

# My First Flight

As I exited the cab with my fiancée, the chill of the mid-January wind struck me from head to toe. The cacophony of noise from the other cabs and passengers coming and going at Houston's International Airport drop-off zone did little to comfort me as I secured my scarf around my neck. The dark clouds in the night sky above threatened to release rain at any moment. I looked at the watch on my left wrist. It was almost seven o'clock. Jeannette and I would have plenty of time to check our bags, use the restroom, and walk up to the terminal with our overhead bags for our seven forty-five flight.

We found a pair of uncomfortable plastic seats next to the Continental Airlines terminal and waited for flight number 53 to arrive. The minutes ticked by like hours. I was anxious to experience my first flight. I wondered for the tenth time what it would feel like to sit in the belly of a large steel construction while two pairs of jet engines thrust it into the air? And what would the view from above the clouds look like?

Alas, I would have to wait another two hours to find out. The attendant at the terminal announced a weather delay from Dallas. With a heavy sigh, I pulled out my newly acquired novel "Shattered Glass" by Elaine Bergstrom. So far, it was a very intriguing tale of a vampire named Stephen Austra. While reading a particularly dramatic and erotic scene, the terminal attendant announced another three-hour severe weather delay.

Sigh. My ass was numb from the plastic chair. I got up and walked around. I stopped in front of the large glass pane next to our terminal. It was cold when I touched it. The rain and dark clouds were soothing despite the fact they were the source of my anxiety. As I returned to my seat, I saw I was not the only one who was bored. A lot of people were reading magazines and newspapers. Some had walked to the airport bookstore and were now digging into their new book. Others were taking a nap. A few were walking around restless.

Time felt as if it had slowed down to a crawl. I chastised myself for not packing a small sketchbook in my bag. Seconds. Minutes. Hours. Just when I thought I would also take a nap, the attendant at the terminal announced the arrival of our plane. Hallelujah! All of us jumped up, took our bags in hand, and got in line to board. NOT. The plane had to dock. It had to stabilize. Then the ground crew had to bustle around it. Then the passengers on the plane had to depart. Then we had to wait while the plane was reset.

It was after midnight when I took my seat next to the window in front of the right-wing on the plane. It was one forty in the morning when we landed in New Orleans.