

D. Ferrara

A Moment

She knew how she was when she traveled.

She called it her Zen mode, but no Zen master ever dragged a roller bag with such grim concentration.

Damn. Damn. Damn.

Her flight to Denver was late. Again. *What is the point of having a goddamned departure time if they don't depart?*

Calm. Calm. Calm. She breathed deeply, forcing air down her chest. *Okay, think it back. The meet and greet is at six. If I get in at four, find a cab right away—like that ever happens, dump the bags, take a shower—if there's time. Damn.*

"Dolores? Is that you?"

She blinked. A willowy blonde touched her arm.

"How wonderful to see you! What has it been? Fifteen years?"

That means grad school. Who IS she?

Time flies, she muttered. Blondie grinned a full headlight blast, all perfect teeth and doe eyes.

"What have you been doing with yourself? You look terrific!"

She fumbled for her card case. Blondie beamed.

"I've been busy myself. I got married, moved to Ashville. He's great—a podiatrist."

She found the card case, slipping out a bent one.

Blondie smiled over the card. "I wondered what happened to you."

Faking a laugh, she hoped Blondie wouldn't notice her inability to conjure a name.

Blondie continued, "When I met him, I thought, a foot doctor?"

She nodded and muttered, *that's great and children?*

Blondie's headlights dimmed.

Damn. Is she going to cry?

Blondie plunged on: "We tried." Back to high beams. "We have high hopes for adopting."

There was more. Blondie burred about American women not giving up babies for adoption, going to agencies, women who thought they wanted to give up babies, then changed their minds.

I might punch that mug if it doesn't shut up.

Luckily for Blondie, the airport voice intervened with her flight.

“Oh.” Disappointment crumpled Blondie’s face. “Is there an email on your card?”

Damn. Of course there is.

Blondie squeezed her arm. “I worried about you.”

Oh my God.

In the space between breaths, she remembered: the night Phil locked her out of the apartment, tossing clothes, books, and toiletries (he kept her CDs and liquor). She had wailed for—*hours?*—until a blonde stranger took her in.

The apartment was no great shakes—a studio, with a futon, and two cats—but it was Heaven. The blonde—an angel.

She had only stayed the night, weeping out her story. In the morning, there was tea and lemon-something bread laminated with a sticky substance, along with a laundry bag for all the things Phil had tossed out. Twenty dollars pinned to it. The blonde had gone to work. Embarrassed, she had slunk away.

Did I even leave a note? Damn.

Blondie’s hand rested a second longer. “I have to go, too.”

Impulsively, Blondie—whose name she still could not remember—kissed her cheek and walked away.

Write me! Dolores shouted, hoping Blondie could hear.