

SECURITY CHECK

by

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Production History

Originally developed at a musical theatre piece, in collaboration with Joe Sarlo, University of California, San Diego, 2004.

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The Players

Aimee - A professional woman in her early 30s. She carries a cell phone and a wheelie bag.

X-Ray - He couldn't possibly be the same person, but from airport to airport he looks remarkably familiar. A South Asian man in all of his immigrant permutations. He runs the x-ray and metal detector.

Customer Service - A woman, mid-thirties, questionable background and ethnicity. She seems so polite with her mid-Atlantic accent!

The Immigration Official - In uniform. An old curmudgeon, very intimidating. He holds your life in his hands. But wheels can be greased, can't they?

Mrs. Multinational - A lonely older woman who swears she loves her life. How could she not, when she has so much money?

The French Tourist - You can tell he's European just from the backpack. What business could he possibly have here? He knows lots of card games, though, and he's cute enough if you're looking at him the right way.

The Airports

All airports look remarkably similar, no matter where you go. They've got the same gray paint and moving walkways, the same signs in English and a few other languages, but always the same font and color. Was there an international convention to decide these things? Or are we all just copying an unconscious pattern?

Our setting, then, is the same for each scene, even though we've traveled thousands of miles to get there. On one side of the stage sits a ticket counter, on the other an immigration desk. Center stage is an x-ray machine and a metal detector. The gate is all the way upstage, and there is a row of connected chairs on each side of the space. Each of the players - other than Aimee - has a place he or she belongs. This is where we should find them.

Every airport, of course, has some subtle elements that make it unique. But these differences are more in sound, smell and texture than they are in construction.

1. NEW YORK

Aimee enters the terminal, talking on her cell phone. She drags a small suitcase on wheels and a small computer bag. She lingers near the ticket desk, where Customer Service waits.

AIMEE

Yeah, Donna, he can eat three cups if he wants them...it says that's okay on the box, trust me. You're not going to be spoil him! Or maybe you are, but when he gets sad, sometimes, he likes to eat, so you can just, you understand that, right?...I'm not calling you fat!...I don't let him eat like that all the time, this is a special situation, he's never had to watch me leave before. *(beat)* Has he stopped crying yet? *(beat)* Oh. *(beat)* Well I'm sure he'll stop soon...No, I don't want to listen, what are you trying to do to me? I've got to go, Donna, I've got to check in now, so just- I'll call you when I get to London.

Aimee folds her phone and steps up to the check-in counter.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Ticket?

Aimee sifts through her things, finding her ticket.

AIMEE

Uh...here.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Passport?

AIMEE
(absently handing it over)

Yeah.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Mind?

AIMEE

Excuse me?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Are you with us today?

AIMEE

Yeah, sorry. Just a little distracted.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

But you know where you are and where you're going?

AIMEE

JFK Airport, heading to Heathrow. In one airport, and out the other.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Good. *(types)* No bags to check?

AIMEE

Just one, but it's really heavy, so I'd actually like to -

Customer service looks at the bag.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It's too small.

AIMEE

What do you mean?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Checked luggage space is reserved for larger bags. Yours doesn't fit the requirement.

AIMEE

What?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It's a new policy. The cargo hold has reached two thirds capacity, so you're going to have to take that one on with you.

AIMEE

But it's big, it's way too big. I checked for the size in the bag sizer thingie. It said it was too wide.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We have to get a new one of those.

AIMEE

And it's full of heavy books and papers and...I. You can't make me carry it, come on!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It's not my policy.

AIMEE

But I checked the policy on your website, it said that I can check two bags.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Two large bags.

AIMEE

(*sigh*) Is there someone else I can talk to about this?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You can talk to anyone you'd like, I really don't mind.

AIMEE

A supervisor.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I am the supervisor.

AIMEE

But someone must be in charge of you, right?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I am the master of my own destiny.

AIMEE

But you have a boss! Everyone has a boss.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Do you?

AIMEE

I...well technically, no, not right now. My boss is in the hospital. Leukemia. He's very sick.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

That must be hard.

AIMEE

No! This is hard! Dragging around this suitcase is hard, and all I want is to check it! There has to be someone else I can talk to here. Someone who can circumvent this idiotic new policy.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

There's the manager.

AIMEE

Excellent.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I'd be happy to get her over here for you, but it might take a little while, and your flight is boarding in twenty minutes. If you wait around until she gets here there's a strong possibility that you'll miss it. But if that's what you want -

Customer Service picks up a telephone handset.

AIMEE

No! Okay, fine. I don't want to miss my flight.

Customer Service puts down the phone, smiles, and folds Aimee's boarding pass into a cover.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wonderful. Here's your boarding pass.

AIMEE

I'm not happy about this or anything. I'm still gonna register a complaint.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The airline welcomes your feedback on all areas of service.

AIMEE

Oh, you'll be getting it, don't worry.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Next time you want to fight the system you'd better get yourself here earlier.

AIMEE

There was traffic!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It's JFK. There's always traffic. *(she turns away)* You're boarding through gate three.

Aimee looks at her boarding pass.

AIMEE

What gate did you say?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It says on the card. Now please proceed to security, there are other customers waiting.

Aimee looks around, confused. She zips her computer bag into the front pocket of the wheelie bag, and drags her things over to the x-ray machine. Her phone rings.

AIMEE

I'm about to get on a plane, mom. I got an international chip for this phone so it should still work when I'm there. *(beat)* London. *(beat)* It's a conference, a paper, nothing you would understand. *(beat)* I don't think you're dumb! *(beat)* Donna has the dog. *(beat)* Donna, best my friend, my roommate from college? *(beat)* No Mom I'm not gay.

No Mom I'm not lonely. *(beat)* I guess you'll just have to adopt yourself your own.

X-Ray motions Aimee forward.

AIMEE

Okay, hanging up now. Try not to drink too much while I'm gone, okay? I'll be back in less than a week. *(beat)* A week! Goodbye.

Aimee shuts off her phone and throws it into a plastic bin.

ANNOUNCEMENT OVER INTERCOM

Flight 126 to London Heathrow Airport, now boarding through gate thirty-three.

AIMEE

What gate did he just say?

X-RAY

Your bag?

Aimee lifts her bag, with considerable effort.

X-RAY

Coat.

Aimee takes off her coat.

X-RAY

Shoes.

AIMEE

Yes, sir.

She takes them off.

X-RAY

Belt?

