

The Last Flight of Dr Covair!

'Here you go Doctor Covair.' A young girl offered me some papers. The badge on her perky breast read *Dawn is in training*. I figured she'd been farmed out to this bargain basement airline by her disappointed parents; the signs of failed teenager were all there; nose-ring, multi-coloured hair – she was screaming for attention.

I only fly reputable airlines but this was short notice. I tried the big guys, but getting a seat in December was almost harder than avoiding those insipid carollers. I shuffled my feet anxiously; the thought of cheap liquor turbulence made me prematurely sick. 'You're an isle seat, flight 512 Sydney to Washington,' Dawn assured me. A bandaid on my forearm pinched my hair; I absently itched it, gritting my teeth through the mosquito bite pain.

'Non-stop right?'

'Yes Doctor, non-stop,' A quaver in her voice revealed; *I'll tell you anything to move you on!*

'You're *sure* it's non-stop? All the way, Miss I don't think you understand how grave it is that this flight be non-stop! I cannot stop anywhere other than my destination. This is life and death you hear me!' I slammed my fist down on the desk.

'Yes Doctor, *non-stop* means *no stopping*. Now if you'll just hand me your briefcase you'll be on your way!' She reached out but I jerked back a shaky step or two, a look of shock washing across my pallid face.

'Come on Sir, we don't have all day! we're boarding soon!'

Darkness replaced my sight; a red glow throbbed all around me. My chest tightened. Over the yellow resin horizon of the counter I saw quarantine officers running around. I leant on the desk, trying to catch my breath and drain the blood from my steaming face.

'Is there a problem?' I enquired. He resembled a rabid dog. I first noticed Dr Covair when he slammed his fist on the check-in desk. He looked dishevelled but most travellers did; it was this transit atmosphere that drew me into flight attending in the first place, it still excited me.

This was my first trans-continent flight and nothing could spoil my dreams of Italy. I headed over to see if I could assist Dawn.

His eyes were on fire, white stringy saliva hung from the corners of his mouth, his hair sweaty, messy. He itched at a bandaid on his arm and the slightest trickle of blood seeped from the wound concealed beneath it. His eyes followed mine; he slapped his hand across the wound protectively.

'As I was explaining to Dawn,' Covair broke in, 'this case *must* come onboard with me; it has vital medication in it.'

I casually lifted Dr Covair's passport. He was ordinarily quite handsome; tall, confident, dark, mysterious. Not at all like the salivating geriatric before me.

'Dr Covair, Dawn's just doing her job. I will let you board with your bag.' Dawn shot me an un-approving glance.

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Rebecca seemed young. I liked her chestnut hair swishing around her clear face. She held tightly to my arm, guiding me to gate six. I shuffled, limped and struggled, my body stiffening; she was so patient, I liked her. I reached over grabbing her arm. I drooled as I tried to navigate around my swollen tongue. 'Don't take this flight.' I slurped.

'Oh, Dr Covair; you're more likely to have a road crash than go down in a plane.'

We arrived at the front of the boarding que with the other invalids. A boy about six holding an action doll stepped out of line to look, mouth drawn open, little black eyes wide as if he'd seen some kind of monster.

I suddenly woke. Hours had passed. We were over the ocean; I had little clue where. I'd slipped in an out of consciousness since we'd left. I would wake finding myself in another part of the plane. Sometimes I would be trapped in a nightmare dream where my fellow passengers were rotting; faces blackening, flesh hanging, revealing bones here, raw sinew there.

I woke suddenly again, this time in my seat. I rolled stiffly over finding myself staring at a traveller sleeping in the next chair. His flesh was still alive but he was itching at some kind of cut on his shoulder. I pulled the bandage away from my arm and was horrified to notice the cut was similar to my own crescent shaped gash. I covered it up, tighter than before, so tight I lost feeling to my fingers. Paranoia; I suspected they'd let my patient onboard. I started to interrogate the others.

'Show me your passports!' I demanded as I made my way, Frankenstein like through the cramped aisle. 'Excuse me, your passport please.' I demanded but they looked at me as though I spoke another language. Some screamed and shouted. 'Please I need to see your passports!'

The plane hit turbulence. We were thrown about. The lights flashed on and off. The seat belt signs sang their one note song. I lost my balance and hit my arm into the overhead compartment. My bandage flew free revealing the grotesque gash; a wad of the decayed skin fell onto the chair below me.

'Oh my god!' someone screamed, pushing me away and running 'They've let a leper onboard!' I turned around, the other people looked at me, some were scared, some terrified, gathered up their children. We hit more bumping air, people thrown this way

and that. I caught a glimpse of two figures coming toward me but my vision was so bad it was hard to see. I squinted, 'Rebecca?'

