

WKD2

Lights on each wingtip identify the airliner as it passes overhead. Erased by the black night, it cruises over the radiant cityscape, lights tipping as it banks with an eloquent surge from Rachmaninov. His *Vocalise* is playing on Maestro FM. Cadences pipe buttercream swirls. Chords make shallow steps. A trill seems to prompt the pilot aloft to coax his stick to port.

The driver of the car harbours special feelings about being at the wheel. He follows the plane, arcing left with the motorway, then right, then left again, his seat tilting him right thigh high, the car's whispered propulsion oblivious to the dip and rise of the road, the adverse camber, that moment of weightlessness on the cusp of a bump. There's hardly any traffic, which allows the driver to eyeball the unconstrained northbound plane as it descends towards the city's airport, the flyover's slip ascending, the road ahead like pulled licorice.

The two vehicles are now in formation, distance's illusion having the car keeping up with the plane—one-fifty knots, zero headwind. But then the driver needs to pull in for fuel because the amber gauge is telling him to.

Stepping out of the sports coupe, the driver is convinced his legs are thinning towards the old man within. Preventative squats have been the order of the day. So has assertive walking: muscular walking, including muscular walking from the pump to the night hatch to pay.

Earlier that evening, at the concert, seated on his left with one arm aligned with his own bespoke sleeve, sat that couture drama in racing leather. On his right, a slender female arm in lilac mohair, resting close but not touching. He'd tried to imagine a home for these sartorial collisions: something avant-garde, something marketed to the demon within.

Another airliner floats in. It crosses the road at ninety degrees: not as high as the first plane because the car is nearer to the airport. The plane's lights tilt and slip behind the driver's right shoulder, entering the blind spot, from where a vehicle suddenly appears . . . overtaking close, very close, *furioso*, not sedate, not sitting on a bed of air.

The driver is startled but Rachmaninov remains calm, nurturing that stable, consistent moment, that singular trajectory that yields curvaceous orchestral edifices. There were no stoppings for gas in this music, no automotive shocks, no leather and mohair sandwiches. In the morning, back at the agency, he would return to the WKD2 account with a fresh mind, an airborne mind, a *classical* mind, the added surge of strings

buoying his imagination, giving it lift. He is impressed with the ease of his inventiveness. No wonder they called them Creatives.

The driver loses sight of the plane, but then spots it again out the corner of his right eye, its double dots forming a colon in the punctuated sky. He turns his head for a better view and feels like he is the one on the flight deck with the warm, sweat-less hands finger-tipping the control yoke, the circuit board city laid out below, illuminated everywhere except for where the black line of the unlit river runs, a bottle of WKD2 strapped to the co-pilot's seat in case of emergency.

Still eyeing the plane as it ducks below the terrestrial sub-roof plateau, he realises he's inadvertently taken a wrong turning—the painful turning he's been ignoring for years. He proceeds to the roundabout, passing the stanchions of the underpass, the traction-less music now conjuring an elderly woman in an overheated care home, sitting, twisted as a bonsai, awaiting a visit that will never come

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