

DAYMAY

by

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Based on the play "Angel's Flight" by Richard Taylor

- EXTRACT -

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EXT. AIRPORT BERLIN TEGEL - EARLY EVENING

OPENING CREDITS over the very busy airfield bathed in a gloriously blazing sunset. Planes are taxiing, landing and taking off at an unusually high frequency.

From the many fragments of RADIO COMMUNICATION between flight crews and the tower, we learn that the second Airport in Berlin (Schönefeld) has been closed temporarily, so all its traffic is being diverted to Tegel.

In all of the cacophony of jet engines and radio chatter there is one singular, anxious voice, repeatedly trying to make itself heard.

PILOT VOICE (O.S.)
Tegel Approach - Tegel Approach,
this is Delta-Echo-Bravo-Romeo-
India. Can you read me?

There is no reply, as all traffic controllers are inundated with calls from other landing aircraft.

PILOT VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(with urgency)
Tegel Approach - Tegel Approach,
this is Delta-Echo-Bravo-Romeo-
India. Request permission for
priority landing due to flight
instruments malfunction. Pan-pan...

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (O.S.)
Delta-Echo-Bravo-Romeo-India. This
is Air Traffic Control, are you
declaring an emergency?

PILOT VOICE (O.S.)
Yes. Actually No. But I need
priority landing permission due to
malfunctioning instruments.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (O.S.)
Delta-Echo-Bravo-Romeo-India. Are
you declaring an emergency, or not?

PILOT VOICE (O.S.)
No, not as such, but I cannot
divert. It's too late.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (O.S.)
Delta-Echo-Bravo-Romeo-India, I
cannot give you landing permission
for Tegel, if you have no
emergency. My airspace is totally
stacked with heavies, I cannot
squeeze you anywhere in here. We
are full with diverted traffic from
Schönefeld.

(MORE)

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Maintain altitude and contact ACT
 Longan on one-two-five-zero-niner.
 Landing permission denied.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW of airport Tegel with its two runways. Way down below, a passenger jet is about to rotate, whilst a one engine Cessna crosses in the foreground, with its visible call sign: D-E-B-R-I.

SMASH CUT TO

INT. PASSENGER JET - BUSINESS CLASS

Heavy turbulences rock the business passengers in their seats, as URSULA STERN, 40+, bubbly and dressed in eco-clothing, is being ushered into the cabin through the drawn curtain between business and economy by a RED HAired FLIGHT ATTENDANT. A particularly strong turbulence causes Ursula to lose her balance. She topples and smashes her head against the arm rest of an aisle seat.

LINA BRENNER, a cool brunette, 30-35ys old, the occupant of this seat, is irritated as she finds herself eye-to-eye with slightly dazed Ursula.

URSULA

(dazed)

I'm sorry. Really so sorry, I just lost my balance. Silly me.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Are you ok? Did you hurt yourself?

URSULA

(still dazed)

I'm sorry.

(tries to ne funny)

I don't usually get swept off my feet this easily.

The Flight Attendant returns to economy.

URSULA (CONT'D)

I'm alright. Really, don't worry... just this sudden turbulence. Silly me.

Though not really in the mood, Lina feels obliged to help. She retrieves a tissue from her bag and hands it to Ursula.

LINA

You've got some blood. There...

She points at her eyebrow. Ursula gratefully takes the tissue and dabs her brow. A further TURBULENCE rocks the cabin. Lina's grip on the armrest tightens.

Her uneasy gaze wanders to the window which is completely filled by the glorious sunset.

URSULA
Do you also hate flying so much?

LINA
(startled)
What? Flying? No. I don't hate flying.

URSULA
(nervous giggle)
Lucky you. Me, I am convinced I die every time I get on a plane. I imagine things, like the wings are gonna break off, or a bird hits an engine or a bomb explodes in the hold. Something silly like that.

LINA
(aloofly)
I don't think it's a good idea to talk about such things.

URSULA
You mean one could conjure up bad things to happen?

LINA
No, but I think that most people would find it inappropriate to discuss the possibility of a crash whilst being inside a plane.

The TURBULENCES have died down and the Fasten-Seat-Belt-Sign is being switched off with the typical GONG.

Ursula ponders over Lina's comment for a second, then stretches out her hand, beaming.

URSULA
I'm Ursula. Ursula Stern. I'm flying over to see my little granddaughter in New York. It's her first birthday and I've been a grandmother for a year now, you know. How time passes.

Lina hesitates for a moment: does she really want to get herself into this? Then she takes Ursula's hand.

LINA
Lina Brenner. Pleased to meet you.

URSULA
Also New York?

LINA

Yes.

URSULA

Family?

LINA

No. Business.

After a beat.

URSULA

New York... Always dreamed of making it, one day.

(sings, quoting Sinatra)

If I can make it there

I'll make it anywhere.

LINA

Yep, good Ol'Blue Eyes.

Ursula euphorically continues to hum "New York, New York", but stops when she realizes that Lina's gaze has wandered to the back of the cabin and has locked on YUSUF DAWUD, a 40 year old man with black hair and dark complexion.

Two beats, while a BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT, comes around with hot towels. Ursula and Lina each take a steaming little towel roll. The Flight Attendant moves on.

URSULA

(marveling)

Quite something travelling First Class, isn't it?

Lina who would rather be left alone, gives her a noncommittal smile but goes along half-heartedly.

LINA

I think they call it Business Class.

URSULA

(in awe)

Whatever they want to call it, it sure is classy.

