

Najeebah Al-Ghadban / Getty

'I MOVED ON HER VERY HEAVILY'

DONALD TRUMP IS WAITING FOR YOU IN FIRST CLASS


'I Moved on Her Very Heavily': Part 3

By E. Jean Carroll

SEPTEMBER 11, 2020

*In her 2019 memoir, *What Do We Need Men For?*, E. Jean Carroll accused Donald Trump of rape, in a Bergdorf's dressing room in the mid-1990s. After the president denied ever meeting her and dismissed her story as a Democratic plot, she sued him for defamation. Carroll was not, of course, the first woman to say that Trump had sexually harassed or assaulted her, but unlike so many other powerful men, the president has remained unscathed by the #MeToo reckoning. So in the run-up to the November 3 election, Carroll is interviewing other women who alleged that Trump suddenly and without consent "moved on" them, to cite his locution in the Access Hollywood tape. "I'm automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them, it's like a magnet ... And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the pussy."*

Carroll's lawsuit took a dramatic turn this week, when the Justice Department intervened in an attempt to take over the president's defense, asserting that Trump was acting in his official capacity when he claimed not to know Carroll. Meanwhile, a White House spokesperson denied all of the women's allegations, calling them "decades-old false statements" that had been "thoroughly litigated in the last election and rejected by the American people." Read [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) here.





Jessica Leeds

Photograph by Rosie Brock

1

Midsummer twilight, and Jessica Leeds and I are letting down what's left of our hair. Jessica confesses that one time she interviews with a computer company, and afterward she hears that all everybody is talking about is whether or not she was wearing a bra. (She was.) Then I confess that one time I buy a ticket to Johannesburg and a coxcomb from the South African consulate makes me sit on his lap before he agrees to give me a visa. What else do we confess? Well, let me just say that if you have never Zoomed with a silver-haired, soigné 78-year-old woman who describes what it

is like being strapped in a seat on a Braniff flight with a future president of the United States trying to fasten his lips on her like a 6-foot-3 suckfish, well, in my opinion, reader, you have not lived, let alone Zoomed, at all.

2

But before we board that Braniff flight, we must first deal with another matter. Again and again we see Jessica, one of the first women to publicly accuse Trump of sexual assault in 2016, on the front page of *The New York Times* or sitting for an interview with Anderson Cooper—and what do we see?

“I know that if the story gets any attention, the first thing Trump will say is that I’m not pretty enough,” Jessica says. “I know instinctively that’s what he’s going to say.”

I snort like the empress of Blandings Castle.

Trump, in fact, yammers about Jessica’s accusations at a rally, and hoots, “Believe me, she would not be my first choice!”

How did Jessica know? Because Jessica is an old bat. Old bats are the best. I am an old bat myself. We old bats don’t kid ourselves.

“I want to tell everyone,” Jessica says. “In my 30s, I’m not bad looking. I certainly never compete in any beauty contest, but I am pretty enough. Thank you.”

3

So for the honor of Jessica Leeds and old bats everywhere, here is a photo of Jessica taken around the time that I’m going to tell you about. (Not that she isn’t a handsome woman still, don’t ya know.)

It is 1979, 1980. Jessica is sailing across the sky, heading back to New York from

Dallas. If she has caught a Braniff flight—and as Jessica remembers, it probably *is* Braniff—her plane will be painted Perseus green or mercury blue, her seat will be full-grain leather, her flight attendant will be clad in Halston, and Jessica will find a complimentary mini-pack of cigarettes on her tray with her free drinks. This is before she becomes a stockbroker, and she is earning \$17,000 a year as a salesperson for a company that supplies newsprint to publications like *The Washington Post*. Her firm is headquartered in Greenwich, Connecticut, in the old Condé Nast building. “It’s very posh,” Jessica says. “And *we* are posh.”



Jessica in 1979 (Courtesy of Jessica Leeds)

“Do you remember what you’re wearing on the flight, Jessica?”

“I have my best suit,” Jessica says. “A brown tweed. I have a blouse that is a satiny

fabric, shiny, and paisley print. Oh, I love that suit! And my hair is dark, *dark* brown. I think I look terrific.”

“What color is the blouse?”

“Silvery, with brown and red. It’s a fabulous outfit. It really is. I hang on to it for quite a while, but—”

She lowers her head and looks at me with her splendid dark-hazel eyes. “I never ... wear ... it ... again.”

“So you get on the plane ...”

“I get on the plane and go to the back and take my seat. And I remember watching the stewardess walking down the aisle, and she says to me, ‘Would you like to come up to first class?’”

In the 1970s, 1980s, it is impossible to surprise a woman: “It never occurs to me *not* to say yes—it had happened to me before,” Jessica tells me.

“Me too,” I say. You too, reader?

“I accept the fact,” says Jessica, flashing a sarcastic look from under her brows, “that I’m entertainment for the big honchos up in first class.”

“Ahh, Jessica,” I say. “People may not understand what we’re talking about.”

What we are talking about is how things used to be: about buying a ticket, putting on our best clothes, and boarding a cocktail party heading for New York or Chicago or Miami or any jazzy city, U.S.A. The party lacks zip unless somebody very rich or very pretty is present. Because to fly 1,500 miles without a beautiful woman next to you is like sitting in a restaurant without being served an entrée.

Men in first class will size up the female passengers before boarding and hold a brief conference with the check-in crew. Or, alternatively, a helpful flight attendant on a

jumbo jet to L.A. will simply stand in the aisle next to me waving people away and rearranging the seating chart so that an extremely tall chap with hair like greased felt can have the spot by me. And, after the plane takes off, following the meal, the chap can show me a photo of his private plane and then show me a photo of his Rolls-Royce, and then show me his erection.

