

## A FLIGHT

I didn't manage to get any sleep last night. At 5 I decided I wasn't going to get to sleep before 6, when I had to get up. So I got up. Pizza for breakfast.

I make it to the airport with plenty of time. After being given the fifth dimension by the security guard at the check in desk, I make my way to the departure lounge. The American kid opposite me sits listening to his disc-man and playing his game-boy, while I jump up and down looking out the window and shouting, "Plane! Plane! Plane!"

Plane. Adagio for Strings plays.

"The people look like aunts! My father always...Hmm?...What?...No...No...Yeah...Tuesday...Oh right. [Coughs.] The people look like ants!...Hmm?...Yeah I know we haven't taken off yet...Yeah...No, I meant the people in the plane. The passengers and the flight attendants and that old man with the six legs and the antennae, and the moustache. And the pilot is like the queen ant, that flies a plane.

There are four thirty something lads sitting in the row in front. As one of them is sitting down he smacks his head on the over head compartment. From the comments and laughter throughout the wait till the take off I think he has seriously injured his brain. And the brains of his companions. He laughs like someone who deep down knows that they haven't said anything funny but also deeper down knows that they never will so they'd better just pretend.

Just as our wheels are leaving the ground some part of the plane makes a noise exactly like a car having difficulty starting on a cold winter morning.

Coffee. Coffee. Tea. Tea. Aer Lingus can't fathom someone wanting to drink something else apart from these. I ask for some water. What the hell is sparkling water? What is that? Who? Why? I haven't slept for 22 ½ hours.

I'm getting in at 5 to 1 and flying out at 1:15. It could be tight. I may not get off the plane till 5 past and I haven't a clue where I'm going. Even slimmer are the chances of my bag making it to the right plane. It doesn't even speak Dutch. Or have a brain. But I suppose nor do I. Dutch. It's...

We start to fly downwards, this doesn't agree with the engines so we fly horizontal again for a while. The flight attendant smiles at me as she goes past. There's that zany still water guy.

As we are landing the plane wobbles from side to side much as it would if the pilot, co-pilot and navigator were all dead and we were all plummeting to our deaths...well except for the pilot, co-pilot and navigator of course 'cause they'd already be dead. The flight attendant hurries past. Queezy. Pizza for breakfast.

I almost died. I almost died. Since I only had ten minutes of a stopover in Amsterdam Airport I didn't think I was going to see much of Holland. But it just so happens that the airport runs the entire length of the country and I ran the entire length of the airport twice. ran. twice.

When I eventually got off the plane and eventually found the screen that told me where a flight to New York was leaving from it said G8. a. I don't see how it could be possible that that wasn't at the very opposite end of this gigantic airport from where I had started. I got to G8 at the time the plane was supposed to leave. There was nothing. Desolation. One guy watching Sky News. I ran back asking everyone that I saw did they know where my flight was leaving from, in 5 minutes I only saw 3 people. One of them said E20. So I ran to E20. And found that there was actually another very opposite end to the building. I skipped the metal detector queue and ran some more. They were still boarding and I got on the plane. I almost died. I haven't slept in 24 ½ hours.

I ask for some water.

It's a Boeing 747. It really is big, this is what planes look like in movies. Every walk of life is on board. A few rows back is a giant. A giant. One of the giant people. A giant.

I put on Graceland and feel amongst my people. "It's okay man, I'm listening to Graceland, everything's cool." When I try to go the toilet I stand dumbfounded outside it for a while as there are baby changing signs. "Nobody in dere." says the giant. "Graceland!" and hide in the toilet.

Back at my seat...corridor with...knives and daggers...Mary Magdalen singing "I Don't Know How to Love Him"...immigration forms...Dutch film about a cat woman...this is crap.

At the baggage claim I try to give everyone a pep talk, "Come on, we can get through this, let's all pull together, we can do it, don't give up." It doesn't work and we suffer a bitter 3 - nil defeat at the hands of the baggage handlers. Where's the giant when I need him?

I get the subway into Manhattan. It's 6 o'clock, pitch black and petrifying.

After a slice of pizza I find myself at a party. I was down the back of one of the sofas. I'm am barely conscious. Peoples talk to me but I'm not in hearing. When I eventually get to sleep I've been up for 40 hours.