(gesturing to the back)

I guess I've left some very envious people behind. Packed like sardines they are back there in Economy.

(with unending euphoria)

Now look at me, here I am in Business Class, for the price of an Economy ticket. Have you also been upgraded?

Ursula follows Lina's gaze back to the menacing looking Dawud.

URSULA (CONT'D)
 Gosh, that guy doesn't half look
 pissed off. Is he staring at you?

Before Lina even has a chance to answer, Dawud is up on his feet and towering over her.

DAWUD
 (menacing)
 I bet you thought you could get
 away from me? Well think again and
 get ready to...

He is being interrupted by the Blond Flight Attendant on her way back to the forward galley.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Excuse me, sir, may I?

Lina grabs the opportunity to jump to her feet and hurry to the front toilet. Dawud, blocked by the passing Flight Attendant, gives her a hateful glare.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT TOILET

Lina locks the door from the inside and stares at herself in the mirror, as anxiety starts to creep over her face.

CUT TO:

BUSINESS CLASS - HENRY AND AIDA

HENRY SMITH, in his 60's, youthful, charismatic appearance, despite his greying hair, has been and still is, a very successful rock star. Leaned against his shoulder is the head of his young girlfriend, AIDA, mid-twenties. A hefty turbulence causes their heads to bang together. Simultaneously the "Fasten Seat Belts"-sign illuminates again along with the typical gong signal.

AIDA
 What was that?

HENRY
 (still dozing)
 What? Nothing.

His hand disappears under her short skirt. She crosses her legs - not in the mood.

AIDA
 Henry, I've flown before. This bump
 was harder than usual.

Henry now goes for her breasts. He gives her his chart-breaking rock star smile.

HENRY

Yeah, harder it was, just how I feel right now, baby.

AIDA

Stop it.

HENRY

Relax, honey. You must learn to chill out, honestly, baby.

Aida looks out of the window, worried.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Come on, honey, I know your little kitty wants to, why don't you?

AIDA

Cut it out, Henry. You're not taking me seriously.

He retracts his hand sulkily and starts paging through an in-flight magazine, whilst Aida looks around the cabin.

AIDA (CONT'D)

How come there are so many empty seats here up front?

HENRY

Hmm.

AIDA

Didn't you say it's going to be booked out, to the last seat because of Easter?

HENRY

In the back, but not in business.

AIDA

It would have been so nice if all of us could have sat together.

The sparkle is back in Henry's eyes.

HENRY

Baby, you're with me, the lead singer, not with them. And it's always been this way. Star up front, band in the back. That's the business.

He gives her that smile again. Aida doesn't fall for it; she retrieves her iPod from the seat pocket and insert the plugs to her ears.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT TOILETTE

A HARD KNOCK on the door makes Lina jump. She has dabbed her face with cold water and now looks anxiously at the door.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Excuse me, the captain has turned on the fasten seatbelt sign, I must ask you to return to your seat. Sorry.

Lina's tension eases slightly.

LINA

Out in a second.

She looks at herself in the mirror, takes a deep breath and opens the door.

CUT TO:

AISLE - GALLEY AREA

Lina steps into the aisle. The Blond Flight Attendant gives her a short stare, but says nothing. Lina's gaze moves to Ursula who is busy looking for her knitting gear in a large handbag, then on to Dawud who is sitting two rows further back. His eyes are closed and he looks relaxed. Only his hands are tightly clawed around the armrest of his seat.

After another deep breath, Lina starts to move towards the end of the cabin, wanting to walk into Economy. Dawud doesn't notice her move, but just as Lina is about to draw back the curtain, she is stopped in her track by the Red-Haired Flight Attendant, who coming from Economy, blocks her way. She hastily closes the dividing curtain. Lina is trying to move around her.

LINA

Excuse me.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Can I help?

She does not give way.

LINA

No thanks. Just wanted to sit in the back for a little while.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I am sorry, Madam, but Economy is completely full. You'll be much more comfortable up here.

LINA
Yes, but I just wanted to stretch my...

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT
(cutting her short)
Besides, the Fasten Seatbelt sign is on, so I must ask you to please take your seat.

The Flight Attendant's cold smile suppresses any desire Lina may feel to argue, so she returns to her seat.

CUT TO:

SEAT LINA AND URSULA

Ursula has started knitting. Lina slumps into her seat and fastens her belt.

URSULA
That man...
(nods to the back, where Dawud sits)
He's a real yob, isn't he?

Lina stares at the setting sun beyond the window as the plane is again rocked by a series of moderate turbulences. They cause Ursula to nervously speed up her knitting.

URSULA (CONT'D)
Oops! Here we go again.

CUT TO:

SEAT MIKE AND KARL-FRIEDRICH

MIKE AMBOSS, early 30's, fit, sunny looks, young owner of a small chain of fitness clubs. He smiles at his conservative looking neighbour, who is busy punching numbers into his laptop.

MIKE
Almost made it.

KARL-FRIEDRICH DAMM (K-F), a no-nonsense business man in his forties, scowls at him.

KARL-FRIEDRICH
I beg your pardon?

MIKE

Almost made it. Out of these
turbulences. Subsiding.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

Ahh.. A weatherman.

He wants to return to his work, Mike butts in.

MIKE

No, no... just know the flying
weather. Had to study it this
afternoon. Flew myself over from
the island in my little Cessna.

K-F doesn't understand.

MIKE (CONT'D)

They didn't want to let me land. At
first. Too crowded with traffic
being diverted from the other
airport.

