

I slumped down on the cool plastic chair in front of gate B14. The crack in the seat exhaled

as the weight of my duffel bag sank like a barbell on top. As I looked around, the woman next to me was reading a worn romance novel, her bifocals resting on the ball of her nose, her wrists resting on her lap as she rigidly held the book upright. The man beside her glanced nervously around, patting his right shirt pocket for cigarettes and murmuring expletives as he fought with the button that kept him from his habitual relief. The small of my back ached as I shifted in my chair. I combed my hair with my fingers, feeling the futility of sifting through my bag for a brush. I hadn't showered for two days, being trapped on a bus, then a train, then another bus until finally being spit out in the hustle of an airport crowd, misshapen and generally disgusted with the lines at security. The intercom rang through the terminal, muffled and washed out by the buzz of travelers. My nose caught the pungent odor of a hamburger and french fries...