She takes it off.

AIMEE

There.

X-RAY

Walk through.

She does. The machine beeps.

X-RAY

Coins.

AIMEE

That one you forgot to say?

Aimee pulls out a pocketful, hands them to X-Ray.

X-RAY

Most people remember to take the metal out of their pockets.

AIMEE

Right.

X-RAY

Back through.

She goes through again, a beep.

AIMEE

I must have a plate in my head or something.

X-RAY

Does this happen to you often?

AIMEE

I don't travel very much.

X-RAY

Your bra, has it got that wire inside?

AIMEE

You want me to take off my bra?

X-RAY

No ma'am. Just let me -

He runs the wand over her body. It beeps at her bra.

AIMEE

Can I get dressed now?

X-Ray looks at her boarding pass.

X-RAY

You've been stamped for a special examination.

AIMEE

What?

X-RAY

A new level of security. You must have shown suspicious behavior.

AIMEE

I just wanted to check -

X-RAY

I'll have to look in your bag. You'll probably want to watch while I do that.

AIMEE

Are you known to steal things?

X-Ray opens her bag.

X-RAY

Laptop computer. You're supposed to take that out and send it through individually in a plastic bin.

AIMEE

But you didn't tell me -

X-RAY

Because it was on the sign.

AIMEE

I didn't see.

X-RAY

(he rummages) A hair dryer, looks kind of like a gun. You shouldn't carry gun-shaped things on board.

AIMEE

I didn't want to.

X-RAY

Nail clippers.

AIMEE

I was going to check them.

X-RAY

They're contraband. I'm going to have to call my supervisor.

AIMEE

Please, no. Just take them. And here, I have a... a Swiss Army knife, please take it, too.

X-RAY

Is there anything else you want to share?

AIMEE

No sir.

X-RAY

You could be in a lot of trouble for this. Attempting to bring knives on board.

AIMEE

I wasn't! I just forgot. Please. You can let this go, can't you?

X-RAY

It's not really my place...*(he looks at her face for the first time)* But you look harmless to me.

AIMEE

Thank you.

X-RAY

You look...better than harmless, actually.

AIMEE

What do that...?

X-RAY

You seem like a nice girl. I'll make you a deal. You scratch my back I scratch yours, that kind of thing.

AIMEE

You want me to scratch your back?

X-RAY

I'll take these contraband things off your hands, keep it all on the hush hush...if you do something for me.

AIMEE

What?

X-RAY

You're going to call me.

AIMEE

Excuse me?

X-ray produces a small piece of paper.

X-RAY

Take my number. When you get back to town, give me a call. Or if you come out this terminal, just, you know, look for me. We'll get a cup of coffee.

AIMEE

Okay...

X-RAY
Okay what?

AIMEE
I may be gone for a very long time.

X-RAY
I just heard you say a week.

AIMEE
Yeah, well, but. You never know what will happen.

X-RAY
Are you single?

AIMEE
Now.

X-RAY
Then it's all right.

AIMEE
It's not that easy.

X-RAY
Yes it is. It really is that easy. But you don't want to call me, that's fine. I'll just-

*X-Ray pushes a button on his machine.
A loud siren starts to go off. Aimee
grabs the number.*

AIMEE
No! Give me that number! I'll do it, I'll do it.

X-RAY
You promise?

AIMEE
Yeah.

X-RAY
Men don't give you their phone numbers very often, huh?

AIMEE
What makes you say that?

X-RAY
When's the last time you went on a date?

AIMEE
I've been busy!

X-RAY

But you're going to make time for me?

AIMEE

Sure.

X-RAY

Okay.

X-Ray takes her contraband, waves her through.

X-RAY

Have a safe and pleasant flight! I'll be hearing from you soon.

AIMEE

Yeah.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Flight 126 to London, now boarding through gate three.

Aimee grabs her things and runs to the gate.

2. LONDON

Aimee walks through the gate, talking on her phone. She proceeds, dragging her suitcase, to the immigration desk.

AIMEE

I really don't know. I guess you could take him to the vet if you want to. *(beat)* I don't know if he's really sick, I'm not there, am I? *(beat)* He's a little emotionally... vulnerable, that's all. Lock him out on the porch if he's really bothering you. *(beat)* He likes it out there!...It's not dangerous, come on. I have to go now, okay, just...don't call me unless something's really wrong.

Aimee hangs up her phone, goes up to the desk.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Ticket.

AIMEE

(producing it)

Here is -

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Passport.

AIMEE

(producing it)

Here is -

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Your end?

AIMEE

What?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Your final destination?

AIMEE

In what sense?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

This trip.

AIMEE

Oh! Here.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Heathrow.

Yes!

AIMEE

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
You're staying at the airport?

AIMEE
No! I mean - a hotel.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
In Heathrow?

AIMEE
In London. It's a...it's a conference.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
On what?

AIMEE
Oh, just...chemistry.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
"Just chemistry?"

AIMEE
Yeah, I mean, that's what I study.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
What kind?

AIMEE
You really want to know?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
It's mostly a formality. I already have your information here.

AIMEE
You do?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
You study neurotoxins.

AIMEE
How do you know that?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Your file. It's all on my screen.

AIMEE
Do you do this for everybody?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

(laughs) No, only high-risk passengers. You were flagged by the airline.

AIMEE

Ugh, those people.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Excuse me?

AIMEE

The people at JFK...The woman at the ticket counter had it in for me because I wanted to check my bag. And then the X-Ray guy gave me a hard time for having contraband...

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Does your luggage contain explosives?

AIMEE

No! Of course not!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

There have been cases where people check baggage, but then at the last minute, they fail to board the plane. And then...boom. So you can see how insisting on checking your bag could raise a red flag.

AIMEE

But I didn't check it!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Nonetheless. It is always best to cooperate fully.

AIMEE

Fine.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You're traveling by yourself?

AIMEE

Yes.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Why?

AIMEE

It's a business trip.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

And your husband is at home?

AIMEE

I'm not married.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

So she lies. *(he makes a note)* There's no point in lying to me, Ms. Weeks. I have your whole file here. You can't hide anything.

AIMEE

But I'm really not married!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

April 12th, 1997. City of New York, Office of the City Clerk, Marriage License Bureau, Certificate of Marriage Registration, License Number M1997562732. Mr. Ivan Ahmad Kaplakov and Miss Aimee Andrea Weeks of 324 7th Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

AIMEE

What?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Do you need me to speak more clearly?