(winks)

Sneaked in amongst the "heavies".
Wouldn't have made this flight
otherwise.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

I understand. You're a pilot.

MIKE

Only single-engine.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

(drily)

Should have flown on to New York
then.

MIKE

Wishful thinking. Still got to do
my instrument flight test. Before
that, it's only hoping around on
visuals. Besides, didn't want to
spoil Lindbergh's record.

Not showing much sense of humor, K-F nods slightly and
resumes his work.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT (O.S.)

May I offer the gentlemen a drink
from the bar?

CUT TO:

SEAT LINA AND URSULA

Lina is handed a Bloody Mary by the Blond Flight Attendant as she catches a glimpse of Dawud who is staring at her hatefully.

Ursula is knitting away furiously and unaware of Lina's growing fear. After the Flight Attendant has moved on with her drinks cart and thus manoeuvred herself between Lina and Dawud, Lina jumps to her feet and retreats to the front of the cabin, wanting to evade Dawud's mad stare.

FRONT OF CABIN

A seat in the very first row is empty. Thank God. Lina sits down. Clutches her Bloody Mary, takes a big sip.

DAWUD (O.S.)

I won't let you get away, you know.

Lina freezes. Dawud suddenly towering over her. Only chance is attack. She jumps to her feet, spilling some of her drink on Dawud's white shirt. None of the other passengers notice her predicament.

LINA

I will call the Flight Attendants.

DAWUD

Will you really?

Leans over to her and whispers menacingly into her ear.

DAWUD (CONT'D)

Really?

LINA

Leave me alone, please. Stop following me.

Dawud seems to ponder over what she said. His aggressiveness, gone. Lina feels she's got him cornered in some fortunate, unexpected way.

DAWUD

Following you..?

LINA

(assertively)

Yes, following me. You followed me onto this flight. You have followed me everywhere for months now. What do you want from me?

Dawud ponders. The aggression seems to have drained from him.

DAWUD
 (gently)
 I'm angry. And I have reason to be.
 Very angry.

Though spoken softly, his words and the fact that both Flight Attendants walk through the curtain to Economy, frighten Lina.

LINA
 Mr. Dawud, I regret but that case
 was ruled against you.

DAWUD
 My case? Your case. Slut. You got
 them to take away my girls.

His anger is building up again.

LINA
 (trying to pacify)
 I honestly regret the fact that you
 cannot see your children at the
 moment. But it was the court's
 decision, not mine.

DAWUD
 (fiercely)
 My wife wouldn't lie. She wouldn't
 dare. You've twisted her mind. She
 stole my girls, my house... my
 pride! And all of it is your damned
 making, Brenner! Your damned
 making! You ruined my life!

Lina switches into lawyer attack mode. Not too loud, but loud enough to draw attention.

LINA
 Listen, Mr. Dawud, I am not
 responsible for you molesting your
 own children. That is your own
 doing. Nothing to do with me.

DAWUD
 You know that's a damned lie! My
 wife lied. I didn't touch my girls.
 Never! You put that into her mind.
 How sick must you be, to believe
 that I would do anything like that.
 You damned whore!

None of the passengers seem to have followed any of this but Lina is relieved to notices the Blond Flight Attendant re-entering Business. She feels safe.

LINA

(icily)

I advise you to back off, Mr. Dawud, and back off for good. If not...

(she pauses for effect)

I will nail your balls to my chopping board before sending you back to prison. Understood?

Dawud is temporarily stunned. Lina's timing perfect. The Flight Attendant has walked up to them.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT

May I also offer you another drink from the bar?

Dawud stares at Lina for a moment, then turns around and ambles back to his seat.

CUT TO:

SEAT KONRAD AND SEBASTIAN

The plane is rocked by yet another turbulence. Dawud his footing. He bumps into the side of a row of seat, but manages to keep his balance and walks on.

KONRAD BAUMANN, a youthful 70 year-old, successful building contractor, reaches out to help, but Dawud carries on without taking any notice.

Sitting next to Konrad is SEBASTIAN KRAUSE, 35, tall, slim and elegant. He hasn't taken any notice of Dawud as he is too worried by the turbulences. He grabs Konrad's hand and squeezes it tightly.

KONRAD

(winks)

I thought you had gotten over your aviophobia.

Feeling sussed out, Sebastian tightens his grip on Konrad's hand.

KONRAD (CONT'D)

Is that all you got, you fairy?

SEBASTIAN

I'll get you to whimper, don't you worry, Miss.

He squeezes his friend's hand as hard as he can. The pain is clearly visible in Konrad's face, but he does not whimper. Another turbulence and Sebastian's lets go of the hand. Konrad looks at him warmly.

KONRAD

No way, sweetheart, this bird isn't going to crash.

Sebastian looks at him sadly.

SEBASTIAN

I wouldn't mind, if I died with you.

KONRAD

But I would. It would kill me twice over. Stop talking like this. Please, Sebastian.

He takes Sebastian's hand.

SEBASTIAN

I want you to have a long and happy life. You are young sweetheart, I am old. We knew this wouldn't be easy.

Sebastian's eyes turn bleary.

SEBASTIAN (CONT'D)

Don't... Please, I don't even want to think about that.

(forcing optimism)

All will be good. Dr. Goldman is the best surgeon around. Very hard to get to and we got an appointment within a month. It's a stroke of fate, Koni. I am sure of that.

KONRAD

A stroke of fate? How sweet you are.

