

AIRPLANE

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SHOOTING SCRIPT

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FADE IN:

EXT. SKY - JUST ABOVE CLOUDS - NIGHT

OMINOUS, THREATENING MUSIC. The upper tail fin of a jet plane emerges through the cloud layer and PASSES THROUGH the FRAME like a shark's fin through water. It passes by again in the opposite direction. MUSIC BUILDS as the fin comes straight TOWARD the CAMERA, MUSIC SWELLS to CRESCENDO as entire jet plane lifts out of clouds and passes overhead. **TITLE SLASHES ACROSS SCREEN, "AIRPLANE!"**

CREDITS and MUSIC continue over following.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT (STOCK)

ESTABLISHING terminal building.

EXT. TERMINAL BUILDING - PASSENGER LOADING ZONE - NIGHT

Airport bus arrives. Stewardess ELAINE DICKINSON steps off. CAMERA FOLLOWS Elaine as she walks to terminal building.

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)

The white zone is for immediate loading and unloading of passengers only. There is no stopping in the red zone.

P.A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)

The red zone is for immediate loading and unloading of passengers. There is no stopping in the white zone.

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)
No. The white zone is for loading and
unloading, and there is no stopping in the
red zone.

P.A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)
The red zone has always been for loading
and unloading, and there is never stopping
in a white zone.

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)
Don't tell me which zone is for stopping
and which zone is for loading.

P.A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)
Listen, Betty. Don't start up with your
white zone shit again!

Elaine enters terminal building.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Elaine is approached by a religious ZEALOT #1.

ZEALOT #1

Hello, we'd like you to have this flower
from the Religious Consciousness Church.

ELAINE

No, but thank you very much.

Arrival-Departure TV monitors. Elaine approaches.

ELAINE'S POV - TV MONITORS

Reads: Flight 209 to Chicago - Depart Gate 89 - 7:25 p.m.
Arrival monitor is goldfish swimming.

BACK TO ELAINE

She checks her watch and walks past Security Check area.
CAMERA STAYS with a middle-aged couple, SHIRLEY and JACK,
waiting to pass through Security Check. Behind them is sign
reading: WARNING, HIJACKING IS A FEDERAL OFFENSE, etc.

SHIRLEY

Jack, isn't that Fred Bliffert over there
in the blue turtleneck? Maybe he's on our
flight to Chicago.

JACK

Yeah, I think he is.

(waves)
Hey, Fred!

FRED recognizes Jack.

FRED
(yelling)
Hi, Jack!!!

A swarm of police and airport security men descend on Fred and take him away.

EXT. AIRPORT - PASSENGER LOADING ZONE - NIGHT

A limousine arrives. Two colorfully dressed BLACK DUDES emerge. An extra pesters them. Two HARE KRISHNA'S arrive on foot and walk toward terminal.

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)
There's just no stopping in the white zone.

P.A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)
Christ, you're as bad as your mother!

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)
Oh, really, Vernon! Why pretend? We both know perfectly well what it is you're talking about. You want me to have an abortion.

P.A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)
It's really the only sensible thing to do. If it's done properly, therapeutically, there's no danger involved.

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)
Have you considered that what's inside me is a human being; that it's alive. We made love. It's us -- you and me.

P.A. SYSTER (male v.o.)
That isn't true. A fetus at this stage is not a human being, nor is it a person.

Krishnas enter terminal building.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - NIGHT

The Krishnas are approached by the Religious Zealot.

ZEALOT #2

Hello, we'd like you to have this flower
from the Church of Consciousness. Would
you like to make a donation?

KRISHNA

(shakes his head)
No, we gave at the office.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - NIGHT

A voluptuous BLONDE saunters through the airport, clears her
throat loudly, and spits on the wall.

She walks past an ELDERLY WOMAN standing outside a men's
room door. She turns and sticks her head in the door.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Go, O.J., go!!

INT. SECURITY CHECK AREA - NIGHT

SECURITY CHECK LADY is watching X-ray scanner. First picture
is typically filled suitcase, then another, then a chest X-
ray.

A man passes through metal detector archway and it BEEPS.

SECURITY LADY

Please put your metal objects on this
tray.

He puts his watch, keys on the tray. Then removes his metal
arm and metal leg.

