

Love in Transit

A Radio Play

By Marteena Mendelssohn

SCENE 1. INT. AIRPORT. AFTERNOON

FX: People Chattering,
sounds of feet running across the
airport floor, babies crying, the
dinging of an airport intercom before
it begins their announcement

Airport P.A: Dear passengers on flight AC48690 to Shanghai, China, we are calling Anita Williams and Jackson Nowak, to the counter at gate C5. Again, we are calling Anita Williams and Jackson Nowak to the counter at gate C5. Thank you.

Anita: Shit.

The old chair creaks as
Anita gets up and grabs her luggage.
The sound of broken wheels follows as
she makes her way to the counter.

Anita: Hi I am Anita Williams. I was called for my flight to Shanghai.

Flight Attendant: Hello Ms. Williams. We called you over the intercom to let you know that we did overbook the flight and we only have only one seat left. There's you and another passenger who have a similar issue. If you so choose to not depart today we will-

Anita: So sorry to cut you off, but I have to make this flight.

Flight Attendant: Alright. We will have to sort this out of course.

Jackson: Hi, I'm Jackson.

Flight Attendant: Jackson Nowak, correct?

Anita: (whispering) Jackson fucking Nowak.

Jackson: Excuse me?

Anita: Sorry.. Uhh.. nothing.. It's just that. You have the same name of a guy I once-

Jackson: Anita?

Anita: .

Jackson: Wow, it is you. Wow..ahaha. Whowouldathunk. Ahahah...

Anita: Wow, Jackson, yeah.. Ahaha.. It's been a while.

An awkward beat.

Flight Attendant: Mr. Nowak, we called you over the intercom to let you know that we did overbook the flight and we only have-

Jackson: It's been so long, how are you? How are the cats?

Anita: I'm good. You know work, travel, cats, whiskey, more work, same old same old. Tokyo got sick a few months ago and we had to put her down.

Jackson: Damn. I really loved Tokyo

Anita: Cairo is doing okay, still addicted to eating the mice out in the corn fields.

Airport P.A dings and
announces: Now boarding flight AC48690
to Shanghai at Gate C5.

Jackson: Cairo always hated me.

Anita: Rio is doing pretty well now, but he was really hung up about Tokyo.

The flight attendant
starts coughing to get Jackson's
attention, he continues.

Jackson: Nice.. So what / what brings you to Shanghai

Anita: What brings you to Shanghai

Jackson: Sorry you first

Anita: No you first

Jackson: Well, I mean, nothing special. I've been invited to collaborate at the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences. It's mainly for hydrogeology, but you know how they are—cross-disciplinary integration. I'll be working with the geophysics team, too. We're trying to model sub-aquifer fluid dynamics. Basically, I'm analyzing the anisotropic permeability tensors in fractured karst aquifers, and coupling that data with geoelectric resistivity profiles. Most people just assume groundwater flows uniformly, but no—there's spatial heterogeneity due to hydraulic gradients, which we're correlating with seismic refraction anomalies. Oh, and we're using multi-electrode arrays to measure subsurface conductivity variations, which—don't even get me started on the magnetotelluric impedance! It's key for our hydrothermal circulation models. Really, the breakthrough here is going to be our work with coupled inverse algorithms to recalibrate the aquifer recharge rates. No one's done it at this scale.

Absolutely groundbreaking... if you're into hydrogeophysics, of course.

Anita: I love it when you talk dirty to me.

Flight Attendant: What?

Jackson: What?

Anita: I said that's really wordy to me...

Jackson: Oh haha sorry. But to put it in layman's terms-

Anita: No yeah I think I get it though totally.

Jackson: Oh! Cool. You were never really into that stuff before.

Anita: Yeah, I mean, all the cool people are into hydrogeologicalphysical... Rocks and shit you know.

Jackson: Yeah... So what brings you to Shanghai?

Anita: Love.

Jackson: Oh! Wow! So you found someone?

Anita: No.

Jackson: Oh?

Airport P.A (Muffled): Dear passengers, flights BA35469 to London, flight AC48690 to Shanghai, and JA09873 to Bangkok are now boarding.

Anita: Yeah, I just decided to pack up for a week and try to find a guy to bring back. There are 24.87 million people living in Shanghai. Because of the one child policy, most of the population is men. So there's gotta be at least 10 million single guys in Shanghai which gives me a pretty decent chance to find a man.

Jackson: Interesting. And you didn't think about going to, I don't know, Chicago, New York, or LA before heading straight to Shanghai.

