishing she would let it go.

"I'm nothing but a human, after all. Nothing special," I explained, shrugging weakly.

She shrugged.

Jacob shrugged.

I felt Edward shrug around me. He asked about the hair; Jacob shrugged and told him it was just more convenient.

I shrugged. "Not in the technical sense of the word."

I shrugged. "Must have all been a misunderstanding."

I twisted to see Jacob's response. Jacob merely shrugged, all the friendliness wiped clean from his face.

Jane's smile faded, and she shrugged indifferently.

I shrugged. "I don't know. It just irritates me."

Felix and another shadow exchanged a quick glance.

Edward shrugged.

I shrugged. I wasn't going to take it back.

He shrugged. "It's nothing."

"That doesn't *bother* you?"

He frowned at me.

I shrugged. Shrugging was good. Very blasé.

"Maybe." He shrugged his shoulders, but his hands remained steady.

"I kind of guessed that," I said, shrugging. My spur-of-the-moment whim hadn't come with a plan intact.

His black eyes appraised me for a second, and then he shrugged.

I shrugged. "Just needed a change."

I shrugged. "Just scared."

“That doesn’t seem fair.” He shrugged, but his eyes were still intense.

“If you want me to go. . .” I shrugged.

He shrugged. “If I had any brains I’d drag it out a little bit.”

I was a little confused by his train of thought. I shrugged.

He shrugged and grinned.

I shrugged. “Either way.”

He shrugged.

“Okay, then, new subject,” I said.

He shrugged indifferently. He led me through the open front door into the dark house and flipped the lights on.

Edward was shrugging out of his jacket. I shrugged. “Been thinking about that last time a lot, have you?”

He shrugged instead of answering, and I winced.

He shrugged. And a fresh wave of panic shattered my brief sense of confidence.

I shrugged. “I guess it stuck with me.”

“Never be afraid to tell me how you feel, Bella. If this is what you need . . .” Edward shrugged.

I could feel the control slipping.

“I’ll be in my room,” I told him, shrugging out from underneath his hands.

“You say that like you’re not sure.”

I shrugged, feigning a lack of interest.

Edward shrugged. “If that’s what you really want.”

He shrugged, and his smile became absolutely angelic.

“You’re impossible,” I groaned. “A monster.”



Jonnie shrugged.

The monster made a sort of shrugging motion and said something.

“Where are they located?” said Jonnie, being very casual.

Terl took his eyes off driving for a moment and looked suspiciously at Jonnie. Then he shrugged.

Ker started to shrug and then had a happy thought.

“If I’m going to help, maybe we better talk over how we are going to do this.” Terl shrugged.

Jonnie shrugged. Then he indicated the list.

Jonnie read it, shrugged, and tossed it in the wastebasket.

Terl shrugged. “Promises,” he said indifferently.

Jonnie shrugged. “They often said things just to please the Psychlos.”

Ker shrugged. Angus told him who it was for and Ker sat there for a while, his amber eyes thoughtful.

Jonnie shrugged and waved a hand at the Russian officer as though to go ahead. The Russians nosed up their assault rifles.

The cadet shrugged and took the bundles.

Jonnie shrugged. “And you are taking me somewhere?”

“Very well,” said the terrestrial with a shrug of his shoulders.

Jonnie shrugged. “It’s the civilized thing to do,” he said and started toward the ship again.

Lord Schleim shrugged.

The other emissaries shrugged.

Jonnie shrugged. “My lord, do you mind if I go on?”

The Hockner shrugged, then gave a strained laugh. He lowered the beam and looked at Lord Schleim. But Lord Schleim simply shrugged.

Jonnie shrugged and pointed to Stormalong. “Can you stay awake to Luxembourg?”

Stormalong shrugged and then nodded.

Lord Voraz, when asked, had shrugged and said it probably came under the heading of prerogatives of a branch manager and was probably bank business.

The branch manager shrugged.

Lord Voraz shrugged. "There are strong bank guards."

Lord Voraz shrugged. "Of course."

The lords shrugged.

Dries shrugged. "This is not news and it is totally off the subject."



There was a long hesitation again and the girl shrugged. "Why?"

"Why not?" Paul shrugged.

She hesitated for a long time, thinking he didn't need to know it, and then shrugged, as though talking to herself.

Lionel shrugged modestly.

Faye smiled as he glanced at Val with a shrug.

"Where's Anne?" Faye asked Val and she shrugged. "She was here when I called. Van? Do you know where she went?"