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Stanley and I wasted no time. We grabbed Covair using a passenger control manoeuvre and hauled him to the back of the plane. I had no idea what had come over him. We shoved him into the kitchen and he squinted at the light, the entire cabin was lit low for sleeping. Stanley called him 'buddy' demanding of him 'Calm down Sir'.

When Covair looked up I could see his face. I gasped loudly taking a few paces backward. Stanley's face crumbled with disgust 'Oh my god! What is wrong with you man?' He demanded. Stanley kicked him and backed away. 'You have a coke nose man! You're doing way too many drugs!' Covair moaned sickeningly, stiffly he rose to his feet; his corpse like body revealed; a foul stench emanated. Stanley wretched all over the kitchenette floor, 'What should we do?' He yelled, 'The man is incoherent, drunk, drugged.'

I didn't fancy a drug death on my hands, not when I had let him on. 'We'll be in New Zealand within the hour. We'll get the police to take him?' But mention of the stop over made Covair aggressive. He grabbed Stanley, throwing him with inhuman strength. Stanley hit a meal cart and grabbed at his shoulder, 'He bit me, the dog bit me!' He wailed backing out. Covair tried to speak but sounded like he was choking.

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'I said non-stop!' I yelled but Rebecca didn't listen. She lifted the phone on the wall. I couldn't let this plane touch down with this disease onboard. I lurched at the cabin door grappling with the lock in an attempt to open it. It was best to kill everyone rather than land. Rebecca screamed, several passengers came to her aid but reared back when they got a good look at what they had been travelling with. Rebecca came forward. Then *it* happened. I lost control; I could feel my flesh rot, the disease squirmed inside me; my eyes white, ghoulish. I lurched forward, moaning. The young woman froze.

I wished she'd known about the patient. How he had come around during surgery and bitten me. How I was on my way to Washington for a cure, but I knew in what was left of my heart, it was too late. Rebecca screamed as she hit the ground, me on top of her. I looked up at the gathering; the little dark haired boy with the doll had pushed his way to the front. Leaning down I bit her; firstly into the softness around her neck, taking a large chunk of her skin into my rabid mouth. I was horrified but unable to resist. I chewed, swallowed and relished the juicy run of blood as it trickled down my rotten chin. Rebecca's screams were deathly but my jaws soon silenced her. 'He's eating her!' they screamed turning back into the cabin but to their horror they discovered there were others. They had woken from their sleep and were hungry. The cabin of flight 512 was soon awash with blood as its passengers were torn apart, organs harvested, feasted on by a motley crew of decomposing monsters.

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'What's that sound?' there was a commotion in the cabin. I reached behind me to the intercom, 'Co-Pilot Johnson here; is everything ok?' Dead air whispered back, the engines roared around us. 'Captain, I'm going to check on the cabin' He was keeping the

plane steady but didn't stir. I unlatched the cockpit door and was confronted by Stanley. He pushed in demanding I lock the door behind him. 'What is it Stanley?' He was pale and shaking. 'Tell me what's happening.' Stanley was whimpering and unable to speak. I poured him a whisky. 'Drink this; I'm going to see what the drama is.' I went to the door wondering what could possibly have Stanley in such a state and then exited from the calm of the cockpit. I could already hear a din of screams from behind the curtain and the stench! There was a smell like nothing I had smelled before. The door closed and locked behind me. Stanley wasn't going to let me return. I raised one hand to the curtain, the other covering my nose and felt a deep sense of doom as I held my breath and counted. One, two, three....

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My hand shook as I chugged the whisky. I started to cry. I reached over and touched the captain's arm. 'I think we should call May Day Captain,' I cried but his arm was cold and stiff. He slowly turned then suddenly grabbed my arm, his hand crushing my wrist. I yelled until my throat was raw. The captain pulled me toward him, 'HELP ME!' I could see a terrible relish in his face. His eyes were red, inside out, white flesh peeled from his face. I struggled but he was too powerful, I screamed but there was no one to hear me. I was inches away from his face, his lips were close to mine as if he were about to kiss me but he opened his mouth wide. I could see his terrible insides. His teeth reared and all I could do was swallow as they came down onto my face. I heard a loud crunching sound before I passed out.

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Suddenly there came a great roar. Over the horizon an aircraft appeared trailing smoke. Its nose sunk and broke the surface of the ocean with a mighty splash. Time stopped. A rescue team swam desperately toward the wreck. The water was freezing but they would be there for hours.

As the sun set, the Sheriff cradled the only survivor in his arms. The little dark haired boy was unhurt but quiet, timid. He rested his head on the nice man's shoulder and looked back out over the debris ridden ocean. The little boy's narrow mouth puckered slightly and smiled mischievously as a red wave washed across his little eyes and he bared his teeth and buried them in the nice mans neck.