

INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT-DAY

Super: January 17, 1997

The airport is jam-packed with PEOPLE who run in every direction. The noise of the rushing crowd looks like a blue and red blur, as it pulsates with the beats of one heart that throbs with each soul who rushes onward. Its beats are almost maddening as if it were a city itself. Ba-boom! ba-boom! It's the sound that goes to all the feet who don't want to be late for their flights. The airport smells like a gigantic bread and buttered pretzel, fresh out of the oven. The strong wafting smells of burgers and baked goods are potent in the air.

ANASTASIA, mid-20s, flaming red hair, looks that could kill, groans. She is wearing a thrift store red dress that reaches the length of her knees. It is a classic 60's style dress with black trim and black buttons. Her kitten pump heels are black with a red bow on the front of them. She has been a friend of Vlad most of her life. He works for her family. He introduced her to Dimitri two years ago after he took pity on him when he was homeless. Anastasia wants to be introduced to her grandmother and hopes to be one day made empress. Vlad has helped her prepare for her future journey for most of her life.

ANASTASIA

I always hated this airport! It is the gateway to h-e double hockey sticks. It smells like moldy socks.

DIMITRI, late-20s, tall, muscular build, he's wearing a worn-out black t-shirt with blue jeans that have seen better days. He is wearing a red ball cap that says Savannah, Georgia on it. Dimitri is from Savannah, Georgia and he lived on the streets for years until he became friends with Vlad, who helped him find a job and introduced him to his friend, Anastasia.

Dimitri trails in behind Anastasia and shoves three heavy suitcases toward her.

DIMITRI

What did you pack? Did you stow away all your belongings with you?

ANASTASIA

A woman has to prepare herself for anything

when she travels. She can never be too careful. I also stowed away a hammer so I can use it on your head.

DIMITRI

Ha-ha, very funny. What are you ready for, an air raid? All of this feels like heavy equipment.

VLAD, mid-50s, mustache, and beard, wearing an old blue suit he inherited from his father, heavy-set, rushes in behind them and skids to a halt with their three carry-ons. Vlad is an old friend of Anastasia's family and knows the sprawling history of her family and has known Anastasia for many years.

VLAD

What are you two up to now? We are about to miss our flight with all these stops. There is not a moment to lose. We have exactly twenty minutes to spare.

Anastasia, Dimitri, and Vlad start to run through the busy airport. They run for fifteen minutes, until they all three stop and run into each other on impact.

VLAD

We cannot stop now! Keep going, you'll have to catch up with you're breaths later Dimitri. Look at Anya she's running on ahead.

DIMITRI

It's most likely because she's the one with the lightest load, Vlad. She's such a spoiled brat.

VLAD

Bite your tongue, Dimitri, she's soon to come into her birthright. She now knows she is the granddaughter of the Duchess Anastasia.

DIMITRI

If she's the granddaughter then I'm a toad!

VLAD

I'd like to see that.

The two men run for another five minutes until they reach gate number thirteen. Dimitri slams himself down on one of the seats at the gate and breathes heavily. Anastasia is already in line.

ANASTASIA

What took you two so long? I'm in better shape than both of you. Hurry up and get in line, you two.

ANASTASIA

I can't wait to meet my grandmother, Anastasia. I'm feeling more and more that my nerves are on edge. I wonder if I look just like she did as the princess. I bet we have so many similarities.

DIMITRI

She's probably where you got your attitude and entitlement from Anastasia, or should I say, your grace?

ANASTASIA

I am not entitled. I just know where I'm going in my life. If I have an attitude it's not of my making.

DIMITRI

Whatever, princess; You just keep up with that attitude.

VLAD

It's time to board our flights, hush children. It will take a long time for us to get to Russia, especially with you two at the helm of madness.

A STEWARDESS, mid-30s, blonde, thin, ushers PASSENGERS forward with a painted grin, while checking their tickets at the gate. The stewardess approves Anastasia's ticket.

Anastasia moves forward, towards the tarmac of the plane.

Dimitri and Vlad follow suit.

Anastasia turns and gives Dimitri a hard shove to his chest.

DIMITRI

What was that for?

ANASTASIA

Didn't you say you got us first-class tickets?
That's not what is written on my ticket!

DIMITRI

Yes princess, you're wish is always my
command. Your ticket is upside down anyways,
silly.

ANASTASIA

I knew that, I don't need your
help.

DIMITRI

You would be lost without my help, honestly.

Vlad hands the stewardess his ticket and heads to first class. Anastasia and Dimitri follow him.

First class has reclining seats, with televisions on the backs of every seat. The seats look like fancy recliners. The stewardess are going around offering every beverage under the sun, including alcohol. Many of the passengers already have their blankets sprawled across them.

