

## *Your Fears Are Justified*

**Rick DeMarinis**

**T**here's a bomb on this plane. I offer no proof. And yet I know. Panic constricts my breathing. My heart can be heard, I'm sure of that. It ticks in my ear like an egg timer. I get out of my seat slowly so as not to alarm the others. In the rest room I splash my face with cold water. The bomb is with the cargo. We're approaching Clinic City. The plane touches down. The bomb, though armed, does not explode.

In the Clinic City hospital I have to share a room

with a heart patient. "What are you here for?" he asks. "Brain tumor," I say. He perks up, interested. "How's your ticker?" he says. His wife, large and phlegmatic, visits twice a day. They whisper. "You're terminal?" she asks, coyly. It's as if she's asked me about the weather in Des Moines. "Not that I know of," I say. "Brain tumor," her husband whispers, nudging her. They exchange loving glances. I know what they are thinking. It's clear: *They want my heart*. "Macroadenoma," I say. "Nonmalignant." They wink at each other. She consoles me with a ladyfinger. After the operation I fly home, weak but still sensitive to threats.

I appreciate your interest. I honor your adrenalinized stare. Your fears are justified. I'm sorry. I will sit here in my living room and decide what to tell you. Yes, there is no hope. But remember, some fuses are duds, some tumors are benign, some heart patients recover on their own. You have time to change your life.