AIMEE

He's not my husband anymore.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

There's no record of annulment or divorce.

AIMEE

It wasn't a real marriage, wedding, whatever - just a quick little city hall thing. For the paperwork.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

But you're still married.

AIMEE

No! He didn't get the green card, it's over.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

So you're confessing to marriage fraud? How much were you paid?

AIMEE

No! I mean, I knew him. We were involved. We were really married, briefly, but it didn't work out. I went away to school and then we were called in and we...failed the interview. I withdrew the petition, and that was that!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

He was deported.

AIMEE

Yeah, that's what I heard.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

And now he's living in Kyrgystan?

AIMEE

Is that what it says on your screen?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You didn't even go to see him off.

AIMEE

It was over by then, okay?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

But you were married.

AIMEE

We all make mistakes. I was young, I was naive. I was just trying to help him.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

And how do we know that you're not still trying to help him?

AIMEE

How?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

A Kyrgystani man, deported from the United States, he's bound to harbor some resentment, don't you think?

AIMEE

I don't know! Really.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

And he could have very easily passed that resentment on to you.

AIMEE

What do you want from me?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

I want you to see how it all looks from our perspective. You're a biochemist who works with neurotoxins. You have access to very dangerous materials. And you had your husband taken away from you, which makes you bitter, full of rage and pain. You pick fights with the airline, you tell an employee you hate their policies. You have no family, few friends, and now...this sudden trip to London with your suspicious baggage...

AIMEE

There's nothing suspicious in my baggage! Do you want to look through it? There's nothing suspicious about me!

I'm just an average boring American academic, trying to get to a conference!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
But you'll admit you lied to me.

AIMEE
I didn't mean to. I really...I didn't know. I thought that was all done.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
You didn't know.

AIMEE
Yes! That's what I'm saying. I wasn't purposely lying to you. I promise.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
All right.

AIMEE
You'll let me go?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
No. I'll look in your bag.

AIMEE
Good, fine.

Aimee starts to open her bag. The Immigration Official flinches.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Not here!

AIMEE
What?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Take it over to security.

Aimee drags her bag over to X-Ray. Immigration Official looks on from behind his counter.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Open it.

X-RAY
Yes, sir.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Let's see what she's really got in there.

AIMEE
 (to X-Ray)
 You look familiar.

X-RAY
 Not me.

AIMEE
 Yes you do!

X-RAY
 I just have one of those faces that everyone -

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
 Quit talking! We're looking in the bag of a potential threat.

X-Ray pulls out Aimee's hairdryer. If possible, it's looking even more gun-shaped.

AIMEE
 My hairdryer!

X-RAY
 Is that what it is?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
 That's not what it looks like to me. Contain it.

X-Ray puts the hairdryer into a large ziplock plastic bag. Keeps looking.

X-RAY
 Some journals on biochemistry.

AIMEE
 They're for my work.

X-RAY
 Really? What do you do?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
 She works with botulinum neurotoxin. Be very, very careful.

X-Ray steps back and regards Aimee warily.

AIMEE
 Don't listen to him. I would never carry biotoxins in my luggage. It's unethical.

O...kay.

X-RAY

AIMEE
Would I be standing here if my suitcase were infected?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Don't listen to the suspect, she may have already given herself the antidote.

AIMEE
What spy shows have you been watching?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
That is none of your business.

X-Ray opens Aimee's computer, turns it on.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
Watch out.

X-RAY
It doesn't look suspicious.

AIMEE
It's not.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL
But the files on it are. Take them into evidence.

X-Ray puts the computer to the side.

X-RAY
Some underclothes.

AIMEE
Mine!

X-RAY
And they're very sexy. What are you, a C cup?

AIMEE
Maybe?

X-RAY
Very nice.

X-Ray pockets a bra and rummages some more.

X-RAY
That's all, sir. Nothing else to worry about.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

We still need to have a look at that computer. And in the meantime -

AIMEE

You'll let me...?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You can take a seat. In our holding cell.

AIMEE

No! I can't. My paper!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

What paper?

AIMEE

The paper that I'm giving at the conference. It's tomorrow! Or today, I don't even know anymore with all these time zones. But they're expecting me.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

The members of your cell?

AIMEE

The other biochemists at the conference. Do you want to see the brochure?

Aimee offers him the brochure.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Is your name listed in it?

AIMEE

No, but my boss is. He was supposed to deliver his paper but he got sick at the last minute so they sent me instead. But look -- I am a legitimate scientist, working at the Brookhaven Laboratory for the US government! I have a business card, I must have a...*(she looks)* Listen, this was a huge break for me, for my career, a huge opportunity, to be taken seriously...

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

How did he get sick?

AIMEE

What does it matter?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You'll admit it's a little suspicious.

AIMEE

No!

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

I'll give you one piece of advice, Ms. Weeks. You're better off sitting in our cell and keeping your mouth shut. Every time you open it you give us something else to suspect you for.

AIMEE

But I haven't actually done anything wrong.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

My job is to stop people before they do something wrong, not after.

AIMEE

(beat) How long will you hold me?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Until it's safe to let you go.

AIMEE

But how long...do these things take, on average?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

I don't know. We have to go through all this "work" of yours, check your story.

AIMEE

Just give me an idea of the timeframe. Days? Weeks? Hours?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

It's hard to say. Especially with your husband in Kyrgystan. Do you have a phone number for him? That could speed things up.

AIMEE

I haven't spoken to him in years.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

A wife should keep a closer eye...

AIMEE

How about you let me into the country, but just for a week? I don't even care about getting to see Big Ben or anything, just issue me a special pass or something, so I can go to the conference and go home.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You don't care about Big Ben?

AIMEE

No! I'm just saying. You could supervise me.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You think we have those kinds of resources?

AIMEE

I'm just trying to find a solution here.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Well, there...is another option.

AIMEE

Really? What's that?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

You can leave. Get on a plane, go home. Free and clear.

AIMEE

Really?

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

It'll be on your record that you were denied entry to the United Kingdom, it'll raise some more flags the next time you try to come in, but it might be more comfortable than the holding cell.

AIMEE

I don't really plan to come back here.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

It's your choice.

AIMEE

It's not really a choice, is it? You're saying that I'm going to miss my conference either way.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

It does seem that way.

AIMEE

And maybe if I went home I could do the presentation by videolink.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Maybe.

