

## Chapter Two: The Perks of First Class

“Please let there be a special place in heaven for the person who invented frequent flier miles,” I whispered under my breath to no one as I drank in the most beautiful sight in the world: a single-digit seat number on an airplane boarding pass. I had just traded a chunk of my reward miles for this work of art, not that it made a dent in my stockpile. My trip home was going to be far cushier than the one that brought me to L.A. I earned it. I had spent all my waking hours of the last week making plans to shut down one of Hemisphere's biggest manufacturing plants.

Anyone who believes that firing people gets easier with time is either lying or a cyborg. Possibly both. Yes, there was standard paperwork to fill out and regulations to follow, that made it a somewhat rote process. But at the end of the paper trail, there was a person. A person who had a job when he walked into the conference room and who didn't when he walked out. It was always horrible. And then it would get worse when his wife would walk in the door and get the same news about her job. After days full of those conversations, I was exhausted.

When the gate agent confirmed that there was indeed room to upgrade for the flight home, I just about kissed her. The more I flew, the more I appreciated the perks of first class. There was more room, there was rarely a line for the bathroom and I didn't have to drink out of

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plastic cups. In first class, I was also blissfully insulated from nitwit travelers who can make a simple, four-hour flight feel like you're jetting halfway across the world. Hemisphere had offices in just about every major U.S. city, and I'd visited them all, so I'd done my time as seatmate to the pudgy, married guy who told me too many times that he was headed to New Orleans for a weekend with the boys, wink wink. Or the fidgety businessman whose frequent sighs of frustration about his Excel spreadsheet were punctuated by his sour garlic breath. Or the tottering college student who made twenty-seven trips to the bathroom climbing over my lap each time. The nervous grandma, the nail-clipping girl, the phlegmy, snoring guy. I've sat next to them all. But never while in first class.

And it got better. I found myself in the rare nirvana that was first class *and* no one occupying the seat next to me. I was alone, I was comfortable and I had hours of uninterrupted quality time to work on the reports I had to complete about the week's events in L.A. I even decided to ignore my own rules about not drinking alcohol on flights to avoid dehydration and gave my cocktail a little stir in its glass made of actual glass. It was true bliss. For about a minute.

"I see you still drink gin."

I instantly concluded that the person hovering over me in the aisle had never been on an airplane before, because he decided to chat me up just as I was firing up my laptop. Everyone knows that is the universal airborne sign for "Please don't talk to me, I just want to go home." Feeling the need to invoke an even more obvious sign, I picked up the headphones I'd strung around my neck and started to push the tiny earpieces into place. First class was supposed to free me from the parade of annoying seatmates, but no, Dense Guy found me here.

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"Better brand of gin now, though. That's good."

The voice was persistent, and a little familiar.

"And you still wear your earring," Dense Guy said, sullyng the label I'd given him through his observation of the tiny diamond stud hovering partnerless in my left ear. The intended affect when I got it, way back when, was the revolutionary idea of having one earlobe double-pierced, while the other remained single-pierced. But I was always forgetting the accessorizing part of getting dressed so it just sat there alone, forgotten and, compared to the multiple piercings I saw daily, quaint. Like a bit of bloomer peeking out from beneath my hoopskirt.

I looked up to acknowledge my interloper. The voice was most definitely familiar, along with the smile and the startling green eyes even though they were sporting some new lines, not that I was in any position to throw stones on that particular front.

"Hello, Lees."

Dense Guy knew my name because he was, in actuality, Seth Austin. I smiled, amazed to be gazing up at the pride and joy of Bradley University, circa 1984. There he was in the flesh; the guy who fronted a popular campus party band and dropped out of school to pursue a short but sweet run as one of MTV's favorite bands. It was well before MTV discovered the joys of reality TV and other non-music video programming.

"It's me, Seth," he said, assuming that I was Dense Girl. I couldn't blame him. I'd been ignoring him and remained mute even once I made eye contact.

"Of course it's you," I said and realized that I wanted to stand up and ... what was it that I wanted to do? Shake his hand? Hug him? Kiss him like the old days? No, of course a kiss was

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not appropriate. That would have been ridiculous. It didn't matter though, because between the seatbelt and the tray table laden with my laptop, a brimming glass and a tiny liquor bottle, it was impossible for me to move.

"I saw you in the departure lounge and I was having a bit of an argument with myself whether it was you or not. Then you were on your mobile the whole time, so I didn't get a chance to come over. But just my luck to run into you again as I'm headed to the loo."