EXT. TERMINAL BUILDING - PASSENGER LOADING AREA - NIGHT

MR. and MRS. HAMMEN and their eight year old son, JOEY,
arrive in a station wagon. They unload luggage.

P.A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)

The red zone is for immediate loading and
unloading of passengers only. There is no
stopping in the white zone.

P.A. System Female v.o. weeping.

P. A. SYSTEM (male v.o.)

The red zone is for...Betty, put down that
gun!

SHOTS and GROAN.

P.A. SYSTEM (female v.o.)
The white zone is for immediate loading
and unloading of passengers only. There is
no stopping in the red zone.

The Hammens walk toward terminal past a BUSINESSMAN.

BUSINESSMAN

Taxi!

A taxi cab skids to a stop in front of him. The Businessman gets in as the driver, TED STRIKER, drops the flag and rushes out.

STRIKER

Back in a minute.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - BAGGAGE PICKUP AREA - NIGHT

Striker enters, looking around as if searching for someone. People are rolling down the conveyor belt of a baggage carousel, banging into each other like luggage. The luggage is standing around the conveyor belt, waiting for the people to come off.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Striker, walking briskly, is approached by Zealot #3 who tries to pin a flower on his jacket. Striker keeps walking but the Zealot is persistent. Finally, Striker slips out of his jacket leaving the Zealot with the coat.

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)
Your attention, please. Flight seven-
thirty-three from Milwaukee is now
arriving on the B Concourse, Gate thirty-
five.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Flight 733 taxis toward gate. A GROUND CREWMAN with red flashlights is directing plane to his right. A SECOND GROUND CREWMAN approaches as First Ground Crewman continues to direct plane to his right.

CREDITS END.

GROUND CREWMAN #2

Hey, Joe, where's the forklift?

GROUND CREWMAN #1

The forklift? It's over there by the

baggage loader.

He points to the left with his flashlights. Flight 733 follows flashlights and CRASHES into terminal.

INT. TERMINAL - GATE 35 - NIGHT

Nose of Flight 733 CRASHES into terminal, scattering waiting crowd. A woman tosses away her infant child as she runs off.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Striker catches up to Elaine.

STRIKER

Elaine!

ELAINE

(surprised)

Ted!

STRIKER

I came home early and found your note. I guess you meant for me to read it later. Elaine, I've got to talk to you.

ELAINE

I just don't want to go over it any more.

STRIKER

I know things haven't been right for a long time, but it'll be different. If you'll just be patient, I can work things out.

ELAINE

I have been patient and I've tried to help, but you wouldn't even let me do that.

STRIKER

Don't you feel anything for me at all any more?

ELAINE

It takes so many things to make love last. Most of all it takes respect. And I can't live with a man I don't respect!

She leaves.

STRIKER

(to CAMERA)
What a pisser.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - CONCESSION AREA - NIGHT

CAPTAIN CLARENCE OVEUR is standing at the magazine racks. The first two sections of the display are books; the third is girly magazines. The captions over the display are FICTION, NON-FICTION, WHACKING MATERIAL. He selects a magazine entitled "Modern Sperm" and begins to page through.

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)
Captain Clarence Oveur, white courtesy
phone. Captain Clarence Oveur, white
courtesy phone.

Captain Oveur approaches telephones and picks up a red phone.

OPERATOR (v.o.)
No, the white phone.

Oveur picks up the white phone.

OVEUR
This is Captain Oveur.

OPERATOR (v.o.)
One moment for your call from the Mayo
Clinic.

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)
Captain Oveur, white courtesy phone.
Captain Clarence Oveur...

OVEUR
(yelling at ceiling)
I've got it!

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)
All right. Thank you.

OPERATOR (v.o.)
Go ahead with your call.

TURNANSKY (v.o.)
This is Doctor Turnansky at the Mayo
Clinic.

INT. DR. TURNANSKY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

DR. TURNANSKY is seated at desk. Behind him are shelves

filled with mayonnaise jars.

TURNANSKY

There's a passenger on your Chicago flight two-oh-niner, a little girl named Lisa Davis -- en route to Minneapolis. She's scheduled for a heart transplant and we'd like you to tell her mother that we found a donor an hour ago.

On his desk is a beaker containing a beating heart.

TURNANSKY

We have the heart here ready for surgery and we must have the recipient on the operating table within six hours.

