

The Call  
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Ring.....Ring...The telephone ringing at fifteen to five in the afternoon was the last thing John Allen needed that day. As the youngest real estate appraiser in Greenville, Mississippi, he felt the only way to pull ahead of the business crowd was to "wow" his clients by taking on tons of work and delivering his product in record time. Three appraisal reports were completed before lunch time and if the damn phone would stop ringing, then he could finish his sixth for that day.

Ring. "Goddamnit!" John yelled and slammed his pen onto his desk as he rose to challenge the chatter-box from Hell. A quick couple of steps pushed him through his home-office bedroom and he stood still in the small hallway to glance at the caller id box. "Unknown Number"...Shit! John thought, he couldn't take the chance of not answering, as he would probably miss some appraisal work.

He gritted his teeth so hard that he could feel glands flatten and expand into his cheeks. With a deep breath and a sigh, he pushed the talk button and walked quietly back to his desk..."Hello?"

"John?"

"Yes?" John could barely hear the voice of a man. He wasn't sure if he recognized it, but it did seem very familiar. The man tried again to make himself known, but the connection was very faint. "Hello?.....I can barely hear you..." John frowned and looked at his watch. He didn't have to get the sixth report finished by five, but it would be a personal best for one working day.

"John! Can you hear me now?" The man's voice was shaking and desperate.

"Scott?" John barely smiled at hearing his friend's voice.

"John listen to me man. I'm in real fucking trouble, man," Scott's voice was much clearer now. The static and unsteady volume of the sounds let John know that his friend was calling on a cellular phone.

"What is it, bud?.....Where the fuck are you?"

"I'm in a Goddamn airplane near Dallas..." The intensity in Scott's voice had not changed. John was quite sure that his buddy was in just the mood to pull the wool over his own friend's eyes for about the billionth time that month alone and he bit onto his lower lip in anticipation.

"Okay...So what's the fucking problem, pal? You run out of beer over there in Okieland?" John and Scott had never met face to face, but had long been friends on the Internet. Writing was their common thread at first, but the friendship grew after a mutual respect of opinions ensued. And there was the bonding thing that all men tend to do...Practical jokes and digs at who must have been the original cause of the downfall of the Old South topped the list. John was a "Mississippi Redneck" and Scott was just an "Okie" from Tulsa.

"Fuck no.....Listen, man--"

"Scott old buddy, I've got about five minutes left to finish one last report. Can I call you back later?" John was a kidder, but to best his personal record was foremost on his mind and he jumped to keep Scott at bay.

"Hell fucking no!...Would you shut the Hell up and listen to me, man?" The tone shocked John because Scott rarely talked with as much color as himself.

"Sure...Something really wrong?" John settled into the swivel chair behind his desk and looked at his computer monitor. Dual patterns of ever-changing polygons took on an ominous image to him. "Scott?....." The phone connection was in and out, varying between weak and strong.

There was a crackling noise and a slight pop, "I'm still here, but I don't know how long I'll be in an area with service..."

"What's going on...You really in a plane"

"Yeah...Flying back from Dallas..." Scott's words trailed off into a silence, but the connection had not been lost.

John frowned and slightly moved his head side to side in confusion, "Scott...Just tell me what the problem is, okay?"

"The pilot...Um...I think he's fucking dead, man!"

"Are you in a private plane?" John quickly asked, knowing the intensity of the situation. He had taken lessons five years before and quit just after he soloed twice. But he also knew that Scott didn't know shit about airplanes, much less how to fly one.

"Yeah..."

"Oh God..." John muttered as more of an out loud thought. His mind began to race and he lightly tapped his fingers on the computer keyboard. What should he do? What could he do? These were the first thoughts to pop into his mind. What would he do if he was in the plane? "Are you sure the guy's dead?"

"I'm pretty sure...I can't find a pulse and I don't think he's breathing..."

"Auto-pilot...Does the plane have an auto-pilot?"

"I don't fucking know!" Scott yelled into the phone, it was obvious that he was scared to death. But John knew that his friend was level-headed in a crisis.

"Scott, tell me what the plane is doing...Is it flying straight and level and at a constant speed?"

"Uh...Yeah..."

