

A Most Prized Possession

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I made my way to the aircraft boneyard. Thankfully it was the last, as good lord were these trips exhausting. The last penny was paid off, and today I was here to pick up the Douglas (all that “McDonnell-Douglas” never made sense to me - Douglas for life!) MD-11ER (indicating it was extended range, complete with extra fuel tank) that I had assiduously paid off, that was now mine. I stood in front of it, and gazed at the cargo door. It was a passenger plane that was converted into a freighter by Boeing, with whom they merged with back in 1997, making it a BCF, which stood for Boeing Converted Freightier. Slowly, and deliberately sauntering around it, I glared at the window-less fuselage. Looks like it will have to be added back in, not to mention on top of refitting the interior so it looked hospitable for passengers again. I admit to loving the cargo door too much to remove it, so therefore, I was going to convert it to a MD-11CF (for “Convertible Freightier”) configuration with some eager friends, allowing it to haul cargo, and/or passengers.

Forty minutes later saw me departing with it, flying to my private airfield, to be stored at my private hangar, and stripped down for Convertible Freightier conversion. I’ll spare you the boring details, but one to one-and-a-half months later, after the conversion was finished, and it was registered at the FAA, while simultaneously bemoaning the fact that I couldn’t enlarge the tail fin (maybe it’s just me, but aircraft tails are getting smaller, and smaller; just look at the Boeing 787 Dreamliner; maybe it’s to reduce weight, but any aircraft is harder to handle with a smaller tailfin, hence the MD-11 being harder to handle than its DC-10 predecessor), I pulled it out in a ceremony, where friends, and anybody else who even cared, marvelled at the plane. Those who believed in me buying the plane congratulated my purchase, and careful conversion. On the other side of the coin, the doubters were dumbfounded that I actually managed to buy a plane, let alone a wide-body tri-jet. I had purposefully invited them here; it was quite fulfilling having them here to spite

them, and their insurmountable doubt, back, seeing as how they stated that I will never be able to acquire it as a fact of life, as some indisputable shit.

A close friend, Simeon, came to my side while I stared at the Pratt & Whitney PW4462 turbofan that was engine #1. “So, Reuven, nice to see our ass-load of handiwork being admired” he said. I had trusted him so much I put him as foreman/assistant in the conversion project, a role he had successfully fulfilled. “Yeah, the finger to them doubters, and the pinnacle epitome of the awesomeness that is being a bachelor”. “Ah yes, you stopped after that girl, Leah Li, was it?” he said. “Yup; turns out it was just that she was scared I’d take rejection badly, and then ran off with our komrade-in-arms, Warren” I replied. “Ah, so the great have fallen” he wryly, teasingly, smiled in a way that incredibly emphasized his facial aesthetic, making him look even more the coyote that he was.

Oh, my ex-girlfriend Leah. I was heartbroken when she announced our “breakup”. The next day, I caught her all over Warren Rosen like we never dated, and pulled her over in disdain. “You act like we didn’t go through a break-up just yesterday” I said. “Well, I was worried you would take me not wanting you in the first place” she said. “Then why did we have extensive conversations on the internet? You sounded less eager after seeing what I looked like, not to mention” I replied.

“Err, yeah” she replied.

“Am I that ugly that I turned you off?” I asked.

“No, it’s just that... you... weren’t the guy I was looking for” she replied.

“What “kind of guy” were you looking for then? Huh?” I said.

“A... guy not like your, uh... type... of guy...”

“What?”

“Well, I didn’t know you were... you, until I saw your picture”

“What does that even mean?”

“You sounded so different from the way you look, you sounded White over the internet chat-”

“So you turned me down because I was Asian”

“No, I...”

“You prefer White instead of Asian”

“Well, not worded like that...”

“I see. So you don’t want to date me because I’m Asian”

“No, it’s just that... I didn’t expect you... to... be who you are-”

“You don’t like Asian guys”

“No, it’s just that I...”

“If your cute serval looks were enough, I’d be convinced” I said disdainfully, affectionately stroking her ears, something she thoroughly delighted in whenever I did it, “but I’m not that kind of guy; tell me, how many Asians other than me have you dated? And don’t even try the ‘technically I date myself, because I love myself, which you have to do before you love others’ schtick”.

Upset that I foresaw her move, she grimaced like I asked her to consume faeces, and went back to Warren. I sighed in discontent. They eventually married. Warren was an old pal from high school, and I didn’t want him to suffer for Leah’s actions, as if he had control over her thoughts, even. I still invite him to visit, and

when they do, Warren would always be taking her with him; on those days, I always make food for two, so the third has to eat out alone. Today I invited him to the ceremony, and when I saw them, I gave Warren a hearty Sockeye Salmon sandwich, and watched him eat it.

