

## **Waiting at the Airport**

The hum of others dotted all about had somehow unified as one holistic yammering. They knew that, should it be possible to unravel the odd yarn from this blanket of woven conversations, they would be able to discern tearful goodbyes, or excited itinerary rehearsals, and even a few conversations of excitement from families, girlfriends, boyfriends and best friends awaiting a return of someone they loved.

Their coffee had gone cold, given that they had been sitting there for nigh on four hours. They knew it was much too early to get to the airport – the flight wasn't due in for another three, and it was rare – if not unheard of – for a plane to be early!

Yet, still, they nursed the cup that they knew wouldn't be finished. In fact, the only reason they bought the coffee is because their partner enjoyed it so much. Had insisted, day after day, that they try it, until either the taste didn't make them cringe as much as it once did, or the caffeine had sunk its merciless claws so deep that the bitterness of the coffee wasn't enough to challenge it.

Every airplane that went past, mostly white but each one with a spark of colour at the tail, or the humungous fans, and a word bearing the airline it belonged to, would fly in and each time they would crane their neck, which had developed a crick because of the angle, to see if it was their airline. It wasn't. Of course it wasn't.

Every time there was an announcement over the tannoy, it seemed as if the airport itself paused to listen – just for a fraction of a second, as the words boomed across the plain floors which reflected the harsh lights above. As it swept in through the duty free, and the cafes, and the restaurants and pubs. Every one would wait, until vowel by vowel, they knew this announcement wasn't relevant to them. Then they would get back to sipping their coffee, or cheersing their holiday, or deciding whether they could get away with another two-hundred cigarettes, or whether to stay safe with three big bottles of vodka.

Suitcases wheels, in their myriad variations; some of the older, more tattered ones losing the ability to wheel – or a wheel altogether – just scraped along the floor, with the slightest of a scuffle slipping from beneath it.

And yet, it felt as if all this was happening in slow motion. Just three more hours. Less than what they'd been there for. One full shift. That's all they needed. And, finally, they'll be back with their love again.

They gave one more glance outside, just in case... and when there were no incoming flights, they glanced over to the barista behind the counter which was full of muffins, and cakes, and crisps – each bearing a price tag that was unjustifiable. There's every chance the café could fill up if a flight is delayed, and so, as if to stabilise their post, they got up whilst leaving their coat over their chair and their book open, but face down to save the page.

“Hi,” they said to the barista. “Another latte, please.”

They smiled their acknowledgement. Then, before it was necessary to ask, “Four sugars again, is it?”

They smiled. “It is, please.” Even with the four, it still tasted like a little punishment.

The coffee was made in swift motions, a wipe, a pull, blast of hot air that fluffed the milk in to a nice, airy foam. And then, it was placed in front of them with the chocolate sprinkles bearing a vague likeness to an aeroplane.

They paid the four-pound-fifty for a drink they wouldn't finished, but, in honesty, it was more for them to anchor themselves in that chair, at that table, looking out of that window for another

hour or two. They just thought to themselves: *One more coffee, one more four-pound-fifty, and I'll be back in the arms I belong.*

And so, they sipped.

And winced.

But happily so.

*Just two hours and fifty-three minutes.*