

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

Ed

* why all the italics?

* You can't say the 1st sentence, then the 2nd, without some transition

I was six years old the first time I saw someone fold up and disappear. It was on the midway at the county fair on a perfect blue sky summer day in 1968. It was my first fair, and I

was about as happy as a little kid could be. Then, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up.

* chronology: see 1st, hairs 2nd

Twenty feet ahead, in the middle of the busy midway, a bright crack appeared hanging in mid-air, from just above the asphalt to a point higher than my dad's head. It was like someone had opened a door to a room on the Sun. The crack existed, dazzlingly bright, for only an instant, then it faded, leaving burning red afterimages in my eyes.

make a verb

better verb

* maybe use more kid-like language?

* What changed feeling?

I stood there, amazed and scared, staring at the spot where the light had been. The charged feeling got stronger. I started backing away, pulling on Mom's hand. I didn't want to be there anymore.

"Peter, what's wrong, sweetie?" she asked. She and my father had both stopped walking when I had. She knelt beside me. Dad just stood there, looking impatient and annoyed.

* Simplify

I don't know how it was they hadn't seen the light.

But since they were both looking at me, they didn't see the tall man ahead of us, the man eating funnel cake as he walked right toward where the light had been.

I shouted, "No, stop!" In my six year-old heart, I knew if he walked where that line had been, something terrible would happen.

Everyone around us turned and looked my way, even the man with the funnel cake. But he didn't stop walking, and when he reached the spot where the line had been, his mouth formed a small oh as he suddenly flattened, like he'd walked into something immovable and the rest of his body just kept going until he was as thin as a piece of paper. If he hadn't been at a slight angle, I

-interesting situation, but we're held at arm's length from it by all the explanations, just tell us what happened.

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wouldn't have been able to see him at all. Then, in the space of a second, his outer edges folded inward, once, then again, faster and faster, until he disappeared in a tiny flash of golden light.

He was gone, and so was the charged feeling.

I screamed, again.

I tried to explain, but no one believed me. No one else had seen anything.

"You're over-tired," Mom said. She ran her fingers through my buzz cut. "We probably shouldn't have let you have so much cotton candy."

Dad was pissed. He said it was all in my imagination. When I protested that I'd really seen something, that I wasn't making it up, he ^{went home} blew up and made us go home early.

For several days, I tried to convince someone, anyone, that I'd seen something terrible.

The only person who believed me was Dale, my best friend. I gave up. Eventually, even I believed it had all been a result of too much sugar. I forgot about it.

The summer of 1980, Dale, my best friend, joined the Marines, and Gloria, my high school sweetheart, the love of my life, went off to Europe. Her parents said ^{it} was to broaden her horizons, but we both knew it was to get her away from me.

On the plus side, I got admitted to MIT on an academic scholarship. Mom and Dad bought me a new Ford Pinto for graduation. Best of all, before she left, Gloria had made me a promise. "I'll be eighteen when I get home, Peter. I'll be ready."

At the time, we were snuggled up together on a blanket we'd spread out on Boston Common, enjoying one of the first warm days of spring, and our last ones together until she returned.

"And that means?"

"You know what I mean," she said, kissing me. "I'll come back a day early and you can

X actual speech

X telling

give us the scene

6?

who? how?

boy? girl?

significant?

* chronology why not tell us, knowled

?

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get us a hotel room. But it better be some place nice!"

No description of her leaving

I saved all summer and made a reservation at the Omni Parker downtown. Gloria told her parents she'd be getting back late the next morning. In truth, she was scheduled to get in to Logan at ten ^{PM} pm. We'd finally have a night all to ourselves. I'd even picked up some weed from a buddy of mine. The baggie was tucked into my back pocket.

Things don't always go as planned. There ~~was~~ ^{is} a strike in France and bad weather over the Atlantic. I was still waiting on her flight at two in the morning. All the kiosks and shops were closed up. I had about a dozen other people for company, all of them waiting ~~with me outside~~ ^{for} customs ^{for} on that one flight.

I paced, too excited about seeing Gloria to sit quietly. I was getting more and more frustrated with the wait. Every minute longer it took for her to arrive, was another minute I couldn't spend alone with her.

