*TAR AerolÍneas Flight YQ-287 from Ronald Reagan National Airport to Cancún International Airport will now begin boarding.*

*El vuelo YQ-287 de TAR AerolÍneas desde el Aeropuerto Nacional Ronald Reagan al Aeropuerto Internacional de Cancún ahora comenzará a abordar.*

The aisles of the Boeing 747 were cramped for most people, but Helen Schwartz strode down the aisle with a confidence and grace that belied the fact that her gut filled up the aisle completely. Where some people of larger girth would worry about how they would scoot past other passengers finding their seats or loading their luggage into the overhead bins, Helen instead had absolute confidence; absolute confidence that you could not try fitting one teensy wafer thin mint past her.

It took years of effort, but she had shaped her body into a singular mass of blubber. She had a gut that could fill an aisle, and an ass that could crush an intern's face. Life was good. Life was very good.   
  
Freed from the confines of playing Buttercombe’s ‘adorable and eccentric’ and definitely sexless school therapist, she let her wild side out. A maroon tanktop with one strap undone just barely meeting at her middle with a pair of cargo shorts she couldn’t wait to unbutton during the flight. A pair of oversized sunglasses tinted everything the color of cola, and made her salivate at the thought she’d soon be able to enjoy cola with real sugar, the way god intended it.  
  
Some passengers tried to treat her girth as *her* problem. If she had guzzled so many sweets that she couldn’t hope to squeeze past, she’d have to wait until they finished. But faced with the strange woman’s unrelenting gaze, and unrelenting gut pressing into them, they all stepped aside and some even apologized to her.  
  
So imagine Helen’s surprise when she reached her seat and collided belly to belly with another whale who could match her weight. If it was any other morbidly obese passenger, Helen would be delighted at the possibility of 13 hours of intense fat on fat contact. But she had the bad luck of being paired with the one person in her life she could never *possibly* be attracted to: Mia Underwood, her predecessor at Buttercombe University.

People always told her they were so much alike. They were NOTHING alike. ‘You are both therapists, and you are both sweet, and you both express ideas slightly more cultural progressive than Spiro Agnew, and you are both...fat...very, very fat, did not mean they were in any way similar!   
  
Mia was a clown! The most unqualified therapist she’d ever seen! The students never respected her, and why should they! She never considered they might have real problems in need of more than guided meditation. She never even kept notes! Her warmth was based on puerile, misplaced complacency, Helen worked *hard* to establish her signature sense of Gemütlichkeit.  
  
She wasn’t even as good at yoga as Helen was!   
  
Needless to say, Helen made sure she was first on the chopping block when Yeng moved in.

“Oh! Hello, Helen!” She said with a big sappy smile, not moving her fat belly out of the way one inch. Early retirement seemed to have done her well. Helen’s well trained eye estimated an extra 100 kilos in the last five years, bringing her close to 250 kilograms. She was almost naked, having opted to fly in nothing but a bikini top and a sarong. It was infuriating for Helen that none of the fat, jiggling flab in front of her could do anything for her. “What are you headed to the Yucutan for?”  
  
“It is my *home,* schweine.” Helen’s voice dripped acid. She did not want to make small talk with some gringo tourist she met once, five years ago, to get her fired. She made a show of looking at the seat numbers. “Seats J12 and J13. These are mine!" Helen tried to be pleasant, but there was a harsh edge to her voice.

"Oh, are you sure? Because it says here I have seats J13 and J15." Mia reached into her bikini top and pulled out her ticket, crinkled from being pressed by the fat hippy’s flabby, shapeless, freckled breast.  
  
“I am sure.”  
  
“You didn’t check.”  
  
“I don’t need to check--” Helen said through gritted teeth. *‘--I’m a super genius!’* Helen thought so loud people around her could almost hear it. “They overbooked us. But since these are mine, and I paid for them, why don’t you just leave.” Helen said. Mia might have put on a lot of weight relaxing in retirement, but Helen could match her kilo for kilo by stuffing her body to the limit all these years. She pushed her fingers into Mia’s stomach (still pressing against hers) to try and push her away. Instead she only found her hand sinking deeply into pale flesh.  
  
Mia gently deflected Helen’s aggression away. “Now Helen, you know that isn’t how this works. We both paid for the seat--”  
  
  
“Ladies!” The stewardess called out, sensing this situation needed to be solved quickly. “We’re sorry about the mix up, if one of you will wait for the next flight, we’ll let you wait at the airport buffet, on us.”  
  
Helen and Mia looked back at each other. Now the question was who was getting that buffet, and who was finding out they needed three seats anyway.