ANASTASIA

Now this is the first class! I love it, everything is
so much better in first class. Don't you think so
Vlad?

Vlad leans back in his seat that reclines. He lets out a big yawn and smiles contently.

VLAD

You seem to be right most of the time my dear.

The crowded plane seems to be drifting off to sleep as many heads begin to nod, and there are dozens of people with their headphones glued to their heads and their eyes sealed shut.

The plane begins to speedily move forward at a breakneck pace. Its speed increases with fury as the crowded plane snoozes on dreamily like it's midnight. As the plane makes one final push, it races up to a weightless altitude, and the open airways and misty clouds above.

Ten minutes into the flight Anastasia buries her face in her new book.

Dimitri's snores fill the cabin like a chainsaw cutting through the silence.

Anastasia turns the other way and continues to read. No use.

She shoves her book in the seat back pouch in front of her. She covers her ears and leans back in her chair.

Dimitri sounds like a puffed-up Louisiana Bayou bullfrog.

Eventually, Anastasia gives him a big shove, but pretends she's still asleep, headphones on, as soon as . . .

Dimitri startles.

DIMITRI

I know that was you, whispers Dimitri in her ear.

Vlad, who is on the left side of Anastasia, chuckles to himself. A couple of hours later, lunch comes. On the menu are steak, potatoes, and gravy. Apple crumb cobbler is for dessert. The beverage choices are wine, beer, juice, coffee, tea, or soda. Anastasia smacks Dimitri on the chest to wake him up again.

DIMITRI

Here comes the best part of the flight, food.

ANASTASIA

You always think about your

stomach first, don't you Dimitri?

DIMITRI

Yes, and you're always thinking about yourself or stuff, take your pick.

VLAD

Am I going to have to separate you two?
Please act like adults, we are in first class,
after all.

INT. PLANE-NIGHT

Four more hours pass, and everyone on the plane starts to get sleepy. The stewardess passes out pillows to everyone. Most of the plane's first-class passengers are all asleep. Anastasia jerks in her sleep and suddenly she wakes up to the whole plane lurching on an air pocket. She looks around frightened. No one else is stirring. The plane jerks forward again and sends Anastasia straight into Dimitri's arms. She stares up into his face dreamily as his sleepy eyes open.

ANASTASIA

Oh my! I'm so sorry, I did not get into this position on purpose, you know. I would never try to push myself on you Dimitri.

DIMITRI

I won't stop you, Anastasia. There's something I've been meaning to talk to you about.

ANASTASIA

There is? What is it, Dimitri? I'm listening. Oh, and I'm not a princess, you know.

DIMITRI

I know you are. You were born at the wrong time entirely princess.

Dimitri falls soundly asleep an hour before Anastasia. As the night grows longer, Anastasia falls asleep and begins to lean toward Dimitri. She lets out a big yawn and snuggles up against him. Anastasia opens her eyes and gazes at Dimitri.

She scoots back in his arms again. She closes her eyes and Dimitri doesn't try to stop her. The night goes on, and the whole plane stays silent, pulsating with the rhythm of the night.

DIMITRI

You may be a thorn in my side, but you will
always be my rose that blooms in the winter.
I'm falling for you more with each passing day.
How can I ever tell you I love you?

INT. PLANE-DAY

The first-class passengers start to stir. Anastasia wakes up, stretches her arms out wide, and yawns. She looks over towards Dimitri, whose hair makes him look like he's a disgruntled peacock. She begins to laugh until she hears him stir. He pops one eye open.

DIMITRI

You're up early princess, he retorts.

ANASTASIA

The early bird catches the worm! I have to get
up early to be ahead of you.

DIMITRI

Wake Vlad up, will you? They should be
around with breakfast soon.

Anastasia pokes Vlad in the stomach with her book. Vlad snorts suddenly and laughs. Anastasia pokes him a second time, this time he snores like a freight train, then he jerks forward.

VLAD

Good morning Anya. I wonder what's for
breakfast. Our plane should be in Moscow by
12:30 p.m. I can't wait to see your
grandmother, I've been friends with her family
most of my life. If I had not found Dimitri we
both know he would still be a street performer
in Georgia. The authorities used to pick him up

all the time before I got my talons in him. I helped him when he was down and out on his luck, we've been friends many years.

Vlad winks at Anastasia then smiles as he sees his breakfast is almost to his tray. It is ten o'clock on the plane, and most of the first-class passengers are awake. One hour goes by as slow as a snail's pace. Anastasia elbows Dimitri for more room. Anastasia falls asleep. Dimitri leans over her and whispers in her ear.

