

Paul on the Plane  
By Joshua James

Paul seated on a plane. He speaks to the MAN seated next to him.

You okay? You look a little, you know. A little queasy. Afraid of flying? It's okay, perfectly normal, most folks are. We're thousands of feet in the air, who wouldn't be a little concerned, right?

(The plane hits some turbulence, rocking them both.)

Whoa, that was a rough one, wasn't it? You okay? Just turbulence, that's all. A lot of people are afraid of flying, aren't they? Seems pretty common. It's always struck me as funny, folks saying that they are afraid of flying because when you think about it, it's not the flying part of the process that's frightening, it's the possibility that at some point in the process, maybe even mid-flight, the possibility that you might find yourself on a plane that is suddenly NOT flying, only falling. That's the scary part, the falling is the scary part.

I'm not, myself. Afraid of flying, I mean. I think the reason I'm not afraid of flying is because the first I ever flew in a plane was when I was going through my suicidal phase, so there wasn't really anything to be scared of. The only thing I was scared of at the time was killing myself, so getting on a plane was something of a relief, because if the plane blew up, BING BANG BOOM, suddenly I no longer have to worry about either suicide or life, it's out of my hands. Taken care of. Great time to start flying, when you're suicidal. It was the most relaxed I'd been in years. I've grown past my suicidal tendencies, but luckily I'm still not afraid to fly.

(More turbulence.)

Kind of a bouncy flight today, isn't it? I kind of like flying, myself. Actually, I really like it. I find that flying is a good time to contemplate death. I mean, why not, right? Contemplating death is a good thing. It could happen at any time, so why not think seriously about it? What else is there to do on a plane? The movies always suck, there is never anything to do once you've plowed through your magazines and don't get me started on the food they serve here. It's poison. You ever think about death? I do. I think about it a lot. I don't think enough people think about it, I mean really think about it. Consider it, for a moment. That is the one true link we all share with each other, the one thing you know for certain will happen is that you and I, someday we will die. We will close our eyes and existence as we know it will cease. Or maybe we WON'T close our eyes, maybe we pop off with our eyes open, that happens, it happens, right? Here's a thought, this is a great thought, see that exit door over there? If you were to open that door and jump out with no parachute, right now, three thousand feet over Wyoming, that means you'd have a good two or three minutes to think about things before you landed. Now then. What do you think would be going through your mind before you hit the ground?

(More turbulence.)

That reminds me of a joke my Grandpa would always ask us kids, he'd go, "What's the last thing that goes through a mosquito's mind right when it hits your car windshield?" "What Grandpa?" we'd ask, and he'd say "His Ass!" And he would slap his knee and laugh and laugh. Grandpa's dead now, drank a little too much Wild Turkey one night while driving and hit a telephone pole. Wasn't wearing his seatbelt, went right through his windshield. I really think that he'd find that terribly amusing.

Now seriously, what do you think is going to happen once you die? Any idea? Me neither. Lots of people, a LOT of fucking people have theories, oh there are a lot of theories on what happens after death, but no one really knows for sure, do they? They say they do, people SAY they know for sure, but nobody does and nobody will until they hit that big exit door, right? Nobody really fucking knows. That's something to think about. That's what I think about. That's what kept me from committing suicide. Thinking hard about death kept me alive. Grandpa would have appreciated that irony, I think.

Long flight ahead. Why don't you give it a shot? I have to go to the bathroom. Excuse me.