"Bit." "Loo." "Mobile" pronounced in two syllables like the man's name and that stuff that the liver produces. Those were new. Although I had to admit that it was possible for a person's vocabulary to change over 25 or so years.

"It's really me," I said with all the finesse of Obvious Girl.

"You look fantastic, Lees. And a bit busy?"

"Yeah, well it's been a long week and I have all this paperwork ..."

Seth, being the Seth I remembered from college, cut me off to throw out a different possibility — the possibility of not working on the flight but rather having a drink and catching up. And Seth, being very much the Seth I remembered from college, wasn't one to take "no" for an answer. He even tried to gain my sympathy by asking me to save him from the pointless novel he'd brought on board.

"Work can wait, can't it?" He flashed a conspiratorial smile and memories of five semesters of putting off school work at his instigation came tumbling back. Once he got me to stop studying for finals by showing up at my usual table at the library bearing two brimming Big Gulps from the 7-11 at the edge of campus. Turned out they were actually what we later christened Happy Gulps because although they looked like innocent vats of cola, they were

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spiked with enough Jack Daniels to make microeconomics the funniest thing I had ever read. The clarity of the recollection was disarming. It was a memory from college I didn't even know I had.

"Scuse me, hon!" A young, perky flight attendant came up behind Seth, trying to get past him so she could offer magazines that no one ever read to the passengers behind us. He stepped closer to me to let her by. He smelled good.

"Give it a thought," he said with what I swear was a wink, and walked toward the restroom. I caught myself glancing at the back pockets of his jeans as he disappeared behind the door. Shit, it was college all over again.

When she was sure the lavatory door was closed and locked, the flight attendant dashed back to my side, crouched so we were face-to-face and put a conspiratorial hand on my arm.

"I'm Jennifer. Just let me know if there's *anything* you need."

"Umm, okay." I didn't think I looked feeble, but I couldn't come up with any other reason for her to be so accommodating. Flight attendants were never that chummy.

"That's Seth Austin-Smith, isn't it? From Joe's Got a Problem?" She was grinning uncontrollably as she said it and I tried to do the math. Seth's band had a couple of hits in the mid-eighties. She didn't look old enough to remember them. Nonetheless, I nodded that Seth was indeed Seth.

"Oh my God, do you think he'd mind if I asked for his autograph? My mom loved that band. She used to sing "She Can't Sing" all the time."

There it was. Her *mom* was a Joe's Got a Problem fan. That made sense, but it still stung a little to hear the word "mom" and realize that fans of Joe's Got a Problem were old enough to have grown children working for the airlines. I wondered how giddy Jennifer would get if she

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knew my connection to her mom's favorite song.

Of course, Seth didn't have the hyphen or the fake second last name when we met freshman year in the beer line at a frat party. I have another flash of memory from college that was startlingly clear – me buying my red plastic Sig Ep cup and spotting Seth across the lawn. Those cups were such an integral part of my college experience. You bought one for a dollar and could refill it as often as necessary from the keg. There was a unique design for each party, so in the aftermath of a night of debauchery, you'd add the latest cup to the collection in your dorm. By the end of the school year, you'd amass a leaning tower of colored plastic cups. Landfills across America had to be brimming with that Greek-letter emblazoned detritus. For a long time, they were the closest thing I had to matching barware. They were useful, dependable and comfortable, and then one day they just seemed embarrassingly juvenile. Much like many of the people I knew at those parties.

My cabinets had been clear of them for a long time. I wondered if Seth's were, too. Probably not if he was still trying to make a living as a musician. For all the adoration it claimed back when MTV actually played videos, I didn't think the band had survived into the 90s. Then again, maybe Seth had abandoned music all together and become a brain surgeon. He *was* sitting in first class, after all. Then again, so was I.

“What do you say, Lees? Can you do with a little distraction?”

Seth had never been a “little” distraction. For what must have been the 10,000th time in our lives, I let Seth talk me out of doing what I needed to do. I slid over to the window seat and let him settle in next to me so we could “catch up.”

“So,” I said as the intro to a thought that I hadn't yet formulated.