SEBASTIAN

Yes, it is. Look, we met in New York. Fell in love. New York is our haven. It will be good to us.

Konrad is touched. He gently strokes Sebastian's hand.

KONRAD

(smiles)

Ok, enough gloom. If this Dr. Goldie is any good, he'll have me running the New York marathon next year.

The Red-Haired Flight Attendant arrives with her drinks cart.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT

How about a drink, Gentlemen?

KONRAD

(beaming)

And why not? What's on offer? I feel like something ultrahazardous.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Well, perhaps I could fix you up with a heavenly cocktail?

KONRAD

We'll have two of those then, thank you very much.

He winks at Sebastian who, lightening up, gives him a brave smile.

CUT TO:

SEAT LINA AND URSULA

Lina moved through to the window seat in an attempt to evade Dawud's stare. Ursula lays down her knitting.

URSULA

Time to pee.

She smiles at Lina and goes to the forward toilet. Lina looks out of the window. Her face is bathed in the warm light of the sunset. Suddenly Mike.

MIKE (O.S.)

Help me.

Lina looks startled.

MIKE (CONT'D)

I know you from somewhere.

Lina looks at him blandly.

MIKE (CONT'D)

No come-on, really. I bet my... no really. Where have we met?

LINA

(cool)

And next you'll tell me you know this nice little Italian in Manhattan.

MIKE

Seriously. No.

He extends his hand.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Mike Amboss.
 (he gestures to the vacant
 seat)
 May I?

He sits down without awaiting her reply.

LINA

Listen Mr...

MIKE

Mike.

LINA

Listen Mr. Amboss. Usually I have
 guys like you for breakfast with
 baked beans on toast. So stop
 crowding me.

MIKE

(amused)
 For breakfast? I'm up for it.

Lina shakes her head and looks back out of the window. Mike
 remains insistent.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Chairman? Sorry Chairwoman?
 Architect?

Lina rolls her eyes.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Got it! Lawyer. You're a lawyer.
 Binz. Two years ago, in Binz. You
 represented the other side who
 wanted to stop me from building my
 little landing strip. It's you!

LINA

Congrats. I remember, you won that
 one.

MIKE

(grins)
 So much for having me with beans on
 toast.

LINA

(grins back)
 The hearing was after lunch. Long
 past my breakfast time.

The plane is jolted again. The fasten-seat-belt flashes on.

CUT TO:

SEAT KARL-FRIEDRICH

Ursula, on her way back from the toilet, quickly seeks refuge in an empty aisle seat next to K-F. He ignores her.

URSULA
 Sorry, I'll be gone in a jiffy.
 Just as soon as it stopped rocking.

A short, bland stare from K-F, before his eyes return to his computer screen. Ursula can't stand tension, so she starts with small talk.

URSULA (CONT'D)
 It's very posh here in business.

No reaction from K-F. After a beat.

URSULA (CONT'D)
 You also been upgraded?

K-F gives her a withering look.

KARL-FRIEDRICH
 No. I have not been upgraded. I
 paid the full price for my ticket.
 And do you know why?

Ursula smiles at him - things are going smoothly.

KARL-FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)
 So that I can concentrate and work
 in peace.

Ursula doesn't get it.

URSULA
 You have to work on the flight? But
 then you can't enjoy any of this
 posh stuff. The finger food, the
 drinks...

K-F looks at her blandly.

KARL-FRIEDRICH
 No. As I say, I need to work.

Finally Ursula understands.

URSULA
 Sorry I'll be gone, as soon as the
 signs are off.

CUT TO:

SEAT LINA AND MIKE

MIKE

I noticed the guy back there was hitting on you.

LINA

A disgruntled loser. Keeps following me around.
(after a beat)
Bloody hot in here.

Lina starts fanning her face with an in-flight magazine.

MIKE

I never met a happy loser. Is he threatening you?

LINA

Not sure.
(provocatively)
Would you protect me if he did?

Mike looks over to Dawud.

MIKE

(grins)
Probably not.

LINA

How gallant of you.

MIKE

(lightly)
He's probably armed.

LINA

He mused have passed through security like all of us.

MIKE

Maybe a ceramic knife in his shoe?

Mike realises that Lina is seriously worrying.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What did you do to him to get him so mad?

Lina stops the Red-Haired Flight Attendant who is passing by.

LINA

Excuse me, do you think the temperature could be turned down a little. It's getting quite hot in here.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I'll tell the captain right away.
Is there anything else I can get
you, madam?

LINA
No thanks.

The Flight Attendant goes to the front.

MIKE
They're saving fuel. The air
conditioning system pulls a lot
extra.

Lina nods and pulls a small mirror from her bag. With it, she
tries to catch a glimpse of Dawud sitting a few rows to the
back. Mike notices.

MIKE (CONT'D)
So what's the verdict? Guilty or
not guilty?

LINA
That's not an option with us
lawyers.

MIKE
So you did him in?

LINA
That's what he thinks.

She can see Dawud's shaky image in her hand mirror. He is
still staring at her.

MIKE
Aha, and now he wants revenge. How
did he know you'd be on this flight
today?

LINA
He has been following me for
months, ever since he has been
released from prison. Fortunately
never in a dark alley. Not so far,
anyway.

MIKE
Eerie shit. Ok, I'll be your
bodyguard on this flight here.

Lina raises her glass.

LINA
Thanks.

MIKE
(winks at her)
Here's to our Liaison Dangereuse.

CUT TO:

SEAT HENRY AND AIDA

HENRY
First time in Business, honey?

