

05 AUG – STORY TO READ

 Two Stories About Flying –

**Part I: *His First Flight* by Liam
O’Flaherty**

**Part II: *The Black Aeroplane* by Frederick
Forsyth**

I. His First Flight – A Metaphor for Human Inhibition

In the vast theatre of nature, where instinct is both compass and commandment, the young seagull stood an anomaly – paralyzed by fear at the precipice of flight. While his siblings had embraced the skies with jubilant ease, he remained earthbound, perched atop a cliff

that mocked his hesitation with every gust of wind.

There is something almost Shakespearean about his dilemma — the existential conflict between what one is born to do and what one dares to attempt. The young bird was not ill-equipped. His wings, though untested, were as capable as any. His hesitation was not of muscle, but of mind. And in that lies the first universal truth of the story: **that the most formidable barriers in life are not external but internal.**

Each day, he watched his family fly — not as a voyeur of envy, but as a prisoner of imagined doom. His brothers and sister skimmed the waves, shrieked across the blue expanse, and returned with fish that

smelled of salt and triumph. Yet he refused — or rather, was unable — to act. This inability was not laziness. It was fear, raw and unreasoned. And so, like many of us trapped in cycles of self-doubt, he chose stasis over risk. He endured hunger instead of testing flight. He chose perceived safety over potential growth. But nature has its methods — ruthless, elegant, and wise.

On that pivotal day, the young seagull's mother, sharp in both instinct and intention, employed a strategy not of coercion, but of temptation. With calculated nonchalance, she approached him with a piece of fish dangling from her beak, offering it not within reach, but just beyond. Hunger — the great leveller — overpowered fear.

He leapt.

In that fraction of a second, before his wings even found rhythm, he experienced what all brave souls eventually do — a moment of sheer terror, followed almost instantly by revelation. **The sky did not reject him. His wings did not fail. The sea below no longer threatened. He was not falling — he was flying.**

What followed was not just a physical act, but an emotional emancipation. His scream was not one of fear, but exhilaration. The abyss he once dreaded became his playground. His wings, once folded in fear, cut the air with purpose. He soared, dipped, and dived — not as an observer of life, but as a participant in its most glorious symphony.

And when he joined his family mid-air, not as a laggard but as an equal, a subtle transformation was complete.

This brief but profound narrative by Liam O'Flaherty serves as a parable — one that mirrors every human being's confrontation with self-imposed limitations. The cliff is never just a cliff. It is a metaphor for every opportunity we fail to seize, every risk we refuse to take, and every version of ourselves we abandon at the altar of fear.

In a world that idolizes certainty, the story is a quiet reminder: **Growth begins where comfort ends.**

II. The Black Aeroplane — A Parable of Trust Amidst Chaos

If the first story explores the tension between fear and instinct, the second — *The Black Aeroplane* by Frederick Forsyth — delves into the psychological terrain of decision-making under duress, and the mysterious forces that often intervene when reason has exhausted its utility.

The narrative begins deceptively simple: a pilot, flying his Dakota aircraft at night, heading home toward England. He is alone in the cockpit, surrounded by the serenity of starlight and the hum of the engine. Below lies a slumbering Europe, and ahead — the warm promise of home.

All appears routine, even poetic. But as with all good fiction, chaos enters without knocking.

Suddenly, the stars vanish. A storm — vast, uncharted, malevolent —

materializes without warning. The plane is pulled into a vortex of black clouds and violent winds. Visibility drops to zero. The radio goes silent. Instruments spin like broken clocks. Fuel begins to dwindle.

In this crucible of panic, logic fails. The pilot's training, his calculations, his instincts — all prove insufficient. He is, quite literally, flying blind.

And then, as if conjured by desperation itself, **a black aeroplane appears**. Silent. Shadowy. Its pilot, whose features are obscured, signals him to follow.

In normal circumstances, such an apparition might evoke suspicion or even terror. But in extremis, the mind clutches at hope wherever it flickers. He follows.

What unfolds is surreal. The mysterious aircraft guides him through the maelstrom, weaving effortlessly through clouds and wind. The Dakota follows, suspended not merely in air, but in blind faith. No words are exchanged. No identities revealed. Yet, in the vacuum of information, **trust is born — irrational, immediate, and complete.**

Eventually, the storm breaks. The sky clears. The runway emerges like salvation painted in lights. The Dakota lands safely.

The pilot rushes to the control tower — elated, bewildered, seeking answers.

But there are none.

No other aircraft was reported in the sky that night.

No radar showed any movement.

The black aeroplane — saviour, phantom, or figment — had vanished.

What is one to make of this encounter?

On the surface, it appears to be a classic mystery — a ghost story of the skies. But beneath the narrative lies a more nuanced meditation on **faith, providence, and the inexplicable guardians that appear when human logic surrenders.**

In literature and in life, there are moments when decisions must be made without clarity, where paths must be followed without proof. The black aeroplane becomes a metaphor for **intuitive trust** — the kind we place in strangers, signs, or even fate.

Forsyth, a master of subtle suspense, does not explain the mystery. And wisely so. For the story's potency lies in its ambiguity. By refusing to name the force that saved the pilot, he amplifies its universality. The black aeroplane is not just an object — it is an idea. An idea that sometimes, help arrives without explanation. That **when one chooses not to panic but to trust — even blindly — the storm may part.**

A Thematic Convergence

Though starkly different in tone and setting, both stories share an underlying thematic current: **the convergence of crisis and revelation.**

In *His First Flight*, the protagonist overcomes internal paralysis through an

act of desperate courage. His salvation lies in movement — a leap of faith, both literal and psychological.

In *The Black Aeroplane*, the protagonist survives not by action, but by surrender. He places his fate in the hands of an unknown entity — an act of vulnerability that becomes his rescue.

One leaps into the unknown. The other **trusts it.**

Together, the stories serve as allegories for the human condition — how we confront fear, how we respond to crisis, and how **often the difference between doom and deliverance is a choice to act — or to trust.**

Literary Merit and Style

Both authors exercise remarkable narrative restraint.

O'Flaherty employs minimalism, using simple prose to mirror the psychological clarity of the young seagull's transformation. Every sentence, though deceptively plain, carries emotional heft. The story functions almost like a fable, rich in symbolism but grounded in realism.

Forsyth, on the other hand, infuses his story with atmosphere — clouds, silence, flickering lights, erratic instruments — painting suspense with cinematic precision. His language, though similarly spare, throbs with tension. Each word tightens the narrative coil, drawing the reader into the cockpit of fear and faith.

In their distinct ways, both stories exhibit literary craftsmanship — not through ornate language, but through emotional architecture. They build tension, collapse it, and then raise the reader into catharsis.

Conclusion: The Flight Within

Ultimately, *Two Stories About Flying* is less about aviation and more about **ascension** — the kind that occurs within.

One story speaks to the internal journey from fear to confidence. The other evokes the existential leap from doubt to trust.

Both protagonists — whether winged or human — survive storms not because they were certain, but because they were willing to leap, or to follow.

And that is perhaps the most resonant lesson in today's world of uncertainties: **You don't have to be fearless to fly. You just have to move before you're ready — and trust that something, somewhere, will catch you.**