

A trip not taken

It was a beautiful, warm Sunday noon in the middle of spring break. The sun was shining brightly and the birds sitting on the trees were singing a beautiful melody. Everything looked so pretty and peaceful. James was playing hide and seek with his sister, Anna in the back yard when their parents called them inside.

“Hurry up and get inside! We have an amazing surprise planned out for you!” their mother told them.

James and Anna instantly run inside, curious about what the surprise would turn out to be. They were blown away when they walked into the living room to find their parents standing, grinning from ear to ear, holding out four plane tickets to Italy.

“We’re going to Rome!”

“Pack your suitcases, because the flight is really early in the morning tomorrow.”

“I can’t believe it!”

“Thank you so much for this amazing surprise!”

Everyone in the family looked extremely happy and grateful. It really was an amazing surprise. The kids quickly went up the stairs and rushed to their rooms in order to pack all of the necessary stuff they were going to need during their trip. Just to be sure he remembered to grab everything, James even made a list of the objects he wanted to take with him to Italy.

Once every suitcase and backpack had been packed, the family sat down at the table to enjoy dinner. The food was really delicious and they all ate with great appetite, while discussing the upcoming trip. They talked about what clothes they picked to take with them, chose which impressive monuments they were going to visit, looked up restaurants with scrumptious food they needed to try and attractions of the city worth visiting, wondered what facilities the hotel they reserved was going to offer, planned what gifts to get for their friends and loved ones and even tried to calculate the duration of the flight and take a guess on what time they were going to arrive at their destination. The atmosphere felt super warm and it created very positive feelings and thoughts about the day after.

When dinner was over, the kids headed upstairs to get ready to go to sleep. James put on his pajamas, brushed his teeth, washed his face and lied down on his bed, incapable of falling asleep. He felt extremely excited for the next morning. However, excitement wasn’t the feeling keeping him awake. One fact about himself that he had never admitted to anyone, not even his family, was the enormous fear of flights and airplanes he has always lived with, without it ever bothering him. Tomorrow though, was going to be different from all other days. Anxiety was crawling over him, covering his excitement with dark shadows of forgotten emotions. The hours passed torturously slowly, making it feel like time had stopped.

A couple of hours later, James' father entered the room to wake him up, only to find him lying on his bed and staring at the ceiling, with dark circles starting to form under his eyes.

"Quick, get up. We're going to miss our flight." he told James.

James slowly stood up, got ready and entered the cold, red family car. It was so early that the sun hadn't risen yet. The city looked so beautiful in the dark that James almost didn't want to leave.

The family quickly arrived at the airport. They parked the car and entered the building in order to begin the check-in process. After finishing, they found out that their flight had been delayed due to an error that had occurred during the examination of the plane's engines. James' anxiety kept growing bigger and bigger every moment that passed in the cold waiting room of the airport. By the time of the announcement to board the plane to Rome, fear and negativity had completely taken over his thoughts and all he was able to focus on was hoping that everything was going to be alright and that nothing bad was going to happen during this flight.

After every passenger had boarded the plane and had found their seats, the flight attendants began giving instructions on what to do in case of something occurring during the flight. James had been hoping that after getting to know what to do and how to act on a dangerous situation he was going to instantly feel better, but he proved his previous assumptions completely false. After the flight attendants' presentation his anxiety became even worse, because he felt like the chances of something occurring were getting bigger.

Seeing him so stressed, his mother advised him to sleep on the way to Rome, considering that he hadn't gotten any sleep during the nighttime. Before dozing off, James heard his mother promising him that everything was going to be alright.

A few hours later, James woke up to a feeling of shakiness. The plane was falling. He looked around but his parents and sister were nowhere to be found. Everyone had stood up from their seats, screaming and panicking. James felt devastated. The last thing he heard before he passed out was the voice of his mother echoing in his head. "I promise everything is going to be okay" she had told him earlier that day. How foolish of someone to make a promise the fulfillment of which isn't up to them.

The first thing he saw when he opened his eyes again was a dirty, white ceiling. Faint rays of light were shining through a small, blurry window on his left. So many questions were running through his head. Where was he? Did he survive the plane crash? What happened to his family? James was feeling so confused and lost, when he heard a familiar voice calling his name. He turned around to see his mother smiling at him.

"Where are we? Did the plane crash?" he asked her.

"We are at the hospital. You had a panic attack during the night, so we came here instead of going to the airport. But don't worry everything is alright now" his mother responded.

A wide smile spread across James' face, as he felt a huge relief. He was so glad that everyone was alright and it didn't matter that the trip was not taken!