AIDA
Yes. But what's the point? You're not getting there any faster than the guys in the back?

HENRY
(fatherly smile)
You will have the time of your life travelling with me, you'll see. Exciting places, famous people with things to say, people who change the world.

AIDA
(suddenly earnestly)
I know, Henry, it's a great opportunity.

HENRY
What's the matter? I thought you love me.

AIDA
I wouldn't be here otherwise.

HENRY
But?

AIDA
No but.

HENRY
(insisting)
But?

AIDA
I don't just want to be your groupie.

HENRY
My groupie? What are you talking about, sweetheart?
(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

You're not one of the chicks who throw their panties at me, hoping I have a little sniff and maybe I or one of the guys from the band take them backstage at the end of the gig.

AIDA

I know, but there's nothing for me to do except be the lead singer's girlfriend and hang out backstage night after night.

Henry thinks for a moment.

HENRY

Ok. Here's what we do. From now on you will be our new tour manager.

AIDA

(surprised)

For real? Doing the hotel bookings, catering service, limo service? Everything? I get to decide?

HENRY

Everything.

Aida ponders excitedly.

AIDA

But Jimmy, is already doing all of that.

HENRY

Yeah, but Jimmy is always doing it from far away, via the Internet. I need someone on scene, who travels with us.

AIDA

And it would be real work? I can make all the decisions?

HENRY

(solemnly)

I swear.

Aida still can't believe it.

AIDA

And I get paid and all?

Henry leans over and nibbles at her ear.

HENRY

Now you're talking dirty, Baby.
Paid and all it will be...

CUT TO:

SEAT LINA AND MIKE

Lina has lightened up with Mike by her side. Both are handed a new drink from the drinks cart by the Blond Flight Attendant.

LINA

Thanks for keeping me company. At least now the guy will stumble over you and break his neck before he can get to me.

MIKE

Happy to help.

They clink glasses and drink. Lina scans the cabin.

LINA

Have you noticed anything yet?

MIKE

(grins)
Yep, fact that you're using that poor sod back there to come onto me.

LINA

No seriously, there is something strange going on here.

Mike looks around. Dawud has his eyes shut.

MIKE

Can't detect anything unusual. Even your friend has gone to sleep back there.

LINA

I don't mean him.

MIKE

What then?

Lina nods towards Ursula still sitting next to K-F a few rows ahead.

LINA

See that eco-bird over there?

Mike nods.

LINA (CONT'D)

She was upgraded from Economy.

MIKE

So was I. Many times.

LINA

Yes but she was moved up here whilst we were taking off. Don't tell me that's not unusual.

MIKE

Maybe someone at the back got sick and they urgently needed the space.

LINA

During take-off? With the seatbelt-sign on?

MIKE

Yes it's unusual but not strange. I was also upgraded. Apparently Economy had been over-booked. Grant you though, they did it at check-in, before take-off.

LINA

I don't know. When I tried to wander around a bit, stretch my legs, the Flight Attendant wouldn't let me go through to Economy.

MIKE

I know. I was watching. But the fasten-seatbelt-signs were on.

LINA

True, but she acted very strangely. Almost as if she wanted to keep me from catching a glimpse of what was going on behind the curtain.

Mike frowns.

MIKE

Tell you what. I'd hate to put any strain on our young relationship, but I think your fantasy has gotten the better of you.

Lina gives him a defiant look. Mike relents.

LINA

Ok, you're saying the flight Attendant didn't want you to look inside Economy?

Lina is not willing to discuss the issue any further. Mike empties his glass in one swig and hands it to the Blond Flight Attendant, who is on her way to the forward galley, gesturing her to top it up again.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT
With pleasure.

As soon as she turns her back, Mike gets up from his seat.

LINA
Why don't you have another go?

Lina steps out and starts to move towards the curtain. The Blond Flight Attendant smiles at her, while handing Mike his drink, then continues towards the galley. Mike smiles in a so-where's-the-problem sort of way. Lina passes the sleeping Dawud with trepidation and reaches the curtain.

Suddenly, however, the Red-Haired Flight Attendant appears through the curtain. She quickly pulls it shut before Lina can catch a glimpse beyond it.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT
May I help you?

LINA
No, just want to stretch my legs.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I am so sorry, but we are still serving back there. Maybe a little later?

LINA
I see.

RED HAIR FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Thank you for your cooperation.

Lina returns to her seat. The Flight Attendant joins her blond colleague in the front galley.

LINA
What did I tell you?

Mike looks puzzled as he sits down next to her.

CUT TO:

SEAT KONRAD AND SEBASTIAN

Konrad perched on the armrest of a neighbouring seat, takes a sip from his orange juice.

KONRAD

How strange, only a few weeks ago,
I wouldn't have touched this stuff.
Freaking healthy.

SEBASTIAN

I know. You'd make me drink your
sour wine instead.

KONRAD

(smiles warmly)
Dry, my dear, not sour. Cheap wines
are sour, good wines are dry.

He takes another swig.

KONRAD (CONT'D)

Seb, we should talk about finances
soon.

SEBASTIAN

What is there to talk about?

KONRAD

(patiently)
If this thing of mine keeps
spreading at this rate, we should
be prepared.

SEBASTIAN

(dismissively)
We are prepared and we are doing
something about it. Konrad, please
stop bringing up these depressing
thoughts.

KONRAD

Seb, we have to face the facts. Be
reasonable, please.

SEBASTIAN

(stubbornly)
We are being reasonable.

