

THE TRUTH ABOUT FLYING

by David A. Zimmerman

I dream of flying, and it's the happiest dream I know. It's one of the few dreams I remember, actually, which is funny, since there's nothing much to the dream besides the flying.

Flying for me is like swimming—a matter of willing the body to push against a countercurrent. My flying is not so much an event, like Thor's spinning his hammer till it propels him through the air or Iron Man's activating his boot-jets, as it is a change of status: Once I was landlocked, but now I am airborne.

Flying in my dreams is silent, peaceful—not the ear-splitting adrenaline rush of the comics. I suspect that something in my dream compels me to be in the air, but once I'm there I'm in no hurry. I enjoy the sensation of being untethered more so than the opportunity to get where I need to be by any means necessary. I get a sense from this dream of just what control gravity has over me.

Ah, gravity, my archnemesis. Let me be clear that I don't wish to stop gravity; rather I wish I could control it. Gravity keeps everything around me literally grounded; it brings predictability to falling (if I drop my pencil, I know to tilt my head down rather than back—unless, of course, I'm suspended from the ceiling); I even count on gravity for, among other things, drip-brewing coffee and watering plants.

Having said all that, there's a case to be made for being outside of gravity's control. If gravity couldn't restrict my movement, I could hover wherever I felt like being or quickly remove myself from any uncomfort-

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able situation to where no one could follow—and no one could do anything about it. I would not have to suffer the claustrophobia of too many people confined to one “two-dimensional” setting. I could be literally above the fray.

I’ve always dreamed of flying, I suppose. When I was a kid, I had a recurring apocalyptic fantasy in which I grew wings after being exposed to nuclear radiation. I flew around rescuing all the pretty girls in my class. When I was in college, all the characters I created in various role-playing games could fly. Interestingly enough, however, my favorite superheroes not only cannot fly but have few exceptional abilities whatsoever. Though I dream of ascending to the heights, I am inspired by people much more down-to-earth.

Maybe I should be concerned by that. Why am I so motivated to fly when the characters who have struck me as the most heroic do it all from the ground? In fact, my dreams of flying rarely involve acts of heroism. Heroes charge into battle, but I fly simply to escape.

Escape is one way of looking at my relation to the world, I guess. Some end-times scenarios amount to pretty much just that—people flying off to heaven while everyone else experiences seven years of very bad luck. But what all my heroes would do—and what Jesus has done, for that matter—is to face such challenges head-on and use any resources available to them to deliver people from evil. If those resources include the power of flight, so be it, but we shouldn’t underestimate what a person can do standing on the earth. The sky’s the limit, you could say . . .

David A. Zimmerman maintains a weekly online column, Strangely Dim, where this article was originally published. Read more such articles at <<http://www.ivpress.com/campus/sd>>.