The Smell of Sky; The Taste of Clouds

by Gay as fuck

Summary

There is a large difference between flying and the sensation of flight. On Nathan Petrelli, his brother, and flying but not really.

Notes

note to my friend who is kin w/peter: this isn't how i see you,, i hope this isn't weird

to everyone else: idk what nathan has going on but i can best sum it up as he wants to help peter because he thinks that if he helps peter that will (or peter will) somehow save him,, i doubt it's healthy whatever he has going on

Nathan still remembered the first night he flew in crystal clarity many years later. He and his wife had been driving home and someone had caused them to crash, he remembered because he soared up high and for a moment he had hung there. He had watched the car crash and heard his wife scream, he had been terrified she had died. He had hung for a moment that felt like years, panicked and confused. When he came to the realization that he was flying he had panicked even more and plummeted to the ground, before he hit the ground it all went black.

However the night wasn’t really the first night he really flew, being the son of rich parents. Nor was it the first time he felt like he was flying, endless pockets and a rebellious streak were able to get him that. So in reality that night may have felt like a first to Nathan it wasn’t.
Nathan couldn’t remember the first time he had flown, his mother and father loved to jet across the sea to France, England, and Spain. The first flight he could remember was a faded memory, that felt more like a dream than real life. All he could remember was wanting to tell his father that when he grew up he wanted to be a pilot.

However his father had sat a few seats up and was fast asleep, so he settled for telling the flight attendant. Of her he could only remember three things; the first was that her hair was long and golden. The second, she wore a blue uniform. The third and most important was that she smelled of the sky. He until a fateful car crash many many years later he only found that scent again on rare occasion no matter where he searched.

When he was 12 his father had sent him on the plane all by himself, first class as always. He remembered this flight because he had felt free, no parents and no nannies to fuss over and bother him. He knew he should have felt scared or lonely but instead he felt safe and happy.

He flew alone many times after that, and those were some of the only times he felt at ease. His father and mother wanted him to be perfect, and he could never live up to what they expected. After a while he stopped feeling bad, or happy, or anything at all.

As a child he didn’t cry much, partly because he was trying to be brave and partly because he was yelled at whenever he cried. One day when he was eighteen and being sent off to college in Europe he cried because he was free and now he could do what he wanted. He soon learned that college doesn’t mean free, it meant he still has far too much money for a kid that didn’t want to, and couldn’t be, what everyone expected of him.

While in France he learned the language, the culture, the alcohol, and the drugs. He had still felt stuck, and nothing changed that. So he tried to find things that made him fly, that smelled like the sky. He tried just about every drug money could buy at least once, and found things that made him fly.

One night on the opposite side of Paris than his dorm (or what his parents would call the wrong side) he found it, something that made him fly. He was reckless and hopeless by then, a mess of a man with no will to live other than the fact that even if he died he would still be disappointing his parents.

He was sure that he would have know why he had been like that if he had a therapist, or at least bothered to look in on himself.

When he’s drunk off his ass and at least two kinds of high he got a call from his mother, one that told him he had a brother. He didn’t remember in the morning, it’s kind of sad that the first thing he did with Peter was to forget about him.

A month after that he got an angry call from his mother. She told him that she was disappointed that he didn’t send Peter anything for his one month birthday, did he not love his brother?. He never admitted to her that he hadn’t known he had had a brother.

In the stories he’d tell to his friends later it was at that moment, 11 in the morning on the birthday of a brother he couldn’t remember ever having that he had decided that he was going to get clean and take care of Peter. In fact he looked at the picture of his little brother and gave a somewhat scornful laugh, that this was all he missed. He felt a little sorry for the kid, having to grow up like he did.

The first time he realized he loved Peter was that Christmas. Like the good christian boy he pretended to be he went home to his family, just wanting to get it over with. He had come into the city during pouring rain, and he had half hoped his mother would have been there to pick him up.
A limo had been waiting, lonely and black like it was taking him to or from a funeral. It was in the way a death, the death of having nothing to live for. He didn’t know it until he had seen Peter in the flesh for the first time that he finally had something to live for.

