

Lanna, a guest at a wedding, stands next to a man watching the ceremony.

LANNA

You know, it's always right about now that it hits me, right at this point here, when I see the bride coming down the aisle, all dressed in white satin and silk, with the wedding march playing and all the Aunts and Grandmothers crying, it's always RIGHT at this moment that it's all I can do NOT to fall to the ground screaming in maniacal laughter. From this point on up until the "I do's" it takes all the strength I have not to break into hysterics. Look at this, my lip is bleeding, it's bleeding because I have to bite it just to keep quiet.

Wait, wait. Listen to that preacher. "We are gathered here together to unite these two souls in holy matrimony." What a pompous ASS. You know, I think that's why they do this whole thing up like this, with the dress and the tuxes, the pomp and the ceremony, they dress it up to disguise what a big JOKE the whole thing is. Seriously. The whole idea is one big fat hairy lie. I'm sorry, I mean, how can you promise in front of God and the rest of the world to love, honor and obey one person for the rest of your life? How do you know how you're going to feel twenty years from now? You could be a completely different person by then. People grow and change. How can you be absolutely positive you will still love the same guy for the next forty years once he gets fat, old and lazy and only cares about football? What are you gonna do when you run out of things to talk about? What are you gonna do when you've tried every sexual position there is and there are no surprises anymore? Nothing. All that's left is to crank out a few kids, wipe their noses and pick up after them. Don't get me started on childbirth, don't get me started. Do you know how much your vagina dilates when you give birth? Ten centimeters. TEN centimeters. Not me, buster, uh-uh NO WAY. Once you stretch something like that it loses its elasticity. I'm not doing that to my vagina. I like my vagina just as it is, thank you very much.

Do you know how many of these weddings I've been to in the last year or so? Nine. NINE weddings. It's like every woman I went to school with hit thirty and started panicking. Oh My God, I'm over thirty and I'm not married I gotta do something, I gotta get a man I gotta get a man NOW! Take the bride and groom, for example. You know how long they've known each other? Six months. Less than that, five and half months. That's it. She says it was love right away. Bullshit. They met over the internet, in a CHAT room. She was just so relieved to find somebody she could live with she couldn't wait. She just felt old and desperate, that's what it is. Trust me. I know. She was frantic. Would you listen to that windbag preacher go on and on? Come on, cut to the I do's, kiss the bride and let's all go get drunk. I can't stand here in these heels all night. Is he getting paid by the word, or what? Cut to the chase, Pops. Still, I got to admit, there is something about this whole thing that is a turn-on. The church, the dresses, the suits. Gets

my juices flowing. Makes me feel, you know, sexy. You seeing anyone, involved with anybody right now? Wait, don't answer that. Never mind. Nothing personal, I keep grabbing one-night stands at every one of these deals and it always ends horribly. He gets head, I get hung-over. Plus, no offense, but you guys NEVER look as good the next day as you do today. Never. It's a simple wedding mirage. Sorry, I can't have sex, besides, this is my week to bleed anyway. You are SO lucky not to be a woman, let me tell you.

Look at that groom, look at him up there in his tuxedo, all shaved and shining. Looking at him you'd never guess that he's unemployed, would you? I know what it said on the announcement, he was identified as a "graphic artist" but trust me, he's unemployed. He's no graphic artist, he does tattoos in his garage for cash and that's it. I think he had a cartoon published in Penthouse once, but that was years ago. Trust me, he's unemployed. And her in her WHITE dress. White dress? Please. Biggest slut in junior high, believe me. She's a close personal friend but you have to call a spade a spade and she was a class A slut. First one of us to kiss a boy, touch a penis, give a blow-job, you can do the rest of the math.

Not that I think that's a bad thing, oh no, I admired her in school, she was considered a pioneer. Why do you think we are friends? But a white dress, come on! Oh it hurts, I'm cramping up, trying not to break into laughter. White. What a joke. Who should wear white, anyway? What kind of idiot stays a virgin until marriage? You'd have to be three kinds of a moron to save yourself until then, I mean, my God, what if you waited and then he sucked in bed, and I don't mean sucked in a good way? What would you do then, you're stuck? You're stuck and you're fucked, and not in a good way. Then again, if you're a virgin when you get hitched, how would you know if you're having bad sex or good sex? I guess you wouldn't know. What a horrible thought. Such bullshit. Only a real mental defective wouldn't have sex before marriage. You buy a car, you take it for a test drive, right? The whole idea of wearing white and staying pure is simply an insult to women, that's what I think. Men want you to stay simple, pure and stupid. That's what I think. It's a marketing plan, it's advertising, to hook you in to the whole idea of everlasting love and marriage, that's what the white dress is all about. It's a billboard. I get married, I'm not wearing white, I tell you that much. IF I get married, and that's one big fucking IF.

