

# Once Again

*by* Foster Trecost

Bruce kept his seat, waiting for those in the aisle to begin filing out. But they weren't moving, and neither was he.

"Could you at least stand?"

Hours earlier, Bruce attempted benign conversation with the man seated next to him, but his attempts were met with a disdainful silence that, if silences could speak, would have said conversation was not an option.

Bruce hoped his own silence, two hours later, said standing was not an option, either.

Once the doors opened, the nervous queue crawled in the direction of daylight. As those in rows ahead moved on, Bruce merged in and crawled with them. At the portal he paused. A memory loaded in his mind, and took him to childhood. He had climbed the ladder, but stopped at the top. His 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!"

This time no one beckoned from the bottom, but like he did back then, Bruce once again jumped onto the slide.

After the quick trip down, he stood and dusted his pants with both hands, and began following the masses who, only moments before could not move fast enough, now lumbered along like a caravan crossing the desert.

"That was almost fun." It was his row mate.

"Now you want to talk?" asked Bruce.

"We're fellow crash survivors. We survived a plane crash. Together."

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

"Sure you can."

Bruce, on the cusp of continuing, thought for a moment about what he might say, and decided, once again, to let silence speak for him.