Peter had been in his crib, sleeping because it was late for a baby. Nathan had leaned over him and felt the intense urge to take him away. The old house was large but far too lonely for another Patrelli son, he knew how terrible it was to grow up there.

It had seemed to him that his parents had become even more distant from both of their sons. The vacation had passed quickly and stiffly, they didn’t talk much and when nathan and his parents had they didn’t say anything important.

The moment over the vacation that mattered were when Nathan’s mother and father retired to sleep. Nathan had been sleeping in the room next to Peter’s nursery and on the second night Peter had awoke crying. Nathan had been a frantic mess as he tried to sooth his little brother, and it was that moment when he came to a realization.

While he had Peter in his arms he decided something, he wanted to protect Peter from everything, and help him whenever he could. He decided that he would live for Peter, maybe if he spent his life protecting Peter, his saving grace he would later reflect, he would be saved as well.

In the old nursery of a house he knew far too well and hated so much he made a promise to his little brother, one he would break time and time again.

“I’m gonna be there for you Peter, I’ll protect you”.

He went back to Paris after a week, and left Peter with his mother and father though he wanted to take his little brother with him. It hadn’t even been a week and he broke his promise, the first of many broken promises.

He got clean when he got back to Paris. It was hard, but he did it for his little brother. He wanted to be better, to come home and be the son his parent’s wanted so Peter didn’t half to be.

When he was 23 and Peter was 6 he came home for good. He had come back to New York to start working with his father and taking care of his brother. Peter had been smart for a boy his age, though every family member says that.

Nathan couldn’t stand to be in the big house with Peter and his parents so he had moved to an apartment further into the city. There he had started his life. Years passed by in a flurry and he had made quite a name for himself. He kept saying that he was pushing himself to the sky for Peter while he left his brother in the care of his family.

Nathan was doing it for Peter so his actions of caring but not really caring for his brother would save him. He loved Peter yes, with every part of his heart, but he hadn’t loved him enough to spend another year with his parents.

During those years in the city he didn’t fly much, he had stayed grounded and busy. Wanderlust had still tugged at his boots. He hadn’t wanted to be another version of his father, and it seemed to him like he was shaping up to be.

When Peter was 15 and Nathan was 32 the older brother went to Texas for a year. He needed to get out of New York, which always seemed to be changing but really stayed the same. While he stayed in the large state he made a few friends but not really.

They were people who were willing to share stories, and the first kind of friends he’d had since he
was a druggie in Paris. He had work friends of course but they didn’t really know him, and it was in Texas he had been able to admit his past and his life to people.

He had told a pretty woman with blond hair and fire in her eyes the story of the smell of sky, which he thought he smelt on her a couple of times. He bared his soul, his heart, and his body to her. He might have loved her, in a different world, but in this one he had needed someone to hear his story.

She loved him though, so much that when he had gone home she still called and told him of his daughter. His young daughter became the second person he really ever loved. He might have loved his mother and father and some point, but it’s hard to tell love from duty sometimes.

He loved Peter, the boy was charming and sweet and his brother who, no matter what, deserved the world.

When he had gotten back to New York he made a pact with himself to treat Peter to all the things a boy his Peter’s age should want. He had made dirty jokes and taken him to baseball games but Peter never seemed to like any of that. All the boy had wanted to do was talk with his online friends, study, and draw.

Peter had drawn back from Nathan so the elder made the terrible decision to do the same. They were brothers and they loved each other but Nathan never understood Peter, he only had what he believed Peter to be.

Peter was the son who was meant to save him and the world. Peter was just Peter though, flawed but wonderful. However to Nathan Peter became a perfect angel, willing to lend out a broken heart Nathan saw as perfect and smelled of sky when he really smelled of earth.

The first time Nathan truly did something for his brother, was when the two of them had flown up into the sky together, radiation pouring from Peter’s body. There, in the night sky, Nathan didn’t let Peter go, and he didn’t save himself. When he held Peter tight he didn’t know it, but that would be the very last time he caught the scent of sky.

He ended up alive though, without peter and without his will to live. He decided that this time, he wouldn’t forget Peter, and he wouldn’t pretend to be saving himself.

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