(She starts to laugh.)

Me. Married. What a joke. Oh my God. I don't see that happening for me. I just don't think anything in the whole institution works. At all. I remember something my mother once said, she said getting married was great, it was the living together afterward that was hell. I think the idea, the idea of true and everlasting love is a great ideal, but that's all that it is, an

ideal. It's not connected to our live reality here. It's not REALITY. I've never seen it with my own eyes, and the people I've met who said they had it, were living it in their own relationships, I've never believed them. Relationships have always looked to me to be a combination of mutual delusions and needs. That's not love. I'm not entirely sure love actually exists. Not really. But the idea, the idea of true and everlasting love is a great idea. I would like to, I want to, see it with my own eyes.

I'd like to believe it might exist.
I'd like to believe in the billboard.
I'd like to believe in the white dress.
I would.

Pauline on the Plane

By Joshua James

Pauline is seated on a plane. She speaks to the MAN who is seated next to her on the plane.

I'm scared to death of flying. I was scared of it before, you know, before THAT THING, the THING that happened as it happened, I was scared enough before then, as if flying isn't frightening enough as it is, flying a machine thousands of feet in the air with a million working parts on it and thus the potential for a million things to go wrong, it's pretty fucking frightening on ITS OWN, now add to that we have to worry that some demented fruitcake is going to whip out his toothbrush and commandeer the flight, crash it into his ex-girlfriend's house as a way of getting back at her, and the corporate powers-that-be will sit back and let him do it, write it off as an insurance loss and another reason to hike up the price of fares. I can see that happening, can't you see that happening? I can see that happening.

Not that it's much safer on the ground. Bullets flying everywhere, stores being robbed, cars crashing into each other, bricks falling from buildings, even bodie's falling from buildings. I heard about this guy, committed suicide because his wife was leaving, jumped from his office window, fourteen stories high, landed on a woman who was just walking by. Killed the woman, the guy survived. She died, he lived. You're not safe anywhere.

I'm scared to death even to walk the street anymore. When I'm walking around, it's like I know something horrible is gonna happen at any second. I see some messenger zipping along on his bike, coming my way, and I just get a picture in my head of him whipping out an axe or baseball bat, braining me with it and then peddling along his merry way, nobody stopping him or even noticing. It doesn't happen, he usually just bikes on by, but I'm sure that it could happen, and that's enough to scare me to death. I try not to walk around by myself if I can help it. Now when I have to go to the store, I call a friend. Not that THAT would do any good, I guess.

I knew this guy, got struck by lightning. Walking around talking to his boyfriend, minding his own business, bang, lightning strikes. Kills him. Wasn't even raining yet, started raining sometime after, but was even raining. No warning, just boom. His boyfriend didn't even realize what happened, kept walking for awhile, looked back and there he was, lying on the sidewalk, sizzling. Horrible. Somebody somewhere's got a sick sense of humor. You know what it is? I'm scared to death of death. That's what it is.

That's why I stopped smoking pot, I used to smoke pot once in awhile, I wasn't a druggie or anything, just on the weekend, here and there, it's really good for relaxing a person and I often need all the help I can get when it comes to relaxing. So I would do it, once in while, I would smoke some weed, and it's pretty good, you get high and just sort of let loose, float above your body for awhile and watch all the pretty flowers and colors. But once when I was stoned, I got, like this really bad vision, you know how when you smoke pot sometimes time slows and sometimes it speeds up, that ever happen to you? Well usually it slows for me which is why I like it, but the last time I got buzzed I went fast forward, like on a VCR I zipped forward in time, really fast, in my life, and I was brought to the end of my life, to my last moment of breath, to my death. I don't know exactly how many years I went forward because I was stoned and not really paying attention, but I do know that it was real, it was fucking real, with all the details, who I got married to, number of kids, house, the whole show. And I'm floating above my body, looking down at me years ahead, me on my deathbed, and that's when it hits me, I'm gonna die. I am definitely gonna die, someday. There was no escape, no negotiation, no way around it, someday I am gonna kick for good. And it FREAKED me out. I haven't smoked pot since then. I'm still freaked out. Doesn't it freak you out? I think I'm freaking out a little bit right fucking now. Excuse me.