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“So,” Seth replied. “What have you been up to for the last couple of decades?” He grinned at me exactly the way he used to in college, which was nice, but also sad. It reminded me of how Seth had been my constant companion for three years, a person with whom I indulged in endless whims and adventures, and now we couldn’t figure out what to say to one another. He was inches away from me, but he might as well have been on the opposite rim of the Grand Canyon. I had no idea how to bridge the gap, or if I even could. We were practically kids last time we saw each other. The only thing I knew about this adult version of Seth was that he was still persuasive. And handsome. Back in college, he could have replaced any member of Duran Duran with his soft, almost pretty, features. He had aged into the sophisticated look of one of those well-groomed men you see in ads for brokerage services. I caught myself wondering if I had any lip gloss in my briefcase.

For Seth, though, there was no Grand Canyon as he reached over to touch the ends of my hair where it brushed the tops of my shoulders.

"Lees, I can't get over your hair. I've never seen it this long. It suits you."

"And you use less mousse." I was picturing him immortalized in the first Joe's Got a Problem video, his hair much longer than mine is now, at least in the back, and sticking out in all sorts of gravity-defying angles. He laughed in that full-bodied, head-tilted-back way of his.

"Well that's true, isn't it? My daughter and I were just talking about hair the other day."

Seth was someone's father?

“She’s got this band, and they’re good, and I’m not just saying that because she’s my little girl. She wails on the drums like... Well, let’s just say she’s a better drummer than J.D. ever was.” Seth disparaging his band mates was another college trait he still possessed.

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“How cute. You do your daughter’s hair?” I tried to picture Seth creating pigtails for a tow-headed little moppet perched in his lap.

“No, I only consult when they’ve got a gig. Beth won’t hear a word if I try to help her with a song or an arrangement, but the occasional hair or wardrobe advice is okay, apparently. I’m always telling her to mind her haircuts, or run the risk of being haunted by them for the rest of her career. Joe’s Got a Problem, Flock of Seagulls. We are all cautionary tales.”

He pulled his iPhone out of his pocket and slid through a number of pictures before he pointed the screen at me. The photo was taken in a dark bar, and in it, Seth was standing onstage with his arm around a young woman who was years past the moppet stage. She had tattoos, a visible red bra and a pint of Guinness clutched in the same hand as her drumsticks. His daughter was old enough to play in bars, not have play dates on monkey bars.

“Wow. I wasn’t expecting her to be so...grown up,” I said, draining my gin and trying to intuit how old Beth was.

“You and me both. Trust me, I do not *feel* like the father of an adult. But there she is.”

I took a second look at the photo and zoomed in on the tattoo on Beth’s arm. It looked like numbers, but they were obscured by Seth’s paternal embrace. I thought I saw a one, a nine, an eight and a five. 1985? She was born in 1985? Fortunately, I had already finished my drink, or the ever-helpful Jennifer would have been cleaning up a spit take in first class. There was no way that Seth could have a 24 year-old child. We were in college 24 years ago. We were in college *together* 24 years ago. Who else was he sleeping with back then?

Not that it was a relevant point in 2009.

Seth caught the eye of our attentive flight attendant, lifted my glass, then raised two

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fingers indicating that we needed another round. No flight attendant in the history of attended flights ever moved so swiftly on a plane that wasn't going down.

"She really is an adorable girl," he continued, oblivious to my furrowing. "But, man can she be a pain in the arse sometimes. It's funny how you can love your kids to death, and still want to kill them, isn't it?"

The Grand Canyon yawned back to life between us.

He didn't bother to try and hide his surprise that I wasn't a mom living the whole suburban life complete with the Volvo station wagon, the weekend home in Southern Wisconsin and the golden retriever. What's more, his eyes clouded to something like actual sadness when I told him that Kevin and I had divorced long ago, long before there was time to even contemplate having children.

"Oh, Lees, I'm so sorry to hear that."

His concern was touching, but it was hardly necessary. Kevin and I weren't together for very long. We started dating senior year, graduated engaged, got married Thanksgiving weekend and separated by Easter the next year. I gave Seth that smile I use for happy couples who fear my failed marriage might somehow cloud their pristine relationships. Apparently, there was no statute of limitations on being a potential carrier of romantic doom.

"It was a long, long time ago," I told him. "It's barely a memory now."

