GHOST PLANE

a short story
by
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The large international airport seemed unusually busy on this particular day. Outside its walls heavy rains were falling, accompanied by sparks of light streaking across the darkened sky. This spectacle of Nature was often reinforced by a thunderous applause. Wow, that flash looked like an oversized airplane, a ghost plane. Another thunderous applause followed.

The unexpected storm sent airline passengers scrambling for cover. Surprise! The weather forecast had been for a clear and sunny day. Once inside the terminal, the wet cattle, I mean humans, were moving in all directions as they attempted to reach their particular goal. The major goal of the hour was to fly away, to another city, another state, or another land.

Lucky me! I was one of these potential passengers.

Ah, I have reached the ticket counter!

Once I was cleared for take off, I mean checked in, my next step was to reach the gate. 'On your mark, get set, go.' Well, slowly that is, first I had to move through a tangle of security checks. At least I now know what a rat feels like during those maze-oriented learning experiments. Finally, the gate has been reached! "Hooray" I yelled out in my exhilarated state. "Oh no, the posted designation isn't where I'm planning to go." I walked to the counter and asked the smiley faced person "What's happened? This is supposed to be my gate, but I am going to Denver not New York". "Oh, your gate has been changed" he spoke. "In fact, you better hurry since it is not only a different gate but also in a different concourse." Then the airline employee proceeded to give me the necessary directions. Off I jogged to my next designation while maneuvering around other bewildered beings. Gate changes seemed to be the norm on this day as others were also running like frightened animals throughout this world of the unknown. At least this is what I surmised from the vocal expressions I overheard, such as "wrong gate, wrong concourse, we'll never make it"! Well, you get the picture.

At last I reached my new gate. Huff, huff, huff. This time the posted designation was the correct one. Yes! Then I looked at the departure time. Oh, no, flight delay. "I'm hungry" I spoke out loud as I sat my tired weary body down in the closest empty seat I could find. A nearby attendant must have overheard my expression as she spoke in a kindly tone of voice "You better wait in case the plane is fixed in a short duration of time". "Did you say fixed?" I asked. "What's wrong with it?" "I don't know" she responded "but it shouldn't take too long." "Ok, I'll wait" I spoke as my tummy let forth with a loud unfeminine growl. "Sorry" I said as I felt my face flush in embarrassment. "Don't forget, you will get some peanuts on the plane" laughed the attendant.

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I sat observing the behaviors of the other captive beings. Two seats opened up next to me, perhaps because of my growling tummy, and a small child filled that which was closest. Grasped in the child's hands was a nice large cup of french fries. The smell almost drove me crazy. Finally, I couldn't handle it any longer. I reached over and grabbed a fry from the cup. This sent the child into emitting a loud scream which sounded like that of a wounded animal. Other beings turned to stare at the crying child. "She took my french fry" he spate out, literally. The guardian sitting next to the child looked at me with her cold dark eyes barring big white fangs in her open mouth. "How could you take advantage of a little child" she spoke in a loud penetrating voice. This alerted other nearby beings to glare at me, like predators waiting to pounce on their prey. I sank down into my seat, wishing that I could dissolve into my encasement. "I'm sorry" I said "I was just very hungry". Since the child just kept screaming, I got up and left the scene.

Finally, my flight was called. Fortunately, the woman and wounded child did not line-up at my gate. The passengers walked systematically through the jetway leading toward our plane. It seemed unusually long as we snaked our way through the grass, I mean the corridor. Alas, the plane was reached and we each entered through the open door. It felt to me like I was walking into a different world! The interior of the plane was a stark white, in fact, everything was white. Once all passengers were seated, the door automatically closed. No flight attendant appeared. In fact, there were no announcements. The plane began moving but there was no sound. I could see the runway. Whew, at least that's a relief.

Once we were lifted into the dark stormy sky, I waited patiently for my drink and peanut service. No one appeared. Finally, I spoke up "where are my peanuts?" There was no response. There was no sound. Even the passengers that I could see did not talk and did not move. They didn't appear to be real! They looked like perfect bodied expressionless mannequins. I looked outside my window and could see nothing. It looked like a blank page in my typewriter.

The interior of my world was white. The exterior of my world was black except for the white parts of the plane. "Oh, I must have been so hungry that I expired" I expressed out loud. My body began to quiver. I felt like another power had taken hold of me and was shaking me into submission. Then I heard sound. It was a human voice. "Judy, Judy we have landed, please wake-up" were the words springing forth from a fellow being. My eyes opened, and, yes, a real live person was jiggling my shoulder. "Gosh, I am alive" were my words. "You must have gone into a deep sleep. I have been trying to awaken you" spoke the person. "You kept pushing the call button, and when I responded, you asked for peanuts. So, each time I brought you more peanuts." "Thanks" I responded as I felt my face grow warm probably flashing a bright red color. In front of me sat a stack of paper-wrapped packages of peanuts.

I slowly turned and looked around me as the plane plunked onto the runway. The mannequins were now clothed in a variety of colors of colors and were chattering

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recognizable words. The plane's door opened and one by one we exited down the latter and onto the tarmac. Once I reached the ground, I turned to look at the plane. It was white. In fact, the plane had no markings of any kind. I continued walking. When I reached the door into the airport, I turned to once again look at my white encasement. It wasn't there. The ghost plane had disappeared!

I guess I will never know for sure what really happened. Everything had seemed so real to me. I pinched myself. Ouch! Well, I guess I haven't expired. Maybe I fainted. Maybe I imagined everything. Maybe I was actually in a different world. Maybe... Then I looked at what was grasped in my hand. Yes, I could now prove to myself that I had been on some sort of airplane. Within my sweaty palm were several paper-wrapped packages labeled peanuts. At least, those which remained after my recent eating binge. After all, much of this trauma, ah, experience, was initiated because I was so hungry. Grrrrr. Sorry, I guess I still am!

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