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.

Wally in the Waiting Room

Wally sits in the waiting room of a Doctor's Office.

What the hell are you looking at? Would you like to know what you're looking at? I'll tell you what you're looking at. You're looking at a dying man. That is the unfortunate truth of my situation. I am dying. Don't look so surprised. Who did you expect to run into in a hospital waiting room? Of course, we are all dying, aren't we? Nobody lives forever. We're all on a collision course with death, it's as unavoidable as the clap was in Korea during the war. The real tragedy is when a person discovers just how close they are to the final checkout, when you're told that it's happening today or tomorrow, that's when it's shit-your-pants time. I don't know why you're here, I'm sure it's not good but even without knowing what exactly is wrong with you, I'm willing to bet hard cash money that I'm closer to dying than you are. Bet you right now, give you three to one odds, too. Not interested? Smart. I'd of taken your money even though I don't have the time to spend it. You know how far away I am from death?

(He holds his fingers up, about an inch apart.)

That far. Yessir. Shit my pants? You bet. Just found out, too. Last week. Shit the pants, and now I spend what little time I have left sitting in these fucking waiting rooms, waiting for a test, waiting for the doctor to look at the x-rays, waiting for the nurse to stick her head out the door and ask me to come in. You'd think they'd try to pick up the pace a little bit, seeing as that I'm on a limited budget of days left. Don't even know why I'm here, should just say fuck it and go to a bar. What's the difference if it's tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, right? But I guess nobody wants to go before they have to.

I'm not even old. I'm a fairly young man, really. Just beat my body all to shit, basically. Screwed the internal engines up beyond all repair. I guess it was the drinking, drugging, fucking and all the fried food, that's what did me in. Had fun, though, boy did I have some fun. I was a merchant marine, I've been everywhere in the world. Top to bottom. I've seen sights that'd frost your ass, trust me. I've had so many adventures, seen so many perfect

things, it's almost unbelievable. In my circle, I'm something of a legend for all the scrapes I've gotten in. I've brawled, I've chased and been chased, I've gotten the girl more than once and I've saved many a day with my buddies when they were in a jam. I can honestly say that I've lived a life full of excitement and adventure. Of course, sitting here waiting to die isn't nearly so exciting as it is nerve-wracking. Most of my friends are out at sea, won't even know I'm gone till after the funeral. My mother passed away while I was at sea. I never made it to her funeral. I should have gone.

Always thought about writing them down, my adventures, when I retired, write a book or something and maybe sell it to the movies. You could make a bunch of movies out of stuff I've done, get Bruce Willis, make a pile of money. And I'd be immortalized forever on film. Always thought about maybe doing that.

Reminds me of something, something I haven't thought of in a long time. I remember when I was a kid, long time ago, I was eight or nine, I went to the beach with my mother. Private beach, owned by some fella my Mother was dallying with, so I had the whole beach to myself while they had their lemonade in the shade. Hadn't really been to the beach before, my first time, and so I set myself to making the king of all sand-castles, I mean I created a beautiful monster, that sand-castle, it was elegant in design and detail, had a drawbridge and moat, five towers and a flag, it was a work of art. I spent the whole afternoon on that castle. Went looking for Mom so I could show off what I'd done. Ran everywhere, up and down that beach, looked around the fella's house, couldn't find her anywhere. Ran around looking for quite awhile, started to get scared. Finally She heard me yelling and came running, her and the guy, afraid I was drowning or something. Both looked a little flushed. I grabbed Mom's hand and dragged her down toward my sand-castle, pretty damn proud of what I'd done. Of course, being that young, I didn't yet know anything about tides. Tide had come in while I was looking for her and washed the whole castle away. I was pretty upset. Mom just ruffled my hair, said she was sure it was beautiful and I could build another one whenever I wanted. Then she went back to the fella, standing over in the shade. It always frosted me that I'd made something so beautiful and yet the only one that seen it was me. I did it and then it was gone. I remember that.

(Nurse gestures for him to come in.)

There she is. Guess it's my turn.

(He gets up and begins to exit, stops and looks at the Man.)

You should have seen my sand-castle.