KONRAD

No, we're not. What point is there,
in letting the tax people lay their
hands on most of your inheritance?
We must do the transfer before it's
too late.

SEBASTIAN

There's plenty of time for that.
Plenty of time! Right now all we
need to do is see that you get the
best treatment without any further
delay.

KONRAD

Seb, Seb, Seb, we can't keep beating about the bush. I am dying, Sebastian, so much is certain. We must face it. Together. And we must get things organized.

SEBASTIAN

Koni, please stop. First we wait and see what the tests in New York will show, then we take appropriate steps.

KONRAD

What do you expect them to show? I already saw two of the top specialists in Berlin.

SEBASTIAN

They may be wrong.

KONRAD

Two specialists, both wrong, Seb?

SEBASTIAN

(stolidly)
We will see.

He reaches for a book unwilling to continue the conversation. Konrad looks at him ponderingly then rises and goes to the toilet. On his way forward he passes Mike and Lina.

SEAT LINA AND MIKE

LINA

I don't know how you feel, but I need to know. Now.

Mike nods.

MIKE

Ok. I'll provide the smoke screen.

Lina stands up.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(grinning)
But now we're partners in crime, first names?

He stretches out his hand. Lina takes it.

LINA

Lina.

MIKE

Mike.

Lina starts moving towards the curtain after checking that there is no Flight Attendant in sight. Again she has to move past Dawud who is still passed out.

Another checking look in Mike's direction and she freezes. The Red Haired Flight Attendant has suddenly appeared behind Mike. She looks at Lina in a bland, detached sort of way.

Lina reacts quickly by addressing Henry, as if it were what she had intended all along.

LINA
Hey aren't you Henry Smith from
Doomsday Afternoon?

HENRY
(rock star smile)
I'm afraid I am.

Lina notices the Flight Attendants surreptitious stare.

LINA
I saw one of your concerts in
Berlin. Long time ago. Was
fantastic.

Henry looks flattered. Lina glances at the curtain. It's a mere three feet away. At the far end, the Red-Haired Flight Attendant has started walking towards her.

HENRY (O.S.)
I guess you'd like an autograph?

Lina nods.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(to Aida)
Hand me a card from your bag,
honey, will you?

The Flight Attendant has reached Mike who only now becomes aware of the predicament. He quickly embroils her in a conversation. Lina cannot hear what they are saying, but to Lina's amazement, the Flight Attendant looks at her and smiles, while giving her an encouraging nod.

HENRY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Here we are.

He holds up the signed autograph card.

LINA
(distracted)
Oh well, that's alright. Don't
worry.

HENRY
 (pissed)
 Hey, I thought you wanted...

Lina has already turned away.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Stupid cow.

Having reached the curtain, Lina slides it to the side a little and looks through the gap.

CUT TO:

She looks shocked. After a few long moments, she turns to Mike who realizes from her bewildered expression, that there's something awfully wrong back there. He looks at the Red-Haired Flight Attendant who nods encouragingly but conspiratorially places her finger across her lips: hush-hush!

None of the other business passengers pay any attention, as Mike walks up to Lina. Both stare incredulously at what lies before them.

The CAMERA CRASH-ZOOMS into a WIDE SHOT to reveal a totally empty Economy cabin. Not a single soul, just empty rows of seats. No passengers, no cabin crew.

Lina and Mike are dumbstruck as they walk down the aisle towards the rear of the plane. All empty. They open the door to the aft toilet. Also empty.

LINA
 Where have they all gone?

HENRY
 This can't be.

LINA
 This is spooky. The plane was full when we boarded. Where have they all gone?

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT (OS)
 There wasn't anyone.

Lina and Mike spin around to find the Blond Flight Attendant approach them smiling. She has closed the dividing curtain to Business.

LINA
 (louder)
 How do you mean, there wasn't anyone? We all saw them when we boarded. How come it's all empty in here?

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 Please, Ms. Brenner, there is really no need to worry. There has been a problem with the bookings. A computer glitch. The Economy passengers you saw during boarding were actually booked onto a different plane.

Lina stares at her.

LINA
 How do you know my name?

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 From the passenger list, Ms. Brenner.

Lina is speechless.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)
 We're just about to serve dinner, could you please return to your seats now?

LINA
 You surely don't mean to tell me that they dispatch an empty plane across the Atlantic simply because of a computer fault?

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 That's precisely what happened, Ms. Brenner.

(in a confidential tone)
 The airlines have to operate a contractually agreed number of flights on any of their routes or they stand to lose their slots. So it is unusual, but it does happen from time to time, that we have to fly almost empty.

LINA
 If that's so, what's all this secretiveness? Why did your colleague tell me earlier that dinner was being served in Economy?

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT
 (with forgiving smile)
 For your own protection, Ms. Brenner. Many Passengers get very anxious if things happen which seem unusual to them. It was the captain's wish not to let the booking error be known.

(MORE)

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

But when we realized that you had to satisfy your curiosity, we let you do it. So you see, there really is nothing to worry about.

Lina shakes her head, she is still not convinced.

LINA

That's crazy.

Mike finds the Attendant's arguments plausible.

MIKE

Yes it is. But it's also true, that with all the hard fighting for profitable routes going on amongst airlines, it is not uncommon that occasional empty flights are accepted as a necessary evil for fear of losing the slot.

The Flight Attendant corroborates with a regretting smile. Lina frowns at Mike.

LINA

You are not saying you really believe any of this?