"Probably just as well. He could be a real asshole." He raised his cocktail to toast with me as a devilish smile played on his face. It put me back into recognizable Seth territory. Back in school, he hated Kevin almost as much as Kevin hated him. This wasn't surprising, considering they had nothing in common. Even some of those last, nasty arguments Kev and I had while our

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marriage disintegrated never topped the whopper over the wedding invitations. Kevin sputtered like a cartoon character and got crimson-faced with indignation that I had even contemplated inviting Seth to our wedding. He screamed at me for what felt like hours that he didn't want some coke-addled punk rocker to show up inappropriately dressed and break the china at his parent's country club. Kevin held a narrow view of Seth's attempt at rock star immortality and wasn't so concerned with getting the facts right, either. The point of the argument was eventually moot because by that fall, the band had launched their first big tour. I didn't know where to send Seth's invitation even if I wanted to.

"Kevin wasn't that bad," I said, lying just a little.

"I guess. But you sure seemed like he was the one. What happened?"

My first, bad marriage was the kind that so many girls get sucked into in their twenties. For a little while, Kevin and I were the quintessential 80s couple. He was living like a character in the movie *Wall Street* with his finance degree and shiny cuff links. I sported more than a few power suits myself back in the day. Our life together just seemed right at the time, the way enormous shoulder pads seemed right.

But fashions changed. Kevin decided to get an MBA and ended up doing extra credit work with a pretty blond classmate on how to project the perfect power image. She taught him about custom-made shirts and the fact that not all shades of green clothes went together simply because they were all green. When he wasn't traveling for work, he was at school or studying or perusing the pages of *GQ* with the blond. I was working as many hours, and traveling nearly as much. There were a couple of weeks when our clandestine meetings at the O'Hare Hilton were fun and provided sexy stories to tell over drinks with friends. But the truth was that his carry-on

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was a more constant companion than I. That was our undoing. Along with, of course, the blond. But I don't usually tell that story. With Seth, I stuck to my usual Cliff's Notes explanation that it just didn't work out.

"Well, you seem okay with how it's all played out."

I nodded. "Of course I am. It was a long time ago."

"What's he up to now?"

"Oh my goodness, I have no idea. I haven't seen him in years."

"Good, it's not just me." Seth looked at me for moment, before raising his glass to toast again. "To amicable divorces."

I clinked my glass against his and asked him if he was speaking from experience.

"I think mine is almost to the amicable point. It's been about a year for Careener and me."

"You call your ex-wife careener?" I tried to imagine what a woman would have to do to earn that nickname. Drive recklessly all the time? Bounce from man to man?

"That's her name -- Careener. C-A-R-I-N-A."

"Oh, Carin-ah," I said slowly and carefully, reaching into the bag of tricks I used for job candidates who speak English as a second or third language. I knew for a fact, however, that Seth's first language was English – good old American English. Where were all these Britishisms coming from? I feared reality had finally left him and he actually had come to believe the made-up history he created for himself when he launched the band.

Worse, I was aware that there was a piece of me, a piece I was not proud of in the least, that was sort of *glad* Seth was divorced. It was crazy. I had no reason for him to be unhappy. It

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wasn't like I was still carrying a grudge about junior year or Live Aid or anything. And he certainly couldn't still kick my hormones around like a colorful little hacky sack after two decades, could he? I looked at his profile and was flooded with memories of watching him sleep, the two of us crammed comfortably in my tiny dorm bed. It was possible he could.

"How is your daughter handling the divorce?" I couldn't change the subject entirely, so I settled for shifting it to concern for his daughter.

"Well, Careener's not her mum, so there isn't that whole mess. But they are quite close. I think Beth trusts her career advice more than mine. She probably should."

"I'm going to need a scorecard to keep up with all your kids and ex-wives," I said, hoping my voice sounded light and breezy. It didn't quite make it and wound up somewhere in the vicinity of judgmental. This was why I preferred to let old listings in my address book quietly fade away over time, and not allow them to be disturbed by a fluke of air travel or the intrusion of a Facebook friending. It was just too easy to say something stupid and a little bit mean to someone you once regarded as your best friend.

"It's not that complicated," Seth answered with what I perceived was a little less spark. He held up a single finger on each hand. "One ex-wife. One daughter."

I learned that Jade – Beth's "mum" – wasn't the marrying type. She didn't marry Seth and she didn't marry the fathers of her other kids. They just morphed into a big, happy, eclectic family during the years Seth and Jade lived together in a not-quite-up-to-code house in L.A. when Beth was a toddler. The place was home to the three of them, plus Jade's son, her other daughter, and a steady rotation of temporarily homeless members of Joe's Got a Problem or other bands that they hung out with back then. There were tales of how sometimes Jade would

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send all three kids to visit him and Carina during Beth's school breaks, and it was impossible not to see the delight Seth got from the fact that all of them had turned into interesting and accomplished young adults. The air of paternal pride was unmistakable and Seth's eyes had the same light in them that I saw every time Angela talked about Lily.