Anita: Oh, please. American men are just... I mean, they're overgrown boys. All they think about is startups, golf, and, what? Bitcoin? No thanks. They treat relationships like an investment portfolio—what's my ROI, how little can I put in to

maximize my gains. I'm exhausted by it! They want *all* the perks without ever opening a door or paying for a dinner without complaining about "gender equality." Like, congratulations, Chad, you Venmo'd me for *half* a latte. So considerate.

But Chinese men? Traditional values, family-oriented, chivalry isn't dead over there. And the one-child policy means a surplus of single guys who were raised to be everything American guys aren't. Respectful, committed, plus, I read this study that said in a lot of Chinese families, the boys are raised to be extra attentive to their wives. They value stability and loyalty. It's not just about Tinder matches and swiping through endless options. It's like... deep down, they believe in *relationships*.

So yeah, why settle for a half-hearted hedge fund bro from Manhattan when I can have a true, romantic comrade? It's like a... geopolitical dating hack!

Jackson: Wow.

Flight Attendant: Wow.

Anita: I'll arrive in Shanghai as Anita Williams and leave Anita Wang. I deserve it.

Jackson: It's funny to hear you talk about love, even if it is a bit calculated. You never spoke like this when we were together.

Anita: Maybe I didn't *know* what I wanted back then.

Jackson: Or maybe you never really knew *yourself*—not then, not now.

Anita: (Voice rising) I know exactly what I want now, Jackson!

Jackson: Oh yeah? A fairy tale? A perfect husband waiting in Shanghai like some prize to be claimed? You think that's *real*?

Anita: At least I'm *trying*! Trying to find something that makes sense, something *stable*! Something better than whatever we were!

Jackson: You think this is about stability? You think a man from halfway across the world, who you've never met, will suddenly be everything you need? *You're running, Anita!*

Anita: And what if I am? What if I find someone who's not afraid to love me? Who actually chooses me?

Jackson: What if you already *had* that, and you threw it away?

Another awkward beat.

Flight Attendant: Damn.

Anita: (Frustrated) Jackson, love's not some underground reservoir you can tap into whenever it's convenient! It's not endless! Once it's dried up, it's gone. You can't pump it back out of thin air.

Jackson: But we're not at rock bottom yet! We're just... in the wrong strata! If we stop running, maybe we can still find each other. You don't abandon a well because it doesn't flow right away!

Anita: Oh my God, will you stop with the geology metaphors! This isn't about fault lines or wells or whatever the hell you're trying to explain! It's us! And it's over, Jackson. Not because of sediment layers or some tectonic shift—because we're broken! We broke *each other!*

Jackson: But we can fix this... I know we can. Just give us another chance. We've weathered storms before...

Anita: No, stop. Stop pretending like this is something you can map out, like you can measure and fix it with your equations and models. People aren't *rocks*, Jackson. Love isn't a process you can predict. Sometimes... sometimes it just *ends*. And sometimes, you have to go to China to find a special rock that you know will treat you better.

Jackson: You don't mean that...

Anita: I do. I mean it. And you need to stop digging for answers that aren't there.

Flight Attendant: Excuse me, but if you two are done with the emotional excavation, we're about to board. You know, some of us have planes to catch and actual jobs to get to. So unless you plan on setting up a geology seminar at Gate 12, maybe wrap it up?

Anita: Yeah, Jackson. Time to board.

Jackson: Yeah... I guess it is.

Flight Attendant: Finally. Thought I'd have to grab a shovel. But which one of you are getting on the flight?

Jackson: What?

Flight Attendant: Well as I was trying to say, we overbooked the flight and there's only one seat left.

Jackson: Shit.

Flight Attendant: (Sighs) Yep. So you two need to decide. Who's it going to be?

Jackson: This is insane. We can't just leave it like this! Why don't we both stay?

Anita: No, you need to go. This is your opportunity.

Jackson: But what about you? You can't just stay here alone!

Anita: I'll figure it out, Jackson, I always do. Just go!

Jackson: I can't just let you—

Flight Attendant: (Interrupting) Last call, folks! This isn't a love story, it's a flight!

Anita: Wait! I'll take the seat.

Jackson: What? Anita?

Flight Attendant: (Rushing them along) Great! Let's go.

Anita: Okay, okay! I'm coming!

A beat.

Anita: I hope you find your... painite

Jackson: Wow, a rare rock reference. (he chuckles slightly) I hope you find your true love, Comrade.

Anita leaves as the sound
of her broken luggage follows.

Flight Attendant: Boarding has completed for flight AC48690 to Shanghai, China.

Jackson: See you later, 'Nita.

The End