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# Welcome aboard

Harrison Minnikin

Something is beeping.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome aboard and thank you for flying with us.*

Aeroplanes should not beep.

*In just a moment, we will be presenting to you a very short safety demonstration.*

A person is screaming.

*Your seat belt should now be fastened. Insert the metal fitting in to the buckle, and pull tight.*

Correction. Lots of people are screaming.

*Please discontinue the use of all electronic devices at this time.*

Why do I smell smoke?

*If there is a loss of electrical power, emergency lighting will illuminate to guide you to an exit.*

There must be a loss of electrical power.

*As a reminder, this is a non-smoking airline.*

Why is there a mask dangling in front of me?

*If we were to lose cabin pressure, an oxygen mask will drop from above.*

Oh, that's right.

*Place it over your nose and mouth, and secure with the elastic band.*

I can't move my arms.

*For your safety we ask that you review the safety information card located in your seat pocket.*

Houston we have a problem.

*Thank you for your attention. Please sit back, relax and enjoy  
your flight.*



Ryan felt both warm and cold. Cold, because he was sitting in the wreckage of a crashed airplane in a snowy mountain range in some indeterminate location. Warm, because he was covered in blood. He tried to put a hand to his neck and he didn't get as much as a finger to twitch.

*oh my god why is there so much blood on me am I hurt why does my throat  
burn?*

His thoughts raced through his mind, leaving behind a sense of dread with each passing.

*why can't I move I just want to stand up please*

He could taste the metallic flavour of his blood.

*no not just blood*

He could taste the metallic flavour of a steel bar protruding through his neck. It pierced both his seat and his spinal cord, ejected out of the side of his neck and left him motionless.

*how am I still alive*

He tried to call for help but just gurgled instead.

*for your safety we ask that you review the safety information card located  
in your seat pocket*

Surprisingly, he didn't feel any pain, other than a coarseness in his throat. Instead he felt fear, like an inky darkness that seeped throughout his body, tainting him with terror as it spread. He couldn't understand how he was still alive. He wished he wasn't. Out of the corner of his eye he could see the chatty blonde lady in seat 21A slumped over.

*what was her name again?*

*Eileen*

Eileen still had her oxygen mask on. She would have looked like a perfectly healthy human being if not for the gash across her forehead and her noticeable lack of breathing. Ryan's eyes flicked back to the cracked TV screen in front of him. He couldn't remember what he'd been watching before the plane lost power. Had he been watching anything? He distinctly remembered sleeping at some point during the flight.

*sleep yes sleeping is my favourite thing to do right now*

Ryan couldn't tell whether he was tired or dying. Although he wasn't sure whether he'd be alive by the end of the night he went against his better judgment and closed his eyes, tuning out the faint groan of the wreckage.



*good morning sunshine the earth says hello*

Ryan blinked, clarifying his mind of all blurry remnants of unconsciousness. It was now dark. The freezing sensation in his ears and the pain in his neck amalgamated to form a tortuous harmony. He couldn't even see Eileen.

*come on Eileen*

All that was visible was a white teddy bear that lay discarded on the ground in the aisle next to him. It had a red bow tie and a cheery smile. It mocked him.

*I hope the kid's okay*

He tried to lean back and look at the night sky. The bar kept him in place. Only the uncomfortable vinyl of the chair in front of him was a reprise from his thoughts. The child was likely not 'okay' at all and he knew that. He tried not to dwell on it.

*come on Eileen toora loora toora loo rye aye*

Somewhere in the darkness a voice called out.

'Is anyone else alive?'

*hello friend I am here*

Ryan still couldn't form a decipherable exclamation and, instead of screaming, a bubble of dark blood burst against his collarbone.

His jaw clicked and the sound resonated in his head. Just the noise alone made him cringe.

*these people round here wear beaten down eyes*

A tattered silhouette of a person started to hobble towards Ryan. As it moved closer its face came into view. It bore the textbook expression of capitulation.

*sunk in smoke dried faces they're resigned to what their fate is*

The person came across the teddy bear next to Eileen and let out a single sob.

*but not us no not us we are far too young and clever*

Hopelessness flooded Ryan. He was screaming on the inside, yet couldn't let out a single noise. The frustration evoked some tears in the corner of his eyes. Only as the first tear rolled down his bloody cheek did he think to use it as a means of communication. Ryan blinked furiously and tried to muster up more tears. His cheeks glistened red. Wind whistled through his nose. Still the individual did not notice him.

*remember toora loora toora loo rye aye*

His inadequate angel stumbled away, holding the teddy bear, taking away Ryan's last symbol of happiness, however scornful. With a long breath Ryan released the last of his resignation and gave in. His vision was going black at the edges. His body was shutting down. He could feel everything slowing, his organs trudging on as an insomniac shuffles through the day. The tears that ran down his cheeks itched now. He closed his eyes, and slept.

*Eileen I'll hum this tune forever*



**Harrison Minnikin** wrote this in 2014 when he was in Year 12 at Brisbane Grammar School in Queensland