

Brucey

by Foster Trecost

I kept my seat. Passengers packed in the aisle weren't moving and until they were, neither was I.

"Could you at least stand?"

Hours earlier, I had attempted benign conversation with the man next to me. These attempts were met with disdainful silence that, if silences could speak, would have said conversation was not an option.

Nearly two hours later, I hoped my own silence said standing was not an option, either.

The doors opened and gasps filled the fuselage. A nervous queue began a two-footed crawl in the direction of daylight. At last I stood, merged in, and crawled with them. At the portal a memory demanded my attention and I paused, giving it time live again. It pulled me back to childhood and placed me atop a ladder. My brother, older and more experienced in the ways of the playground, stood at the bottom of a metal slide. "Come on, Brucey, you can do it!"

He used to call me Brucey. He was the only one who ever did.

Back in the present, no one beckoned from the bottom, but like I did back then, I jumped onto the slide. After a quick trip down, I stood and dusted my pants with both hands, and began following masses who lumbered along like a caravan crossing the desert.

"That was almost fun."

It was my row mate. I didn't answer.

“Hey, did you hear me?”

“I did,” I said, “My name is Brucey.”

“We're fellow crash survivors.” he said. “We survived a plane crash. Together.”

I looked at the plane overhanging the runway by only a few feet, yellow tongues protruding from every opening. “We skidded off the runway,” I said. “You can't really call that a plane crash.”

“Sure you can.”

I looked again at the airplane and thought about things that had nothing to do with airplanes. Brucey. I liked the way that sounded. Still do.

