

The Woman in Black

I had been waiting in the baggage claim area for about thirty minutes for Kelly's flight to arrive from San Francisco. She was returning from a three-month deployment to Saudi Arabia with the Air Force, while permanently stationed at McClellan AFB near Sacramento, California.

I had flown up from San Diego to help get her truck running again after being stored for three months and having some problems with it before she left. I had my tool box with me and was ready to get started on checking it out for her.

What was keeping her? The announcement board said her flight had arrived, but she seemed to be taking an unusually long time to come to the baggage claim area. A new policy had just been implemented that family and friends could no longer meet arriving passengers at the gate. So, I couldn't see her disembark from her plane.

It appeared that most of the passengers from her flight had already picked up their bags, because the carousel for her flight was empty, except for one or two bags and a few people who were still milling around. Had she missed her flight?

As I wondered what to do, I noticed a short, fireplug-shaped object crossing the room, dressed in black. It was a strange scene watching this black-cloaked image drifting through the room in an, otherwise, typical crowd of people dressed in colorful California shorts, skirts, and tropical shirts. The black object stopped, looked around, and began moving directly toward me.

As the apparition got closer and closer, I felt like climbing the walls. What was it? Who was coming toward me? There appeared to be a woman inside the black hood, and I could see her eyes. Suddenly, the person lifted her arms, grabbed me, and said, "Hi, Dad. Did you miss me?" I nearly jumped out of my skin before I realized, it was my daughter, Kelly, in a burka!

She had changed her clothes in a restroom in the concourse before emerging into the baggage area. The delay had raised my anxiety level and caused me to react strongly to the, "Woman in black." I had never seen a burka before and the

image was very unsettling. Today, a burka in the US is common and much less intimidating, but still retains an aura of mystery.