

Red Eye

By and Based on the Books of Robert J. Cormier (www.thefaithkit.org)
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Dennis was facing another long, late flight back to New York. Five hours of sitting still, watching it get dark fast, trying unsuccessfully to sleep—even with the help of the business class booze—and arriving back to the sad scene of an airport at midnight.

Maybe they would leave the seat next to him empty.

Nope.

Maybe this guy would not insist on talking.

On this count there was hope. The guy said “hello,” and that his name was Arthur, and then settled down to his papers and his thoughts. *Thank God*, said Dennis to himself.

Dennis was in no mood for talking. He had just finished another boring, semi-successful trip to the West Coast to get the retail marketers up to speed on the new inventory management programming, and he was tired from the trip, and all the phoniness of pretending to be “one of the boys” and “on the team” with his equally phony counterparts in California. He was also bummed because he was coming home to nothing. His latest live-in had moved out about three weeks ago—Thank God, again—and his little black book was full of bores. His plan was to take tomorrow off, go to the gym, and eat a pizza.

The guy next to him was still busy. He was writing words and drawing lines, and seemed quite happy about it. One word stuck out—Dennis could not help but noticing—God. As he marked up page after page, “God” appeared on every one.

What the hell, Dennis thought, *why not ask?* “You have God working for your company; that probably helps,” Dennis said out loud. He thought this was clever.

Arthur smiled. “God works for everybody’s company, and He’s in everybody’s company,” he said. And then, “Hey, that’s a good one. I’ll have to write that down.”

“What are you working on?” asked Dennis.

“It’s an addition to my website. I’m trying to help people apply the points to their lives.”

“I’m not very religious,” Dennis admitted.

“I guess I’m sorry to hear that.”

“Why?”

“Because faith is very important to me. It lets me understand my life, and be cool with myself, and take hard things. It tells me why I am here and what is supposed to be the purpose of my life.”

“So, what is supposed to be the purpose of your life?”

“To go home. To go home to God in the best possible shape—and to help others do the same.”

“Why would we need to go home? Why aren’t we already home?”

“God is giving us an opportunity. He is letting us be involved in our own creation, to have something to say about who we are going to be—forever. We all want to be our own person. God is giving us the chance.”

“I’m not too sure about God,” Dennis said. “I mean, look at the world. Look at the things that happen to some people. Look at what might happen to us in this airplane.”

“I know things sometimes look bad. But faith is meant to remind us that we were not meant for here; we were meant to live with God. Here is where we get ready. When someone loses their life here, they get the life that they were meant for. And that’s a better deal. How long are we here—a hundred years at the most? Heaven is forever.”

“Isn’t that just wishful thinking? After all, death looks like death, and there’s really no sign that there’s anything else.”

“I think there are *many* signs that there’s more to life than this,” Arthur said gently. “Look at the world, the universe. When you quiet down and look at it with your soul—in other words, when you look at things and notice what your deep gut is telling you, you see that we come from somewhere. And this somewhere is greater than anything else. And greater than any person. And this Person would not have made us for death. No, if He gave us life, He meant us to love, and to live, and to live with Him. I have to tell you: People of faith think that this is kind of obvious.”

“Well, maybe you’re lucky to feel the way you do, but, truthfully, I don’t see it.”

“Have you really looked? I mean, I know that faith has gotten kind of a bad name in the modern world. I know that a lot of people believe in a God who doesn’t seem too nice. And that believers contradict each other all the time, and even contradict themselves. But the bottom line is this: We are here. Our deep self says that we come from somewhere. If this is true, we must have been made for life. That means we must be here for some important reason. And, by the way, it also means that everything happens for a reason, that God is using everything that happens to get us ready to go to Him in the best shape.”

“You can say that when you look at the kind of stuff that happens in this world?”

“Yes. If God is God there must be a reason. And I’m not saying I know as much as God, but I can think of some of the reasons that hard things happen. In my own life I have seen how something really tough led to something really good. And I definitely get the idea that if we are here for some important work, we need some important problems to work on. Bottom line: in the end we will all be richer for everything that all of us have gone through. Must be true if God is God.”