AIMEE

And my dog. My dog is crying.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

He is.

AIMEE

I never should have gotten on that plane.

Immigration Official looks at Aimee, waiting for her to speak again.

AIMEE

I'll go. No holding cell. Put me back on a plane.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

This is your choice?

AIMEE

Yes. Yes, this has all been one big nightmare. I'll just go home.

IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL

Go to the counter. There'll be a ticket waiting for you.

AIMEE

Yes, sir.

Aimee ducks away from the Immigration Official and goes to Customer Service. She is waiting.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Your ticket.

AIMEE

You -

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Yes?

AIMEE

Nothing. Thank you.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Your plane is leaving from gate thirteen. You have to get on, right now.

AIMEE

Gate thirteen, okay. Can I check my bag this time?

Customer Service shoots her a look.

AIMEE

Never mind, I'll carry it.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Have a trip!

Aimee crosses to center, grabs her bag from X-Ray.

X-RAY

You mustn't leave you bag all by itself.

AIMEE

Thank you for watching it.

X-RAY

It was nothing, really.

AIMEE

I'm missing my plane.

X-RAY

I need you to walk through the metal detector one more time.

AIMEE

But I've got metal...everywhere. There's no time to get undressed and everything -

X-RAY

Then I'll just frisk you, if that's alright.

X-Ray pats her down. He seems to enjoy himself.

AIMEE

That's enough. Stop it!

X-RAY

Is there a problem?

AIMEE

I've got to go.

X-RAY

It's been a long time since you've been touched by a man.

AIMEE

I really don't think that's an appropriate question!

X-RAY

It wasn't a question.

AIMEE

Please!

X-Ray grabs Aimee by the wrist.

X-RAY

I'm the one who makes the rules here.

I need to go.

AIMEE

You're always in such a hurry.

X-RAY

Let me go!

AIMEE

I'm on your side, Aimee, you should know that.

X-RAY

I do. I know that.

AIMEE

I'll see you again soon!

X-RAY

No you won't! Sorry. I'm going home.

AIMEE

X-Ray lets go of Aimee's wrist. She grabs her bag and charges through the gate. X-Ray smiles after her.

3. ABU DHABI

Aimee enters through the gate into the Abu Dhabi airport, dragging her suitcase behind her. She's a little bleary-eyed, the travel is starting to take its toll. At first glance, the terminal feels Western, but there's something about the music, the tone of the announcements, that makes it clear we're not in JFK.

AIMEE

What the fuck?...What terminal is this?

Aimee looks around. Perhaps she sees a sign in Arabic.

Talk about an International airport...

Mrs. Multinational tries to get past Aimee, exiting the gate.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Excuse me Miss, coming through! Please don't hold up the flow of traffic.

AIMEE

I'm sorry, I just...I don't know which way to go.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Well, that depends on whether this is your last stop. If so, you just follow the yellow signs to Baggage Claim. Look for that little picture of a suitcase.

AIMEE

But I have my bag.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Then you're ready to go through immigration. The signs are all in English as well as Arabic, it's not that hard to figure out.

AIMEE

I'm American.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I know it's silly. But they do make Americans go through immigration, too. Sometimes they're really tough on us. I think it's payback for what we do to them. And it's gotten so much worse since 9/11, too. Have you noticed that?

AIMEE

I don't travel much.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Well I do. Obviously.

AIMEE

I'm just supposed to be going home.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Oh! If you're in transit, you can just hang around here! This terminal has the best shopping in the Arab world, so you really shouldn't miss the opportunity...

AIMEE

The Arab world...

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

It's like a whole...duty-free mall! All the perfume, cigarettes, electronic goods and liquor that you could ever want. Only you're not supposed to take the liquor into most countries around here, so make sure you bury it in your underwear before you head through customs.

AIMEE

But I'm not -

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I'm headed over there now, if you want me to show you.

AIMEE

No, that's okay. Thank you.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Your loss.

Aimee's phone rings. It sounds different than before, but she still answers it. Mrs. Multinational exits to shop.

AIMEE

Hi Mom. Did you get my message? Are you outside? *(beat)* No, that's okay. It's fine if you're not feeling up to it. What time is it?...AM or PM?...But it looks...sunny out, I don't know. I can take a cab or something. No, I've landed, it's just that...I don't think I'm actually there. Can I call you back?

Aimee drags her bag over to Customer Service.

AIMEE

Excuse me, can you tell me - where...am I?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Please state your name.

AIMEE

Can't you just answer my question first?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Who are you?

AIMEE

Would that change your answer?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

No.

AIMEE

Aimee Weeks.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We've been waiting for you.

AIMEE

Of course you have.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

They called from Heathrow. You're a special case of some kind? *(looks over her papers)* Denied entry.

AIMEE

They told me they were sending me home, but I'm pretty sure this isn't it.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

(laughs)
They couldn't put you on a direct flight.

AIMEE

I got to Heathrow on a direct flight.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It's going to take you a few more stops this time. You're in Abu Dhabi.

AIMEE

Where?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

United Arab Emirates.

AIMEE

Why?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

No particular reason. It's just a hub.

AIMEE

JFK is a hub. It's about the biggest hub in the world!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

But it's not nearly as nice as Abu Dhabi. We have some of the best airport shopping you'll ever find.

AIMEE

I wasn't trying to insult your airport.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I'm sorry?

AIMEE

I'm tired, I don't want to shop, I just want to get home.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Shopping is a great way to pass the time.

AIMEE

I don't...

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Why don't you go buy a present for your husband?

AIMEE

I don't have one.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

All the more reason! He's going to expect something...

AIMEE

I meant I don't have a...Please. I'm sure your airport is lovely but I really just don't want to be here, okay? Can't you get me on the next plane out of here or something?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The next plane is to Muscat.

AIMEE

Where's that?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Oman.

AIMEE

I don't even...is that closer to home?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You don't want to go to Muscat.

AIMEE

Why not?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Abu Dhabi is a much nicer place to rest. It's an oasis! Have you checked out the fountains? The mosaics?

AIMEE

Is there any...shopping in Muscat?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Just one little duty-free store. It's embarrassing really.

AIMEE

I think maybe I'll be happier there.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

But if you just wait here, there's a direct flight I could put you on in (*she checks her computer*) sixteen hours!

AIMEE

And if I went to Muscat?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

No one stays in Muscat very long.

AIMEE

I want to keep moving. Send me to Muscat.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You got it.