She'd been so busy trying to see things on her last days in Europe, that she hadn't had time to write her usual long letters. The last letter had been a hasty note, "Better not keep me waiting!" and her itinerary. Then, just before getting on the plane she'd called. "I can't wait to see you. I love you," she said. In the background, I could hear them announcing the boarding of her flight.

My plans for the evening had included a late dinner with Gloria, so I hadn't eaten and I was ravenous. I went searching for a snack machine.

I found one down a short corridor that ended in one of those ubiquitous "Authorized Personnel Only" doors. The snack machine was tucked into a nook right beside the door.

My joy at this discovery was short-lived. The machine hadn't been restocked after a long day of feeding hungry travelers. All the good stuff was gone, the only choices left were garlic

What actually happens?

too much explanation

chronology

Why significant

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and onion potato chips and pineapple chewing gum. No chance of a kiss if I ate those chips. And pineapple gum. *Really?* I gave up, went back to waiting with the others, still hungry.

I must have dozed off, because I was startled awake by the announcement that Gloria's plane was landing. I suddenly realized I needed to use the facilities, so I dashed off for the restroom. I figured I had just enough time to get cleaned up a bit and get back before they started letting people off the plane.

The first and closest restroom was being cleaned, so I had to run to the next one. I hurried things along as quickly as biologically possible, splashed water on my face and ran back.

The last few passengers were coming out of Customs, meeting up with those waiting for them and heading for the exit. I didn't see Gloria. A couple minutes later, the flight crew came walked past, and I realized I must have missed her.

My heart sank. Did she already go and get a cab? Did she just assume I wouldn't be there because the plane was late? I peeked around the corner and didn't see her at any of the baggage carousels.

A grandmotherly woman saved me. She must have seen my confused look and came over. "I'll bet you're the one that pretty young thing was looking for," she said.

"Gloria? Did she leave already?" I was picturing the look of disappointment on my girlfriend's face.

"Oh, no," the woman said. "I could tell she was looking for you. I told her you'd be right back. I think she went over to the snack machine."

"Thank you!" I said, and sprinted in the direction of the snack machine.

I rounded the corner, and felt it, a charge in the air, like lightning was about to strike. I skidded to a halt. In a rush, the memory of seeing that man fold up at the fair came back. And,

necessary?

*to
much
responsibility*

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just like then, a wickedly bright vertical line appeared, hanging in mid-air. Gloria was just beyond, kneeling with her back to me, getting something out of the machine.

The line shimmered and faded.

Gloria stood, turned and saw me. She grinned, waved. "Peter!" She started toward me a grin on her face.

She was going to walk into that ... ~~whatever~~ it was. This time, it wasn't going to be a stranger who disappeared, it was going to be Gloria. She was going to disappear from my life, from the whole world, forever. I couldn't let that happen. I charged toward her.

tell us

Gloria misinterpreted what I was doing. Laughing, she dropped her carry-on, opened her arms, and rushed towards me.

I tried to yell, "Stop!" But, I stumbled and went flying forward, sure I was going to slam into her.

Instead, I hit something cold, solid and invisible. In that brief instant, I saw Gloria's expression change from delight ... to terror.

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Twenty feet ahead, in the middle of the busy midway, a bright crack appeared hanging in mid-air, from just above the asphalt to a point higher than my dad's head. It was like someone had opened a door to a room on the Sun. The crack existed, dazzlingly bright, for only an instant, then it faded, leaving burning red afterimages in my eyes.

I stood there, amazed and scared, staring at the spot where the light had been. The charged feeling got stronger. I started backing away, pulling on Mom's hand. I didn't want to be there anymore.

"Peter, what's wrong, Sweetie?" she asked. She and my father had both stopped walking when I had. She knelt beside me. Dad just stood there, looking impatient and annoyed.

I don't know how it was they hadn't seen the light.

But since they were both looking at me, they didn't see the tall man ahead of us, the man eating funnel cake as he walked right toward where the light had been.

I shouted, "No, stop!" In my six year-old heart, I knew if he walked where that line had been, something terrible would happen.