"...Then it's probably on auto-pilot...Look for a gauge that looks like a speedometer..."

A few seconds passed, but it seemed like an eternity to John. Besides the static from the cell phone, the only other sound he could hear was the fan blowing inside the CPU of his desktop computer.

"Uh...I see it."

"What does it say?...Where's the needle pointing?"

"Um...120..."

The plane John had flown was a small, four-seater and the cruising speed was around 120 miles per hour. It seemed that an auto-pilot must be on the plane if it was still in pristine flight. This gave him another brief moment of relief and he wondered how many tid-bits of relief he was going to have that day. "Okay...What

kind of plane is it?...Uh...Is it a single-engine or a twin?"

"Um...It's only got one propeller..."

John let out a relieved breath at that. He had only flown small, single-engine planes and not for a long time, but he was a good flier and it was possible that he could do something. But John wasn't qualified to help and he knew it. "Scott...Do you see the radio?"

"Yeah..."

"Is it on?"

"Um...I think so...it says 128.8 on the screen..."

"Okay..." This made John feel more at ease. Scott could contact a nearby control tower and possibly get emergency assistance. But flying a plane is like learning a new language. There were terms and systems and all sorts of things that would take forever to get through to his friend under this circumstance. John closed his eyes briefly and resolved to get Scott back onto the ground in one piece. "Listen Scott...Take the mic and tap the button a few times. If it's working, you will hear little popping sounds. Don't touch the radio itself, though...You may fuck it up..."

"Um...I don't see one...There's not a fucking mic" Scott's voice trembled and John feared that his buddy would panic.

"Listen, Scott...Does the pilot have a head set on?"

"Yeah..."

"Then the mic is built into that...You're going to have to take it and put it on...On the yoke should be a little button where your right thumb would go...Okay??"

"What's a fucking yoke?"

"The steering wheel, Scott..."

"Okay...Yeah I see it...But if I put on the thing, then I can't talk on the phone..." And Scott was right, but

John knew it would be better to get him in touch with a control tower.

"That'll be okay...If you can, just cover one ear with it...You can use the phone, then."

"All right...I have it on...Now what?"

John thought as fast as he could because that was a damn good question. "Um...Push the button, but don't fucking move the steering wheel, go it?"

"Yeah..."

"Push the button and say 'Mayday...' uh 'flight emergency' and tell me what happens."

"Okay...." Scott trembled with fear as he carefully placed his cell phone into the space between his thighs and he reached for the flight yoke. His hand shook violently and he could feel beads of sweat forming above his brows. He had never liked to fly, but the only way he was going to get promoted at his job was to go to Dallas once a month to supervise the operations of his subordinate team. Scott's mind was in battle fighting time that raced and feelings that were still. It felt to him like he was being chased in a dream, where each step he took made him slower and slower in getting away from the bad guy.

The time that it would take Scott to make the call would be brief, but not brief enough for John. Instinctively, he reached down to the pocket of his shirt for a smoke, but there wasn't anything there. John had quit smoking for the final time just weeks before and he was doing fine. Stress was the only time that he felt helpless without his crutch and habit and this was certainly trying for him. John groaned and stared into the depths of his computer monitor where the evolving, colored lines of the screen saver continued to bounce at random in a hypnotic dance of light. John shook his head to clear his thoughts and he glanced to the telephone on his fax machine. Who could he call for help? His mind was fixed on helping Scott and it clouded his thinking.

"Mayday...mayday...I have a flight emergency..." Scott spoke into the head set microphone almost timidly and he waited for a response. Any response from any person in the world would have made him joyous

beyond all belief. "Mayday...Does anybody hear me?.....Um, I'm not a pilot..." The speaker of the head set was silent. Scott raised his thumb from the sending button to make sure he was pushing it right; a tiny puddle of sweat glistened on the black, plastic yoke where his hand had been resting. "Does anybody fucking hear me?" He yelled at the top of his lungs as he pushed the button so hard that he could feel it almost cutting into his thumb. "Goddamnit, somebody fucking answer me!"