DIMITRI

I wonder what you're dreaming about my princess. I love to see you happy. It will be gut-wrenching if we should part ways. I don't think I'll be able to take the pain. You deserve much better than me.

Vlad takes a seat on the other side of Dimitri and gives him a stern look.

VLAD

Dimitri, you should tell her how you feel about her. Holding it inside of you is crushing you. You've been in love with her for two years. It's now or never, I'm telling you as a friend. Do it, before it's too late.

DIMITRI

I know you're right, but it's selfish to think she would ever choose me.

PILOT

I'm sorry to tell you this, folks, but the storms are going to cause us to have some turbulence and our flight will be delayed by at least a couple of hours.

Anastasia, Vlad, and Dimitri tightly hold each other's hands as the plane lurches up, and then falls for several seconds. Anastasia is holding Dimitri's hand so tight he thinks she's going to cut the blood circulation off. The violent turbulence churns everyone's stomachs for almost an hour.

ANASTASIA

I think I'm going to throw up all over my shoes.
I'll be ok just let me drink some water.

DIMITRI

The worst is over princess. There's something I
want to tell you when we land.

ANASTASIA

Tell me now. I don't think I can take the
suspense, it could be anything.

DIMITRI

You're always overdramatic. Now is not the
right time.

The storm begins to clear and the turbulence is no more. The whole plane cheers and people can be heard saying, "Thank you, Jesus."

PILOT (V.O.)

That was the worst storm I've flown through in
my career, folks. We're safe and sound now,
and our destination is looking better and better.
It looks like we are still another hour away.

Anastasia reads her book for an hour, to pass the time away. Dimitri falls asleep, and his head falls on her shoulder. Vlad sleeps soundly and snores so loudly that half the first-class passengers have pillows to their ears.

The pilot makes an announcement that they will begin their descent.

The plane slowly descends, the wings come out, and the plane makes a vicious landing on the runway.

In twenty minutes, the seatbelt sign turns off. People start to get up and pull their

oversized luggage out of the overhead compartments.

VLAD

Welcome my dear, get ready to find your future family. It is finally time for you to shine and find a place you can call home. We will help you in every way that we can.

DIMITRI

Get ready to polish your crown, princess. God knows you've always had it waiting in the wings.

The pilot comes on the speaker system and makes an announcement.

PILOT (V.O.)

Hello, this is your pilot speaking. We have reached our destination in Moscow, Russia, where the temperature is 57 degrees and the time is 2:15 p.m. On behalf of myself and the crew, we hope you have a wonderful stay, and we would love you to choose Delta for your future flight endeavors. As always, it has been a pleasure flying with you. Take care and safe travels.

DIMITRI

It's time to meet the grand duchess herself, princess.

ANASTASIA

I was meant to find her. I'm looking to find rest and peace in her eyes. My mother told me about how wonderful she is. If one day I become a princess, I will accept. I do not know what I'll ever do for her that I will deserve it.

VLAD

You were born for this my dear. She will love you at once, as I do.

DIMITRI

As do I, my princess.

Anastasia looks up at Dimitri and takes his hand in hers and squeezes it softly. She raises on her feet and presses her lips to Dimitri, as she kisses him as softly as cherry blossoms falling to earth, on a warm summer's day.

Dimitri holds her close to him. He runs his fingers through her long red, wavy hair. He squeezes her waist and pulls her closer to his tall frame. The gentle kiss becomes as fierce as a desert storm and lasts for several minutes. Dimitri finally pulls away, but he remains glued to her frame.

DIMITRI

I wasn't expecting that my princess.

ANASTASIA

I love you too when you're not being a pain in the ass. From now on call me your grace, it has a nicer ring to it.

All three step out of the plane to meet their new fate. The chilly wind hits them like a cold block of ice. Anastasia's fiercely bright red hair whips around like a fiery flame in the bone-chilling wind that blows like a tornado. The trio connects to the tarmac for their final gate. Anastasia hears a familiar voice shouting at her from the end.

GRAND DUCHESS, Gray hair, elderly 70s, posh clothing, throws her arms wide at the sight of her granddaughter.

GRAND DUCHESS

My dear, you're even more stunning in person. You don't know how long I've been waiting for this moment.

Anastasia smiles widely and runs to hug her grandmother. Dimitri and Vlad are smiling in the background. The grandmother looks up at them and smiles warmly as if to say thank you. Dimitri bows to the grand duchess and Vlad follows suit.

**THE WHOOSHING SOUND OF THE WIND OUTSIDE LEADS TO A VIOLENT
TORRENT OF RAIN AND HAIL. ITS DOWNPOUR SOUNDS LIKE PER-
PLUNK, PER-PLUNK, PER-PLUNK.**

THE END