

ON AIRPLANES

I am always amused
By those couples—

Lovers and spouses—
Who perform and ask

Others to perform
Musical chairs

Whenever they, by
Random seat selection,

Are separated
From each other.

“Can you switch
Seats with me?”

A woman asked me.
“So I can sit

With my husband?”
She wanted me,

A big man, who
Always books early,

And will gratefully
Pay extra for the exit row,

To trade my aisle seat
For her middle seat.

By asking me to change
My location for hers,

The woman is actually
Saying to me:

“Dear stranger, dear
Sir, my comfort is

More important than yours.
Dear solitary traveler,

My love and fear—
As contained

Within my marriage—
Are larger than yours.”

O, the insult!

O, the condescension!



And this is not
An isolated incident.

I've been asked
To trade seats

Twenty or thirty times
Over the years.

How dare you!
How dare you

Ask me to change
My life for you!

How imperial!
How colonial!

But, ah, here is
The strange truth:

Whenever I'm asked
To trade seats

For somebody else's love,
I do, I always do.

MS