

Richard Lawson

the stage is my world  
and the world is my stage

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I was on my way to a drug education and training meeting with the Cleveland Cavaliers. The departure time and gate for my flight had already been changed three times. I was sitting there, hardly able to hear myself think, because of this fat little six-year-old no-neck monster sitting next to me having a full on tantrum...screaming at the top of her expansive lungs while her walking waterbed of a mother sat next to her, flipping pages of a *People* magazine as if she was going to show her disgusting child that she was not going to give in to this form of emotional tyranny. The rest of us wanted to take this little brat and choke the living shit out of her with her own Pippi longstocking ponytails, which was an impossibility anyway, because the little monster had no neck to choke. God forbid... If this bad seed winds up next to me on the plane I'll slit my wrists and gag her to death with the blood from my veins. While I was sitting there developing T.M.J... you know, Temporal Mandibular Joint... translated it means "tight muthafucking jaws"... the ticket agent, whose name was Michael Doughty, walked up to me and said...

Michael Doherty

Hey man, my wife really loves your work. She watches you everyday on *All My Children* and she saw you on *Dynasty* too. Would you mind giving her your John Hancock.?

Me

(gratefully)

Absolutely not, I would love too.

Hey, do I look like Boo Boo the shit head? I knew that the nicer I was to him, perhaps the nicer he would be to me. I damn near wrote his wife a love letter and included in there how nice he was... anything to make sure that I was not stuck sitting next the devil's daughter. It worked like a charm. Before long, Michael came over to me and said...

Michael Doherty  
Hey brother, how would you like to  
move up front if we have an open seat?

Me  
(beyond grateful, almost kissing his ass)  
Ah man, I'd really appreciate that...  
Thank you so much, but just in case  
I don't get that seat, can you do me  
a big favor?...

Michael Doherty  
I'm already ahead of you, bro. She  
done already got on my one last nerve.

The airport was wall to wall with people. There was an angry storm outside. The snow was blowing sideways. I remember thinking, 'this trip is not that important'. The vibe was just weird.

Finally it was time to board. Mr. Doughty told me that he was sorry that first class was full but if anything changed, he would take care of me. He also said that I would be sitting in seat 6A and that he blocked out 6B so I didn't have to worry about the demon child. I got in line and started walking down the ramp. As I got close to the door of the plane, the co-pilot came in the ramp door from the outside. He was wet, with snow on his cap. I knew that he had just made the walk around the plane... checking to see if everything was alright. It's S.O.P. ...Standard Operating Procedure. There was something about his energy or what he was carrying or withholding that gave me a cold chill. It was like my spirit picked up a truth or a vibe that the universe was trying to warn everyone about. I got to the door of the plane and I stopped. I didn't want to cross that threshold. It was a long hesitant moment. My head was spinning. I was totally conflicted... Completely frozen.

Flight attendant  
May I help you find your seat, sir?

Shocked out of my momentary coma, I stepped into the plane. I made my way to seat 6A which was on the left side of the plane facing forward.

There was only one row of first class seats so it didn't hold much promise for me moving up. They were about to close the door of the plane, when luck stepped in and Mr. Doughty came on and motioned for me to come forward. I smiled and happily got my stuff. He moved me up to 1F, which was on the right side of the plane. It was a window seat. Moving to first class made me feel a little better. Isn't it strange how creature comforts can deafen the truth? So now I'm in a comfortable seat, looking out the window at a snow storm blowing sideways, trying to rationalize why I need to go to Cleveland.

Me

If I'm not at this meeting tomorrow,  
what am I going to say to the league  
office. "I was scared to fly because the  
weather was bad."

My Inner Voice

**get off this plane... now.**

I sat there with an equally violent storm raging inside of me... my inner voice being compelled to do what it inherently knew was right, and my public self being shamed by desperately not wanting to be wrong. I looked out the window and I saw a de-icing truck come along the side. This gave me a sense of relief. Thank god. You can hear the swish of the de-icing fluid up and down the side of the plane. It reminded me of when I was a kid and I would ride through the car wash and hear the squirting water against the window. The de-icing truck moved along the plane from front to back and did the whole right side of the plane.

Me

See Richard, there's nothing to worry  
about the plane is being de-iced and  
everything is ok.

My inner voice remained firm about what I had to do.

I was waiting for the swish of the de-icing truck on the left side of the plane but I never heard it. The alarms started to go off in my head again. We sat there for approximately half an hour before the pilot spoke on the loudspeaker...

### The Captain

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you noticed, we haven't moved and the de-icing truck hasn't finished washing the plane. We have a little problem, the de-icing truck stalled at the rear of the plane, and they can't move it...and with the truck behind us, we can't move either... so we're stuck here at the mercy of the mechanic's until they find out what the problem is with the truck. Don't worry, everything is going to be alright. We'll give the plane a good washing before we take off. Thank you for your patience and I will keep you updated.

He had an easy confident charm about him that in most cases could have instilled some form of comfort. But I had a greater knowledge that I was wrestling with. About ten minutes later I saw the de-icing truck outside my window again. That same guy was standing there, only this time he wasn't washing the plane.

### The De-icer Man

(waving to the tow truck driver)  
Move this plane back!

I screamed inside myself

### My Inner Voice

**Noooo...wash this plane again.**  
Richard, go knock on the pilots door  
and tell him that the plane is not  
thoroughly de-iced.

I stood up to move to the door. The public me, the shamed me, the good boy in me, the middle class me said...

### Me

What the fuck are you doing?! Don't make a fool of yourself. Sit your ass down!

So I sat down...hating myself.

#### The Captain

Ladies and Gentleman, thank you for your patience. We're now finally under way. Because of the delay, we lost our place in line. We have about eight planes in front of us so it'll be about ten minutes before take-off.

#### My Inner Voice

Ten minutes my ass. Eight planes is going to take at least a half hour. That means that the right side of the plane wouldn't have been washed for about at least an hour. My god!! My god!! Am I on an airplane to hell? 'Look Richard, all you have to do is ask to get off this plane and they will have to turn around and take you back. They have to.'

I continued to sit...frozen in my own battle. Caught between that part of me that has seen things and known things my whole life. The kinds of things that I couldn't see, hear, smell, touch or taste. The unalloyed part of me, the most organic part of me, the unadulterated part of me, the authentic part of me. The things that came through me because I was the conduit for some universal truth. The things that always turned out to be accurate, regardless of how convincing the evidence was to the contrary. All of that was in direct conflict with that part of me that failed me consistently. The part of me that was weak, the part of me that couldn't say yes to the things that I should and no to the things I shouldn't. The part of me that was perverse and self-destructive. The part of me that would sabotage progress or success. The negative part of me. The part of me that is my own worst enemy. That fucking part of me that gets caught up in the status quo...the supposed to, can't do's, shouldn't do's, don't make mistakes, got to be perfect, don't rock the boat, I got to please this one, don't hurt that one, you don't want to come off this way, you don't want them to think that way, you got to be strong, don't be weak. Time and time again my decisions and choices would be influenced by how they would be perceived. I didn't want to be the bad guy. I wanted to be liked. I didn't want people to think that I'm a faggot.

My Inner Voice

**Oh, shut up! Just shut up and just stand up. This may be your last chance in your life to stand up for what you believe...take responsibility and speak your mind ... because it is true.**

The Captain

Ladies and Gentlemen, again, I thank for your patience and for flying U.S. Air. Have a comfortable trip.

I looked out the window as he turned on the landing lights. The snow was still blowing sideways.

My Inner Voice

**Stand up mutherfucker!!!!!! They can't take off if you just stand up!!!!!!**

The plane started taxiing down the runway.