Everyone around us turned and looked my way, even the man with the funnel cake. But he didn't stop walking, and when he reached the spot where the line had been, his mouth formed a small oh as he suddenly flattened, like he'd walked into something immovable and the rest of his body just kept going until he was as thin as a piece of paper. If he hadn't been at a slight angle, I

Print a picture to just pose the next thought

suddenly

vertical

New #?

Why is Dad not equally dotting or concerned?

Combine #s

oh " " " "

Julie

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wouldn't have been able to see him at all. Then, in the space of a second, his outer edges folded inward, once, then again, faster and faster, until he disappeared in a tiny flash of golden light.

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combine
As



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I tried to explain, but no one believed me. No one else had seen anything.

"You're over-tired," Mom said. She ran her fingers through my buzz cut. "We probably shouldn't have let you have so much cotton candy."

word choice
managed
frustrated
angry

Dad was pissed. He said it was all in my imagination. When I protested that I'd really seen something, that I wasn't making it up, he blew up and made us go home early.

For several days, I tried to convince someone, anyone, that I'd seen something terrible.

The only person who believed me was Dale, my best friend. I gave up. Eventually, even I believed it had all been a result of too much sugar. I forgot about it.

These
seen
like
slightly
different
writing
styles.

The summer of 1980, Dale, my best friend joined the Marines, and Gloria, my high school sweetheart, the love of my life, went off to Europe. Her parents said ^{it} was to broaden her horizons, but we both knew it was to get her away from me.

for how
long?

On the plus side, I got admitted to MIT on an academic scholarship. Mom and Dad bought me a new Ford Pinto for graduation. Best of all, before she'd left, Gloria had made me a promise. "I'll be eighteen when I get home, Peter. I'll be ready."

At the time, we were snuggled up together on a blanket we'd spread out on Boston Common, enjoying one of the first warm days of spring, and our last ones together until she returned.

wrap into
this

"And that means?" I began.

"You know what I mean," she said, kissing me. "I'll come back a day early, and you can

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get us a hotel room. But it better be some place nice!”

10:00 I saved all summer and made a reservation at the Omni Parker downtown. Gloria told her parents she'd be getting back late the next morning. In truth, she was scheduled to get in to Logan at ten pm. We'd finally have a night all to ourselves. I'd even picked up some weed from a buddy of mine. The baggie was tucked into my back pocket.

2:00 Things don't always go as planned. There ^{was} a strike in France and bad weather over the Atlantic. I was still waiting on her flight at two in the morning. All the kiosks and shops were closed up. ^{There were} ~~Had~~ about a dozen other people ~~for company, all of them~~ waiting with me outside customs on that one flight.

I paced, too excited about seeing Gloria to sit quietly. I was getting more and more frustrated with the wait. Every minute ^{that passed} ~~longer it took for her to arrive,~~ ^{awkward} was another minute I couldn't spend alone with her.

She'd been so busy trying to see things on her last days in Europe, that she hadn't had time to write her usual long letters. The last letter had been a hasty note, “Better not keep me waiting!” and her itinerary. Then, just before getting on the plane she'd called. “I can't wait to see you. I love you,” she said. In the background, I could hear them announcing the boarding of her flight.

eventually ^{became} My plans for the evening had included a late dinner with Gloria, so I hadn't eaten and ~~I~~ was ravenous. I went searching for a snack machine.

I found one down a short corridor that ended in one of those ubiquitous “Authorized Personnel Only” doors. The snack machine was tucked into a nook right beside the door.

My joy at this discovery was short-lived. The machine hadn't been restocked after a long day of feeding hungry travelers. All the good stuff was gone, the only choices left were garlic

JULIE

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and onion potato chips and pineapple chewing gum. No chance of a kiss if I ate those chips. And pineapple gum, really? I gave up, went back to waiting with the others, still hungry.

Have him fall asleep in seat
at sight
- observed by = pale?
- with his back to her?

Unnecessary
need only one side trip.
Use vending machine

I must have dozed off, because I was startled awake by the announcement that Gloria's plane was landing. I suddenly realized I needed to use the facilities, so I dashed off for the restroom. I figured I had just enough time to get cleaned up a bit and get back before they started letting people off the plane.

The first and closest restroom was being cleaned, so I had to run to the next one. I hurried things along as quickly as biologically possible, splashed water on my face and ran back.