Customer Service hands Aimee a ticket.

AIMEE

Can I check my bag?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You're flying standby. We don't know for sure that you'll get on, so we can't...

AIMEE

Can't you just send it back to New York for me? I mean, I don't need it until I get back there. I don't care whether it gets there before me, or after me, whatever.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Oh, that would be convenient, wouldn't it?

AIMEE

What would?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You could blow up JFK while you were doing your shopping here, or just sitting in Muscat.

AIMEE

But I'm not a terrorist!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

No, no, of course not.

AIMEE

You can look through my bag. Everyone else has. X-ray it! Riffle through it, I don't care! But I need you to take it. It's really heavy, my arm is about to fall off from dragging it around airports with me, and one of the wheels is cracking. So please, can you just take a look -

*Aimee drags her bag over to X-Ray.
She does a quick take when she sees
him, but keeps going. Customer
Service looks on.*

AIMEE

Hi! Sir, please. Can you put my bag through your machine to prove to this woman that there's nothing bad inside, no bombs or anything?

X-Ray & Customer Service gasp!

AIMEE

What?

X-RAY

You can't say that word in an airport!

AIMEE

But she said -

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I said "blow," I did not say bomb.

AIMEE

But there! You just said -

X-RAY

(taking the bag)

The rules are different for her. Thank you.

*(Customer Service ducks back to
her counter)*

I'm going to have to take this bag from you now.

AIMEE

Oh thank you god!

X-RAY

...and have it destroyed in a controlled environment.

AIMEE

But you can't! My work!

X-RAY

What work?

AIMEE

On my computer, there, in the side pocket -

X-RAY

Here?

X-Ray opens the pocket. There is no computer.

AIMEE

Or...maybe I put it inside? I was in a rush, at Heathrow.

X-RAY

Why?

AIMEE

It's a long story.

X-RAY

I'm sure it always is with you.

AIMEE

What do you mean by that?

X-RAY

Nothing.

X-Ray opens the main compartment of the bag. There are papers and books, no computer.

X-RAY

I don't see a computer.

AIMEE

Oh my god. I must have left it somewhere. Shit! Did I leave it on the plane...? No, at the security, at Heathrow... shit!

X-RAY

What's all this paper?

AIMEE

That's the backup copy.

X-RAY

So it's not all lost. Unless I confiscate this, I mean.

AIMEE

No, you can't take it! That's my work, it's my life!

X-RAY

Work and life are the same thing to you?

AIMEE

Right now, sure. I'm still young.

X-RAY

You don't look so young to me. What are you, thirty, thirty-five?

AIMEE

What's it to you?

X-RAY

A woman of your age should have a husband and a family, not just...work.

AIMEE

(laughs)

That's funny. I had a husband once, that's how I got into this whole mess.

X-RAY

You let him get away?

AIMEE

I left, he left...

X-RAY

And what were you left with?

AIMEE

What do you mean?

X-RAY

This is all you have, stacks of paper about some little chemical compound that no one can see. Nothing real, no one waiting for you at home.

AIMEE

I...I have a dog. I just got a puppy. You want to see?

X-RAY

(jumping back from the bag)

Where is it?

AIMEE

He's not here! I have a picture I could show you. In my wallet.

X-RAY

No thank you.

AIMEE

Okay. But can I have my work back? I really do need it.

X-RAY

It's taking up too much of your time. You should be concentrating on finding a husband, you won't be young much longer.

AIMEE

Oh! But I'm still married, actually.

X-RAY

You are.

AIMEE

I just found out.

X-RAY

Tell me about your husband.

AIMEE

He was...he is...a good man.

X-RAY

Yes?

AIMEE

Strong. Traditional. Opinionated. Handsome. He came along when I was at my weakest point, totally lost and alone. And he took care of me. He gave me a place in the world. Then later we fought a lot, we had different ideas of what that place should be, but...

X-RAY

Yes?

AIMEE

It was good for a while. It was wonderful. I don't know, it's weird....you remind me of him in a way.

X-Ray closes up her bag, smiles at her.

AIMEE

Maybe it's just the way you're looking at me.

X-RAY

You're not as strong as you make people believe.

AIMEE

That's it! He said things like that and made my knees shake. That's what he did to me.

ANNOUNCEMENT

British Airways flight 476 to Muscat, now boarding through gate three.

Customer service returns.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Aimee? Ms. Weeks?

AIMEE

Yes?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You have to go on now, that's your fight.

AIMEE

I know.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You want to go, don't you?

AIMEE

Yeah. I do.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Then go. Get on your plane.

X-RAY

I'll see you again.

AIMEE

I don't know about that. I'm going to Muscat.

X-RAY

Sounds like a good step for you.

AIMEE

Muscat. You're sure?

X-RAY

You can trust the airline. They'll get you where you need to go.

*Aimee zips up her bag and exits
through the gate. Mrs. Multinational
follows.*

4. MUSCAT

Aimee enters through the gate. She's just slightly refreshed and optimistic after her flight. At least this time she knows where she is. Muscat has a funny smell, and, perhaps, a live piano player.

AIMEE

It's me Donna, are you there by the phone? Pick up pick up pick up...okay, anyway, I got your message and I'm really sorry. You didn't have to take him to the vet because I'm actually on my way home. There was this thing at the airport, and I'm...anyway, I'll be there soon. Sorry he's been so much trouble. *(to self)* Sorry you've been so hysterical. *(dials again)* Hi mother, are you home?...Oh, sorry....What time is it there? Six or seven? Have you been drinking? Call your sponsor!...Okay. It's six here, or at least that's what the clock says. AM or PM I don't know...Muscat. Don't ask. Okay, I'll let you go. Get some sleep.

Aimee crosses to Customer Service.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Did you have a pleasant flight?

AIMEE

Slept the entire way.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

For half an hour.

AIMEE

That can't be all it was.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Sometimes when you fall into a dream it feels like you've slept a lot longer.

AIMEE

I feel like I'm dreaming now.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

No, you're just in Muscat.

AIMEE

Aimee Weeks.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I know.

AIMEE

They sent word ahead of me again? Look out for the special case!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

No, I just...we don't have that many transfer passengers. I have your next ticket here, if you'd like.

AIMEE

How much time do I have before it leaves?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Not long. Eight hours.

AIMEE

Eight hours? But they told me I wouldn't have to stay in Muscat long!

CUSTOMER SERVICE

They say the hours feel like minutes here.