John could hear Scott's cries and he pushed the telephone harder onto his ear. "Scott!.....Scott!" He screamed into the phone not knowing that his friend had placed his cell phone into his lap. Then he heard a "thud" and a scream of agony. "Scott! Goddamnit!"

The clatter that the head set made when Scott slammed it into the seat resounded inside the tiny aircraft. Scott looked frantically around the cabin for anything that would help him out and for a second, his look stopped cold on the pale face of the pilot. Scott felt more hatred than fear at that moment; he hated the man for dying and leaving him all alone. John's yelling could be heard over Scott's phone as he grabbed it from his lap. "It didn't fucking work man...Nobody answered!"

"It's okay, Scott--"

"It's not okay! I'm screwed man...I'm fucking screwed and I'm going to die in here!" Scott screamed as moisture began to cover his eyes.

"Scott! Listen to me...Settle the fuck down or you will die, but that ain't going to happen man!" John was in a rage, an anger driven by a feeling of helplessness. But he wasn't about to fuck this up for this best friend. "Scott...Just settle down and listen," he continued, his voice calmer and reassuring, "Listen to me, okay pal.....Okay?"

Scott winced his eyes hard then opened them wide to dry the tears. The dream-like state was now gone and he knew that he was sitting in a airplane not knowing if he would live. He placed the phone to his ear and calmed himself. "Okay...okay...What do I do?"

"Just sit still for a second...Tell me about the plane...Are the wings level with the ground?"

"Um...Yeah, pretty much."

"Good...Look at the airspeed gauge, the speedometer...Does it still say 120?"

"Yeah..."

"All right, Scott...You're sounding better...Now I'm going to use the fax line and try to get some help--"

"Don't hang up on me man!" Scott yelled on the verge of panic again.

"I'm not...I'm just going to use the fax line...I'll be right here," John gently said trying to maintain a calm for Scott and for himself, "Just sit still and don't touch anything...I need to ask you some questions, so just relax as much as you can. These are very important, okay?"

"Okay..."

John took in a deep breath and searched his memory for the principles of flight. Quickly, he decided for safety reasons that he would repeat himself often to be sure. "All right...Now, the airspeed is 120--"

"Right."

"You are flying straight and level--"

"That's right."

"Okay...You need to look on the instrument panel for the altimeter...Uh, it should be toward the bottom middle of the panel between the two yolks..."

Scott looked down to the panel and searched for the gauge, "What does it look like?"

"It depends...Sometimes it looks like a clock with three needles and sometimes it's just digital ...Oh, the clock one may have a small readout in it that is digital, also--"

"I see it!" Scott yelled into the phone. It was obvious that he was clinging to any good fortune.

"All right...What does it indicate?"

Scott looked over the round gauge and found a little box near to the bottom of it that contained digital

numbers, "It looks like about two thousand feet."

"All right...Um, okay...Look around for two gauges that are identical and side by side...Those should be the fuel gauges, one for each wing. Wait a minute-- Is the plane a high-wing or a low-wing?"

"What does that mean?" Scott asked, confused.

"Look out the side window and look down to the ground...Do you see a wing or do you see the ground?" The tone of John's voice was sharp, evidence of his frustration and he reminded himself that knowledge about planes wasn't common.

"The wing..."

"That's good...The ground effect will help you when you land...It gives you a cushion of air, like a hovercraft --"

"Jesus!" Fear was soaked into Scott's words.

"Relax buddy, just take it easy...Hold a sec--" John shut his eyes tight and rubbed them with the palms of his hands while he tried desperately to remember the important basics of flying. "Okay...Do you see the fuel gauges?"

A few seconds passed and all John could hear was the heavy breaths of his friend, "I...Fuck, I don't see shit like that..."

John tapped the keyboard and made a quick decision, "Forget it...We'll just assume that the plane is on empty, so listen up."

"Yeah?"

"What is the terrain like below you?"

"Uh...It's mostly flat, farm land with some crops."

"All right...I'm going to try to get hold of the FAA...While I'm on the phone, I want you to do nothing but watch for obstacles like radio towers and other planes...Got it?"



"Yeah...Hurry up--"

"Just hang in there...The plane is probably full of fuel, but we can't think that way..."

