

Anxiety

by Anthony Van Hart

I read the awkward scene in Gatsby on the plane. Halfway through I put the coke soaked Southwest napkin inside and shut it.

Minutes passed. I asked for a shooter of Beam, thinking it would give me the courage to finish the chapter. I finished the coke and ordered 2 more tiny bottles.

Half cocked on Beam and diminishing feeling, I read it two, three times. I let the words engulf the open spaces in my mind the way smoke fills vacant rooms and suffocates ... everything.

When the chapter was finished and the empty vessels were lined up on the shallow tray like dead chess pieces, I placed the deteriorating napkin back at the start and nodded off on a stranger's shoulder. I don't think he minded.