Need introductory course
When awake

The last few passengers were coming out of customs, meeting up with those waiting for them and heading for the exit. I didn't see Gloria. A couple minutes later, the flight crew came walked past, and I realized I must have missed her.

My heart sank. Did she already go and get a cab? Did she just assume I wouldn't be there because the plane was late? I peeked around the corner and didn't see her at any of the baggage carousels.

A grandmotherly woman ~~saved me~~. She must have seen my confused look and came over. "I'll bet you're the one that pretty young thing was looking for," she said.

"Gloria? Did she leave already?" I was picturing the look of disappointment on my girlfriend's face.

"Oh no," the woman said. "I ~~could tell~~ ^{assumed that} she was looking for you. I told her you'd be right back. I think she went over to the snack machine."

Delete over

"Thank you!" I said, and sprinted ^{down the hall} ~~in the direction of~~ the snack machine.

I rounded the corner, and felt it, a charge in the air, like lightning was about to strike. I skidded to a halt. In a rush, the memory ^{returned} of seeing that man fold up at the fair came back. And,

Move further forward in sentence

JULIE

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just like then, a wickedly bright vertical line appeared, hanging in mid-air. Gloria was just beyond, kneeling with her back to me, getting something out of the machine.

Which item did she choose?

The line shimmered and faded.

x2

Gloria stood, turned and ~~saw me~~. She grinned, waved. "Peter!" She started toward me a grin on her face.

x2

She was going to walk into that ... whatever it was. This time, it wasn't going to be a stranger ~~who disappeared~~, ^{but} it was going to be Gloria. ~~She was going to disappear~~ ^{who} from my life, from the whole world, forever. I couldn't let that happen. I charged toward her.

Gloria misinterpreted what I was doing. Laughing, she dropped her carry-on, opened her arms, and rushed towards me.

I tried to yell, "Stop!" But, I stumbled and went flying forward, sure I was going to slam into her.

Instead, I hit something cold, solid and invisible. In that brief instant, I saw Gloria's expression change from delight ... to terror.

Ooh! CLOVER SWITCH AT THE END!
I'D LIKE TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.
ACTUALLY, IF IT'S WRITTEN IN FIRST-PERSON SINGULAR,
HE OUGHT TO STILL BE NARRATING. YOU MAY WANT
TO CHANGE IT TO 3rd-PERSON OR OMNISCIENT.
OH... JUST NOTICED IT'S AN EXCERPT.

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Jean's Comments

- Great first line

I was six years old the first time I saw someone fold up and disappear. It was on the midway at the county fair on a perfect blue sky summer day in 1968. It was my first fair, and I was ~~about~~ as happy as a little kid could be. Then, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Twenty feet ahead, in the middle of the busy midway, a bright crack appeared hanging in mid-air, from just above the asphalt to a point higher than my dad's head. It was like someone had ~~cracked open~~ opened a door to a room on the Sun. The crack existed, dazzlingly bright, for only an instant, then it faded, leaving burning red afterimages in my eyes.

I stood there, amazed and scared, staring at the spot where the light had been. The charged feeling got stronger. I started backing away, pulling on Mom's hand. I didn't want to be there anymore.

"Peter, what's wrong, sweetie?" she asked. She and my father had both stopped walking when I had. She knelt beside me. Dad ~~just~~ stood there, looking impatient and annoyed.

I ~~don't~~ ^{didn't} know how it was they hadn't seen the light.

But since they were both looking at me, they didn't see the tall man ahead of us, the man eating funnel cake as he walked right toward where the light had been.

I shouted, "No, stop!" In my six year-old heart, I knew if he walked where that line had been, something terrible would happen.

Everyone around us turned and looked my way, even the man with the funnel cake. But he didn't stop walking, and when he reached the spot where the line had been, his mouth formed a small oh as he suddenly flattened, like he'd walked into something immovable and the rest of his body just kept going until he was as thin as a piece of paper. If he hadn't been at a slight angle, I

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"You're over-tired," Mom said. She ran her fingers through my buzz cut. "We probably shouldn't have let you ^{eat} have so much cotton candy."

