



NEWS RELEASE

Falling in love one standby flight at a time

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Just friends — that's all Rafael and Kenia Sanchez were.

No really. Just friends.

They met as managers on duty for the afternoon shift on the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW) ramp in 2022. "We ran a pretty tight ship," Rafael said. "There was no thought of dating."

Three years and 40,000 standby miles later, they are much more than friends. They are a husband and wife in love with each other and their 1-year-old daughter — and they credit their American Airlines travel privileges with their love story.

'The one for me'

Kenia and Rafael's friendship turned into more shortly after Kenia started a new role as the general manager at Minneapolis–Saint Paul International Airport (MSP) in December 2023. Two of their friends from DFW were getting married, and Kenia flew back for the wedding.

"We decided to go to the wedding together," Kenia said. "For the first time we had a conversation that didn't just pertain to work and got more personal."

The friends discovered they had a lot more in common than they had realized. They both came from humble beginnings, and both felt the weight of family responsibilities.

"I knew that weekend that she was the one for me," Rafael said. "I'd always known she was sweet and kind, but I didn't know that side of her." In the coming days, they texted each other daily, and Rafael booked a flight to

Minneapolis for their official first date just one week after the wedding.

"My first night there, I asked Kenia to be my girlfriend," Rafael said. The next day, they went to brunch, walked through a snowy city park and put up Kenia's Christmas tree.

"He was so different than any other relationship I've had," Kenia said. "Not only was he a gentleman, but he made me feel I could let my guard down with him and let him take care of me."

American's travel privileges allow team members and their eligible travelers to fly for free or at discounted rates across American's network and on some partner airlines. So Rafael was easily able to return to MSP every single break he had for the next 10 months to visit Kenia. When he did the math, Rafael realized he'd traveled 40,000 miles in less than a year.

"Thanks to American Airlines, we were able to keep our spark alive one standby flight at a time and our love grew stronger," he said.

Passing on the love of travel

On May 25, 2023, Kenia's birthday, Rafael surprised her by proposing in front of their families, but a bigger surprise came the following week. The couple was overjoyed to find out they were expecting.

Kenia arranged with her leaders to return to her previous role at DFW to be closer to Rafael and their families, and the couple married that fall. They welcomed their daughter, Khloe, the following January.

"I have this precious little life that was so unexpected," Kenia said.

Now the new parents are doing what any good airline parents do: They are introducing Khloe to her American travel privileges.

Khloe has since traveled to Nice, Monaco, Disney World, as well as Nicaragua and Puerto Rico, where Kenia and Rafael's families are from, respectively. "I want my daughter to know where she comes from and what we do," Kenia says. "American has played a huge part of our lives, and we're so thankful and grateful."

What's next for the adventurous family?

"Happily ever after," Kenia said smiling. "And maybe we give baby Khloe a sibling."

Rafael chimed in. "Maybe she'll be a pilot one day."

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