

Night Flight

by Michael D. Brown

I was all strapped in and ready for takeoff, remembering how odd it seemed when we were at the reservations desk and the most unattractive clerk told us, she had a record of Mario's name on the missed flight, but there was nothing about me. She said it was not a problem booking us on another plane. He simply had to pay the difference in fares and I could purchase another ticket. I started to protest that as we had reserved seats for both of us, we should both get repositions at only the slight increase, but as we were late, and the ugly woman was so insistent, we didn't press the issue. We followed her plan and booked the two seats on the next immediate flight.

After rushing through security, and not having a moment to relax, we were now on the plane and it was almost ready to leave. I could make out the face on the moon through the window if I leaned forward, but while I was sitting with a magazine in front of me and my seat belt buckled, Mario was still futzing with his things in the overhead compartment.

Then, I heard them calling my name. "Will passenger Karen Anderson please come to flight desk Six Fourteen? Flight 912 is ready for takeoff. This is your last call."

"Mario, did you hear that?" I asked. "We're on the wrong plane!" Frustratingly, he paid me little mind, and continued stuffing things into the compartment.

I unbuckled myself and stood up quickly. My thought was if he was not concerned about the need to respond, I, at least, would go forward and ask an attendant to open the door so we could get off and still try to make the other flight. Again, I was puzzled as to why they only said my name, and not Mario's, but first things first. At the front of the plane there were no attendants, but as the door to the cockpit was open, I looked in and called to the pilot's back, "Please, sir. There's been a mistake. We need to get off." He did not respond. "Please..." I reached forward and tapped his shoulder. The

pilot turned around, but he had no face. There were no features where his face should have been! I screamed as scenarios about death planes raced through my mind. I started to run back to warn Mario that we must try to escape a horrible fate, but there were no other passengers, and Mario was gone. I looked again toward the cockpit, and there was no pilot! The plane was empty except for me, and all I could think of doing was screaming in hopes of somebody shaking me to wake me from this nightmare.

Then, I did wake up, and Mario was brushing my hair with his hand, "It's all right, honey," he was saying, "You fell asleep in front of the fan. You had a bad dream."

"Oh, Mario," I said, shaking, "It was horrible. I dreamed we were on a death plane, and you wouldn't pay any attention, and then you weren't there, and I was all alone."

"I know, I know," he said, "I couldn't make it back. They only had one reservation. Remember?"

And then he vanished.

I sat in what had been his favorite chair with the cool air of an oversized fan blowing away the fragments of the recurring nightmare I had been suffering for the last three months.