John picked the phone from the fax's cradle and dialed information as quickly as his fingers could find the numbers. The auto-response system at the phone company promptly supplied him with the number and after a few seconds, he was on the line with authorities in Memphis, Tennessee.

"Federal Aviation, Memphis Center..." A monotone, female voice answered John's call."

"Yeah...Um listen up...My name is John Allen and I'm a student pilot in Greenville, Mississippi...I've got a friend on the other line who's in trouble--"

"What's the problem, sir," the voice cut him off.

"Listen to me damnit!...My friend's flying between Dallas and Tulsa in a plane with a dead pilot, lady!"

"A dead pilot?...I think I've already heard this one--"

"Look, I'm serious...You've got to listen to me. Scott doesn't know shit about flying so I can't tell you much, but he's up there living on auto-pilot...The pilot must have had a heart attack or something, I don't know..."

"Sir, there's not much we can do without the call number of the aircraft, the pilot's name or the transponder number--"

"Hold on--" John grabbed the other line, "Scott, what's the guy's name?"

"Uh...Shit, I don't know man...What's going on?"

"Just hold on..." John felt he didn't have time to explain or that he just didn't know what to say.

The woman's voice could be heard over the fax line, "Sir...Sir?"

"Yeah, I'm still here--Look, he don't know any of that...The radio is at 128.8, but he couldn't get anybody to--" A click and a tone told John that the line was disconnected. "Damn it!...What the fuck's wrong?"

"John!...John!" The tiny voice emitted from the other line screamed out to John.

"What is it?"

"It's moving man!"

"What's moving?" John frowned.

"The fucking plane.....It's dropping..." Scott shrieked in horror.

"What did you do? Did you touch anything?"

"I didn't do shit! It just started--"

John searched his thoughts for what could be happening. The auto-pilot could be off a touch, but he didn't know if the plane even had one. The pilot could have set the airspeed and trim so that it would act like an auto-pilot, but that only works in very calm skies. Most planes that size don't have them and John tensed in fright. If Scott moved abruptly or the winds shifted, then the plane would have lost some equilibrium.

"Scott...Listen to me carefully..."

"Okay, okay--"

"Find the throttle...It should be near the upper center of the console and it may have a red knob--"

"Got it--"

"Take the palm of your left hand and rest it on the control panel trim just below the throttle--"

"Okay...It's there--"

"Don't touch the tip, the red part...Place your thumb on the base of the lever, but don't push it--"

"Okay--"

"Now look at the altimeter and the airspeed gauge...Is the airspeed increasing or falling as the altitude falls?"

Scott scanned the gauges and reported back as fast as he could, "The speed is increasing...Um...It's at 132--"

"Okay, that means you're in a dive, but it doesn't sound too steep...Now, take your right hand and place it

on the shaft of the steering wheel--"

"The silver part?"

"Right...Now listen, flying is a game of millimeters...If you pull out on the yoke, then the plane will pitch back or up. But you don't have to pull it out far...Use your hand against the console to put pressure on the yoke and gently pull back about a quarter of an inch...When you feel the plane level, look at the airspeed and if it decreases below 100, then push in slightly..."

"Shit...Okay...I--" Scott felt some relief, but it was only because he was learning to fly at the worst or best possible time.

"And watch the altimeter, if you start to drop more than fifty feet, then I want you to push up on the throttle barely...If you do the yoke right, then you won't have to adjust the throttle...The only other thing you have to do is to keep the wings level." John bit onto a finger nail with apprehension. He shut his eyes briefly and said a two word prayer. "You ready?"

"No...But okay..."

John pressed the re-dial button on the fax machine and it returned a busy signal, "Mother fucker!..." John whispered as he covered the mouthpiece of the phone to Scott.

"Scott...Just remember...This is stick and rudder flying...Use your senses but don't rely completely on them...That plane is built to fly and that's just what it's going to do...You're just going to help it out a little, okay?"