"Really, the only thing that could be better, as far as Jade's concerned, is if all the kids were musicians, not just Beth."

"Oh, Jade is a musician, too?" I was curious, of course, but I was also trying to figure out when and where Jade came into the picture. I didn't remember anyone at school with that name, there weren't any back-up singer auditions and no one ever went home with Seth after a show but me. As far as I knew.

"Not exactly. It's more like...how do I explain Jade?" He paused long enough consider his words and to smile charmingly at Jennifer and the fresh gin and tonics she offered up of her own volition, no doubt looking for an opportunity to talk to Seth.

After a few false starts, Seth explained that for most of the 80s, Jade fully indulged her fascination with musicians – lead singers in particular. She spent a lot of time at bars, at concerts, at rehearsal spaces, at hotels where bands stayed while on the road. He was practically Victorian in his avoidance of the word "groupie."

"Hmmm. Any one I'd recognize? Besides you, of course."

"Well, that is an interesting question. The rumor, completely without any evidence that I know of, is that her son's father is Rick Springfield."

"Seriously?"

"Well, it's not like he walks around humming 'Jessie's Girl' all the time. But it's... Let's

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just call it plausible. And Beth's step-sister is a dead ringer for the lead singer for the Tubes."

I tried to imagine what a twenty-something, female version of Fee Waybill would look like. And I began to question Seth's grasp of the English language. By my count, he had one daughter, two sort-of step-children, an ex-wife and an ex-whatever you call Jade. And those were only the ones he had mentioned so far. His definition of "not that complicated" was radically different from mine.

But it was a total rock star scenario, exactly what he was after when he was putting up flyers in the student center freshman year, looking to put together a band. He got J.D. on drums within an hour, and added Ricky on bass and Sam on guitar nearly as quickly. Their following among fellow students grew just as fast. Granted, Bradley was a small school dropped into the small central Illinois city of Peoria, so it was pretty easy to be the big fish. But still, there was a certain buzz about Joe's Got a Problem that emanated over the entire campus. Even the townies, who normally avoided all things and people associated with the university, liked the band. They'd sing along at the shows and a couple of them actually hired Joe's Got a Problem for their weddings.

Friends visiting from other schools helped get them booked at other campuses and that's when the traveling started – weekend gigs in Normal, DeKalb, Macomb, Iowa City, Champaign, Rock Island. A fateful frat party at Northwestern opened the band's eyes and fan base to a receptive music scene in Chicago, which then led to gigs on the East Coast and the amazing break no one thought was possible – a last-minute opportunity to do a couple of songs in the very early hours of Live Aid in Philadelphia. That broke it open for Joe's Got a Problem and made them a beloved three-hit wonder band of the 80s. The last time I saw Seth was somewhere

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between Peoria and Live Aid. That is, if you didn't count "seeing" him and the band on MTV chatting up Nina Blackwood about their latest video.

"So, do you live in California now?" I asked him.

"Not exactly," he replied, defying the conventions of a standard yes-or-no question and explaining that he hadn't completely moved out of the house he and Carina shared, but the things he required for survival – his guitar, his laptop, his toothbrush, most of his clothes – resided in the guest house at Jade's in L.A. The concept of setting down roots apparently remained elusive for him. For most of his youth, Seth's mother was in what we disparaged as her "Liz Taylor Phase," changing husbands the same way one might switch from a winter wardrobe to a summer one as the seasons changed. Every new step-father moved them into a new house. It made Seth really good at being on the road with the band. He was used to having an easily portable life.

"What about you? Where are you off to on this flight, Lees?" He folded up the armrest between us and shifted his body sideways to face me head on.

"To Chicago. That is where this plane is headed, isn't it?" I asked, throwing in a little glib to make up for the fact that my life story was far more streamlined and less interesting than his.

"Of course, but *where* are you going? To a convention? To change planes? To drop off a package at a mysterious location?"

He threw out an impressive array of options, but I couldn't claim any of them. Instead, I rattled off the shortest possible version of my week of business meetings in southern California.

"Sounds boring."

"I wish it had been boring. I helped start the shutdown of an entire manufacturing division."

