

Chapter One—Turbulence at 30,000 Feet

Bronwyn St. Claire settled into her window seat on the Austin-to-Toronto flight, the kind of midday hop that felt more like a lazy drive than air travel. The plane was barely half full—most passengers clustered up front like they were afraid of the tail end.

She'd snagged this spot deliberately, craving the isolation after a hectic week of freelance writing gigs in Austin. Her carry-on bulged with a dog-eared paperback, the cover screaming “steamy romance” without saying it outright. She cracked it open as the engines hummed to life, diving into a scene where the heroine was pinned against a rain-slicked wall, fingers tangled in her lover's hair.

Across the aisle, Nathaniel “Nate” Collins stretched his legs into the empty row beside him. He was headed to Toronto for a long weekend of nothing—hiking, maybe some craft beer tours, a break from his remote software consulting setup in the Texas Hill Country.

The flight attendant had given him the option to sit anywhere after a family of four claimed his original seat up front, but he didn't mind. He chose to move to the very back of the plane because the solitude suited him.

He pulled out his noise-canceling headphones, but before slipping them on, his gaze drifted to the woman by the window. Bronwyn, though he didn't know her name yet, was lost in her book, her free hand idly caressing the edge of her thigh.

The flight leveled off, and the cabin dimmed for that fake “night” vibe, even though it was broad daylight outside. Nate glanced over again, not meaning to stare, but there was something magnetic about her focus.

Her cheeks had a faint flush, and her legs shifted, pressing together. The book was open to a particularly explicit page—Nate could make out words like “thrust” and “wet” from his angle. She bit her lip, her hand

slipping higher on her thigh, fingers pressing in a circle that looked anything but accidental.

Bronwyn felt the heat building, the words on the page igniting a fire she hadn't planned to stoke mid-flight. The plane's hum vibrated through her seat, amplifying every sensation. She glanced around—no one nearby, just an expanse of empty rows ahead of her.

Her pussy throbbed, slick against her panties, and she couldn't resist. Just a little touch, she thought, sliding her hand under the armrest, fingers dipping beneath the waistband of her skirt. The fabric brushed lightly against her skin as she found her clit, swollen and begging, rubbing in tight, needy circles.

She didn't notice him looking at her, but Nate noticed everything.

His pulse kicked up. He shouldn't watch, but fuck, it was impossible not to. She was subtle at first, but her breathing hitched, and her hips twitched forward. The way her chest rose and fell, nipples hardening against her thin blouse, made his cock stir in his pants.

He shifted, trying to play it cool, but when her eyes flicked open and met his—dark, dilated, caught in the act—something electric passed between them. She didn't pull away. Instead, a smirk curved her lips, challenging.

“You’ve caught me,” she whispered, voice low enough to blend with the engine noise. Her fingers stilled but didn't retreat.

Nate leaned closer, keeping his tone casual. “Looks like the book's doing its job. Want a hand?”

Her laugh was breathy, surprised. “I appreciate your boldness. Sure, why not?”

He glanced back—no flight crew in sight, the curtain to the galley drawn. The risk made it hotter. Nate unbuckled, sliding into the seat next to her with a grin.

"Hi, I'm Nate," he said, offering his hand like they were meeting at a dinner party.

"Bronwyn." She shook it once, then guided it directly to her thigh. Her skin was warm, and she parted her legs just enough.

"Make it quick," she started—then her gaze dropped. Long fingers. Big hands. She reconsidered. "Actually. Take your time."

His fingers traveled up her left thigh, finding her heat. The scent of her arousal hit him—musky and inviting—as he brushed against her damp panties. Bronwyn gasped and leaned her head back closing her eyes, the book all but forgotten tucked between the seats.

Nate's middle finger pressed against her clit through the silky lace, feeling it pulse. "Fuck, you're soaked," he murmured, rubbing in firm strokes.

She gripped his arm, her nails digging into his flesh. "More, please," she begged. "I want you inside of me."

He pushed the fabric aside, two fingers sliding into her. She was tight, clenching around him immediately, her pussy gripping like it didn't want to let go.

Nate curled them, seeking out that spongy spot inside while his thumb worked her clit. Bronwyn's hips bucked subtly, her free hand clutching the seat arm. "Oh fuck yes, right there," she hissed, eyes half-lidded.

The plane hit a pocket of turbulence, jolting them, but it only amped the thrill. Nate pumped faster, his cock straining against his zipper, pre-come leaking as he watched her face melt with pleasure.

Her breaths came in short pants, and she ground down on his hand, chasing the friction.

“Come for me, baby girl,” his voice a hot whisper in her ear. She did—hard—her cunt spasming, juices coating his fingers as she bit her bottom lip to stifle a moan.

They sat like that for a minute, her head on his shoulder, until she straightened herself. Once she was completely upright, she turned her head toward him and with a wicked smile, she murmured, “Toronto just got a lot more interesting.”

The descent into Toronto felt charged, like the air between them crackled. Customs was a blur, but they stuck together, grabbing bags and hailing a cab to the same downtown hotel—coincidence, or fate, who cared? Bronwyn checked in first, her room on the 12th floor. Nate's was on the 14th.

“Please, join me for a drink?” he asked politely in the lobby, and she followed him to the hotel bar, sliding onto the stool beside him.

Over whiskey sours they talked for hours with surprising ease. He learned she was forty-one and had two adult daughters in college on the East Coast—one at Yale Law, the other at Columbia studying economics.

He also learned she'd been born in London (he'd thought he'd caught a hint of an accent) but had moved to Rhode Island at nineteen to attend Brown University, where she earned a master's in creative writing. She'd relocated to Austin after losing her husband in a horrific car accident nearly two years earlier.

“Fuck, I'm so sorry. That's a lot for someone to endure,” he said with sincerity.

“It certainly was,” she responded softly with tears welling in her eyes from the memories.

Her sudden emotional state did not go unnoticed. “So, what made you choose Austin?” he asked, quickly changing the subject.

She flashed a small smile at him, grateful that she didn't have to continue talking about her past.

"It was a mix of things," she said. "I love the music scene—live shows are the best. And it's nowhere near as rainy and gloomy as London, or as snowy and cold as Providence. I bloody love the sunshine, though I didn't expect it to be this hot—I can't believe it's only mid-April and already around thirty-five degrees Celsius. I'm even considering going back to school for a master's in journalism—the university here has a top-notch program."

"Oh, they absolutely do," he interjected. "My ex, Rebecca and I both graduated from UT Austin. And it's where my daughter, Rachel, is planning to go in the fall."

She nearly choked on her drink. "Nate, did you just say that the two most important women in your life are named Rebecca and Rachel?"

"Yes?" he replied hesitantly.

"No fucking way. You're joking, right?"

Puzzled at her reaction, he set his glass down. "I'm being completely honest."

"Holy shite. You aren't going to believe this, but those are my daughter's names."

"No way," he said, shaking his head. "No fucking way."

"I swear to everything pure and holy," she replied, placing her hand over her heart. "I've got a Rebecca Nichole and a Natalie Rachel."

"What a crazy, random happenstance," he grinned.

"Oh my goodness gracious, did you just quote a line from *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*?"

"Yes, ma'am, I did."

“I knew there was a reason why I liked you.”

She pulled him into a deep kiss—brief, decisive, a promise more than an invitation.

“Come on,” she said against his mouth. “My floor's closer.”

He left a twenty on the bar without looking at it and they made their way toward the elevators.