"Right..." Scott slowly pulled back on the flight yoke as he switched his views from the altimeter, the airspeed gauge and the natural horizon beyond the spinning propeller. His breathing became more rapid, so he gently rolled his shoulders to relax. Scott was afraid to pull on the yoke, but he did so just as his friend had said. When he looked down to the instruments, he felt disoriented. Looking out at the natural horizon gave him a sense of stability and he found that the plane was easier to control when he did. At a moment, Scott felt his body

shift into a natural position. The plane was flying level again, he thought. A quick glance at the altimeter and the airspeed showed that he had only lost twenty or thirty feet in height and the speed was almost at 120 again. For the first time in what seemed like forever, Scott smiled. "I did it!" He picked the phone from his lap and screamed to his friend, "I fucking did it! It's level, man!"

"That's great, bud...You're doing fine..." John felt jubilant and proud for a moment, but then reality set back in. Scott was far from safe and they didn't know how much fuel was in the plane. Even if both wings were full to the tabs, it would be dangerous for Scott to attempt switching tanks if one emptied.

John hit the re-dial button of the fax again and his heart sank when the busy signal returned. The more time that passed the better the chances that the plane would develop problems or that Scott would accidentally cause a problem. He had to land the plane now. "Scott...What does your altitude read?"

"Um...It's just under two thousand feet..."

"Okay...Tell me about the land below you again and how far away from the plane can you see?"

"Uh...It's still flat with trees..."

"What about a highway?"

"Uh...Let me see..." Scott peered out of the side window and had to strain slightly to see over the wing root. "No...There's only a small road down there and a bunch of crops..."

A road would be better than landing in a field, especially if the field was constructed of furrows. "Well, what's the road like?...Is it wide enough to land on?"

"I can't land this fucking thing man! Are you crazy?" Scott's voice blasted over the phone receiver.

"Take it easy, Scott...You're going to have to land it...Nobody else can--"

"Oh Christ!...This ain't happening--"

"Listen...Landing a plane is a lot easier than it looks...Trust me--"

"I can't John...I'll crash it...What about the FAA people? What about them, man?" Scott seemed to be

searching for any way out of dealing with his fate.

"I can't get 'em...But you'd have to do it anyway...You can do this, man...I swear you can." John convinced himself that what he was saying was true. And he hoped that he was right.

"Fuck, fuck fuck!!" Scott repeated under his breath. He was strangely calm for some reason, but John didn't question him. He was relieved that Scott could be calm now.

"Look...Is the road wide or narrow?" John quieted and got back to business. He reached into his shirt pocket and again retrieved only air. He was under the greatest stress in his life, but he'd have to deal with it now.

"Uh...I can't tell...There's a center line, so it must be pretty wide I guess."

"Okay, that's good...What about the length?"

"Uh...It's goes further out than I can see and I can see for at least five or ten miles...But it's not very strait."

Damnit, John thought, but they'll just have to risk it.

"All right, that'll just have to do...Now listen up. I'm going to go over the basics right quick and I'll probably repeat myself or talk to you like you're a fucking three-year-old, but I don't want you to miss anything...Got it?"

Scott still had his right hand on the yoke and with the back of his left, he brushed the sweat from above his eyes. "Yeah, I got it..." He looked over to the dead pilot and simply repeated the words, "I got it...Let's do it."

John sat back into his swivel chair and pinched the crown of his nose. After a few seconds, he began, "All right. That plane you're in was designed to fly and that's what it wants to do. When the wind flows over and under the wings, lift is created. All you have to do is keep the wind flowing over the wings and the plane from diving or climbing and you're flying. Airplanes have speeds that they need to achieve to maintain flight...And if the wind speed over the wings is too slow, then the plane falls. The throttle controls the altitude and the yoke controls the airspeed...The rudder pedals control yaw in the air, but we're not going touch them until we hit the

ground...Got that?"

"Yeah..." Scott quietly answered, hanging to every word.

"Okay...Landing is simply a controlled crash...You're going to have to reduce the throttle to lose altitude and at the same time you're going to have to adjust the yoke to maintain airspeed. I'm guessing that the landing speed of that plane is around 80, but to be safe, I want you to keep it at 90...Got it?"

"Yeah....."

"Now, all you're going to do is fly strait ahead and hope to touch-down on the road...I don't want you attempting a turn...Are there any power lines on the side of the road?" John had just remembered about the danger of the lines and he hoped they wouldn't be a problem.