“And if I don’t buy it, what happens to me?”

“Well, according to my faith, we are a family. (I mean, isn’t it obvious? Nobody just appears here. All of us are quite related!) Anyway, our job of getting ready for heaven was given to the whole family. Growing means that over time more and more people will get it, more and more people will do better and better at getting ready to see God, more and more people will have more and more to share with everyone else. And that’s how it should be because none of us created ourselves all by ourselves, each of us is really the product of the whole human family, history, and the influence of the good and the bad, and people like you and people like me. God has His purpose for your life, whether or not you make it to faith. But it will be better for us all forever, and for you right now, if you make it to faith.”

“Very pretty, but isn’t it all a little too pretty?”

“Not if God is God—the truth should be beautiful. And it should also be something that all of us can find, if we look. And it should be really important to do that, if, after all, this is the reason we are here.”

Arthur went on: “I know we hear too much. And people need to be careful about what they decide to believe. But surely you can see that we are here only for a short time. Surely you see that it is greater for us to take a stand. The truth was written within you. God put it there so you could see for yourself if you look; He knew you would need to. And if you look you will see. And you will see that you have nothing to fear. The basic things that we believe will never be disproved. With time you will become only more sure: Nothing else explains life so well, or so beautifully, in a way that does justice to a God who is really God. And I can promise that you will find peace in you that most people in today’s world cannot even imagine until it arrives. You will find freedom, from envy and insecurity, and everything else that screws us. You will be excited about what is coming, and feel more alive right now. You’ll feel loved and your response to that will feel even better. All of this is within your grasp, any day, even right now. God loves you; you should know it.”

And now Arthur noticed that Dennis’ eyes were a little red. Dennis said, “If I wanted to think about this more, what should I do?”

“Just do it. Think. And decide you have the guts to make a decision. And if you want a little help, something to read, that you can easily have for free, take a look at my website at thefaithkit.org.

Included in the faith kit:

The Church's Prayer for You

We, God's people, make this prayer for you our brother (sister).

We pray that from the moment you wake up, every single day, you feel the attention and love from God that have also been yours all night long.

We pray that you know that your life matters, and that as you go forward and help others to do the same, you are making daily an eternal difference. We pray that you understand that you are playing an irreplaceable part in God's plan for us all, and that you are preparing to see God as no one else will see Him, except through you forever.

We pray that you often get a glimpse of heaven in the things that God has made—especially in nature, the seasons, and the weather—and in many moments when things are fun, funny, or interesting.

We pray that you have a dream that is also for you a glimpse of heaven, and that you are happy for the hope, grateful for the opportunity, and peaceful with the struggle. We pray that you see your work as love, because this is what it is if this is how you see it.

We pray that you are happy to be tired at the end of the day, and that you love yourself enough to rest, to enjoy your evening meal, and to share your life with others you also love.

We pray that you do share your life with others you love, and that you share your life in conversations that are sometimes endless, just like the life that we will share with God.

And we pray that with time you are only more amazed—that God made *you*, that you will see God, and that God is excited that He will see you.

also included in the faith kit:

Another Prayer of the Church for You

We, God's people, make this prayer for you our brother (sister).

We pray that you don't wake up, every single day, tired and angry— tired because you didn't have peace enough to rest, and angry because your life is so far from what you want it to be.

We pray that you don't despise your life because you don't see how it will ever give you the things your heart has always hoped for, and because you don't see life's purpose, or yours.

We pray that you don't despise yourself because you are not all that you wanted to be, and because you don't see how you will ever get there.

We pray that yours is not a day embattled—with your family because you don't have the spirit for forgiveness, with your co-workers because you show no charity to them, and with society because you are often offended and easily feel put down.

We pray that you don't spend half your day half-dead—because you don't do an honest day's work, and don't have the faith to see your work as love.

We pray that you don't spend the little free time you have being absorbed and manipulated by electronics, and made to feel like just another anonymous watcher or listener.

We pray that you don't eat just to fill your stomach, you don't drink to escape, and you don't go to bed disgusted.

And we pray that you don't waste your life in worship of this world, never satisfied, always frustrated, and that you are not among the number whose future is despair.