“Ah, so they revel at this monolithic achievement” Simeon said. Everyone was marvelling that MD-11 like they had never seen a plane before, let alone a wide-body jet. “Well,” I replied, “to be fair, not always you see a golden jackal like me get a private plane, right? therefore, I shouldn’t be surprised they come to me saying things like, ‘Reuven Yang, you are damn lucky to own a private jet’ or some shit along that line” I shrugged. I turned to the crowd. “Let’s explore the inside, shall we?” I announced to the crowd. I wheeled a mobile airstair to the forward port door, just like at airports, which usually docked their jetways, and/or airstairs portside, and opened the door. It was configured to all-passenger, so it resembled a standard passenger plane. To avoid unwelcome tampering, I had left the cockpit entrance shut, and piled 5 empty (for ease of removal’s sake) cardboard boxes in front of it to further discourage uninvited intrusion.

While the crowd was inside admiring our handiwork in the interior, Simeon had a few moments together with me. We quietly chugged my home-made Riesling together. “So,” I said, in a weak, half-hearted attempt to start a Conversation, “we can go anywhere with this thing; I can do something else, other than watch my Pharaoh Cuttlefish, although I do enjoy having it as my pet. I remember when I hatched it from an egg”. “Yeah” he replied curtly, simply. Conversation was not fit for the moment.

I remember when I first bought the cuttlefish. It was a Pharaoh Cuttlefish, *Sepia pharaonis*. It arrived a mere black egg, as cuttlefishes inject sepia ink into the egg. After hatching, I raised it on copepods, and then brine shrimp. As an adult, I gave it a steady diet of shrimp, and silversides. It was indeed quite satisfying watching it snatch the food with its two long hunting tentacles, lighting fast. Maybe I didn’t get it to alleviate my heartbreak, but my initial heartbreak emotions were quickly healed thanks to that amusing cephalopod. It accepted me for who I am, just like

Simeon did. Relief from that most disappointing breakup was also one of the two reasons why I took the quite mad ambition to get an aircraft, the other simply being a desire to express (although I concede it is quite an extreme form of expressing it) my hobbies, although I didn't necessarily expect that I would have to convert it for passenger use, initially expecting to acquire a passenger plane.

The breakup had freed up my time, and I needed a distraction from my sorrow within. Randomly going up, and down the roads in my 1969 Ford Talladega, I most randomly ended up at an aircraft boneyard in Arizona. Made sense making a plane storage, and/or demolition solutions facility in the Sonoran Desert. It was so dry, any aircraft in long-term storage won't rust, or corrode, or some shit like that. Even I thought I was out of my mind telling the foreman I wanted to buy that plane off, the only reason of me saying all that was because I saw that it was scheduled for demolition, dismantled into pieces. A few payments (I somehow managed it...), and 14 months (surprised it somehow wasn't even longer...) later, and here we are. Buying it was a distraction, while converting it was a distraction, *and* a therapeutic way to blow off steam.

Taking up the conversion project as a remedy for heartbreak worked, and now it was more than a plane. It was a pinnacle of getting over ridiculous emotions not worth my attention in the first place. All that pointless frustration, and sadness diverted into making an aircraft suitable for passenger use. I was careful never, while venting my emotions, let my emotions get the best of me, as otherwise, I would've have gotten sloppy, and error-some in my actions. Although I didn't intend to, I now realise having an assistant, let alone one like Simeon, would have kept me from going off the edge with emotions if I did, although it didn't ever happen, and I was thankful that it didn't.

When I was finished with conversion modifications, I wasn't going to be like a museum, putting it on a static display to be merely gawked at. I was going to take it for a spin every so often when I felt like it to keep the engines running, and/or take a private means of transportation anywhere I wanted. The passenger seats I ordered, although apparently unnecessary, as chances are that only I will ride it (but

hey, you never know, right?), were the most deliberate antithesis of airline seats nowadays: while most standard seats are smaller, and smaller to cram more passengers on, I had purposefully ordered seats that were roomy, and cosy, with the seats strategically placed for copious legroom to spare. Having overstuffed cushions was an extra nice touch I included. As it was a wide-body, I configured it eight-abreast: two-abreast by both walls, and four-abreast in the centre, with overhead cabinets on the side, and centre to match.

It was what I managed to accomplish with this plane that was the reason why I *actually* held this plane in the highest value of all my possessions. Not because it was some expensive plane, but because it was the reason why I finally got over my absurd heartbreak, the vestiges of negative emotions evaporated, all thanks to that. All said deeds able to be done due to that aircraft. For all that, it is, and will be, a most prized possession, let alone mine.

“So, Simeon Millerson, you want to keep me company on that plane when I perform that aerial demonstration, taking off from this Montana airfield, going north into Canada, and circling back here nonstop?” I quipped. “I’d be happily obliged to do such a deed” he replied curtly.

When the crowd finally had finished taking in the interior sights, I approached them as they reached the bottom of the airstairs. “Well, now that you are done taking in the interior sights, it’s time to see me fly it around in an aerial demonstration” I said. “For that, everyone has to move there”, pointing a good distance to the side.

When the crowd had moved a safe distance away from the plane, Simeon, and I boarded it, closed the door, removed the boxes, and entered the cockpit, with me in the captain’s seat, and Simeon on the other. As there was nobody to wheel the stairway away, I employed the reverse thrusters to back the aircraft up out. Taxiing onto the runway, I fired up the engines to full power. We accelerated down the runway, tilted up, and soon the airfield shrank until it disappeared way down below.