"Um...In places they're on the left side and on the right in some. I can see where they cross the road."

"Can you see any of the road where it is directly in front of you?"

"Yeah...A few miles away, then it curves, then it's back again."

"All right...Then we're going to lose the altitude very slowly and hopefully you will be able to control where you set down." John knew this would be close to impossible for Scott to do on his own, but he thought that if Scott became just a robotic extension of himself that they had a good chance.

"Okay...What do I do?" Scott was becoming more scared to be in the air. The thought of being on the ground alive, even if he did crash the plane, was all that was concerning him now.

"Okay...Take the throttle and slowly pull down about an eighth of an inch per second...While you do this, make sure the airspeed doesn't drop too quickly by pushing down on the yoke slightly. And don't let the wings dip to either side...Oh yeah, can you tell which way the wind is blowing?"

"How?"

John pondered for a moment then it came to him, "Look at the clouds or find some smoke...Hell look for ripples on water, anything will do."

Scott looked around, but the clouds were too high above him to tell and there was no smoke. The ground was dry with only acres of farm land and the winding road. "I can't tell...There ain't nothing like that around."

"Shit...Okay...Listen...I only want you to dip the wings when you're just over the road and only if I tell you to...I want you to line the nose of the plane up with the center line on the road...If the wind blows you to the right, then slightly dip the wing to the left and vice versa...Understand that?"

"Yeah...I get it...But not unless you say?"

"That might not work...Maybe you'll just do it...I don't know."

"Okay...What do I do now?"

John thought for a moment to catch the place in his mind where they were in the process. "Start decreasing the throttle slowly and watch the airspeed...When you get to one thousand feet, I want the airspeed to be at around 100...Okay?"

"Okay...I'm starting it now..." Scott gently placed his sweating hand below the throttle and eased it down. The airspeed began to drop quickly. "I'm slowing down!"

"Put the nose down! But not too much...Just watch the airspeed...Remember, only millimeters count." John's heart skipped a beat, but he knew that the small plane was easy to recover, even by a complete novice.

"Okay...It's okay now...Uh...I'm at about fifteen hundred feet and still falling." Scott said calmly. The tone of his voice was almost like a seasoned professional. The flight of the plane gave him great confidence even when he had to correct the slightest error. Scott was just beginning to feel the attitude of the craft and flying was getting easier.

"Good...Just maintain the airspeed...That's the most important thing at this point." Even though it was almost too late, John hit the re-dial button on the fax again. He didn't even listen this time for any response. His mind raced to solve problems before they happened and knew that last minute corrections had to be explained before the last minute. "When you reach one thousand feet, you're going to maintain a constant airspeed while

watching the altimeter. If it stops dropping and the speed remains constant, then you will pull up the long lever between the seats one time...Do you see it?"

Scott took his hand and felt between the seats until he touched a long, metal bar. "I got it..."

"Okay, that's the flaps...That will give you more lift to make the landing slower and steadier...Wait until I tell you."

"All right. I'm at eleven, no I'm at a thousand feet now...." Scott said and tightened his grip on the flaps lever.

"Okay...Just watch the gauges and for a few seconds...You may have to adjust the yoke a touch to keep speed.

"It's holding...they're both all right."

"Okay...First, check the road...From this altitude, you'll land about two or three minutes after you pull a notch of flaps and reduce the throttle again."

Scott searched the road below and noticed the spans of power lines to the left of the plane. "Um...It looks okay...Do I start now?"

John didn't know what to say. This was the point where people became either pilots or memories. But there was nothing more to be done. If Scott couldn't land the plane, then he would die. "Okay...Slowly...Pull the lever up until it clicks once...The tail of the plane is going to rise and it will seem that you're diving, but don't touch anything else for a few seconds. The plane is just getting extra lift and it will equalize on its own...Okay?"

Scott took in a huge breath hoping that it wouldn't be one of his last, "Okay...Now?"

"Now..."

Scott slowly pulled up on the lever and he could feel the plane pitch forward as he did so, then he heard the click. Even the novice pilot that he was told him to check the airspeed and altimeter. The speed was basically the same as was the altitude. "Okay...It's done...Now what?"