Mike shrugs.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT

I must really ask you to please go back and take your seats in Business now. It's only two of us in service on this flight and we don't want everybody to get scattered all around the plane.

LINA

(pointedly)

And no doubt you wouldn't want us to mention the empty Economy?

The Flight Attendant smiles conspiratorially.

BLOND FLIGHT ATTENDANT

We would be very grateful.

CUT TO:

BUSINESS CABIN

Lina and Mike re-enter Business. They are followed by the Blond Flight Attendant who closes the curtain meticulously, before disappearing into the front galley.

SEAT LINA AND MIKE

Lina and Mike sit down.

LINA

Don't tell me you didn't find this spooky.

MIKE

Spooky, no. Maybe strange or unusual, but definitely not spooky. There's a rational reason behind it.

He retrieves a tin of Fisherman's Friend from his Jacket, opens it.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Little refreshment?

Lina looks at the open tin, then to Mike.

LINA

Very funny. Do you want me to use a straw?

Mike looks inside the tin and is perplexed. The mint pastilles are all crushed and pulverized.

MIKE

What on earth happened to these guys? Just bought them at the airport.

Tries to be funny.

MIKE (CONT'D)

How about a little Fisherman's snuff then?

LINA

Thanks, but no thanks.

CUT TO:

SEAT KARL-FRIEDRICH AND URSULA

URSULA

I'm Ursula Stern.

K-F looks at Ursula's hand as if she was offering him a dead rat.

URSULA (CONT'D)

(insistently)

Ursula.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

(impatiently)

I will not tell you my name,
because it will not be of any
relevance to you.

URSULA

Won't it?

KARL-FRIEDRICH

No. I tend to be very blunt, Mrs.
Stern, and I know most people can't
cope with bluntness. Surely you
can't either.

URSULA

Do you think so?
(winks at him)
Don't be too sure.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

Mrs. Stern, please don't take this
personally, but fact is, you and I
are diagonally opposite
individuals. For one, and I will
probably not be able to
exhaustively prove this at this
point in time, I will nevertheless
allege, that my IQ is at least 30
points over yours. Secondly, I
predicate that I may have had the
added benefit of a superiour
education. And last but not least,
Mrs. Stern, I bet my soul, you
regularly weep during "Sons and
Daughters".

Ursula's eyelashes flutter, she is dumbstruck.

KARL-FRIEDRICH (CONT'D)

That's to say, Mrs. Stern, that
there is nothing in this world you
could possibly tell me, I would
even find mildly compelling.

Pause. K-F returns to his laptop. Ursula is truly hurt. The
seat-belt-sign are turned off.

URSULA

Are you saying I'm dumb?

KARL-FRIEDRICH

If you wish.

URSULA

You are a very unkind man.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

Open and blunt, I call it, that's
if you can fathom the difference.

Ursula stands up.

URSULA

I will not sit here and let myself
be insulted by you.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

That for once, is wise, Mrs. Stern.

CUT TO:

SEAT LINA AND MIKE

MIKE

I honestly can't think of any other
explanation, other than it must
have been a banal computer error.

LINA

Ok, so when do you suggest all
those economy passengers
disembarked?

MIKE

Who says they disembarked? We
boarded Business first, so we can't
tell what happened after we were in
here.

LINA

But didn't you say you were
upgraded?

MIKE

Yes immediately after you guys came
on, before Economy was called out.

LINA

Look that in itself doesn't make
sense. Business passengers can
always board whenever they wish.

MIKE

Yes but this wasn't always. They
obviously had a major screw-up with
the bookings.

Lina is still not convinced.

LINA

And what with the eco-bird? The one
who got upgraded during take-off?

(MORE)

LINA (CONT'D)

She said it herself, that there wasn't one single free seat left back there.

As if on cue, Ursula arrives at her seat with a tomato juice in her hand and still flustered by her encounter with K-F.

URSULA

You won't believe the things that rude business person over there said to me. Says I'm of subaverage intelligence, says I'm dumb!

She slumps into her seat and empties the glass in one big swig. On noticing Mike, her face lights up and she proffers her hand.

URSULA (CONT'D)

Ursula Stern, nice to meet you. Were you also upgraded?

Mike takes her hand.

MIKE

Yes I was. Mike - very pleased to meet you, Ursula.

He raises his glass.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Oh, it's empty.

He looks around but none of the Flight Attendants are around. The drinks cart stands abandoned at the front of the cabin. Mike rises.

MIKE (CONT'D)

May I get the ladies a top up?

URSULA

Yes please, a tomato juice, that would be nice.

MIKE

With great pleasure.

(to Lina)

How about you Madam? A little something from the bar?

Lina won't have it. She points at the drinks cart.

LINA

And the fact that the drinks cart is left unattended in the middle of the aisle without an Attendant in sight? Is that also banal?

MIKE
 (grins)
 I better hurry, before they notice
 their mistake.

Off he goes. Ursula gives Lina a scrutinizing look.

URSULA
 You're worrying, I can sense that.

Lina is in no mood.

LINA
 No. I'm fine.

Ursula gets the message. She plugs her earphones in and starts knitting.

CUT TO:

AT THE DRINKS CART

Mike is in the process of retrieving two cans of beer and two tomato juices, when Henry steps up to him.

HENRY
 Looks like there's a sale on?

MIKE
 Yep. Self-service, latest ploy in
 keeping down the operating costs.

Henry starts to rummage through the drawers.

HENRY
 Don't suppose you've come across
 any Martians?

Mike looks at him amused.

