

Miles to go While I Weep

Diana Friedman

Miles to go: 2375. My itinerary says I'm on a plane to San Francisco, but with everyone plugged into their buds and screens it looks more like a test flight to the moon. If I want, I can chat up the passenger in 24C without lifting my ass. I can order a drink from my seat via my fingertips. Or I can watch TV, a movie, the news, some crappy sports channel, all of it far better than what the guy next to me is watching.

Miles to go: 2342. I unbelt myself and make sure to kick my neighbor in the ankle as I search for a flight attendant. Is there anything that can be done? She shakes her head. Close your eyes? But the laptop screen is embedded in my line of sight: Very large and very naked women gushing buckets of liquid from their privates. Do women really spew that much or did they put water balloons up there the same way they used to attach fake packets of ketchup to explode like blood in the westerns?

Miles to go: 2185. Has it always taken this long to get to San Francisco? Dr Fisher has more than once suggested I avail myself of Ativan or Xanax, but if the plane goes down I'd like to be fully conscious of the terror, the death hormones filling the cabin like cows heading to the slaughter. I hear the smell is ferocious. How many of us get to smell our own death?

Then again, how many of us want to? I tap the screen. How long does it take to get a drink delivered via teleprompter on an airplane?

Miles to go: 2165. What is the square root of 2165? How many miles would it take me to figure it out without a calculator? Will that number have any relationship to distance traveled versus distance left? Of all the damn toys on this screen why didn't they give us a calculator?

Miles to go: 2021. My niece will be 23 in 2021. I wonder what she'll look like.

Miles to go: 2010: Remember how we weren't sure whether to call it two thousand and ten or twenty-ten? Glad we resolved that quickly. It would have sucked to spend the whole decade quibbling over it.

Attitude: 35,789 feet. The flight attendant dropped four bottles of wine on my lap. I insisted that I only ordered one. She insisted I ordered four. The screen insisted I was charged for all of them so I insisted she give me four cups. She insisted that she would take away two bottles if I got belligerent. I insisted that she can't take away something I paid for. She insisted I was wrong. I caved and now have one cup for four bottles of wine.

Miles to go: 1965: A great year. Yours truly arrived. Okay, maybe not so great.

Miles to go: 1645: Michael Cardozo became the first Jewish lawyer in Brazil. That must be where all the fun started.

Miles to go: 1598: The neighbor has turned off the laptop, but he's snoring so loudly it's vibrating my noise-cancelling headphones. If I stuff a napkin up his nostrils will they arrest me at SFO? They certainly can't throw me off the plane.

Wait! Can they?

Ground Speed: 486 miles. What does this mean? Aren't we in the air? Is this flight an illusion, like some 4D virtual reality chamber?

Miles to go: 1658. Supposedly Queen Elizabeth had the heart and stomach of a king, but three bottles of shitty airplane wine and my stomach is in the lavatory.

Miles to go: 1577: Maybe I should take that Xanax. But then I will arrive to California and NOT be able to sleep.

Miles to go: 1492. Duh. Just waiting for that one.

ETA: 11:15 local time. Who names a terrorist organization after a technical travel term? Not very threatening.

Miles to go: 785. I must have dozed. Finally.

Miles to go: 781: Is there some inverse relationship between time elapsed and time remaining to fright factor? And why is the plane so tiny on this map? It's like a tinker toy. When I fiddle with it on the screen it doesn't move. Obviously this isn't a REAL Google map. You'd need to know voodoo to make it crash like that.

Outside Temperature: -56 degrees. Did I really, really need that piece of information? The skin on this plane is thin enough.

Miles to go: 20, 12, 9. I just know that the loud noise I heard was the wheels going down, not the engine conking out.

I know it, I know it, I know it, I know it, I know it.

Miles to go: 8.

Miles to go: 12.

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Miles to go: 25, 42, 63, 87.

WTF?

SFO fogged in. We're diverted to LA.

Fuck! I knew I shouldn't have gone to flight school.

I punch porno to wake him up and hand him the wheel.

Five hundred miles to go.

I weep.

THE END