

CRASH POSITIONS

By Jonathan Dorf

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Crash Positions was first produced by
City Theater Company in Wilmington, Delaware.

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(An airplane over the Atlantic Ocean somewhere between New York and Bermuda. GEORGE and MEREDITH, thirty-somethings, sit in a pair of airplane seats - probably just chairs - facing the audience, their chins between their knees. Periodic airplane noise suggests turbulence.)

MEREDITH: I've never had a near-death experience before.

GEORGE: What?

MEREDITH: I said I've never had a near-death experience before.

GEORGE: **(not what HE wants to hear)** How is this near death?

MEREDITH: An airplane crash is near death.

GEORGE: Have we crashed?

MEREDITH: Not yet.

GEORGE: We are still very much in the air.

MEREDITH: We are, but -

GEORGE: The flight attendant said this is only a precaution.

MEREDITH: Is that why she duct-taped pillows all over her body?

GEORGE: I think she may be pregnant.

MEREDITH: She's drinking an awful lot of vodka for a pregnant woman.

GEORGE: Maybe it's a hysterical pregnancy. **(beat)** There's no reason to assume we're going to crash.

MEREDITH: We've lost an engine.

GEORGE: Lots of planes do perfectly well with one engine. Lots of planes *start* with only one engine.

MEREDITH: Smaller planes. Smaller planes start with only one engine.

GEORGE: Yes...

MEREDITH: One engine can lift a small plane. Not a big plane. You need more engines to lift a big plane. I consider this a big plane. Do you think the flight attendant would give me some of her vodka?

GEORGE: She'd probably charge you three dollars.

MEREDITH: I should have upgraded.

GEORGE: If we do crash, the people in first class'll get it first.

MEREDITH: Don't even joke about a thing like that.

GEORGE: I only - you're the one who keeps saying we're going to crash.

MEREDITH: I didn't say we were going to crash. I mentioned the words "airplane crash." That isn't the same.

GEORGE: **(beat)** I had a near-death experience once.

MEREDITH: Is that supposed to make me feel better?

Crash Positions – Page 4

GEORGE: You started talking about near death experiences.

MEREDITH: I used the words. I used the words "near death."

GEORGE: Right next to the words "airplane crash."

MEREDITH: I was making conversation. What was I supposed to say?

Nice clouds - why are we dropping through them so quickly? Or good day for a water landing? I was trying to get my mind off the details.

(beat) I can't take this anymore. **(sits up)**

GEORGE: Get down!

MEREDITH: I'm getting nauseous!

GEORGE: They said to stay down.

MEREDITH: They're not in crash position.

GEORGE: That's because they're attending to the passengers.

MEREDITH: **(watches the imaginary flight attendants)** I don't think so.

GEORGE: **(peeks at the attendants)** That is really... interesting.

MEREDITH: Isn't that illegal?

GEORGE: I don't know what the rules are about, uh...

MEREDITH: **(to the attendants)** Hey, there're children sitting by the bulkhead! **(to a child)** Sweetheart, close your eyes. **(to the attendant)** At least close the curtain! **(the turbulence and shaking noises surge)** Whoa! **(resumes crash position)** Was your near-death experience anything like this?

GEORGE: It wasn't on a plane. It was on the subway.

MEREDITH: In New York?

GEORGE: The Bronx. I'm from Manhattan, but I fell asleep on the train.

Next thing I know I'm in the Bronx, and some guy with a knife is charging at me.

MEREDITH: Did your whole life flash before your eyes?

GEORGE: I was too busy fixating on the knife to hallucinate.

MEREDITH: But you're alive now. Did you disarm him, or do you have a horrible scar somewhere, but you lived through some miracle?

GEORGE: Guy next to me shot him.

MEREDITH: I live on Long Island, but I consider myself from Manhattan.

I grew up in Manhattan. I'm not sure I've ever been in the Bronx.

GEORGE: I don't recommend it. **(beat)** I'm glad I'm here.

MEREDITH: Are you crazy? You want to be on an airplane that's going to crash?

GEORGE: I mean here - in this seat. You see that man over there?

(MEREDITH looks up from her crash position.)

GEORGE: Don't look up! He'll know you're staring.

MEREDITH: If I look up?

Crash Positions – Page 5

GEORGE: In this position, looking up at all is tantamount to pointing at somebody with both hands. **(beat; MEREDITH returns to her crash position)** I switched with him to get this seat.

MEREDITH: **(puzzles this out)** You switched...

GEORGE: I paid him so I could have this seat.

MEREDITH: **(beat)** Are you stalking me?

GEORGE: Yes. This is all a plot to stalk you. **(beat)** I saw you when we boarded. You looked like the kind of person who gets... agitated. I thought maybe I could help you.

MEREDITH: I went through so much therapy to be able to fly JFK to Bermuda and back. I go through so much therapy for everything. How much did you pay for the seat?

GEORGE: I'd rather not say.

MEREDITH: You'd rather not say you paid a lot, or you'd rather not say the guy didn't want to be in the emergency exit row anyway, and you just gave him a couple bucks so he could save face.

GEORGE: How'd you end up in the emergency exit row?

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