

MID-AIR REVALUATION

A very short play

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(Onboard an aeroplane; in the short corridor between the galley and the toilets; enter Eddy and Vixen staggering, a bit drunk kissing and grabbing each other)

EDDY

Hey baby! Yeah! It's true about drink hitting you quicker when you're flying. It's the pressure difference. It's only slight but it's there. Mmmm... oh, yeah, do that again baby... that's why they put bubbles in lager and champagne and mixers... to push the alcohol solubility curve over to the right...

VIXEN

mmm... bored already... come on Nerdy-pants! Hurry up it's vacant! Quick, quick come on, Eddy!

(They giggle, embrace and fall into the loo cubicle. The door closes and the moaning of serious snogging starts ..As the stewardess (AMBER) emerges from the galley with a tray of drinks. She double-takes at the noise from the cubicle whose sign still says VACANT.)

AMBER

hey! Hey; whoever's in there...

(She pushes the door which moves a bit then stops;)

VIXEN (O.S)

Fuck off this is a private party!

(The door slams fully shut and the lock clicks home: the sign now reads OCCUPIED)

AMBER:

BOLLOCKS. ARSEHOLES!

(Turns away with drink tray - bumping into Colonel Dobermann wearing dress khakis and a green USA Special Forces beret; (a bit tipsy).)

COL. D.

Ah hope that wasn't meant for me and my guys, lil lady... y'know we're just doing our job protecting the free world against terrorism...

AMBER

Sorry sir. There's a slight passenger related problem... but I don't think it's terrorism...

COL.D.

Are you British?

AMBER

Scots. I lived in London for a while... now I go where the job takes me ken?

COL.D

Huh? My name's Dave. David. David Dobermann, Colonel, United States Army Special Operations; at your service, ma'am.

(He salutes and grins ...the rhythmic thump of buttocks against the loo door begins -and moans and gasps.)

EDDY AND VIXEN(O.S)

Uhh... Ha! Mmm ohhhh..... huh...ahhhh.... Hah! Ohhh yesss! Baby! Mmmm! Ohhh....

AMBER

Now *they're* no terrorists are they? Colonel, er, David?

COL.D.

No ma'am; I do believe that we're hearing is, what's known as... uh, joining the Mile High club.

AMBER

I've got tae take these drinks up to the flight deck. Skipper's usually parched after three hours and the United Nations lot stress her out... she's Russian ken.

COL.D

Yes I've met Captain Rossova. She's got some mighty peculiar views... I'm escorting the ladies and gentlemen of the UN fact-finding mission to Iraq and their boss insisted on going up to the flight-deck and having my guys check the anti-hijacking systems... guess they're nervous y'see, case Al-Qaeda storm the plane when we land... or sneaked hijackers in among the civs, the ordinary passengers...

AMBER

Ordinary- like those two randy so-and-sos in the loo the now?

COL.D.

Well... hey, I just follow orders lil lady- say, what's your name?

AMBER

Amber. Amber McCallan. My dad was a whisky lover ken... I'll, maybe I'll see you later David.

COL.D.

Sure hope so, Amber. Uh, you get your Captain her refreshment then- she was pretty tense last I saw, tore me off a strip for suggestin' she couldn't handle hijackers... Say did you know she's got a machine-gun up there in the cockpit?

AMBER

Oh aye... Alexandra, I mean Cap'n Rossova's a tough woman; she useta fly transport planes for the Red Air Force in Afghanistan ken, in the '80s.

(Amber exits. Col. D.bends his ear towards the rising noise of sex - and grimacing, holds his privates.)

COL.D.

Enjoy, folks. Love sure is the sweetest thing.

(A speaker crackles and briefly howls as a microphone comes on)

CAPTAIN ROSSOVA (O.S)

Good afternoon fellow traveller... or as we say back home, *Dobrye din sputniki*... I am your Captain Alexandra Yekaterina Rossova and I like to welcome you onboard Flight 13 to Baghdad International Aeroport with Air Valkyrie; or as we say *Air Valyuta*... If you hadn't flown our way before, our motto is, Any where, we get you there, for the cheapest fare! In hard currency of course that's why we call ourselves *Air Valyuta*. H'm... If you didn't get our brochure because our no frills policy, I like to briefly say I am the veteran pilot of over sixty thousands of hours flying large air transports without accidents. And like majority of Air Valkyrie pilot I am woman, we are biggest airline which has women pilots, although I am not pretty like your cabin crew chief stewardess Amber McCallan who can cater for all your needs in flight. *Da*... Our ETA to Baghdad International was... 19:47 hours local time. I think is still the same more or less... thank you for listening; welcome and cheers, *nazhdoroye!*

(The shagfest in the loo rises noisily to a climax, cries of passion and bums banging on cubicle doors. Col.Dobermann, fed up, hobbles down the corridor still holding himself)

(After a long doubled gasping and moaning the loo door finally unlocks and opens cautiously; Eddy peeps out.)

