

Getting Out

by Nonnie Augustine

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Holding the sleeping infant on her shoulder, a young mother sat on the bench in the Greyhound station waiting for her nine p.m. bus. She was taking her baby home, back to the Maritimes, back to Prince Edward Island. Adair Brodie had given Boston her best shot and she was finished with the it. The Marathon Bombings and the chaos and fear following the explosions pushed her into a decision she had been struggling to make since her baby's birth. Adair was going to bring little Cameron up to the vast Brodie clan. She wore no wedding ring, and had no regrets about that because Matthew Barnes, the father, was a bastard. She'd gotten money for the trip and assurances from her mother that all of them, even her strict Presbyterian McKenzie grandparents, would welcome the two of them, not before some scolding to be sure, but she could weather all of the lectures.

Adair and the baby were startled by shouts. The old man sitting next to her jerked awake and the toddler playing with his balloon let go of the string and wailed as it floated to the ceiling. Two policemen ran into the station with their guns drawn. Within seconds the dozen or so people about were crouching with their heads down, fearful that more violence was about to happen. Cameron, tiny as she was, sensed the tension and started crying. Adair rocked her baby in her arms as best as she could in her hunkered down position and watched the cops run into the men's room. They came out again quickly, separated and searched the station. Then they talked in low voices with the ticket agents. When they turned to the still frightened travelers scattered around the station, they'd finally holstered their guns.

“Sorry, folks,” the taller of the two said in a carrying voice. “We got a call about a suspect being here in the station, but everything seems okay. Sorry for the scare. We know everyone has been through a lot of these past weeks and we’re trying to keep you safe.”

Thank you very much, sir, but my Cameron and I will feel safe when we get to the Maritimes, away from this shocked and noisy city, and away from Matthew. He'll never show up there-- not after all I've told him about my brothers.

The bus to Maine was announced over the system a few minutes after the police left, and she quickly gathered her baby's bag and wheeled her single suitcase to the line of people waiting to get their baggage stored in the luggage compartment. Adair cooed to her baby, whose sweet brow still had a tiny wrinkle, and finally boarded.

There were plenty of empty seats and the young mother and infant sat alone in their row. Adair waited until the weary-looking crowd settled down, then she wrapped a light shawl she carried for the purpose around them, turned off the overhead light and nursed her baby.

The Greyhound made a stop to pick up more passengers at the North End station and the seats quickly filled. The last empty seat was the one next to Adair and sleeping Cameron. No one wanted to sit next to a baby if they could avoid it. The last person to board put his heavy backpack on the rack above them, flopped down with an exhausted sigh, and immediately closed his eyes.

Black hair, black eyes, brown skin and he looks like an Arab or something! Sweet Jesus, who have we got next to us?

The newcomer opened his eyes and looked directly at Adair. Seeing her frightened expression, he smiled gently at her.

“Hello, Miss. My name is Anwar. Please be peaceful. I'm no one to worry about. I know I may look dangerous to you right now, but I am not dangerous, just an MIT student on my way to Portland, Maine. May I ask your name? And your lovely baby's?”

“I'm Adair Brodie and this is Cameron. It has been so horrible in Boston these last weeks and you look like...” She broke off, embarrassed. Anwar's eyes looked tired, but they were soft and held no threatening gleam.

“Please, Miss Adair. Relax. I understand. I know who I look like, but you can rest yourself about me. I only want to visit my cousins and be away from stares like the one you just gave me. Boston is not a good place for young men from Chechnya these days.”

They continued talking quietly as they traveled north. Anwar told Adair that he was a mathematician, and that his relatives had lived in various parts of New England for many years, but that he had only been in the United States for two. As they shared stories, Adair liked Anwar more with each mile. She told him about the home she was going back to where the spring lupines stretched almost to the very edge of the sea and where it was quiet; a good place to live and bring up a child.

Anwar said he was not homesick for Chechnya. He hated the struggles with Russia, the violence on both sides, and the poverty of the people. His family back home were Muslim, but they prayed for peace. Anwar loved America.

Adair fell asleep. She and Cameron slept for an hour and woke when the motion of the bus stopped in Portland. Anwar had stood and was pulling down his backpack. He had his hood pulled over his head, because rain pounded on the roof of the bus. Seeing Adair was awake, he wished her luck, shook her hand, and made his way off the bus. A few minutes later she cried out at the sound of gunfire

and people shouting. Within minutes sirens blared. The driver's voice came over his speaker.

“Stay on the bus, everyone. One of the passengers, the Arab kid, has been shot and they tell me he's dead.”