Dad was pissed. He said it was all in my imagination. When I protested that I'd really seen something, that I wasn't making it up, he blew up and made us go home early.

For several days, I tried to convince someone, anyone, that I'd seen something terrible.

The only person who believed me was Dale, my best friend. I gave up. Eventually, even I believed it had all been a result of too much sugar. ~~I forgot about it.~~ word echo

The summer of 1980, Dale, my best friend joined the Marines, and Gloria, my high school sweetheart, ^{and} the love of my life, went off to Europe. Her parents said ~~was~~ ^{it} was to broaden her horizons, but we both knew it was to get her away from me.

On the plus side, I got admitted to MIT on an academic scholarship. Mom and Dad bought me a new Ford Pinto for graduation. Best of all, before she'd left, Gloria had made me a promise. ~~I~~ "I'll be eighteen when I get home, Peter. I'll be ready."

At the time, we were snuggled up together on a blanket we'd spread out on Boston Common, enjoying one of the first warm days of spring, and our last ones together until she returned.

"And that means?"

"You know what I mean," she said, kissing me. "I'll come back a day early, and you can

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get us a hotel room. But it better be some place nice!”

I saved all summer and made a reservation at the Omni Parker downtown. Gloria told her parents she'd be getting back late the next morning. In truth, she was scheduled to get in to Logan at ten pm. We'd finally have a night all to ourselves. I'd even picked up some weed from a buddy of mine. The baggie was tucked into my back pocket.

Things don't always go as planned. There ^{was} a strike in France and bad weather over the Atlantic. I was still waiting ^{for her arrival} on her flight at two in the morning. All the kiosks and shops were closed up. I had about a dozen other people for company, all of them waiting with me outside customs on that one flight.

I paced, too excited about seeing Gloria to sit quietly. I was getting more and more frustrated with the wait. Every minute longer it took for her to arrive, was another minute I couldn't spend alone with her.

She'd been so busy trying to see things on her last days in Europe, that she hadn't had time to write her usual long letters. The last ^{one} letter had been a hasty note, “Better not keep me waiting!” and her itinerary. Then, just before getting on the plane she'd called. “I can't wait to see you. I love you,” she said. ~~In the background, I could hear them announcing the boarding of her flight~~

My plans for the evening had included a late dinner with Gloria, so I hadn't eaten and I was ravenous. I went searching for a snack machine.

I found one down a short corridor that ended in one of those ubiquitous “Authorized Personnel Only” doors. The snack machine was tucked into a nook right beside the door.

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I must have dozed off, because I was startled awake by the announcement that Gloria's plane was landing. I ~~suddenly~~ realized I needed to use the facilities, so I dashed off for the restroom. I figured I had just enough time to get cleaned up a bit and get back before they started letting people off the plane.

~~The first and closest restroom was being cleaned, so I had to run to the next one.~~ I hurried things along as quickly as biologically possible, splashed water on my face and ran back.

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"Thank you!" I said, and sprinted in the direction of the snack machine.

I rounded the corner, and felt it, a charge in the air, like lightning was about to strike. I skidded to a halt. In a rush, the memory of seeing that man fold up at the fair came back. And,

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Gloria misinterpreted what I was doing. Laughing, she dropped her carry-on, opened her arms, and rushed towards me.

I tried to yell, "Stop!" But, I stumbled and went flying forward, sure I was going to slam into her.

Instead, I hit something cold, solid and invisible. In that brief instant, I saw Gloria's expression change from delight ... to terror.

Cool! Keep going. Flows well.
I want to know what happens next.

Great tension in only 5 pages.

DAVE

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"Peter, what's wrong, sweetie?" she asked. She and my father had both stopped walking when I had. She knelt beside me. Dad just stood there, looking impatient and annoyed.

I don't know how it was they hadn't seen the light.

But since they were both looking at me, they didn't see the tall man ahead of us, the man eating funnel cake as he walked right toward where the light had been.

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good opening the Milky Way is a cheat Reader has some things to watch for don't get distracted as the story goes on

Reverse

a wall

DAVE

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body just kept going until he was as thin as a piece of paper. If he hadn't been at a slight angle, I wouldn't have been able to see him at all. Then, in the space of a second, his outer edges folded inward once, then again, faster and faster, until he disappeared in a tiny flash of golden light. He was gone, and so was the charged feeling.