Vanessa shrugged.

Val shrugged. "Who knows?" She shrugged indifferently and looked out the window.

He shrugged. And shrugged. But Faye was in no way prepared for what came next.

"I wish you'd stay out of this damn business." Lionel shrugged.

"You and Mom seem to like it a lot." Val shrugged.

He shrugged and looked vague. Two people couldn't have been more different than they.

Val shrugged. She had nothing to do with it after all and what did she care anyway? So she just shrugged and said, “Yeah, so what? Big deal.”

He shrugged then, looking very young again.

“What can I say?” He shrugged to Val after the funeral. “What did you do today?”

She looked at him for a long moment and then shrugged.

“Any big new heart throbs since I left?”

Valerie shrugged. She shrugged again. She didn’t want to tell him what she’d been through. That was nobody’s business. She led a different life now, in another place, another world.

Her mother smiled at Ward, and he shrugged. He shrugged with a grin.

“Sounds pretty boring to me.” He shrugged. “What do you want?”

She shrugged pensively as she threw her coat on a chair. “Maybe to publish a book one day ... good reviews ...”



Katherine Rose shrugged her shoulders. Apparently it wasn’t much of an issue.

“Merry Christmas, sir.”

Gary Soneji shrugged. “Merry Christmas back at you,” he said and shrugged. “Is that it, Marty?”

Marty frowned and looked down.

“Now what did you get her?”

Missy whispered conspiratorially to her brother. “You’re too much.” Marty shrugged as if he couldn’t remember.

Gary shrugged his shoulders.

Marty frowned. "You want to say something here?"

Gary shrugged. As if he didn't have clue one.

Marty frowned.

Gary shrugged. "Maybe not."

Monroe shrugged, but he continued to smile.

I shrugged and sipped the truly bad-tasting coffee.

Jezzie shrugged her shoulders. That was her only answer.

3

He looked at her silently for a moment. It was an odd look, as if from a great distance.

“Why me?” she asked, giving him an odd look.

Oz stared at her a moment. He gave her an odd look as he realized she was serious.

He gestured to her, then to the projector. “Do you think you can heal it?”

She gave him an odd look, then shrugged and walked to the workbench.

“I mean, that must surely be one of the Affiliation’s main needs.” He gave her an odd look, as if she had missed something that should have been obvious.

“What? What is it?”

She could see Giles staring at her, giving her one of his odd looks. And then he shrugged, his mind going neatly back on track.

Diana gave him an odd look and shook her head. She gave me an odd look, but I turned away.

Marino gave me an odd look.

“Sounds like I’m missing something important,” Wesley said as he pulled out a chair and sat down.



“Was that published data?” Evans said.

“I don’t remember offhand,” Drake said, giving him an odd look.

“The mind is its own control,” Clocker said.

Waxhill gave him an odd look. “Maybe mind-control failed with Alfie precisely because we were so confident that he was an easy mark.”

Peter gave him an odd look. He gave me an odd look. “Is that so?”

Burnet nodded. “Then it all went according to plan.”

Watson gave him an odd look.

Kristobal gave him an odd look and drew back some.

Everyone exchanged odd looks.

“Aye,” Pim said, and there was an odd look to his eyes that puzzled me.

“Hold on,” someone said. “You mean . . . like astrology?”

Sato grunted and raised her eyebrows, giving Langdon an odd look.



Although its juvenile dial often drew odd looks, Langdon had never owned any other watch.

The priest gave him an odd look. “Sir?”

Silence.

Sato gave him an odd look, apparently having heard nothing.

Vernet gave him an odd look. “I have no idea what that is.” There was an odd look of fierceness on the boy’s face.

Langdon gave him an odd look. It was an odd look, part shame, part defiance, and — yes, Henry would swear it — part hope.



“Is something wrong?” Fiona asked him. He had an odd look on his face, as though he had been struck by something, as the waiter poured his coffee.

An odd look came over her. “Barty? Short for ... Bartholomew?” His eyes told her that it was, and she was sorry she had come then, but he was moving slowly toward her with an odd look on his face.

She gave him an odd look. The *maitre d'* gave him an odd look.

“Ice it down,” I told him.

He gave me an odd look. Usually, he’s the one advising me to stay cool.

“My apologies,” Ixil said, an odd look on his face. “I’ll go up and...”

He trailed off, an odd look on his face. “What is it?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” he said slowly, the look still there.

