

The Bright Pink Feather

He represents every businessman in America. Wearing two of the three pieces of his black suit, a white button-down shirt, and a yellow tie, a look of forced happiness mixed with boredom is apparent. Behind him, four clocks hang on the wall. 1:15 in Tokyo, 9:15 in Paris, 2:15 in LA...these are important details in the life of this businessman. He swims in a sea of computer chips and paperwork. This is his life. His name is Joe, and he is not fulfilled. His world is tedious and precise. It is technical, like a form letter, the only elements that vary being the date and the contents of his lunch. Joe needs something – he needs a catalyst, and he needs it now.

Joe will take a trip. The trip will not be like his life – it will be spontaneous, entertaining, and fresh. It will include a six-hour flight from his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia. He will fly on Northwest Airlines, and will arrive to his destination an hour late; he is aware that Northwest Airlines is known for this type of delay, the informed consumer that he is.

His destination is Las Vegas, Nevada. Since he has never been on trips other than those for business, this is a new experience. Joe loosens his tie at the airport as a gust of relaxation sweeps over him. He briefly considers removing the tie. He does not remove the tie.

Joe has reserved a room at the Radisson Hotel. The computer chip industry has paid him well, so he can afford this room. He checks in and takes the elevator to the seventeenth floor. Taking stock of the room, he notes a pen, stationery, and the Gideon Bible. His suitcase is then unpacked, its contents placed in drawers and on hangers in the closet.

Riding the elevator back down to the ground level, Joe leaves the Radisson Hotel and walks out onto the street. Strange people surround him. He is handed pamphlets containing pictures of naked men and women. These pamphlets also have phone numbers in them. He finds the nearest trash receptacle and deposits them there. Joe *is* on vacation, but he is *not* that kind of man.

He proceeds down the street, passing by street performers. One street performer is a man standing on a box. This man moves only when music plays from his small stereo, shifting around like a robot. Joe gives him one dollar, and then proceeds into the nearest casino.

Lights flash everywhere and screams of excitement fill the casino. Joe approaches the cash window, places a perfectly crisp \$20 bill on the countertop and receives an equal amount of money in chips. Roulette and blackjack seem too risky, so he heads for the slot machine, deposits the proper number of chips into the machine, and pulls the lever. He loses his chips, but repeats this process until all the chips are gone. He is disappointed. It is time for a break.

Wandering around aimlessly, Joe stumbles into a side room of the casino. The room is blasting rock and roll music and is filled with women. These women are all dressed in a similar manner, wearing bright colors, crocheted vests, bell-bottoms, and huge round or aviator-style sunglasses. They all have lengthy brown hair, which is wavy. Tied into their brown hair are feather boas. Some are bright pink and some are red.

Joe is confused. He is approached by one of the women with brown hair and bell-bottoms. She urges him to enter further into the room and invites him to sit down. As he does so, he looks up and notices a large banner, which reads “Janis Joplin Impersonation

Night”. The woman sits down next to Joe and asks him his name. He quickly outlines his statistics.

The woman is joined by two of her friends. Her friends are also Janis Joplin. These women are friendly – very friendly. They say things like “come on, take another little piece of my heart now baby”. Joe is, again, confused. He does not know what, exactly, the women want. His computer chips have never asked him to take a piece of their heart.

Joe remains seated as the Janis Joplins smoke their Marlboro Reds. They give him drinks. He normally does not drink, but he *is* on vacation. He drinks a blue drink, a green drink, a red drink, and a pink drink. He repeats this process. Joe feels fuzzy. He feels happy and euphoric.

The Janis Joplins ask Joe where his room is. He cannot remember. They find his room key and see that it is on the seventeenth floor of the Radisson Hotel. They decide that it is time to go to bed. The Janis Joplins walk him back to the hotel, over to the elevator, and push the button for the seventeenth floor.

They enter his room, and find that there is a massive king-sized bed. Joe informs them that there is good money in computer chips. The Janis Joplins were not aware of this. They prepare him for bed, leaving him in only his white briefs. They figured him to be a brief man. The Janis Joplins also get into bed, feather boas and all, and they all fall asleep.

Joe awakens the next morning. He is wearing only his white brief underwear. He does not remember much about the previous evening. He doesn’t remember how many drinks he had. Looking over next to his head, Joe sees a bright pink feather lying on the

pillow. He then remembers the Janis Joplins. He also remembers that it is time for him to go.

Joe gets up, showers, re-packs his suitcase, makes his bed, and places the bright pink feather in his wallet. He takes a taxi to the airport, and boards a plane for the six-hour flight home. On the flight back, he reflects upon his time in Las Vegas. He thinks of the Janis Joplins, and how wild he was for that one night. He returns to his job and to his computer chips. His face returns to a look of happiness mixed with boredom. But somehow, with that bright pink feather resting in his wallet, the look of happiness on his face is no longer quite as forced.