I screamed, again.

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"You're over-tired," Mom said. She ran her fingers through my buzz cut. "We probably shouldn't have let you have so much cotton candy."

Dad was ^{ANGRY} pissed. He said it was all in my imagination. When I protested that I'd really seen something, that I wasn't making it up, he blew up and made us go home early.

For several days, I tried to convince someone, anyone, that I'd seen something terrible. The only person who believed me was Dale, my best friend. ~~Doesn't follow~~ Eventually, even I believed it had all been a result of too much sugar. I forgot about it.

The summer of 1980, Dale, my ~~best friend~~ ^{WENT} friend, joined the Marines, and Gloria, my high school sweetheart, the love of my life, went off to Europe. Her parents said was was to broaden her horizons, but we both knew it was to get her away from me.

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good
this is
the promise
you have to
ask for the
promise

Dave

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Distracting
from the
mystery

"And that means?"

"You know what I mean," she said, kissing me. "I'll come back a day early, and you can get us a hotel room. But it better be some place nice!"

I saved all summer and made a reservation at the Omni Parker downtown. Gloria told her parents she'd be getting back late the next morning. In truth, she was scheduled to get in to Logan at ten pm. We'd finally have a night all to ourselves. I'd even picked up some weed from a buddy of mine. The baggie was tucked into my back pocket.

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filler

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Personnel Only” doors. The snack machine was tucked into a nook right beside the door.

More
Distraction
My joy at this discovery was short-lived. The machine hadn't been restocked after a long day of feeding hungry travelers. All the good stuff was gone, the only choices left were garlic and onion potato chips and pineapple chewing gum. No chance of a kiss if I ate those chips. And pineapple gum, really? I gave up, went back to waiting with the others, still hungry.

I must have dozed off, because I was startled awake by the announcement that Gloria's plane was landing. I suddenly realized I needed to use the facilities, so I dashed off for the restroom. I figured I had just enough time to get cleaned up a bit and get back before they started letting people off the plane.

The first and closest restroom was being cleaned, so I had to run to the next one. I hurried things along as quickly as biologically possible, splashed water on my face and ran back.

The last few passengers were coming out of customs, meeting up with those waiting for them and heading for the exit. I didn't see Gloria. A couple minutes later, the flight crew came walked past, and I realized I must have missed her.

My heart sank. Did she already go and get a cab? Did she just assume I wouldn't be there because the plane was late? I peeked around the corner and didn't see her at any of the baggage carousels.

Really?
A grandmotherly woman saved me. She must have seen my confused look and came over. “I'll bet you're the one that pretty young thing was looking for,” she said.

“Gloria? Did she leave already?” I was picturing the look of disappointment on my girlfriend's face.

“Oh no,” the woman said. “I could tell she was looking for you. I told her you'd be right

DATE

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

back. I think she went over to the snack machine."

"Thank you!" I said, and sprinted in the direction of the snack machine.

I rounded the corner, and felt it, a charge in the air, like lightning was about to strike. I skidded to a halt. In a rush, the memory of seeing that man fold up at the fair came back. And, just like then, a wickedly bright vertical line appeared, hanging in mid-air. Gloria was just beyond, kneeling with her back to me, getting something out of the machine.

The line shimmered and faded.

Gloria stood, turned and saw me. She grinned, waved. "Peter!" She started toward me a grin on her face.

She was going to walk into that ... whatever it was. This time, it wasn't going to be a stranger who disappeared, it was going to be Gloria. She was going to disappear from my life, from the whole world, forever. I couldn't let that happen. I charged toward her.

Gloria misinterpreted what I was doing. Laughing, she dropped her carry-on, opened her arms, and rushed towards me.

I tried to yell, "Stop!" But, I stumbled and went flying forward, sure I was going to slam into her.

Instead, I hit something cold, solid and invisible. In that brief instant, I saw Gloria's expression change from delight ... to terror.