EDDY

Coast's clear babe...

VIXEN

Come on then- move it- I need a drink!

(Heading for the cabin doorway they collide with a middle-aged man in a suit (BARAK) with his head down holding a laptop and murmuring to himself)

BARAK

Imsh'Allah ar-rahman, ar-rahim... And the faithful who die defending the faith do not die; their souls live forever among the blessed in heaven- oh! Excuse me...

EDDY

No problem, guy...

(Eddy double-takes and stops, Vixen clinging to him.)

EDDY (Continued)

Hey, hey, hey! I know you, man... hey, you're, uh, Mubarak? Remember? Hey! Muswell Hill? Summer when, what year?

BARAK

Eddy Steadman! Good G- what- yes; you still awful with names. Barak, I'm Barak Abdul-Malik. Rock Steady Eddy! How long? 1987. Summer, yes.

VIXEN

Oh fuck, I mean... Hi! Barak! what a surprise.

BARAK

Yes... isn't it. A big surprise; Vixen. Are you still called Vixen?

VIXEN

The one and only... how've you *been*, boy? Mmmm...

(Vixen hugs Barak who responds stiffly holding laptop between them like a shield. As he steps back, Eddy reclaims his girlfriend)

EDDY

You still in engineering? I'm with Impetrocom Logistics now; maybe you've heard about us. Y'know, oil field infrastructure...

BARAK

Yes, yes I've heard all about Impetrocom. Communications and fuel-supply control systems aren't you? Sensing and monitoring ...

EDDY

Yeah it's telemetry based stuff. Refinery, Pipeline and extraction end too. Integrated systems touch, mate. Modern as fuck!

BARAK

Really? The wells too? That's interesting. Fascinating...

VIXEN

Yeah, yeah! Look its great to see you again Barak; but I totally need a drink *right now*.

BARAK

Oh yes... please don't let me keep you from a drink

EDDY

Hey, did we sink a few beers that summer or what? We had a few parties man... Back when you and me were trying to understand engineering, hey? A few beers...

BARAK

Oh yes, a few parties we threw in Muswell Hill Gardens. And Vixen; I remember those days now. Long time, long time. Yes. Of course I don't drink now... I'm a genuine Muslim these days. Not a disturbed young *fool* any more... I've found peace. Through submission to our Creator. The Great Engineer and Architect; the compassionate and merciful One.

VIXEN

Hey way to go guy... great stuff...

EDDY

Hey, we're in 76 and 77 right by the port wing, man. Can't see shit but blue sky; welcome to join us for a chat, we've got empty seats all round us.

VIXEN

Yeah, like we're a pariah state or something; like Iran.
(**Whispers**)
c'mon *Eddy*... come on.

BARAK

Yes later, Rock Steady. I'll check you later.

(**Barak goes in the loo and locks
the door**)

VIXEN

Now I *really* need a drink. Your mate's gone weird man; who takes their laptop into the loo? I mean who nicks stuff on airliners at 30,000 feet?

EDDY

Hey my mate Barak used to be *your boyfriend* back then, when, before we, before.

VIXEN

Before I shagged you, you mean? Before I got you out of your nerdy shell and taught you all about *life*? Hey; you wanna know something? I fancied you for ages but I only shagged you that night because *your best mate Barak* was too drunk to get it up. Yeah, that's probably why he started being a Muslim...

EDDY

Yeah, right; losing you would drive any guy nuts. Hey let's get that drink.

(Holding hands they go forward to the cabin.)

(Moments later Amber reappears through the same door, going straight into the galley with a tray of empty plates and glasses, looking shocked; she stops, trembling violently, the crockery and glasses rattling, and looks back at the doorway.)

AMBER

Fuck. Weird or what? Jesus. I canna believe that. No fucking way.

(She goes into the galley and we hear a cupboard door slam and glasses smashing.)

AMBER (O.S.) (Continued)

Oh *shit* oh *fucking* shit!

(Seconds later CAPTAIN ROSSOVA appears from the cabin - shaking her head, smiling and swearing in Russian)

CAPT.ROSSOVA

Vibratchy, vibratchy idiote Spetsnatz Amerikansky, vibratchy cretine...

(From the galley comes muffled sobbing and sound of broken glass being swept up.)

(Capt. R. pauses on her way to the loo; pokes her head through the galley door.)

