

Emotional Baggage

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EMOTIONAL BAGGAGE by Jake Lewis

Characters

TONYA (any age)

WORKER (Male or female, any age)

MANAGER (Male or female, any age)

Setting

An airport check-in desk

Now

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Lights rise on an airport check-in desk. TONYA is waiting impatiently, and an airport WORKER is positioned behind the desk.

WORKER: Next!

TONYA rolls her suitcase over to the desk and lifts it onto a scale. She then gives her ID to the worker who types on the keyboard.

WORKER: Hello! How are you today?

TONYA smiles and nods.

WORKER: Kissimmee!

TONYA: Excuse me?

WORKER: Kissimmee. Your destination.

TONYA: Oh. Yes. Florida. I thought you wanted me to--

WORKER: Kiss you, right? I always get a kick out of that when it pops up on the screen. Gets 'em every time!

TONYA: Good one. So, my ticket--

WORKER: Well, anyway! That should be relaxing!

TONYA: Actually, this is not a vacation.

WORKER: What?! Why else go to the Sunshine State if you're not going to be able to enjoy the weather? You're only an hour from the ocean -- or 45 minutes if you drive like my husband! Oh, and Disney World is practically right down the street!

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TONYA: Even though it's none of your business, I'm going for my father's funeral.

WORKER: Well, poo! I really put my foot in my mouth this time, didn't I?

TONYA: It's alright, if I could just find out which gate--

WORKER: So you would say that you're experiencing a heightened feeling of grief?

TONYA: *(Slightly shocked by the WORKER'S bluntness.)* I suppose so.

WORKER nods and types something into the computer.

TONYA: Did....did you just type that into the computer?

WORKER: *(Ignoring the question and leaning forward in confidentiality)* My mother passed away recently. We were never that close, she and I. Goodness, did regret hit me hard, let me tell you.

TONYA: Same! My father was pretty cold when I was growing up. I can't believe I'm confessing this to a stranger.

WORKER: Perfectly normal. Customers tell me their innermost feelings all the time. Must be my face. People always say I have a welcoming face. So, "regret," yes?

TONYA: I guess so?

The WORKER smiles and types something else into the computer.

TONYA: There you go again. It feels like you're writing what I'm telling you about my current emotional state.

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WORKER: Oh, this? That's nothing to worry about, I assure you. All of our notes remain internal. You see, we here at Superfly Air like to know the....temperaments of our passengers.

TONYA: The tem--whatever for?

WORKER: Well, for one thing, it helps our flight attendants serve you better.

TONYA: (*Somewhat pleased.*) Oh. I see. It's nice to see an airline making a concerted effort to improve relationships with their customers. Airlines aren't really known for their interpersonal relationships. Especially with all those new fees you folks are charging us these days!

WORKER: I completely agree! So, let's see...your total will be \$50.

TONYA: There must be some kind of mistake. I paid for my bag online.

WORKER: Yes indeed, I see the suitcase is paid for in full. This fee is for your emotional baggage.

TINA: My what?

WORKER: Emotional baggage.

TONYA: No, I heard what you said. I just-- Oh! I get it! (*Laughs.*) I mentioned extra fees, so that's another one of your jokes! Like the Kissimmee thing! Good one! I really appreciate you trying to cheer me up, but I sorta need to hurry if I'm going to make my flight on time.

WORKER: Certainly, my apologies! Would you like to pay by cash or charge?

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TONYA: For what? I already told you--

WORKER: For your emotional baggage. You said you're flying with "grief" and "regret." That's a total of \$50.

TONYA: (*No longer amused.*) But everyone has emotions!

WORKER: You'd be surprised how many emotionless people I see here everyday. I think that it's something about airports that kills a person's sense of self. I don't quite understand it, I've worked here for twenty years and look at me!

TONYA: This is a scam! You can't charge people for their feelings

WORKER: Of course there are some feelings, like "boredom" and "mild anxiety" -- what we call "carry ons" -- that would be cruel for us to charge extra for.

TONYA: Exactly!

WORKER: Then there's the higher cost emotions. Like yours, for instance. Let me assure you, you're saving a lot of money.