The heart jumps out of the beaker, across the desk and falls off the edge.

TURNANSKY

I want you to make sure she is kept in a reclined position and that a continuous watch is kept on her I.V.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - PHONE AREA - NIGHT

TURNANSKY (v.o.)

Also, it's important that...

OPERATOR (v.o.)

Excuse me. This is the Operator, Captain Oveur, I have an emergency call for you on line five from a Mister Hamm.

OVEUR

All right. Give me Hamm on five, hold the Mayo.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Ambulance arrives at airplane. Attendants and MRS. DAVIS unload LISA DAVIS into wheelchair.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - NIGHT

Elaine and Striker are walking together.

STRIKER

Look, you'll be back in town tomorrow night. We'll have dinner -- talk it over.

ELAINE

I won't be back. I've requested the Atlanta run.

STRIKER

Elaine, not yet. I promise you I really can change.

ELAINE

Then why don't you take the job that Louie Netz offered you at Boeing?

In the b.g. an airline PORTER is transporting an ELDERLY COUPLE in an electric cart. They round the corner too fast and the woman falls out. Husband doesn't notice.

STRIKER

You know I haven't been able to get near an airplane since the war. And even if I could, they wouldn't hire me because of my war record.

ELAINE

Your war record? You're the only one keeping that alive. For everyone else it's ancient history.

STRIKER

You expect me to believe that?

In the b.g. the Elderly Woman staggers to her feet and is immediately run over by another electric cart.

ELAINE

It's the truth. What's hurt you the most is your record since the war. Different cities, different jobs, and not one of them shows you can accept any real responsibility.

STRIKER

But if you'll just give me...

ELAINE

It's too late, Ted. When I get back to Chicago, I'm going to start my life all over again. I'm sorry.

She walks off. Dramatic MUSIC as Striker glares with determination. The religious Zealot tries to pin a flower on his lapel.

ZEALOT #3

Hello, we'd like you to have this...

Without looking, Striker decks the Zealot with one punch. He walks after Elaine.

INT. COCKPIT - FLIGHT 209 - NIGHT

Clarence Oveur is in the pilot's seat. VICTOR BASTA is seated at engineer's console. There is a St. Christopher's statue on the dashboard.

BASTA

Any word on that storm lifting over Salt Lake, Clarence?

TEXACO SERVICE MAN is cleaning windshield.

OVEUR

Unlikely, Victor. I just reviewed the Area Report for 1609 hours through 2400 hours. That's an occluded front stalled over the Dakotas -- backed up all the way to Utah.

Texaco Service Man opens hood and checks dipstick.

BASTA

If it decides to push over into the Great Lakes it could get plenty soupy. How about the southern route, around Tulsa?

OVEUR

I double checked the terminal forecast and winds aloft. IFR ceilings all the way.

Oveur gives charge card to Texaco Man.

BASTA

Where do they top out?

OVEUR

Well, there's some light scattered cover at twenty thousand with icing around eighteen.

BASTA

Looks like the original flight plan over Denver is still the best bet.

Oveur signs charge form and gives it to Texaco Man.

OVEUR

Denver it is.

ROGER MURDOCK enters. He is played by a famous athlete.

MURDOCK

Sorry, Clarence. Latest weather report shows everything socked in from Salt Lake to Lincoln.

OVEUR

(to Murdock)

Hi, Roger. Good to have you aboard. Victor, this is Roger Murdock.

BASTA

How do you do, Roger?

Texaco Man hands receipt to Oveur.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - BOARDING AREA - NIGHT

Stewardesses Elaine and RANDY are greeting boarding passengers including the Hammens and SISTER ANGELINA who is carrying a guitar.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

HARI KRISHNA #1

Do you believe those goddamn Steelers? Can you imagine blitzing on third and long with two minutes in the game?

HARI KRISHNA #2

Well, hell, they couldn't stay in zone coverage with Dallas running swing patterns!

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

JACK

What did you think of 'Great Expectations?'

SHIRLEY

Well, it wasn't all that I had hoped.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

A SOLDIER and GIRL are tearfully embracing at the base of the stairs leading into the plane.

GIRL

Oh, Bill, I'm going to miss you so much.

SOLDIER

You promise you'll write.

GIRL

Every day.

AIRPORT STEWARD

Better get on board, son.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - GATE 89 - NIGHT

Striker approaches check-in counter.

