

My First Post-9/11 Dream: In Which I Discover Life After Death

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It's 1:45 am or 10:45 pm depending on your philosophy about changing your watch when you fly. My plane is scheduled to land in San Francisco soon, but I'm completely disoriented because I've just had my first post-9/11 dream.

I was on a small plane like the one I flew in earlier today, and we were about to land in what seemed to be New York or Washington. As we approached, instead of going to a runway, the plane went into a dive. Everyone began saying "Oh, no!" hoping it would level out, but it didn't. We kept going straight down until I could see the city streets rising up to meet us.

I couldn't believe I was about to die, but I knew I was. It was so sudden and so inevitable that I went right from disbelief to acceptance. I held hands with the woman in the seat next to me. I tried to say the Lord's Prayer, but there wasn't time. I thought about Jim and Mom. There didn't even seem to be time to think of anything else.

As we neared the ground I could see that a demonstration for Israel was going on in the street. I saw a big Israeli flag held out flat, and our plane was aimed directly at it. Then we hit; there was a moment of blackness, and it was over.

I was out on the street wandering through the crowd where other people from the plane and the people on the ground were all mingled together. There was a lot of chaos. I had some blood on me, but I wasn't in pain or anything. I knew I was dead, but I was still carrying my book manuscript in its purple plastic folder. It had some blood on it.

I thought about my life being over. My book never finished. I thought I didn't accomplish very much. I didn't publish much of my work, and I didn't do much to help other people. I was sad and also very worried about Mom. How upset she'd be when she heard the news. I was afraid she'd have a stroke.

In a way it was nice to "lay down my burdens." I set my book down on the ground and imagined someone would find it, and it would become an artifact of the event that would make it worthy of attention. I picked it up again. I don't know what I did with it after that.

I wandered along feeling lonely. I thought I might be greeted by Dad or Ed or some other dead people, but I wasn't. I only saw live people running around and the people from the plane. I ran into the woman who had been sitting in the seats behind me with her two little girls. The girls were crying. I said I was sorry that they had died. They were cute and wistful looking.

A man spoke to me, and I said I was lost and I didn't know what to do. Where was God? Wasn't anyone going to give any instructions? Any direction? I didn't know what was happening. What was supposed to happen.

He said Santa Claus would be talking to me soon, indicating a number of Salvation Army Santas on the street.

I said: "Don't be ridiculous. Santa Claus isn't God. And anyway those aren't real Santas." He shrugged. That was all he had to offer.

The dream ended then: with sorrow for those who would miss me and regret that I didn't do more with my life.

Now I'm awake and the real plane is about to land. I don't see any trouble ahead. Only the sparkling lights of the city and the dark expanse of the Bay as we glide lower and lower.

There's a bit of jostling as we touch down, but then we're on the ground. Safe.

Thank you, Santa Claus. I am glad to have another chance at life.

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