Mrs. Multinational comes through the gate and gets in line behind Aimee.

Aimee takes her boarding pass and starts to leave, but she notices something strange on the ticket.

AIMEE

I'm sorry. I think this is wrong.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

A ticket for Aimee Weeks!

AIMEE

No.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Did I get the name wrong?

AIMEE

No, not the name. The destination.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

It's correct.

AIMEE

I'm supposed to be flying to New York? JFK?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

There aren't very many direct flights from Muscat.

AIMEE

Right.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

If you want to fly directly you'd be better off trying Abu Dhabi.

AIMEE

But I just came from there! This is such bullshit. Look, just give me the correct boarding pass, okay?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Please miss -

AIMEE

(to Mrs. Multinational)

She's trying to give me a boarding pass for New Delhi.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I'm sorry they didn't explain it to you.

AIMEE

No one's explaining anything to me! And when they do try, the words that come out don't make any sense. I'm sorry. I really need to sleep.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I know.

AIMEE

Is there a hotel here, by the airport? Could you put me up for the night?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

There are hotels outside the airport.

AIMEE

That's fine.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

But you would need a visa to enter the country.

AIMEE

Okay. How do I get a visa?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

For an American citizen? It takes four to six weeks.

Aimee is crestfallen.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

There is a hotel in the airport at Abu Dhabi. We could fly you back there, but you would miss your connection to New Delhi.

AIMEE

(starting to laugh)

But I don't...this is absurd. You know this is absurd, don't you?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Please, miss, just take the ticket she's giving you.

AIMEE

No! I don't want to.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Then move along. There are other people here who need to do business here okay? You're holding up the line.

Aimee steps away, confused.

AIMEE

There's no line, it's just you.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Are you going to take your bag?

AIMEE

(grabbing her bag)

Fine.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Now that's a good girl.

Aimee stands for a moment, waiting then grabs her bag. The cracking wheel breaks in two. Aimee drags her suitcase over to a seat next to the French Tourist. He is playing solitaire.

AIMEE

You're waiting, too.

FRENCH TOURIST

We all have to kill time.

AIMEE

That's a good idea.

FRENCH TOURIST

What?

AIMEE
Playing cards.

FRENCH TOURIST
I always have them with me.

AIMEE
When is your flight?

FRENCH TOURIST
At two.

AIMEE
PM?

FRENCH TOURIST
I...I actually don't know. They need to get more windows in here, it is very hard to tell.

AIMEE
That's what I've been saying! (*beat*) Where are you going?

FRENCH TOURIST
No set destination.

AIMEE
But eventually.

FRENCH TOURIST
My father is an executive for Airbus. I can take any flight I want, but I just have to fly stand-by.

AIMEE
How did you end up here?

FRENCH TOURIST
I woke up one morning and I went to the airport Charles De Gaulle, I got on a plane, and I started going. I stay until I am tired and then I take the first plane out. It has been several months now. A great adventure.

AIMEE
You're young.

FRENCH TOURIST
You must be about the same age. (*indicating cards*) Twenty one?

AIMEE
I'm much older than that.

FRENCH TOURIST
Really?

AIMEE

You're flattering me. I don't like it.

FRENCH TOURIST

Then we will play to thirty, your rules.

French tourist starts dealing.

AIMEE

It seems like the rules keep changing on me. They're definitely not in my control.

They play.

FRENCH TOURIST

Maybe they are. Maybe that's your problem. You just can't decide what you want.

AIMEE

I know what I want.

FRENCH TOURIST

What?

AIMEE

Everything! Just like everyone else.

FRENCH TOURIST

What is everything?

AIMEE

An amazingly successful career, a rich and charming husband, kids, maybe, down the line. A house, a dog.

FRENCH TOURIST

And you don't have all that yet?

AIMEE

I have the dog. Just got a puppy. Want to see?

Aimee takes a picture from her wallet and shows it to him.

FRENCH TOURIST

I don't get it.

AIMEE

What?

FRENCH TOURIST

You're saying this man is supposed to be a "dog?"

Aimee grabs the picture, looks at it.

AIMEE

No, no. That's all wrong. Just a second.

FRENCH TOURIST

It's really cruel of you. Call him a jerk if that's what he is. I have seven dogs at home. I love dogs!

AIMEE

I love dogs, too! I'm really sorry.

FRENCH TOURIST

It's all right.

AIMEE

Where is your home?

FRENCH TOURIST

My family has several. My favorite is in Southern France, a big farm. We grow olives.

AIMEE

And animals?

FRENCH TOURIST

We have chickens, a few goats. (*beat. He lays down the cards.*) Thirty.

AIMEE

I thought we were playing twenty-one!

FRENCH TOURIST

Then you're the winner, aren't you, this time around.

AIMEE

No, we can play by your rules, it's fine.

FRENCH TOURIST

If we were playing by my rules, we would be in Abu Dhabi right now.

AIMEE

You didn't take the first plane?

FRENCH TOURIST

Muscat was a mistake. There aren't that many ways out of here. I'm waiting for someplace interesting to come up.

AIMEE

I'm waiting for a way to get home.

FRENCH TOURIST

But for now, you are here. Why not live in the moment?

AIMEE

You sound like a boy I once knew.

FRENCH TOURIST

Was he beautiful?

AIMEE

He was cute...my first love.

FRENCH TOURIST

And you lost him?

AIMEE

We grew up. Moved on to other people. I met a man, got married.

FRENCH TOURIST

But you said -

AIMEE

I used to have a husband. But he was different. He wasn't like you at all. Except that he had goats. Or at least he said he did, back home.

FRENCH TOURIST

You lost him.

AIMEE

In a way.

FRENCH TOURIST

You miss him.

AIMEE

No! Or, not until just recently, I guess. He was good, for a while, he took care of me.

FRENCH TOURIST

You were lonely?

AIMEE

I was lost. My first year out of college. Alone in New York, no clue what to do with myself. My father died. My mother, she kind of lost it, they put her away for a while. I had no one to help me.

FRENCH TOURIST

So he took care of you.

AIMEE

We helped each other. I got him a visa so he could stay in the United States.

FRENCH TOURIST
And then he left you?

AIMEE
I went back to school and I...I don't really know what happened anymore.

FRENCH TOURIST
You fell out of love.

AIMEE
I stopped needing him.

FRENCH TOURIST
That's Twenty-one.

AIMEE
Yes.

