

Ashleigh Mitnick

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Daniella Castillo Vasquez

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Traveling in a group of nine people with the age range spanning from three to seventy five is never a ‘seamless’ experience. Getting the stroller, wheelchair, and without doubt someone's accidental 3.9 ounce liquid through security is not for the faint of heart. Once through the airport, my grandmother insists on sitting down for a three course meal, often at 6 in the morning. At last we board the plane in complete chaos. I touch the leather airplane seat and put my headphones in intending to sleep until we touchdown in paradise. Yeah, no. That’s not reality with my family. Babies screaming and my grandma constantly tapping me to ask “what’s wrong with my phone” due to airplane mode making her unable to scroll through the same 15 emails over and over again. Oh and how could I forget my grandpa’s negative awareness of his surroundings. Suddenly the flight becomes a concert for the worst “oldies” cover band.

My entire family complains in unison. “Shut up pa” is what my brother commonly says. My mom, mortified and pretends she has no idea who her dad is. My grandpa, with no care in the world, thinks the airplane is the perfect place to sing along to his perfectly curated spotify playlist. He calls it “PPL” which is an acronym for pa’s perfect playlist. It is filled with songs by The Beatles, The Beach Boys, and most importantly Billy Joel. He sings these songs not just on the plane, but everywhere he goes. The second hand embarrassment often makes my cheeks turn red. My anxious self doesn’t comprehend how he can just burst into song in front of anyone and anywhere.

When the flight attendants came by with the snack cart, I tried to hide behind my hood. I pretended like the clouds outside the window were fascinating. My mom had her tight lipped

smile presented on her face, which if you know my mom, means she is screaming of annoyance on the inside. My grandmother was ready to bang her head against her multiple magazines she purchased at the airport bodega. And then, my grandpa cleared his throat. Not the average throat-clearing. A dramatic one, like he was ready to perform at Madison Square Garden. I felt like the people around us were thinking “Oh no, not this again”.

Finally the flight landed. My first thought was “get me out of here”. My whole family regrouped on the jetbridge. Because, yeah, that’s a calm and collected place. My baby cousins were ready to run a marathon, my grandma was already complaining about the car service, and my brother was busy checking the Islanders score. By the time we made it to baggage claim, I felt like my nerves were poked in all the wrong ways. Everything was overstimulating me: grabbing the suitcases, the airport announcements, and finding the driver. I was ready to jump out of my own skin.

Suitcase tetris began as we loaded 9 suitcases and a double stroller into the trunk. “Please. Let’s just... get to the resort”. That's what my mom said outloud but in retrospect, it’s what we were all thinking. The van smelled like sunscreen and rusted fabric with a touch of vomit from the bumpy caribbean roads. Of course, my grandpa took the seat next to the driver. Singing again, now like it was a Beach Boys concert at the Jones Beach Amphitheater. The singing wouldn’t stop, I had to suck it up for the rest of the week.

There was one song in particular that I honestly didn’t mind. Whenever he bursted out into “Uptown Girl” by Billy Joel, I unintentionally would sing along. Whether it was in my head or out loud alongside him, I loved singing that song. I didn’t know what Billy Joel’s meaning of “Uptown Girl” meant or who Christie Brinkley was. I did not care what the true meaning of the

song was because I made my own. I took this idea of an “uptown girl” in a different way. To me, an uptown girl was someone who shined a positive light on the world, with a smile on her face.

On the beach we would sing Uptown Girl together. The weather was sunny and the sound of the waves created a melody. The constant flow of pina coladas and strawberry daiquiri’s only made the singing sound scratchier and off tune. The Billy Joel songs brought my whole family together on the beach. Not just my family, but the resort staff joined in too. Nothing was “normal” about this, but it was fun. Singing these songs made me feel like a real uptown girl.

It was time to leave the resort and head home to New York. Yet again, packing the suitcases like a game of tetris in the van. Buckling in the carseats, lifting my five foot grandmother into the van, and off we went. Getting through the small Caribbean airport wasn’t too hard of a task, until they screamed “Rona Ginberg please report to the help desk”. My grandmother's anxious natured self freaked out. She was then pulled into a small room and interrogated. She had stupidly brought packs of cigarettes through customs. The entire duration of her interrogation my family was pacing. My mom was worried about missing our flight. The time to board was approaching and yet, no sign of my grandmother. The crowded airport felt even more suffocating as I was looking all around for her small figure. Finally, we were able to board. Piling everyone into their assigned seat. Obviously, I was grateful that we were towards the front of the plane. Despite having “good” seats, I hated it. I was so embarrassed by everyone walking past my unhinged family. I’ve come to the realization that there will never be a seamless travel day in my family.

The warm shower after a travel day felt amazing on my skin. I got out of the shower, and into my cozy robe. Then, my mom shouted, “Is anyone in the shower?”. I first thought she was just eager to shower herself, but then she said put clothes and shoes on and we gotta go. I threw

on the top clothes on the shelf, threw my sopping wet hair into a claw clip, and slipped on my ugg slippers. My grandfather had fallen and cracked his head open. We rushed to their house to find him in the bathroom blotting blood off his forehead.

Arriving at the emergency room was scary. I looked up to my grandfather, he was my idol, and seeing him down was heartaching. But, as always, I was an uptown girl. I had to make the experience as positive as possible. We went back, got his vitals checked, and after a long time of waiting he got stitches. There is no doubt that this was not an ideal situation, but I was able to remain calm due to the song Uptown Girl playing over and over in my head. My uptown attitude kept the awful experience as upbeat as possible.

Billy Joel did not just compose a song. He created a mantra. Yes, there is no doubt the song originally was mocking Christie Brinkley's flamboyant lifestyle. Personally, I never cared about who Christie was. I took this song and put it in my own perspective. In reality, this song taught me to put everything into perspective and that not everything is a big deal. Being an uptown girl helped me concur my anxiety. It taught me to take hardships and form them into life lessons. Like my grandpa always taught me, the glass would always be half full, rather than half empty.

As much as I could complain about my grandpa's annoying singing, I must admit I slightly enjoy it. It makes boring times into memories I will never forget. The love for music he has shared with me allows me to analyze songs for a deeper meaning. Many times not the meaning the writer meant, but the meaning that feels right to me. Song has connected my family in many different ways. Song has brought us together during the highest of highs and lowest of lows. For me, Uptown Girl will always be my mantra. I'm forever grateful my grandfather introduced me to this song and allowed me to make it my own.