Judy wrinkled her brow. She turned in her seat, gave him an odd look.



Ike tossed her one of the .38's taken from the Ninth Order. "You know how to use that?"

Nina looked at the pistol. An odd look came into her eyes. She pointed the weapon at Ike and jacked back the hammer. "More or less," she answered vaguely, with an odd look in her eyes.

A few of the men gave her an odd look but they said nothing.

She gave me an odd look, then an odd smile, and the weapon was back in its holster.

A gong banged.

'Ah,' said Mr Bucket. 'Luncheon is served.'

He extended his arm to Granny, who gave it an odd look before remembering who she was and taking it.



She gave him an odd look, but, surprisingly, remained still. He straightened and waited with an odd look in his eyes.

"Tell me something," Cyndi said. "Do you ever sign text messages George?"

He gave her an odd look. "No. Why?"

She shrugged. "I live in hope."

All over the roof garden, women in Gucci, Chanel, Dior and Valentino were drinking mango champagne cocktails. Rincewind watched them go into a huddle. Occasionally one of them would raise her head and give him an odd look, as if she was reassuring herself that he was here.

He fidgeted slightly, an odd look on his face. “They’re not dangerous, are they?”

She had this odd look on her face and she was very nervous.

He gave her an odd look.

And just like that, she was gone.

But he was still staring at her, that odd look still on his face.

I looked over at him. Curious about the odd look in his eyes, I said, “She left a lot of her stuff here. Is she going to come back for it?”

He looked down at the table for a second, then back up to my eyes. He gave me an odd look, then shrugged.



Throat gave him an odd look. “They have to be crazy,” he said aloud. A student going the other way gave him an odd look.

“In a way,” Byers agreed, giving him an odd look. He hadn’t been able to believe the news when he heard, and he saw Cynthia and Bill exchange an odd look.

Bill gave me an odd look, but they were gone without my making an opportunity to talk to him.

Masklin stood up. Angalo, who had been sitting with his chin in his hands, gave him an odd look.

“What now?”

Lomar gave him an odd look, then stared thoughtfully.

The sergeant never stopped sprinkling a bit of salt and pepper on her eggs. She did not catch the odd look on Dubois’s face.

Vlad gave her an odd look, as if she wasn’t reacting in quite the right way. He had rushed on, encouraged by the odd

look of her face, a look of contemplation that was almost a faint half-smile. "I need access to the Scarpe Pietrasanta premises," he said.

She gave him an odd look.

He gave her an odd look. He glanced at the nearest click-goers, who were giving them odd looks. The messengers gave him some very odd looks.

He went back to his lodgings and had a look at himself in the mirror over the washbasin. He glanced up, an odd look on his face.



'Him!'

Cutwell gave him an odd look. He backed up toward his bike. The receiver's beeping took on a slightly slower staccato, and the green light flicked like a lightbulb just starting to go. He played with the thing like a ten-year-old for about five minutes, then noticed that he was getting some odd looks.

Sophie gave the misplaced intercom an odd look. She stood aggressively in front of him, as if to bar his way, and there was an odd look in her eye.

The man gave her an odd look. "I imagine you want to talk."

She gave him an odd look. "Yes, of course. We do have a lot to talk about."

He threw her an odd look. "But I was. I thought you knew." He noticed an odd look in her eyes then.



“That’s strange,” she finally said, and sitting at her desk in New York, she had an odd look on her face. Savannah could hear it in her voice. She trailed off, thinking of the odd looks, the silences, the blushes. The signals.

Ben muttered under his breath.

Paula frowned and gave him a very odd look. “I beg your pardon, Ben?”

Denise looked at him, noting the expression on his face. “Odd look on your face, Ben.”

“This is where it all began, Denise. I woke up one morning, and the whole world had gone crazy.”

The others gave him an odd look. He would repeat that fact to anyone who would listen, and he said it with an odd look of reverence.

“Oh, wonderful,” Ike muttered.

Ben gave him an odd look.

The Librarian gave him another odd look, and shook his head.

“I get the feeling something’s coming down, somethin super-humongous.”

“Bigger than the end of the world?” I asked.

He gave me an odd look, then grinned. “Maybe.”

He was smiling, so I knew he was joking, but Kellan gave him an odd look before bringing back his casual smile.

Ben gave him an odd look.



My eyes swung back over to Kellan, who was now walking over to me, an odd look in his eyes. He seemed to notice my odd look and grinned.