CAPT. ROSSOVA

Hey, whassup Amber girl? Why? Why you crying? Its not important you break a few glasses; Air Valyuta can buy new. Come on; chill up. Is your month? Period? I think it's mine soon, hey? It's why I attract annoying Americans. *Spetsnatz* Colonel, big *vibratchy idiote* who was in my flight deck before being paranoid about terrorist hooligans. Now is chatted me up. Cheeky bastard. Fucking soldier I need these like two holes, you know? I had one Russian like this in Afghanistan, summer 1987, one day I wait for him two days in Kabul. Actually was Crimean boy. Very pretty boy, very fit. But his body came in pieces back to the airbase in a zip up bag. Bastard men. Who needs soldier for lover? Hey?

(She backs out as Amber emerges wiping her eyes.)

AMBER

I'm alright, right? Fine. And no it's not my *time*; ...And it's no *chill up*, Alex. It's fucking chill oot! I've no got your English sorted yet have I?

CAPT.ROSSOVA

I guess. I sorry. I need piss; stay there. You not fine you need talk. Wait one minute. Shut up that's order. I Captain Alexandra Yekaterina Rossova... one minute.

(She stops outside cubicle shrugs and turns back)

CAPT.ROSSOVA (Continued)

Is occupy. Okay I wait here. *Nye prablem*.I good bladder. You fetch vodka from there..

(Nods towards galley)

Finnish vodka better than Russian I think; is why I enjoy fly for Air Valkyrie. Good vodka and good money.*Valyuta*, not roubles... go on, your Captain give you order. And don't bother with glass.. And don't drop!

(Amber fetches bottle of Absolut vodka and gives it to Capt. Rossova who uncaps it and downs a hefty swig)

CAPT. ROSSOVA

Now tell me Amber please what is matter?

(As Amber hesitates Capt.R. hands her the bottle)

Drink and talk. Is order. What wrong? Is man?

AMBER

Oh bloody hell fire shit and *piss*.

(Starts to cry then draws deep breath and sips from bottle)

Aye that's good stuff you're right. And aye it's a man. An ex from twenty year ago. ..And my ex-friend. We all lived together in London, two couples. And then that bitch...

CAPT. ROSSOVA

I seeee.... drink. Me too... is great invention autopilot. I only got to land, take off and set direction. Also height... so. *Nazhdoroye* ... Talk!

AMBER

Her boyfriend Barak was a right alky, Muslim too and she fed up, but that bitch whore had tae have a man.. So one night I'm working late and...

CAPT. ROSSOVA

Da, see. Twenty years ago... was when I lost Yevgeny. My beautiful Crimean boy...

(Drinks, passes bottle back)

Why now you cry and break glasses? Is him in toilet?

AMBER

They're in the cabin the now. But they were in there. Together. I saw them and I realised what, what...

CAPT.ROSSOVA

In the toilet? Dirty animals. On my aeroplane. *Vibratchye*. Give me; I need drink. *Nazhdorovye*.

(Enter Col. D.again, walking stiffly)

COL. D.

Uhh... ladies... can I get by?

(The toilet door opens and Barak emerges, holding a disassembled laptop shell in one hand and a pistol in the other)

COL.D.

Jesus aitch keerist, boy. You can't be serious. I'm dying here...

BARAK

Yes you are. I'm sorry.

(HE SHOOTS COL.D. Twice through the head)

AMBER

(screams)

No!! I'm losing my mind! It can't be you, no, Barak, Barak fra Muswell Hill, Eddy's mate? No way...

BARAK

Amber? Amber McCallan? *Imshallah!* How are you? I am sorry you are here. Vixen my ex the whore is here too; and guess who else?

CAPT. ROSSOVA

She knows; she saw him, *vibratchye hooligan*. Girls talk.

BARAK

(to Amber)

I'm sorry but I must hijack the aeroplane now; the UN people onboard are my only hope. We, my group the Sayf-Allah Command Committee, need a hostage against the Western servants of Satan who are looting our economy. When I saw Eddy I thought there was God's justice; let him die too when -if- I shoot the pilot and bring the plane down if I must; but now you- I am deeply sorry Amber.

(Shaking his head sadly, Barak turns away - his pistol at the ready behind the gutted laptop)

CAPT.ROSSOVA

Vibratchye fascist cretin idiote...!

(She steps forward, swinging the vodka bottle to Barak's skull, follows with a punch and kicks his legs away. ...and as he falls she takes his pistol)

CAPT.ROSSOVA (Continued)

If you shoot the pilot? And crash my aeroplane? I am *Captain* Alexandra Yekaterina Rossova. Flying through Afghan mountains and dodging your religious fanatic fascist friends' heat-seeking missiles when you were still alchy schoolboy in London. *Vibratchye*.

(She inspects the bottle and drains half its remaining contents in gulp. Handing it to amber she makes the pistol safe, ejecting the magazine clip and the chambered round before pocketing it.)

(Amber looks down at Barak, shrugs, drinks the vodka)

AMBER

Cheers Skipper...
(grimaces)
What a bloody mess.

CAPT.ROSSOVA

Friendships are like roubles I think; we revalue them in middle life.

THE END