FRENCH TOURIST
My game.

AIMEE
Okay, then. Your game.

FRENCH TOURIST
Was he the one who left?

AIMEE
He was removed.

FRENCH TOURIST
And you didn't fight for him.

AIMEE
I was a kid! I didn't know how.

FRENCH TOURIST
So they sent him back to his farm.

AIMEE
In Kyrgystan.

FRENCH TOURIST
I don't even know where that is.

AIMEE
It's one of the former Soviet...

FRENCH TOURIST
I know that.

AIMEE

I looked for it on a map once. It's not far from here, I'm sure.

FRENCH TOURIST

He's probably waiting for you.

AIMEE

He's probably forgotten all about me by now.

FRENCH TOURIST

You carry his photo inside your wallet. You carry all his love letters in your bag. You want to tell me this man doesn't matter? Sometimes you see things more clearly with a little jet lag.

AIMEE

He never sent me letters!

FRENCH TOURIST

Then what's in your suitcase?

AIMEE

Nothing! My work, just, my paper...

Aimee opens her bag grabs a piece of paper.

AIMEE

It's a study about the effectiveness of botulinum neurotoxin on the treatment of victims of stroke! It's not even -

French Tourist grabs the paper from her.

FRENCH TOURIST

The sun rises in the morning and I think of you. The shaft of light, coming through the blinds, and landing right on your thigh. Your lips, your mouth, half open, breathing...

AIMEE

Give me that!

FRENCH TOURIST

It's a love letter!

AIMEE

I don't get it...

FRENCH TOURIST

It's from him.

Aimee reads in silence.

AIMEE

...he wrote me letters...

FRENCH TOURIST

And you never wrote him back.

AIMEE

I wanted to. I didn't know how.

FRENCH TOURIST

There's a return address on the envelope.

AIMEE

But I didn't...I didn't have the strength. Emotionally, I mean.

FRENCH TOURIST

What kind of wife are you?

AIMEE

The kind who goes on with her life. Who works her way through loneliness and pain and gets her dreams back on track. But when she finally tries to move on, she is derailed! He messed up my whole life! He did it then and he's doing it again now! I was supposed to be making my career and now I'm in fucking Muscat, thanks to him! He's not going to do this again!

FRENCH TOURIST

That's Thirty!

AIMEE

I've got to get home.

Aimee sits down for a minute. She closes her eyes.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Flight 128 to New Delhi, now boarding through gate eight.

The French Tourist nudges her. She stirs.

FRENCH TOURIST

Are you coming?

AIMEE

Where?

To New Delhi? FRENCH TOURIST

I...guess so. AIMEE

Let's go then. FRENCH TOURIST

But it's not for eight hours. AIMEE

You fell asleep. It's leaving now. FRENCH TOURIST
(laughs)

Oh. Okay. AIMEE

Did you have a pleasant dream? FRENCH TOURIST

Yeah, I guess so. AIMEE

You look beautiful when you're sleeping. Your husband was right. FRENCH TOURIST

*French Tourist gathers his things.
Gets ready to board the plane.*

Okay, I just...just give me another minute. AIMEE

Aimee closes her eyes again.

So tired... FRENCH TOURIST

Tired. Yes, I'm tired... AIMEE

*Aimee closes her eyes. French Tourist
watches her sleep.*

5. NEW DELHI

Aimee sits where we left her, but the airport has changed around her. Loud and bustling, classical Indian music plays in the background. The air is thick and spicy. Aimee wakes up out of the most delicious dream. She looks around for the French Tourist.

AIMEE

Okay, I'm ready.

But her companion is gone.

AIMEE

Is the plane still boarding? *(suddenly worried)* Damn, I hope I haven't missed it. *(Aimee gathers her things)* Pierre, Jaques, whatever your name is, where did you go...? *(beat)* I can't believe I didn't even get his name...

Mrs. Multinational sits down next to Aimee.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I have a message for you.

AIMEE

What?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

From Yvain.

AIMEE

Who?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Your friend.

AIMEE

Yvain, really? That was his name?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

He told me to tell you goodbye. He had to leave, something about the rules.

AIMEE

Oh...no. He boarded the plane?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

We all boarded the plane. Then we all got off the plane. Deplaned. Good word. There should be a more efficient word for boarding.

AIMEE

(rubbing her eyes)

So we're in India.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Yes.

AIMEE

And he's gone off to explore...

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I don't know.

AIMEE

Wow. That would be something, wouldn't it? Just wandering around India, going wherever the day takes you...

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

India is highly overrated. There are few nice hotels but most of the country is poor and dirty and full of annoying hippies all trying to discover their spirituality. Makes my skin crawl.

AIMEE

Oh.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

You look tired. Can I buy you a cup of coffee?

AIMEE

That's okay.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

You're still in transit, though.

AIMEE

(yawning)

I guess so. I should check in at the desk.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I'll get you a cup of coffee.

AIMEE

You really don't have to.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I told that boy I would look after you.

Aimee sleepwalks over to the Customer Service desk. She finds the same woman there, as always, waiting for her.

AIMEE

You got something for me?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Name?

AIMEE

I'm your airline's favorite passenger!

*Aimee spreads her arms out,
presentationally.*

AIMEE

You seriously don't know?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Aimee Weeks.

AIMEE

Aimee months, Aimee years...

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You've missed your connection.

AIMEE

How is that possible?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

I don't know. I'm not the one who's late.

AIMEE

I guess I fell asleep. I got really tired all of a sudden.
Maybe that boy drugged me.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Which boy?

AIMEE

Oh, just another traveler, on my last plane.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

We can put you on a new flight in an hour, but you'll have
to make another connection.

AIMEE

What is it this time?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Tashkent.

AIMEE

Sounds pretty. Where is it?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Uzbekistan.

AIMEE

Ozbekistan. Feels good in your mouth when you say it.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Yes.

AIMEE

You want to say it?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Uzbekistan?

AIMEE

I'll take it!

Customer service passes her the boarding pass. Aimee looks it over.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

You have time for a cup of coffee before your next leg, I'd recommend it.

AIMEE

I'm fine.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Customers in a state of intoxication are sometimes denied boarding.

AIMEE

You think I'm drunk? I'm not drunk. I'm just losing my mind.

Aimee wheels her bag away from the Customer Service desk. Mrs. Multinational waits with coffee. She hands a cup to Aimee.

AIMEE

Thanks.

