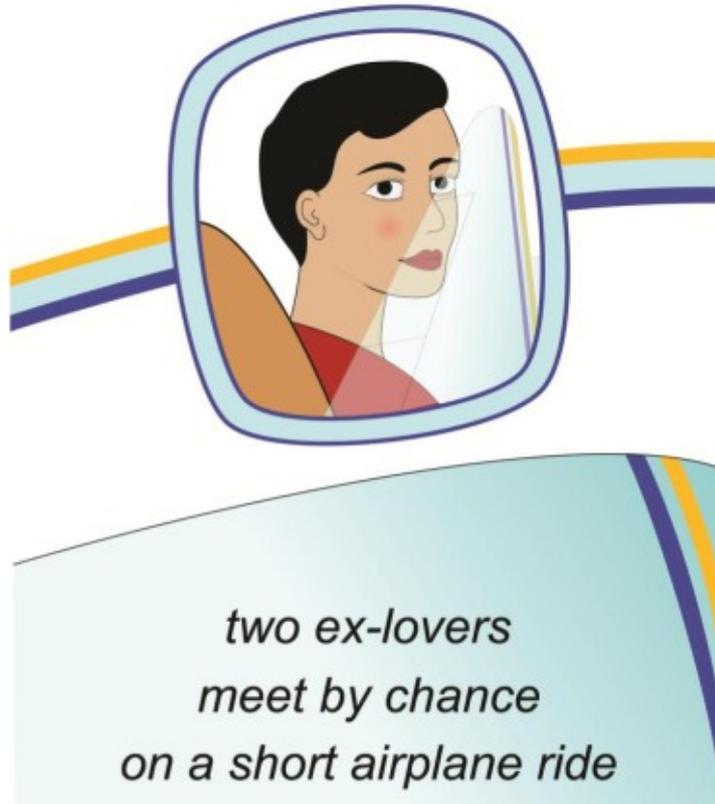


The Day-Trip

by Sam Stone



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THE DAY-TRIP

by Sam Stone

Time: The present day

Setting: Minimal – May be as simple as chairs placed as airplane seats with a space between them suggesting an aisle. A small table may be placed beside chairs for drinks.

Possible airplane window on Barbara's side.

Props: Beer
Small V-8 juice

Characters: Barbara – 50's/60's
James – 60's/70's
Flight Attendant (male or female)
Extras James – may occupy outer seats on each side –non-speaking.

Short Synopsis:

Barbara is on a day-trip to an airport to meet her boss, deliver materials, exchange information and get a few signatures. This trip is routine for Barbara, who sometimes sees her boss in airports more often than the office.

The plane makes a short stop at an intermediate airport where James joins the flight. James is flying for the first time in three plus decades and is surprised to see a woman he was very much in love with thirty-some years ago.

During the flight, we learn about their past and present.

Author's Note: Please adjust the dialogue to fit ages and dates.

The Day-Trip

On Rise: BARBARA is in an aisle seat looking out the window or engaged in conversation with another passenger on her side of the aisle.

JAMES rises from a seat further upstage or enters from upstage. HE is casually looking around. Seeing BARBARA from behind, JAMES does a surprised double take.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Walking through, stops to inquire.)
Do you need any help sir?

JAMES

Not really. Just stretching my legs. Airplanes don't seem to have changed all that much since my last flight. The seats do seem to be more comfortable.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

You may not have flown First Class before. How long since your last flight?

(BARBARA begins to pay attention without looking toward JAMES.)

JAMES

(Surprised, JAMES mouths 'First Class?' FLIGHT ATTENDANT nods. JAMES shrugs.)
Uh... let's see...
(Thinking.)
About Nineteen Eighty-five. I'm not quite certain.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Really?

(JAMES nods.)
Jeez! That was... uh...
(FLIGHT ATTENDANT begins to count on his/her fingers.)

BARBARA

(Offhand, still looking away.)
Thirty-Three (Insert correct number) years ago.
(BARBARA turns toward them. She gradually recognizes James. Is surprised.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Yeah!

JAMES

Probably before you were born.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I'm not that young but thanks. I'll be back with drinks in a few.

(FLIGHT ATTENDANT exits. JAMES turns to see BARBARA looking at him.)

JAMES

(Charmingly.)

Speaking of thirty-three years ago, hello, Bobbie!

BARBARA

James! When did you get on the plane?

JAMES

The last stop. My seat's a couple of rows back... uh... I'll go back.

(BARBARA waves it off and gestures at the empty seat across the aisle. JAMES Sits.)

(They lean as the plane banks.)