Cholmondeley and Madame Ruth gave me an odd look I didn't understand for a second, and then I did. I nodded and smiled and caught the odd looks.

Kate giggled and then gave me an odd look. I wondered for a split second if she suspected what Jenny had suspected, and paled even more. She stopped because Mallory was giving her an odd look.

Kellan paused for a moment at the entryway, his back to me. Grace gave him an odd look.

Now it was Cute Angry Guy's turn to give her an odd look. "You live here?"

She nodded. She never took her eyes off him.

I gaped at him, speechless. He finally turned to look at me, an odd look in his eyes for half a second, before calmness settled in his features.

4

It was only the briefest pause, a moment of astonishment at a question she had not expected, but the engineer looked more closely at her face, and in time with her answer he gasped, “Good God!”

“He did?” The question was almost a gasp.

“Oh no!” gasped Mouch.

“Oh, I didn’t mean it that way!” she gasped. She gasped, remembering that this was true.

“What?” gasped Taggart, and regretted it: the sound was a confession of panic. “Really? Who is it?”

“Ragnar Danneskjold in Delaware Bay?” a woman gasped.

Francisco sat up straight. “What?” he asked, his voice so low that he almost succeeded in hiding the sound of a gasp.

“What?” gasped Dr. Stadler, whirling toward Ferris.

“WHO?” gasped Keating.

“Hugh Akston!” the attractive young woman gasped. She glanced around and gasped at the sight of the tall figure.

Dr. Akston shrugged, spreading his hands in a gesture of helpless self-mockery. He did not know whether the next

sound, part-gasp, part-scream, part-laughter, started rising from him or from the radio—but he heard the click that cut them both off.

She gasped like a child at a burst of firecrackers; there was a gasp, not of indignation, but of astonishment, in the crowd.

She caught the sinking gasp of her breath: “You’ve lived here for twelve years . . . here . . . like this . . .”

“Like this,” he said, throwing open the door at the end of the room.

She gasped.



“Mr. Roark!” gasped Mrs. Keating, staring at him from the threshold. “Mr. Roark!” she gasped, pointing at his clothes.

She gasped, “What have you been doing to yourself? You look awful.” She said it involuntarily and she gasped a little at her own words.

There were gasps among the people in the lobby. Yet their first response, ahead of shock or wonder, was a single emotion that went through the room like a gasp of relief.

“Katie!” he gasped.

She said nothing.

“Katie!” he gasped, regaining his voice.

Three gasps of recognition greeted the voice, but nobody had the power to notice them among the sounds of the crowd. One was a gasp of triumph, another—of terror, the third—of bewilderment.

Rearden whirled to him, then remained still, with a stillness like a gasp.

Mallory gasped, but no one heard it; Mike's hand clamped down on his wrist and made him keep still. "What's the matter with you?" he gasped.

"Oh, no!" Keating gasped so furiously. "I'll be damned if I let them—" She broke off on a gasp; he saw the change in her face.

Homer Slottern gasped. He went home, told the news to his mother, left her gasping in the middle of the living room, and locked himself in his bedroom.



He woke with a sudden indrawn gasp, sitting bolt upright in bed, eyes wide and staring into the darkness, hands crossed in front of his face. And his chest drew in a convulsive gasp that was expelled in a huge, racking sob.

Then one of the children in the third row had gasped, "It's Jesus!"

One by one the other kids had given a similar gasp, one little girl transported in near-ecstasy, crying out shrilly: "I see Him! I see Him!"

Jack gasped harshly. His gasp, which had been mingled with theirs, had nothing to do with beauty.

With a gasp that echoed in his own head he jerked himself out of the darkness.

Then he was out, his face was turned up to the sun, and he was crawling through the snow, crawling away from the half-buried cement ring, gasping harshly, his face almost comically white with powdered snow—a living frightmask.

She picked up Jack's feet again and dragged him in. She was gasping harshly now, at the limit of her strength.

Then, gasping, he got to his feet.

Silence came back.

His eyes traveled across the lobby to the foot of the wide stairs and a harsh gasp escaped him.

She slipped one of the razor blades out, fumbling at it, her breath coming in harsh little gasps. The ticking of the domed clock in the ballroom seemed to fill her ears, and counterpointing it, Jack's panting, agonized gasps as he began to mount the stairs.



He turned, climbed one flight of stairs and stepped through a door that led to the starboard side of the boat deck. He gasped as though he'd been stabbed by a thousand needles. "Thank God!" Donner gasped.

