

She lay there wide-eyed with her fists clenched and teeth aching. Her chest rose with each hastened breath while she tried furiously to gulp down any morsel of air in the room. Her pulsing heart aggressively thumped against her ribcage and forced her into an abrupt consciousness. Under the thick blue blanket, her t-shirt clung to her torso, and she could smell the weight of her sweat sinking into the yellow bedsheet beneath her. A mixture of salt water and his cologne, her seasonal scent. Her glassy eyes were transfixed on the black ceiling fan like an infant memorized by the mobile that hangs above their crib, a beckon of safety, a sign of the world apart from them.

She could still hear it all: the gushing wind, the screams, the sound of metal cracking from the chokehold of the blue. A storm brewed inside her: a gush of fragmented memories of the other passengers, their red faces now indistinguishable from one another, sharing the same swollen eyes and pleading cries.

She felt something cold on her cheek, a wet, unfamiliar substance, and it wasn't until it rolled over her tragus and dropped into her ear canal that she recognized it as her own tears. What was that, she asked herself.

She unraveled the bony fingers on her right hand from their grip on each other and brought her hand to her face. She delicately placed her pointer finger into the crevasse of her right eye, where it met the bridge of her nose, and it landed in a shallow puddle. She traced the path the tears took—rolling from their home, passing the purple pockets under her eye, down the line of freckles of her cheekbone, and over the edge of her face, ultimately streaming onto and into her ears. She stuck the tip of that finger into her ear canal and wiggled it frantically, where she could hear the loud squish of the tears and wax emulsifying. She reveled in the pleasure this brought her, and suddenly, she could feel it it coming back, so she quickly unplugged her finger from her ear and wiped the slime on her right thigh. She turned towards the right, positioned her right arm under the firm pillow to cradle her head, and dragged her left leg over the right until she was lying on her stomach. She had exhausted any energy that she had built up since she opened her eyes and let out a long and heavy sigh.