TONYA: I am?

WORKER: Why, when I traveled for my mother's funeral on a rival airline, they charged twice as much for those very same emotions! But we here at Superfly Air try to keep the fees as low as possible. It's what makes flying with us super!

TONYA: Well, I'm not paying extra money because I'm in mourning. Give me a break!

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WORKER: Look, here's what I'll do since I like you: I'll give you an aisle seat.

TONYA: How can you get away with this?

WORKER: Recent studies have shown that people who travel with certain heightened emotions tend to be....shall we say, disruptive, to other travelers. It just makes the whole flight unpleasant for everyone involved.

TONYA: And you think charging them more money for an uncomfortable ride in a flying tin can is going to calm them down?

WORKER: I don't make the rules, dear.

TONYA: Then let me speak to a manager!

WORKER: Of course! Just a moment, please. (*Presses a button, and MANAGER enters.*)

MANAGER: What seems to be the matter here?

TONYA: Your representative was just trying to charge me for an extra \$50 for emotional baggage!

MANAGER: (*Looking at screen.*) Yes, I see, grief and regret. (*Beat.*) So, what can I do for you?

TONYA: (*Angry.*) What can you--Well, for one, you can get rid of that stupid fee, that's what you can do! That's extortion! This is security theatre, that's all it is!

MANAGER: Ma'am, I sense you're angry--

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TONYA: Oh yeah, I'm angry!

WORKER: Oh dear.

TONYA: Oh dear? What?

WORKER: Well, since you just said you're angry, we're going to have to add another piece of emotional baggage. That's \$100 now.

MANAGER: Anger, grief, and regret. We call that the emotional trifecta.

TONYA: I can't believe this! This is too much! (*Thinking a moment.*) Alright. Two can play at this game!

WORKER: Game?

MANAGER: What do you mean?

TONYA: Well, I didn't want to really say anything because of how it would make me look, but you've given me no alternative. I am thrilled my dad is dead! That's right! Over the freakin' moon! I couldn't be happier that bastard is worm food! Look how giddy I am about it!

TONYA dances around and sings, kisses the MANAGER, or some other exuberant activity.

MANAGER: Oh, I see. That certainly changes things.

TONYA: Good!

WORKER types something into the computer again.

WORKER: That'll be \$200, please.

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TONYA: \$200? You said \$100 before! I'm happy now! See? Happiness must be less costly emotional baggage than grief, regret, and anger!

WORKER: You'd think so, wouldn't you? Excessive happiness is a little off-putting to other passengers, we've found.

MANAGER: They're chatty and loud, often invade your personal space. Grief and regret causes most people to keep to themselves, even if they're in a bad mood.

TONYA: Then I take it back! I'm still pissed! I was lying about being glad my dad is gone. I miss him terribly! (*Wails dramatically.*)

MANAGER: In other words, you were being deceitful?

WORKER: (*To manager.*) Do we need to call Security?

TONYA: Wait, what? No! Sorry! I'm just an emotional wreck today!

WORKER: We can see.

MANAGER: I should inform you that now that "deceit" has been added to your emotional baggage, it doubles the cost.

TONYA: But deceit isn't an emotion!

MANAGER: No. You're right. It isn't.

TONYA: (*Confident that she's one-upped the MANAGER.*) So what's my total emotional baggage now?

MANAGER: \$400.

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TONYA: But that's the doubled price! You just admitted that "deceit" isn't an emotion, so you can't charge me for it!

MANAGER: True, "deceit" is not an emotion, as you so rightly pointed out, but it is what we call an "overage fee."

TONYA: I'm going crazy. That must be it. That's the only explanation.

MANAGER: I'll pretend I didn't hear the "C" word there. So....anger, grief, regret, happiness, and deceit. Will that be all?

TONYA: *(Spent.)* Yes. I guess so.

TONYA hands over a credit card. WORKER runs it and produces a boarding pass.

WORKER: Have a wonderful flight!

TONYA takes ticket and exits. As lights fade...

WORKER: Next! Oh, hello sir! Is that your emotional support animal?

The End