He stopped a moment and listened. The only sounds he heard were his own gasps and the wind.

Water streaming down his oilskins, his breath coming in gasps, he pushed back past the door just as Ensign Kelly's voice rasped over the speaker again.

"Captain?"

He gasped in agony as the door fell across his knuckles.

"Oh shit!" Dana gasped.

She gasped and stood there.

Hopper gasped.

"My God," Giordino gasped.

"I'm not up to it," Giordino gasped.

When the thrashing settled to a feeble twitch, Giordino loosened the chain and allowed the guard to fall to the ground

next to his unconscious partner only two gasps away from death.

The menace in the man's eyes bulged into a look of shock. Then a strangling, tortured gasp escaped his gaping mouth as the wind burst from his lungs.



Tim nearly gasped with fright.

He wasn't exactly sure what had happened. Just to think of it made him uneasy.

He stood in the road, gasping with panic. Gasping and terrified.

His sister's breath came in ragged, frightened gasps. He could feel how frightened she was, her breath in little panicky gasps.

"I have it!" Lex cried, clutching the pin in her hand, and she pushed it through the hole.

Locked.

Now she was running flat out, not daring to look back, her breath coming in deep gasps.

Grant was shocked to see it happening and froze in panic, when suddenly the animal made a gasping, gurgling sound and the big body pitched forward onto the ground. He released Gennaro, who bent over, gasping for breath.

Grant collapsed back, his chest heaving. He couldn't catch his breath. Gasping, he dragged himself on his belly onto the rocks, and looked at the river. His breath came in wheezing gasps.

In the car, Malcolm gasped. And he squeezed his eyes shut and gasped with the intensity of it and threw up his hands to

cover his eyes and felt the slippery foam trickling down both sides of his nose.

Malcolm moaned, and breathed in ragged gasps. The pain in his head made him breathe in short, shallow gasps. And he was only dimly aware that the tunnel tilted slightly upward, along the path, shifting his body, leaving him gasping and seeing spots before his eyes.



At once the room was flooded with a harsh yellow light. He lay gasping for breath, his forehead hot and wet, the pillow around him stained with sweat.

I stared at Lestat. I gasped.

‘Louis, it’s . . . it’s absinthe! Too much absinthe!’ he gasped.

‘Louis, Louis!’ he gasped over and over.

‘Claudia!’ He gasped again, and his eyes rolled towards her.

The woman gasped. She put her hands to her throat and gasped, her mouth open, the scream strangled.

‘Claudia,’ I gasped, turning away.

He let out one more gasp and fell sideways on the carpet. She stood looking down at him.

I gasped, but I could not take my eyes off it.

‘No,’ she gasped. No . . . : shaking the mane of hair. And tossing her hair, she put her hands to her ears as if to stop the sound of her own words, her breath, drawn in rapid gasps, the tears seeming to scald her cheeks.

‘Louis, the doors!’ she gasped, her chest heaving, her hand at her heart.

She let out a gasp when she saw him now.

Then, weak and gasping, I saw him at a distance from me. I let out a gasp, and, not meaning to, I must have taken several steps backwards when I saw him.

‘You want to see?’ he gasped as he peered into my eyes.

A wretched gasp escaped my lips.

And suddenly a cry went up from the crowd. No, it wasn’t a cry, it was as though they were all gasping and moaning, and then everything went quiet.

It was Death standing before the audience, the scythe poised, Death at the edge of a dark wood. There were gasps from the crowd.

She gasped.

I gasped.

A fly lit on the baby’s forehead, and involuntarily I gasped as I pressed it between two fingers and dropped it dead to the floor.



So it died, because for a split-second it got brave. But not then. It died much later, after the split-second of bravery had faded into long hours of wretched gasping fear.

Milosevic gasped out loud and Brogan looked stunned.

There was another gasp as they caught their breath simultaneously. “YOU?” Finlay gasped.

Picard smiled a cold smile at him.

Finlay inhaled sharply. It was practically a gasp. “Christ,” he said. He gasped in shock and backed off a foot.

Roscoe put her hand to her mouth and gave a silent gasp. Her eyes were wide. “Through the breezeway,” she gasped.

Holly gasped and used both hands to shift her leg.

Reacher gasped up at her from the floor. The guy gasped and spun away. He hauled himself along, gasping and sweating and shaking. Jammed his rifle into McGrath's gut and leaned on it, recovering.