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"Sounds brutal."

"You have no idea. Where are you going?"

"No, we're talking about you. All I know is that you live in Chicago, you're not with Kevin anymore, you work for a big company that likes to fire people and apparently you never eat. You're awfully thin, Lees."

A small panic surfaced in my midsection that was exactly the uncalled-for anxiety I felt in grade school when the teacher picked me to read out loud. Seth nailed most of the details of my life in a few simple sentences. He knew where I lived, what I did for a living and who I wasn't living with anymore. I couldn't think of anymore to say. There was nothing in the past week to talk about, no witty anecdote or interesting hobby. I couldn't even claim that my current situation was an anomaly brought on by business travel. My life was pretty streamlined. The scenic design was small and self-contained, more suited to a neighborhood theatre production than the big-budget, movie blockbuster that Seth's life seemed to be. Could I really tell him that I generally rose at dawn, went for a run, spent double-digit hours in an office tower and came home for a quiet evening with my cat?

Not one thing in that survey of my life bore any resemblance to the eighteen-year-old girl he knew in college. There were physical differences, of course, like my hair, my body mass index, my wrinkles. But that was just style and exercise and age. The Lees that Seth knew only existed in that particular time and place, the four years – okay four-and-a-half years – in the alternate-universe limbo between living under your parents' roof and taking on the full-blown responsibilities of real adult life. That Lees was always dancing at the edge of the stage, borrowing Michael's car to drive to any of Seth's gigs that were reasonably close by, sneaking

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off to get naked with Seth any moment we could find to be alone, or reasonably close to alone. That Lees also held an expansive view of what constituted “reasonably close.” Being the only two people in a row of airplane seats would have counted in those days.

But those days were long gone and that Lees simply didn’t exist anymore. Literally. No one in my life shortened my name in Seth’s particular way. Most people lopped off the "a" and made it rhyme with "peace." Seth's version sounded more like "bees." But I was just Lisa now. Seth probably saw me as a soulless corporate drone who listened to "smooth jazz" on the weekends and went to bed early. In flannel.

When the fasten seatbelt sign came on near the end of the flight, our new best friend Jennifer hovered noticeably in order to soak up her last moments of proximity to Seth.

“Mr. Austin-Smith, are you in town for a show?” She had already collected our glasses and was personally assuring his full, up-right position for landing.

"Yes, I am. I’m playing at Space up in Evanston on Saturday night.” His reply made Jennifer giggle that she wouldn’t miss it. It made me curious.

"Please don't tell me Joe's Got a Problem is back together.” I glanced around at the seats near us. “Did you make the other guys sit in coach?”

"No, no, no,” he laughed. “I’m helping out a friend. I’m sitting in on his set to give him a little more guitar and backing vocal. You ought to come, Lees.”

“I can’t.”

“Sure you can.”

“I’m sorry. I can’t. I missed my brother’s birthday party while I was in California, so we have plans to celebrate Saturday night.”

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“Bring him to the show. I’d love to see Michael.”

“My friends are planning this dinner at their house... I can’t. I’m sorry.”

“It would be great to see a familiar face in the crowd, Lees. I haven’t been on a stage in a really long time.”

I was stunned at this admission. The Seth I knew in the 80s lived and breathed to be the frontman and treat the rest of his band like shit. He was born to do it. When I mentioned this, he just shrugged and explained he’d spent most of his post-Joe’s Got a Problem career focusing on songwriting. He rattled off a long list of artists I’d never heard of and television shows I never watched that he created the music for. You couldn’t say he hadn’t been busy.

“If you won’t come to the show tomorrow, will you at least have dinner with me tonight?”

“I couldn’t. It’s kind of late for dinner, and I have so much work to catch up on...”

“Lees, it’s Friday night! You can’t work on a Friday night.” Despite the fact that he had never met her, Seth was doing a spot-on imitation of Angela. I tried to smugly retort that he was one to talk about working weekends, when a bout of turbulence rattled me as I tried to retrieve my bag from the overhead bin, which usually doesn’t happen when the plane is already on the ground. Fortunately, Seth was quick to slip his arm around my waist and kept me upright. That’s when I realized how copiously the gin had been flowing thanks to our flight attendant’s quest for Seth’s autograph.

“You’re not planning to drive home, are you?” Seth asked.

“No, I’m taking a cab.”

“Brilliant. We’ll share one.”

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