WOW! Is this how they turn now?

BARBARA

Yeah. For the last thirty-two years.

JAMES

I see you haven't lost your edge.

BARBARA (defensive)

What does that mean?

JAMES

There's no meaning. It's a compliment. You've always been good at fast comebacks.

BARBARA

So, why haven't you flown in all these years?... Wait a minute! It's the CAMPING thing right?

(JAMES shrugs.)

Not afraid of flying?

JAMES

Not a bit! It's just that there isn't anywhere I prefer to go that doesn't include a lake, mountain or national monument... with or without the fly-fishing.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

(Enters.)

Would you folks like something to drink?

JAMES

Can I get a beer?

(FLIGHT ATTENDANT acknowledges. JAMES looks at BARBARA.)

How about you? Still drinking Courvoisier stingers?

Do you have V-8?

BARBARA

Of course! I'll be right back.
(Exits.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

V-8?

JAMES

I stopped drinking Twenty-five years ago.

BARBARA

Really? Too bad it wasn't Thirty-five.

JAMES

Why?

BARBARA

Long story. Not worth telling.

JAMES

(FLIGHT ATTENDANT returns with drinks.)

Here you are Ma'am... Sir.
(Exits.)

FLIGHT ATTENDANT

What long story?

BARBARA

You sure you want to hear this?

JAMES

Are we talking about us?

BARBARA

Why don't we just forget I said anything? I... uh... I have a book I've been dying to read and...
(Starts to rise.)

JAMES

It is about us! I wouldn't miss this for the world. Pray continue.

BARBARA

(Sits.)

JAMES (hesitant, then resolute)

Okay, where do I begin? I think maybe...

BARBARA

You said, 'Too bad it wasn't Thirty-five years ago.' That's a good beginning.

JAMES

No, that was the end... well... and a beginning too, I guess... Do you remember going to that place by the racetrack and we'd play pinball and shoot pool all night?

BARBARA

Joe's Lime Shack! Those were fun days.

JAMES

Well... yeah, at first... uh... do you remember when you switched from beer to hard stuff?

BARBARA (hesitant)

Yeah... sort of.

JAMES

Well, I don't know whether the liquor was the cause or the effect but several things happened at the same time. You probably wouldn't admit it but you had become an alcoholic. At the end of the evening, too often it was you drunk and me sorry.

BARBARA

You knew then? Why didn't you...?

JAMES

What? Stop you? As if that were possible. By the time I'd pick you up, you'd already had one or two drinks. Then, you'd down two drinks for every one of my beers.

BARBARA

You left because I drank too much?

JAMES

NO!...

(Beat, becomes more serious. Calms himself.)

It might have been a lot easier if I had. At least I think so. Let's see... you no longer respected me... treated me with the most amazing contempt even to the point of holding telephone conversations with other lovers in my presence...

BARBARA (tries to interrupt)

Wait a minute, I...

JAMES (pushing through)

...as if I was foolish enough to think you were conducting some sort of business or you were talking to an old buddy you hadn't seen in...

BARBARA

You knew...?

JAMES

How could I not? When you were drinking, you were in a world of your own. I knew you were chasing around but didn't have the character to leave until ...

BARBARA

Until what?

JAMES

One of your... "FRIENDS" gave you some sort of... umm... Barbara, you passed it along to me.

BARBARA (embarrassed)

Oh!... after you disappeared, I realized I... yeah, you're right... I, uh... went to a doctor. He prescribed some medication that didn't kill it but sort of controlled it. Nowadays, there are much better medications for that sort of thing. I had hoped that you hadn't been... uh...

JAMES

(Gesture of nonchalance.)

Barbara, it's okay! It taught me to be careful and, yes you're right, the medical improvements along that line are considerable.

BARBARA

I called your sister Lee, and told her about it but she wouldn't give me your number. She wouldn't even let me send you a letter through her.

JAMES

Yeah, she told me. She drove all night to where I live, just to tell me face to face. She wanted to make sure I didn't do anything stupid. She did her best to save me from myself at times.

BARBARA

Save you from yourself?

JAMES

It's not your fault I was so desperately in love with you. I'm the one who chose to hang around through all that abuse and...

BARBARA

Abuse?

JAMES

The emotional kind ...AND, it isn't YOUR fault you didn't love me any longer... it's just a fact of life. It happens every day... sometimes in the best of families.

BARBARA

So that's it? That's the long story? I abused you until you finally said, "Nuff"?

JAMES

No! I...

(Pause. Gathers his thoughts.)

...I knew you wouldn't understand.

BARBARA

What wouldn't I understand?