Aimee opens her bag, takes out toiletries to freshen up. She takes off her shirt, stripping down to a t-shirt underneath.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

You've been traveling a long time.

AIMEE

The climate changes keeps changing on me.

Aimee looks through her bag.

AIMEE

I didn't really pack for India. Didn't expect to come here...ever. Or Muscat, or Tashkent, or any of these places! It's insane.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

You still haven't really been to any of them.

AIMEE

What, I've been dreaming?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

You haven't actually entered the countries. You have to leave the airport to do that.

AIMEE

So where have I been for the last few days?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Neutral international territory. It's like being inside the United Nations building. Sure, you're physically on Indian soil at the moment, but you haven't, actually entered India. You're nowhere.

AIMEE

That figures.

Aimee deodorizes, then rummages through her bag some more. She finds a small jewelry box.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

What have you got there?

AIMEE

I really...don't know...someone's been messing with my bag.

Mrs. Multinational steps away from the bag.

AIMEE

Not for real. It hasn't been out of my sight, it just that what's inside it keeps changing.

Aimee's phone rings, a very odd tone. She looks at the phone.

AIMEE
Is that me?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL
I think so.

AIMEE
(picking up the phone)
Hello? Hello?

Aimee hangs up.

AIMEE
There's no service here. So strange.

Aimee opens the jewelry box.

AIMEE
My god. Why do I have this...?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL
Wedding rings don't make it through the metal detector, huh?

AIMEE
No! They're not - I mean I guess they are, my engagement and my wedding ring. But I took them off a long time ago. Tucked them away at the back of my...I guess I stored a lot of things in this bag.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL
You should put them on.

AIMEE
Why?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL
People will take you more seriously if you do. I wear a wedding band.

Mrs. Multinational flashes her ring.

AIMEE
But I'm not really married.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL
I'm not married at all! But that's not the point. Women like us, women of a certain age, people expect us to be married. Before I put on this ring people either felt sorry for me and tried to set me up with boring men, or they decided that I was some horrible bitch who could never get a date. Now they just think there's some hen-pecked husband back home that they've never had a chance to meet.

AIMEE

But there isn't?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Who has time for it?

AIMEE

Don't you get lonely?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

No! I have my work.

AIMEE

Oh. Right.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I mean, isn't it that way for you? You're a little younger, I know, but you remind me of myself.

AIMEE

I have a dog!

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Me too! I have three, actually. I was traveling so much the first one started to get lonely, so I bought a dog for my dog. And then they had a puppy, so it's really...it's really quite sweet.

AIMEE

I'm sorry.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

What for? It's the only way to do it. You want to have a career, right? You want to be a powerful and successful woman? You can't have it all. But this way you can have an awful lot.

*Aimee stares at the rings in the box.
She puts on the engagement ring. It
sparkles.*

AIMEE

Maybe I'll just wear the engagement ring.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

That'll work for a few years.

*Aimee puts on the ring and stares at
her hand for a moment, fantasizing.
Then reality hits her.*

AIMEE

What day is it?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Wednesday.

AIMEE

Then the ring doesn't matter one way or another. I don't think I have a career anymore.

Aimee starts to take off the ring.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

What do you mean?

AIMEE

I'm supposed to be making a big splash in London right now, but instead I'm here, and I don't even have phone service to explain anything to them. I'm so fired it's not even funny.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I'm sure they'll understand.

AIMEE

You are?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

What do you do?

AIMEE

I work with neurotoxins?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Really? Me too!

AIMEE

What are you doing in New Delhi?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Oh, I'm just in transit, on my way to Tashkent. I have some Uzbek clients who wanted to meet me in person, you know.

AIMEE

No...

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

My work takes me all over the world. Wherever there's an oppressed minority holding a grudge! Or a defensive-feeling majority. I deal with governments, too, sometimes. Just not this time.

AIMEE

You work with government scientists...?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Officially yes, that's all I do. I provide expert advice. But my advice often comes in a package that contains materials, too. If you know what I mean...

AIMEE

I'm not sure that I do.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Biological defense? It's a really quickly expanding market. Lots of job opportunities for a smart young cookie like you! I mean, if the other job falls through.

AIMEE

No thanks. I'm not really interested in...traveling.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

You wouldn't have to! We have labs all over the world, you could choose to base yourself wherever you wanted to. Bishek, even.

AIMEE

Where?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

It's the capital of Kyrgystan.

AIMEE

Why would I want to base myself in Kyrgystan?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Oh! I thought that was where you were headed.

AIMEE

I'm going home to Long Island.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Well they're certainly sending you there in a roundabout way.

AIMEE

You're telling me.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I am.

*Aimee looks at Mrs. Multinational,
confused. She opens up her bag again.*

AIMEE

My husband, my ex, is supposed to be in Kyrgystan.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Oh, really?

AIMEE

You sure you didn't overhear that?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Nope.

AIMEE

But I don't think he's in Bishkek. He sent me these letters. The address...well, I can't tell.

Aimee shows Mrs. Multinational one of the letters.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I really don't know Kyrgystan very well.

AIMEE

He says he lives on the side of a mountain.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Then it's probably in the south. *(beat)* I've only been there once.

Aimee opens the letter, reads

AIMEE

"Every morning I climb to the highest peak and look out over the land, trying to catch a glimpse of you, thousands of miles away. I wish there was a way to get you here, but it seems our governments have conspired against our love. You are my heart and soul. I'd give anything to be back with you. But that will never happen, I know."

Aimee puts down the letter, stunned.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

He loves you!

AIMEE

I'm beginning to see that.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

I remember when I used to carry around such things. When I was young. When I was happy.

AIMEE

Yeah.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

They say that a woman can't have it both ways. You can have your career, or your husband, your family. Some women manage to find the balance, for a while. But then...

AIMEE

Then what?

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

They get lost. You know, in transit.

AIMEE

I don't know what I should do anymore.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

It doesn't seem like you're getting to make your own choices, does it?

AIMEE

No.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Finish your coffee. Tashkent is next. You can make your decisions later.

AIMEE

Okay.

ANOUNCEMENT

Flight 365, connection to Tashkent, now boarding through gate nine.

Mrs. Multinational gets up, throws away her coffee cup.

MRS. MULTINATIONAL

Come on.

Aimee begrudgingly follows. They exit through the gate.

THIS PLAY IS NOT FINISHED!

For the full script, contact RuthAMcKee@aol.com