

"Buckle up, we're in for a bumpy ride" the captain said. Well, no, he didn't really. I made that shit up. But the rest of this is absolutely true.

Love stories are bumpy rides though. It's true of long stories and it's true of stories that last a week. It's true of life and even the best memories we have.

The passengers felt another jolt and looked up to where the 'fasten seatbelt' sign was now illuminated. The Vocal One returned to her seat at 4C. She had been across the aisle to 4D for several minutes, haphazardly nuzzling yet still loud in the ear of He of the Unnaturally Dark Hair. She was heard and noticed, quite difficult not to be, by the Woman at a Professional Crossroads, seated behind them in 5D. She wondered about the state of their relationship, which had the signs of newness and unfamiliarity, and felt compelled to wonder out loud, but not too loud, to Andy of Woodbridge Past beside her in 5E.

"The honeymoon phase," AOWP observed,

"It's the best," WAPC remarked with a conviction of someone who has been there.

He of the Unnaturally Dark Hair murmured across the aisle in response to the Vocal One's concern about the turbulence, the impact on the meal service, and whether she could get another white wine. It was impossible to hear HUDH but even above the engine hum she could be heard, every word, every inflection of her concerned voice. It wasn't the bumps, it wasn't the meal, it wasn't even entirely to do with the next drink. It was him, it was this, it was them, going to Paris, now.

"Go for it Grandma," her granddaughter Beatrice had urged. It was one thing for granddaughters Kimmy and Vicky to encourage her to join a dating site, they were open to risk and were exuberant just as the Vocal One had been years ago. Beatrice on the other hand was cautious and measured in how she lived her life. So when even she encouraged TVO to sign up, even help her with the profile (talkative, adventurous, likes a glass of wine), she agreed.

He of the Unnaturally Dark Hair was not the first man she exchanged messages with, but he was the first that didn't brag, didn't list every accomplishment, didn't make the Vocal One feel she had something to live up to. Mind you, he didn't say a lot. Simple and short compliments. Simple and short descriptions of his day. Simple and short.

And it was to be a simple and short exchange that led directly to seats 4C and 4D. HUDH had asked if there was anything she had hoped to do. He had meant, was there anything she hoped to do that day but the question was simple and short and was also misunderstood.

"I'd like to see Paris," the Vocal One replied.

Moments later she was looking at the message he sent back: "Let's go."

That's all. Short, simple, six letters, an optional period and an apostrophe that 26% of the English speaking population leave out. But he didn't. HUDH said "let's go." The font seemed to grow, where did that bold lettering come from and the stylized italics were totally inappropriate!!

The Vocal One rubbed her eyes and checked again. No, the message was small, nothing special, no pleading or promises. A mild voice really. " Let's go."

She knew how Kimmy and Vicky would answer. What would Beatrice advise? More importantly, what would TVO have said when she was younger, when she was ... her first self?

"Okay."

They bought the tickets the next day, a Monday. The flight left Halifax on Thursday. They booked a room in Paris, 180 Sq m, private bath, pleasant view of a back street 4 blocks from the Louvre. Two beds. How the beds were to be used was not discussed. They reserved their seats on the flight 24 hours before departure with an aisle between them. Just in case. It was her idea. Not that He of the Unnaturally Dark Hair was any more certain of this adventure so abrupt. He was as surprised as she at his forwardness, his bravado, and of being misunderstood in such an unbelievably grand fashion.

Unlike the Vocal One, who had been married for 36 years before her husband's death, HUDH had never been married, never so much as co-habitated. He had never even shared a bathroom and the secret of his unnaturally dark hair.

Now he would. And it would be in Paris. On Friday.

This life is theirs and they are controlling it the best they can.

Kimmy drove her grandma to the airport. He took an Uber. They met at the check-in counter. They introduced each other, even compared passports, just to be sure. They were both nervous but when they smiled they each relaxed just a bit. And they were determined to go.

Should she tell him about the new denture that she has to remove to eat? Should he tell her about his regimen of pills for high blood pressure, cholesterol and reflux acid? No.

"I can't believe were doing this," TVO said into hais ear.

He held his hands up slightly. "No turning this plane around," he said.

"What do you want to see first?" She asked excitedly, tipping back her white wine.

"The ground." HUDH had always been a reluctant flyer.

The Woman at a Professional Crossroads left the plane with her daughter, Andy of Woodbridge Past with his son and they collected bags and were off to begin their week of making memories to never ever forget.

Somewhere in the border control line and rush for transportation the Vocal One and He of the Unnaturally Dark Hair slipped away, sauntering one way or the other into Paris, around Paris, within Paris. If they tried to walk with purpose his bad knee held him up. If they walked and talked it didn't work either as TVO became too engaged to also walk at a steady speed. But sauntering they did well.

What started as a brush of arms became holding hands. What started as a sunset at Sacré Coeur became leaning closer and then a kiss. It was sudden and awkward and perfect, just like their week in Paris. No one else noticed, not even the Woman at a Professional Crossroads who was just a few feet, watching the twilight and relishing the moment that was hers. To each their own story.

And is this the end of theirs? What about the hotel room with a view of a back street 4 blocks from the Louvre? What happened??

It is not for us to know.

But did he snore? Did he toss and turn? Did she get up to pee at 2:30 in the morning and then couldnt go back to sleep? What?!

It doesn't matter. This is a love story and as such it is not defined by the things we cannot control. Like the bumps.