John tried to place himself in the cabin of the small plane as he thought of the next step. To him flying was just an extension, like the plane was strapped to his back and not that he was basically just a passenger. Scott would have to feel the same way if he was going to land on his first try. "Next to the altimeter should be a gauge with a horizontal needle...That's the rate of descent meter. Don't let it drop below two hundred feet per minute and you will be fine. At this point, you're going to have to use common sense, the instruments and your sight to land the plane...Watch the airspeed more than anything, but check outside the plane to make sure you're not dropping too fast. If it looks and feels like you are, then you probably are...Okay?"

"Okay....."

"Now...Gently pull back on the throttle while keeping the speed of the plane at 90...If you feel like you're dropping too fast, just ease up on the throttle, but don't let the speed drop. You can fly that bitch as long as there is fuel, so don't rush anything...Dip the wing into the wind if you drift and remember that once she hits the ground, it's like going ninety miles per hour on a tricycle. You push the tops of the rudder pedals to break and left and right to steer. Once you're on the ground, that yoke don't do shit...Got it?" John felt like he was about to have a heart attack and his head was spinning, but for varied reasons, he felt great. "Gently pull back on the throttle now and watch the center line of the road. But don't look down where you are, look to where you want to land and a little beyond that."

"Okay..." Scott pulled down slowly on the lever. His life didn't flash before his eyes and there wasn't a tear in sight. Damn the situation, Scott was starting to enjoy himself. He couldn't die, that happens to other people. The plane began to fall slightly and smoothly. Scott was shaking, but it was more from exhilaration than fear. He checked the speed and the rate of descent. The ground was rushing up to meet him, but it did feel good.

"How are you doing, man?" John asked after several seconds of silence from his friend.

"I'm almost there...The speed is about 100--"

"Don't worry about that...I'd rather you land at 100 than stall at 50...Pull back on the yoke a hair,

though..." John couldn't tell if Scott had the feel of flight, but his tone was calm. "What about the power lines?"

"They're way away on the left...I'm almost there, but it seems like I'm dropping to hard--"

"Shit!" John thought to himself. "You gotta flair it every so often...When you drop so long that it feels like your going to slam into the road, gently pull back on the yoke...You have plenty of speed to play with, but be careful. Flairing settles the plane into a glide path and it should feel like you're floating."

"I got it...Shit!"

"What?"

"Here I go man....."

Suddenly, John could hear a loud buzzing sound coming from the plane, "Push down! Push Down!...You're stalling!"

"I am!...Shit!"

"Scott!.....Scott!!....." John screamed, then he heard a yell.

"I'm on the fucking ground!...It bounced five fucking times, but I'm on the ground!.....Holy shit! I'm hauling ass, man!...What do I do?"

Even though Scott was rushing down a road made for cars at ninety or more miles per hour in a small airplane, John laughed. "Push on the tops of the pedals! And you may have to steer at the same time...Pull the fucking throttle all the way down!"

"I pulled it down!...Jesus, this mother fucker is flying...I mean..." Scott ended the sentence with a strange laugh and pressed hard on the pedal breaks. "Shit!...There's a car coming, man!"

John knew of only one thing that would stop the plane any quicker and it was dangerous, but he told Scott to do it anyway. "Pull hard back on the yoke...Pull back as hard as you can!"

"What??"

"Just do it!"

Scott pulled back with all his might on the yoke and nose of the plane leapt into the air. The oncoming wind pushed against the plane so hard that it came to a sudden stop with a screech and the front landing gear pounded into the road. The force of the light plane slamming onto the roadway jolted Scott so hard that the tiny cellular phone flew from his hand and onto the floor. His body lunged forward and the seat belt pulled tightly against his waist, almost squeezing him into unconsciousness. Then it was over and Scott settled back into the seat, "Holy shit...Am I dead?"

It took a second for Scott to realize what had happened and he screamed in joy. The airplane and the car had stopped within mere feet of each other. He shook his head to clear his thoughts and he calmly looked out to the car, the smell of burning rubber lingered in the plane's cabin and the noise of screeching tires echoed in his head. Scott looked to the strange faces staring at him and all he could do was return a stare of his own...But his stare contained a hint of a smile.