Back to the story

All this makes me wonder if the author knows the ending

the premise is great - A kind of dimensional warp - the diversion to girl friend, etc is just that - a diversion - Get us quickly to the airport scene - it doesn't have to be an airport - just a scene where the girlfriend is in jeopardy & the story will continue nicely

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

I was six years old the first time I saw someone fold up and disappear. It was on the midway at the county fair on a perfect blue sky summer day in 1968. It was my first fair, and I was about as happy as a little kid could be. Then, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. Twenty feet ahead, in the middle of the busy midway, a bright crack appeared hanging in mid-air, from just above the asphalt to a point higher than my dad's head. It was like someone had opened a door to a room on the Sun. The crack existed, dazzlingly bright, for only an instant, then it faded, leaving burning red afterimages in my eyes.

Comment [s1]: Add in a couple of sentences here—more description of the immediate surroundings, so that when Peter sees it happen, we are right there with him, the scene clear in our minds.

I stood there, amazed and scared, staring at the spot where the light had been. The charged feeling got stronger. I started backing away, pulling on Mom's hand. I didn't want to be there anymore.

"Peter, what's wrong, sweetie?" she asked. She and my father had both stopped walking when I had. She knelt beside me. Dad just stood there, looking impatient and annoyed.

I don't know how it was they hadn't seen the light.

But since they were both looking at me, they didn't see the tall man ahead of us, the man eating funnel cake as he walked right toward where the light had been.

I shouted, "No, stop!" In my six year-old heart, I knew if he walked where that line had been, something terrible would happen.

Everyone around us turned and looked my way, even the man with the funnel cake. But he didn't stop walking, and when he reached the spot where the line had been, his mouth formed a small oh as he suddenly flattened, like he'd walked into something immovable. ~~I and~~ the rest of his body just kept going until he was as thin as a piece of paper. If he hadn't been at a slight

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

angle, I wouldn't have been able to see him at all. Then, in the space of a second, his outer edges folded inward, once, then again, faster and faster, until he disappeared in a tiny flash of golden light. He was gone, and so was the charged feeling.

Comment [s2]: need better descriptor

I screamed, again.

I tried to explain, but no one believed me. No one else had seen anything.

Comment [s3]: You might consider more dialogue here. Is he stuttering? Crying?

"You're over-tired," Mom said. She ran her fingers through my buzz cut. "We probably shouldn't have let you have so much cotton candy."

Dad was pissed. He said it was all in my imagination. When I protested that I'd really seen something, that I wasn't making it up, he blew up and made us go home early.

Comment [s4]: Again, I'd like to see the dialogue here.

For several days, I tried to convince someone, anyone, that I'd seen something terrible. The only person who believed me was Dale, my best friend. I gave up. Eventually, even I believed it had all been a result of too much sugar. I forgot about it.

The summer of 1980, Dale, my best friend joined the Marines, and Gloria, my high school sweetheart, the love of my life, went off to Europe. Her parents said it was to broaden her horizons, but we both knew it was to get her away from me.

On the plus side, I got admitted to was accepted at MIT on an academic scholarship. Mom and Dad bought me a new Ford Pinto for graduation. Best of all, before she'd left, Gloria had made me a promise. "I'll be eighteen when I get home, Peter. I'll be ready."

At the time, we were snuggled up together on a blanket we'd spread out on Boston Common, enjoying one of the first warm days of spring, and our last ones together until she returned.

Comment [s5]: Put this paragraph before Gloria makes her promise (keep it in chronological order)

"And that means?"

"You know what I mean," she said, kissing me. "I'll come back a day early, and you can

Comment [s6]: meaning what? she'd lie to her parents about her return date?

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

get us a hotel room. But it better be some place nice!”

I saved all summer, and made a reservation at the Omni Parker downtown. Gloria told her parents she'd be getting back late the next morning. In truth, she was scheduled to get in to Logan at ten pm 10PM. We'd finally have a night all to ourselves. I'd even picked up some weed from a buddy of mine. The baggie was tucked into my back pocket.