“Trump may have asked the flight attendant to go and fetch you,” I say.

“It could be,” Jessica says.

“So you come walking up to first class—”

“I recall he introduces himself. The name means nothing to me.”

It wouldn't. Not in 1979 or 1980. Jessica is from Missouri. Her father is a cattle buyer for Oscar Mayer. Her mother, who divorces her dad when Jessica is little, is the executive secretary for the Springfield city manager, and, Jessica says, “she runs the town.” Jessica grows very tall, very quickly, towering over everybody in school, and, until she flunks fifth grade, nobody knows she can't see the blackboard or the words in her books. Her older brother has been reading everything to her, and Jessica has been memorizing what he reads to her, going to school, and faking it. The day she puts on her new glasses and walks to school and sees the leaves on the trees: “The whole world opens up. It is amazing! *Amazing!*” She wins a partial scholarship (tuition and books) to Northwestern University, majors in speech and drama, and, finding herself out of money, finishes up at Southwest Missouri State. She gets a job with an early computer-programming company, then moves on to the paper company. She lives in Connecticut, and though she is flying in and out of New York airports, Jessica is not aware of the levels, the ranks, the spheres of New York society that Trump, a young rat out of Queens, is chewing his way through.

“I introduce myself,” Jessica says, “and he is perfectly reasonable when I first sit down. He's blond, tall—you know, a good-size man—but I don't remember being overwhelmed by his looks. Then we take off, and they serve a wonderful meal with real linen and real food. And you know? It is delightful. Really delightful. What do we talk about? We talk about him. He doesn't ask me any personal questions. I know very few men who *ever* ask personal questions. They don't want to know the answers. And I have my book. And he has nothing to read, and when they come and pick up the trays and everything, within a short amount of time—all of a sudden—*he is on me.*”

“Does he try to kiss you first?”

“Yes. Yes ... Yeah.” She glances away from the screen with a revolted wince.

“Does he say anything?”

“He didn't say a word. He was too busy trying to kiss me.”

“Does he move the armrest between you?”

“I don’t remember. All I remember is all of a sudden, he is on me.”

Jessica is ladylike. Therefore, allow me—for I also have experience with Trump—to say in plain English what I believe Trump is about to do. I believe he will go straight for the crotch, this calumny Don who tells Anderson Cooper three times in 2016’s second presidential debate that he has never kissed or groped a woman without consent.

“It’s like he’s got four extra hands,” Jessica says. “He’s grabbing my breasts. He’s trying to kiss me. I’m trying to get his hands *off* me. And this struggle”—the very data on the Zoom screen seems to shiver as Jessica recalls the scene—“it’s when he starts putting his hand up my skirt that I get a jolt of strength and manage to wiggle out of the seat. I grab my purse and storm to the back of the plane.”

Let’s cut to the transcript:

E. JEAN: Now wait. Trump puts his hand on your leg and slides it up your skirt?

JESSICA: Exactly.

E. JEAN: Does he make it all the way up to your panties?

JESSICA: No, no.

E. JEAN: Because by this time you are starting to stand up?

JESSICA: Right. I am on the aisle, so I have an *out*.

E. JEAN: Does anyone offer to help you?

JESSICA: The guy across the aisle, his eyes are as big as saucers. I keep thinking, *Why don’t you say something?* [*Chuckling.*] That’s when I realize it is only me who can rescue me.

E. JEAN: Some women freeze in a situation like this. They freeze, or they appease. You certainly don’t freeze.

JESSICA: No. But I certainly don’t say anything.

E. JEAN: Did you laugh? [I’m picturing Jessica fighting the big orangutan in a small cage.]

JESSICA: I don't recall laughing, no. I take it seriously. This is a real, physical attack. I can recall men propositioning me and laughing, but not with someone as physical as Trump.

E. JEAN: Let's try to figure this out, Jessica. The question before us is: Why does Trump do this? He's gotta know he's not going to have intercourse with you right there on the plane, right? What does Trump think he's going to gain? Do your manifold charms cause him to lose control of himself?

JESSICA: I think he is bored. Nothing is happening, you know, so let's grab a little pussy.

And there you have it.

4

Although regretting that she had not “planted my fist right into the man-on-the-plane's nose—I think I really could've broken it,” Jessica moves on. Something happens a year or two later that brings back the plane and parks it forever in the hangar of her brain.

The event occurs after Jessica leaves the paper company and just before she aces every question in her Bache & Co. interview by answering as if she is a man, *viz*: “My Boy Scout leader's opinion means more to me than my mother's.” She goes on to pass the Series 7: General Securities Representative Qualification Exam and becomes a stockbroker with Bache, which is later bought by Prudential and becomes Prudential-Bache. These are the days when Jessica has a great little apartment in a brownstone on East 83rd, before she runs into fellow broker Buddy Leeds in the 86th Street subway station (reader, she marries him), and is helping out at a gala for the Humane Society of New York. The event is at Saks Fifth Avenue, and she is wearing a Mary McFadden dress in taxi-cab yellow. “I mean,” Jessica says, “I am meeting Geoffrey Beene, I am meeting Bill Blass, and Mary McFadden comes up and says, ‘That's my dress!’ It is a fabulous, *fabulous* evening.

“Then Trump and his wife, Ivana, come in. She is very pregnant. He looks at me when I hand him his table assignment. And I look at him and I think, *I remember you*. And he stands there and stares at me, and he says, ‘I remember you. You're the cunt from the airplane.’”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

E. Jean Carroll

E. Jean Carroll is a journalist and former advice columnist for *Elle* magazine.
