

*\*Jenny's childhood memory of first-class cabin on the flight to Japan pp. 341-343.*

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### A Peep into The First Class Cabin

Susan Choi precludes the “betrayal” of Pauline with Jenny’s vivid childhood memory of the flight to Japan with her father. Contrasting the uneasy and unfortunate behavior of Jim, young Jenny spends a fabulous time with the rich children and adults in first-class lounge, where Jenny should never have accessed to without her father’s quarrel over assignment of seats. This childhood story after Jenny’s arrest unveils her motivation in the left-wing political movement as a Japanese American in retrospective. Furthermore, it foreshadows Pauline’s and the public’s indifference on Jenny as a predictable outcome given her racial and social underprivileged status.

Inside the first-class lounge in the childhood story, Jenny easily blends herself into the joyful scene. As soon as she enters the lounge, there are immediately “dozens of faces looked at her with pleasant pleasure” (341). Jenny’s appearance in the first-class lounge, a place designed for wealthy people to take flights as a luxurious enjoyment rather than a way of transportation, automatically makes other people assume her wealth and social status. In the lounge, there is no fatigue of traveling, financial burden, and racial prejudice. There are only children sprawling on the floor piled with “quantities of beautiful toys” (341). Even her unwelcomed Japanese face is assumed by adults as a “Hawaiian” feature, which greatly contrasts how, becoming an adult, she is insulted as a “China Doll” in a random gas station (341, 264). Indeed, the effortless intimacies that Jenny builds with other kids and adults in the lounge may never appear again when she grows up. Therefore, deep down, Jenny constantly longs for being equally treated without prejudice on her colored skin. Then, her active involvement in the earlier bombing activity with William, the trainings and robbery with the Cadre, and the run with Pauline is no longer a

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coincidence. In any of those circumstances, the “pure and sublime” political ambitions can temporarily let everyone, including Jenny herself, forgets her underprivileged identity as a Japanese American, even though everyone else is white and has received higher educations. Without the left-wing activity, Jenny would never have the chance to know Pauline, an extremely wealthy and privileged girl who drives “two-seater car” and “desire[s] ‘to be normal’” (343). In conclusion, Jenny becomes left-wing to enter that first-class lounge again.

However, Jenny's attempt of living the life of a left-wing activist forever is as nonrealistic as staying in the first-class lounge forever, which is a plot made by Choi. First, she should have never appeared in that first-class lounge, which suggests the absurdity of Jenny's love affair with Pauline. In the story, it was an irrational decision made by her father to travel in this “brand-new DC-8 jet” (340) given the financial burden. Also, without Jim's quarrel with the flight attendant over their seat assignment, they would have spent the flight in the Coach seats. All those details under Choi's narrative are given a new meaning that the parallel lives of Pauline and Jenny would have never crossed if Pauline was not kidnapped, or Jenny had never been persuaded by Frazer. The brief air turbulence in the flight can be related to the fleeting life of Jenny and Pauline. Two of them are trapped in the situation of getting caught just like how passengers are tied to each other on a flight. The comfort given by Jenny and Pauline's bodies “twin[ing] together at the center (in the motel rooms)” becomes equivalent to that of “oops-a-daisy!” from the father in the turbulence (280, 342). Although the father who amuses Jenny has no connection with her at all, at that moment, they are tied together given their vulnerability in front of the possibility of a plane crash. From this perspective, Pauline's brief love with Jenny has no commitment attached since it was purely a necessary choice made under the situation. Inherently, Choi embeds the unavoidability of Pauline and Jenny's departure in love and the

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public's ignorance of Jenny into the flight story. Facing a complicated event happened in real life, Choi reduces Jenny's journey as a peep into that first-class cabin.

### **Bibliography**

Susan Choi. *American Women*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003.