McGrath gasped and squirmed under the pressure. He was gasping and panting. Gasping and shaking. Flinching and gasping, as his heart and lungs fought each other for space inside his chest.

When they got level with the Garber driveway, they were panting and gasping and smeared with moss and green pollen dust. There were sudden breaths and gasps. The beginnings of low moans.

Webster could hear distorted breathing and gasping through the earpiece.

The camera zoomed right out for a moment, to establish the scale, then it tightened in on a crowd at the eastern end of the range. Then it tightened farther to a small knot of people standing on some brown matting. There were four men clearly visible. General Johnson gasped.

He froze the picture and tapped his fingernail four times on the glass.

Johnson stared back for a long time, expressionless. He nodded. And said nothing.

Note

Airport Novella is inspired in part by “DrivingFlyingRising Falling,” a video by People Like Us. It consists entirely of excerpts from the following novels:

1

The Andromeda Strain by Michael Crichton
Sphere by Michael Crichton
The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown
The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown
Brother Odd by Dean Koontz
Odd Thomas by Dean Koontz
Watchers by Dean Koontz
K is for Killer by Sue Grafton

2

True Believer by Nicholas Sparks
The Notebook by Nicholas Sparks
New Moon by Stephenie Meyers
Eclipse by Stephenie Meyers
Twilight by Stephenie Meyers
Battlefield Earth by L. Ron Hubbard
Family Album by Danielle Steel
The Gift by Danielle Steel
Kaleidoscope by Danielle Steel
Daddy by Danielle Steel
Along Came a Spider by James Patterson
The Christmas Train by David Baldacci

3

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand
Oz: Into the Wild by Christopher Golden
Cause of Death by Patricia Cornwell

Demon by John Varley
The Gunslinger by Stephen King
Buffy: The Angel Chronicles by Nancy Holder
Tempting Fate by Nora Roberts
Mojave Crossing by Louis L'Amour
The Body Farm by Patricia Cornwell
State of Fear by Michael Crichton
Mr. Murder by Dean Koontz
The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown
Club Dead by Charlaine Harris
Next by Michael Crichton
The Christmas Train by David Baldacci
The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown
To the Far Blue Mountains by Louis L'Amour
Dreamcatcher by Stephen King
Wisdom of War by Christopher Golden
Second Chance by Danielle Steel
From the Corner of His Eye by Dean Koontz
Daddy by Danielle Steel
Trump Tower by Jeffrey Robinson
Seize the Night by Dean Koontz
The Icarus Hunt by Timothy Zahn
Replay by Ken Grimwood
Blood in the Ashes by William Johnstone
The Long Road Home by Danielle Steel
Feet of Clay by Terry Pratchett
Millennium by John Varley
Maskerade by Terry Pratchett
Conan The Unconquered by Robert Jordan
Thoughtless by S.C. Stephens
The Last Continent by Terry Pratchett
Serpent by Clive Cussler
Journey by Danielle Steel
The Morcai Battalion: The Recruit by Diana Palmer

Odd Girl Out by Timothy Zahn
Guards! Guards! by Terry Pratchett
In the Balance by Harry Turtledove
Our Lady of Darkness by Fritz Leiber
The Kiss by Danielle Steel
Dead as a Doornail by Charlain Harris
Wings by Terry Pratchett
Danger in the Ashes by William Johnstone
Carpe Jugulum by Terry Pratchett
Moving Pictures by Terry Pratchett
The Truth by Terry Pratchett
Mort by Terry Pratchett
Sins of Our Fathers by Jane Jensen
The Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett
Dying of the Light by George R.R. Martin
Dangerous to Kiss by Elizabeth Thornton
Kaleidoscope by Danielle Steel
Southern Lights by Danielle Steel
Loyalty in Death by Nora Roberts
Ambush in the Ashes by William Johnstone
Smoke in the Ashes by William Johnstone
Soul Music by Terry Pratchett
Vengeance in the Ashes by William Johnstone
Lords and Ladies by Terry Pratchett
The Case of the Toxic Spell Dump by Harry Turtledove
The Last Juror by John Grisham
The Snowflake Inn by Samantha Chase

4

Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand
The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand
The Shining by Stephen King
Raise the Titanic by Clive Cussler
Sahara by Clive Cussler

Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton
Interview with a Vampire by Ann Rice
Die Trying by Lee Child
Killing Floor by Lee Child
Tripwire by Lee Child



Troll Thread 2017