MIKE
 Martians? In here?

HENRY
 (grins)
 Martinis, my man. Those much-to-
 tiny-fuck-the-environment, little
 red glass bottles?

MIKE
 Pass.

HENRY
 I'll check in the back then.

Mike wants to reply, but decides against it and grins, as Henry walks down the aisle. Lina follows him with her eyes. She checks for Flight Attendants, but they're not to be seen.

The curtain closes behind Henry as he walks into Economy.

A Beat. And back he is, pale faced and shaking, as if he had seen the devil himself. The curtain behind him has closed again.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 (exasperated)
 Guys... guys! Back there...
 (he waves his arms towards
 Economy)
 There's no one back there.

Faces turn, with the exception of Ursula's who is knitting away with her ear plugs in place and Dawud's who is still passed out. Konrad gets up from his seat.

KONRAD
 What do you mean?

HENRY
 Empty, man, the whole goddamn
 Economy is empty. We're the only
 guys on this fucking plane!

Konrad walks up to him.

KONRAD
 You alright? Why don't you sit
 down, I get you some water.

He pushes the CALL button and a typical GONG is heard from the galley.

HENRY
 No, no, no. Listen to me. I'm fine,
 but there's not a single soul back
 there.

Konrad pushes the CALL button again, but there is no reaction. The others watch Konrad walk up to the curtain and throws it wide open.

One by one they rise from their seats, staring in awe at the vast expanse of empty seats beyond the curtain.

CUT TO:

ECONOMY CABIN

Konrad walks past a few empty rows of seats, then starts opening overhead lockers. They too are empty. Mike, Henry and Lina step up to the curtain.

MIKE

I'm sure there's nothing to worry about.

HENRY

(aghast)

Except that a plane full of people have just fucking vanished without a trace.

MIKE

Due to a computer glitch. A booking error that resulted in economy passengers to be put on another flight.

LINA

That what the Flight Attendant says.

HENRY

Bullshit! My whole band sat back in here. No way would they have disembarked without telling me.

LINA

(at Mike)

So will you now stop pretending everything is normal?

MIKE

Fine. Has anyone got a more likely explanation?

A beat.

KONRAD

Ok, so the stewardess told you there was a booking error?

LINA

She said it was under-booked.

KONRAD

Yet they let everyone board. We all saw it, right?

Lina and Mike nod. Henry has started checking under the seats.

KONRAD (CONT'D)

So why would they do that? Why let Economy board and then have them disembark again?

MIKE

They must have had a second plane on standby.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

Maybe with a larger economy section
and a smaller Business section, so
they couldn't fit us in.

K-F has joined the group.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

Never ever. Makes no economic
sense.

LINA

Mike, you said yourself that you
never paid for business on this
route because you always managed to
get upgraded.

MIKE

That's correct.

LINA

So, if they had a second plane with
a larger economy section, surely
they would have booked you onto
that rather than upgrade you to
business.

Sebastian and Aida have also joined the others. All look at
Mike.

MIKE

How should I know? Whatever, let's
be reasonable.

HENRY

Fuck that! I wanna know where my
band has gone!

He punches a few Call buttons within his reach but no Flight
Attendants shows up.

URSULA (OS)

I'm afraid there's no point.

All look at her. Ursula has removed her earplugs.

URSULA (CONT'D)

They've gone.

HENRY

How do you mean, gone?

URSULA

(matter-of-factly)

Both of them entered the cockpit
about quarter of an hour ago.

SEBASTIAN

That's right. I saw it too.

(looking at Lina)

When you came back from economy with the Blond Attendant, she fetched the Red-Haired one at the drinks cart and they both disappeared into the cockpit.

K-F glances at Ursula with disdain.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

For heaven's sake, please don't you start interfering now!

LINA

(sharply to K-F)

Excuse me but I don't think it's your business to decide who gets to talk or not!

K-F taken aback, shuts up.

LINA (CONT'D)

(addressing Ursula)

Ursula, can you confirm that you were upgraded from Economy and re-seated in Business during take-off?

URSULA

Yes, I was.

LINA

And you were saying that there wasn't a single empty seat left back there, when they moved you?

URSULA

Yes, not a single empty seat. It was totally crowded. I was very lucky they picked me for an upgrade.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

That's impossible! No one is allowed to move about during take-off. She's hallucinating.

LINA

It was definitely during take-off. I remember exactly.

(to Ursula)

You remember, don't you?

URSULA

It was very crowded back there and very bumpy, so I can't recall exactly, but yes...

K-F butts in.

KARL-FRIEDRICH

(nervously)

She can't remember, you see? Mad as a hatter she is, you all are!

With this he returns to his seat and starts working the keyboard of his laptop with extra fervor.

HENRY

Why don't these bloody stewardesses show up?

AIDA

The Red-Haired one went to the back to fetch me a cushion. That's when I last saw one of them.

LINA

When was this?

AIDA

About ten minutes ago.

LINA

(looking at Ursula)

Maybe she came out again?

URSULA

(shakes her head)

I would have noticed.

(points at the cockpit door with the knitting needle)

They're both in there.

Lina looks at Mike, he guesses her thought.

MIKE

We can't go in there.

HENRY

Why the fuck can't we?

MIKE

Because they would report us for jeopardizing air safety and the boys in blue would arrest us on arrival.

LINA

Ok, I am going to get to the bottom of this.

CUT TO:

**END OF EXTRACT - PLEASE SEND AN EMAIL TO POST@KLAUSWITTING.DE
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