Things don't always go as planned. There ^{as a} strike in France and bad weather over the Atlantic. ~~At two in the morning, I was still waiting on for her flight to arrive, along with about a dozen others at two in the morning.~~ All the kiosks and shops were closed up. ~~I had about a dozen other people for company, all of them waiting with me outside customs on that one flight.~~

Comment [s7]: ? sentence doesn't make sense to me

I paced, too excited about seeing Gloria to sit quietly. ~~I was getting more and more frustrated with the wait. Why was it taking so long?~~ Every minute longer it took for her to arrive, was another minute I couldn't spend alone with her.

Comment [s8]: it's obvious that's why he's excited

~~(need a transition to this paragraph)~~ She'd been so busy trying to see things on her last days in Europe, that she hadn't had time to write her usual long letters. The last letter had been a hasty note, “Better not keep me waiting!” and her itinerary. Then, just before getting on the plane she'd called. “I can't wait to see you. I love you,” she said. In the background, I could hear them ^{being} announcing the boarding of her flight ~~her flight announced.~~

Comment [s9]: reword

Comment [s10]: Peter's waiting in the airport. His thoughts need to make sense. So...he couldn't wait for her to arrive. They'd been apart for months. It had gotten in the last few days-they'd spoken less, and he'd missed her. Something like that...just a better transition, and more of Peter's thoughts.

My plans for the evening had included a late dinner with Gloria, so I hadn't eaten, and I was ravenous. I went searching in search of a snack machine.

Comment [s11]: something like that-need to reword that last sentence

I found one down a short corridor that ended in one of those ubiquitous “Authorized Personnel Only” doors. The snack machine was tucked into a nook right beside the door.

My joy at this discovery was short-lived. The machine hadn't been restocked after a long day of feeding hungry travelers. All the good stuff was gone, the only choices left were garlic

Comment [s12]: kind of a formal way of saying this. Doesn't sound like Peter's voice. Try something like: Tired, starving, I stared at the machine. It was practically empty. What the hell? Only garlic and onion potato chips and pineapple chewing gum? Why were those even choices? No chance of...etc etc

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

and onion potato chips and pineapple chewing gum. No chance of a kiss if I ate those chips. And pineapple gum, really? I gave up, went back to waiting with the others, still hungry.

I must have dozed off, because I was ~~startled~~ jolted awake by the announcement that Gloria's plane was landing. I suddenly realized I needed to use the facilities, so I dashed off for the restroom. I figured I had just enough time to get cleaned up a bit and get back before they ~~started letting people off the plane~~ Gloria's plane started to de-board (something like that).

Comment [s13]: who says that? not a guy!

The first and closest restroom was being cleaned, so I had to run to the next one. I hurried things along as quickly as biologically possible, splashed water on my face and ran back.

The last few passengers were ~~coming out of~~ exiting customs, meeting up with those waiting for them and heading for the exit. I ~~didn't see Gloria, and started to panic (show this here-is he walking around, running through people?)~~ -A couple of minutes later, the flight crew came-walked past sauntered through, and I realized I must have missed her.

Comment [s14]: reword

My heart sank. ~~Did she already go and get a cab? Did~~ Had she assumed she just assume that I wouldn't hadn't shown up for some reason be there because the plane was late? I bolted back to the baggage carousels. She was nowhere to be seen peeked around the corner and didn't see her at any of the baggage carousels.

A grandmotherly woman saved me. She must have seen my confused look, because she approached me and touched me on the shoulder ~~and came over~~. "I'll bet you're the one that pretty young thing was looking for," she said.

"Gloria? Did she leave already?" I was picturing the look of disappointment on my girlfriend's face.

"Oh no," the woman said. "I could tell she was looking for you. I told her you'd be right back. I think she went over to the snack machine."

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"Thank you!" I said, and sprinted in the direction of the snack machine.

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I like this story a lot. From the first sentence. I wanted to keep reading. I think that this story needs another pass - better verbs, tightening of sentences, some more description as to what's happening through the use of dialogue. I want to have a better idea of who Peter is, what his personality is like. You could extend the dialogue between them, before she leaves for school. Maybe add in emails between them. Add dialogue (as I noted) at the beginning of the story, to show us how Peter reacts when he sees the man disappear. Also, note your word usage. A guy

- VOICE

SHORT STORY EXCERPT: FOLDING MAN

does NOT say he needed to use the facilities. He had to go to the john, or take a piss. Look for that when you edit.

Keep writing!