# There’s always the sky

Richard Bach

I was supposed to write a story about the man, not to kill him in cold blood. But somehow I couldn’t make him believe that—it was one of those rare times that I had met a person so frightened he was alien, and I stood helpless to talk with him as though I spoke ancient Urdu. It was disconcerting, to find that words sometimes have no meaning, and no effect at all. The man who was to have been the central figure of the story advised me clearly that he was on to me, he knew that I was a puppet, a boor, an ingrate, and a mob of other unsavory characters all wrapped in a faded flying jacket.

A few years earlier, I might have experimented with violence to communicate with him, but this time I chose to leave the room. I walked out into the night air, and in the dim moonlight by the shore of the sea—for this was to have been a story of the man and his resort paradise.

The breakers boomed along the dark beach, flickering blue-green-phosphorous like gentle peaceful howitzers firing in the dark, and I watched the salt ocean rush in swift and steady, slow and back, hissing softly. I walked half an hour perhaps, trying to understand the man and his fear, and finally gave it up as a bad job. It was only then, turning away from the ground, that I happened to look up.

And there, over the elegant resort lands and over the sea, over the oblivious guests at the indoor bar and over me and all my little problems, was the sky.

I slowed, there on the sand, and at last stopped and looked way on up into the air. From past-horizon north to past-horizon south, from beyond land’s end to beyond the depths of the western sea, lived the billion-mile sky. It was very calm, very still.

Some high cirrus drifted along under a slice of moon, borne ever so carefully on a faint, faint wind. And I noticed something that night that I had never noticed before.

That the sky is always moving, but it’s never gone.

That no matter what, the sky is always with us.

And that the sky cannot be bothered. My problems, to the sky, did not exist, never had existed, never would exist.

The sky does not misunderstand.

The sky does not judge.

The sky, very simply, is.

It is, whether we wish to see that fact or to bury ourselves under a thousand miles of earth, or even deeper still, under the impenetrable roof of unthinking routine.

It happened a year later that for some reason I was in New York City, and everything was going wrong and my total assets equaled twenty-six cents and I was hungry and the very last place I wanted to be was in the prison streets of sundown Manhattan, with iron-barred windows and quintuple-lock doors. But it happened that I looked up, which is something one never does in Manhattan, of course, and again, as it had been by the sea—way on up there, way high over the canyons of Madison Avenue and Lexington and Park—was the sky. It was there. Unhurried. Unchanged. Warm and welcome as home.

What do you know, I thought. What do you know about that. No matter how tangled and twisted and distressful goes the life of an airplane pilot, he always has a home, waiting. For him always waits the joy of being back in the air, of looking down at and up to the clouds, for him always waits that inner cry, “I’m home again!”

“Bunch of mist, bunch of empty air,” the people of the ground will say. “Get your head out of the clouds, get your feet on the ground.” Yet in times as far separated as that lonely beach and the crowded Manhattan street, I was lifted from black despair into freedom. From annoyance and anger and fear to a thought, Hey! I don’t care! I’m happy!

Just by looking into the sky.

This kind of thing happens, perhaps, because pilots aren’t far-traveling wanderers after all. It may be that pilots are happy only when they are at home. And it may be that they are home only when they can somehow touch the sky.

