

## The Knowing

By, Heather Williams

Beautiful, freckled with fine flaxen hair, Ingrid McGee is seated in 6D. Me, I'm in 6C. We're on a flight to DC. Ingrid tells me she's going to Georgetown.

I say, "I'm going to any town as long as it isn't in Georgia."

She laughs and snorts at my joke. Her eyes twinkle at me. Her freckles shimmer like diamonds. Red-orange hues envelop her body like auras. Then, somewhere visceral within me, it begins. Gnawing, unbridled, compulsive, The Knowing overtakes me. Unmasked, my heart races. I'm coming undone.

The Knowing whispers, "She's the one."

I answer it softly, "I know."

Ingrid gazes at me. She senses something has changed. She clutches my hand. "Are you O.K.? Should I call the flight attendant?"

I smile The Knowing smile. It sets her at ease. She smiles back.

"It's your turn," she says, as the flight attendant hands us our drinks and snacks.

We are playing a game. I let her choose. She chose checkers. She's winning. I always let them win. I always let them choose.

"One more," she says, "please one more!"

"One more," I say.

Ingrid resets the checkerboard with childlike enthusiasm, as the flight attendant returns to collect our trash. We play until we are advised to place the tray table in the upright and locked position.

I revel in the beauty of her little pout and the crinkle in her nose as she puts the game back in its case and hands me it. Our fingers brush in the exchange. My excitement escalates. I turn to her and ask, "What are your plans for the day in DC?"

"Well, she says, "classes don't start till Monday. So, I think I'll take an Uber to the Mall and visit the sights, The Lincoln Memorial, the Smithsonian, stuff like that. I know. It's cheesy, but I've never been."

As we touchdown, I say, "I don't think its cheesy. My car is at the airport, if you don't mind the company, it'd be fun to see the sights with you."

"You're so nice," she says, "I'd really appreciate the company. You're the only person I know in DC."

I help Ingrid with her bags as we deplane. We walk together to the parking garage. She chatters nonstop about her family, about her Pug, Homer Simpson, and about how excited she is to begin classes at Georgetown. I am enjoying every minute with Ingrid McGee. It's better than the first time.

"Thank you, Ingrid," I say, under my breath, so she doesn't hear.

We stop at my car. I place our bags in the trunk. She's jabbering about the National Zoo now. I walk behind her. I place my hands around her neck and crush her windpipe. It's exhilarating and quick. I hold her limp body against mine for a moment before I drive away and dump the last of Ingrid McGee into the Chesapeake.