STRIKER

Can you tell me if Elaine Dickinson is on this flight?

She looks at her list.

CHECK-IN LADY

Well, the whole flight crew has boarded. Yes. She is on board.

STRIKER

I'd like one ticket to Chicago. No baggage!

EXT. TERMINAL BUILDING - PASSENGER LOADING AREA - NIGHT

The Businessman is patiently waiting in Striker's cab.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - GATE 89 - NIGHT

CHECK-IN LADY

Smoking or non-smoking?

STRIKER

Smoking, please.

She hands him a smoldering ticket, and he walks out the door.

EXT. TERMINAL - NIGHT

Striker emerges and freezes in terror.

STRIKER'S POV - THE AIRPLANE - NIGHT

DRAMATIC MUSIC.

CLOSEUP - STRIKER - NIGHT

agonizing over war recollections. SUPERIMPOSE ROARING fighter planes. SUPER FADES OUT. Striker musters his courage and walks toward airplane.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

BLACK DUDE #1

Shi',man, tha' honkey mo'fo' mess wi' my ol' lady, man I rap tha' dude upside his head, man.

SUBTITLES APPEAR ON SCREEN: "GOLLY, THAT WHITE FELLOW SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM MY WIFE OR I WILL PUNCH HIM."

BLACK DUDE #2

Yeah, man, he ain't never goin' come on layin' no pig rap off you, man.

SUBTITLES APPEAR ON SCREEN: "YES, THERE IS TRUTH IN WHAT YOU SAY. HOWEVER, I THINK HE MAY BE MISLEADING YOU."

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Randy is taking Striker's ticket.

RANDY

Fourteen-B. It's halfway down on your right.

STRIKER

Thank you.

As Striker sits down he sees Elaine, who is unaware he is on board.

STRIKER'S POV - NIGHT

Elaine is handing out pillows. We HEAR A DING.

INSERT - LIGHTED WARNING SIGNS

**"NO SMOKING
EL NO A YOU SMOKO"**

**"FASTEN SEAT BELTS
PUTANA DA SEATBELTZ"**

He fastens his seat belt and looks nervously out the window. The Elderly Woman next to him notices.

MRS. ELDERLY

Nervous?

STRIKER

Yes.

MRS. ELDERLY

First time?

STRIKER

No. I've been nervous lots of times. I used to be a pilot myself...during the war.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Elaine approaches Mrs. Davis and Lisa.

ELAINE

We'll be taking off real soon so we better fasten you in tight.

LISA

Thank you. Oh Mother, this is so exciting.

MRS. DAVIS

I know, but remember you must get some rest.

ELAINE

That's good advice. You relax and I'll be back after we take off.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

MILTON, an eight year old boy wearing a conservative coat and tie, fastens his seat belt and begins reading his "Business Monthly" magazine.

He sees BERNICE, a seven year old girl, in the aisle and looks her up and down.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

DRAMATIC MUSIC. Engines one and two REV UP.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock and Oveur look toward left wing.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

ENGINES three and four REV UP.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock and Oveur look toward right wing.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Two more ENGINES REV UP.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock and Oveur look toward left wing and do a double take.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Two more ENGINES REV UP.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock and Oveur are confused and counting on their fingers.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Stairs are removed from airplane. The Soldier is in the open doorway waving good-bye to his tearful girlfriend at the base of the plane.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

OVEUR

Two-zero-niner to ground control. We are loaded and ready to taxi.

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

GROUND CONTROL (v.o.)

Roger, two-zero-niner. You are third in line for takeoff...Air Israel, taxi into position.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

An Air Israel airplane with beard and pais, wearing a yarmulka and tallis.

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

GROUND CONTROL (v.o.)

Air Poland, you are cleared for takeoff.

INT. AIR POLAND COCKPIT - NIGHT

Crew is Jose Feliciano and look-alike for Ray Charles.

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

GROUND CONTROL (v.o.)
Taxi to runway one-niner.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Oveur moves console levers as if shifting into first gear.

EXT. AIRPLANE - SOLDIER - NIGHT

as 209 starts to taxi, the Soldier is leaning out the door.

SOLDIER
Good-bye, darling.

EXT. RUNWAY - GIRL - NIGHT

His girlfriend is moving along next to the plane as in typical train station good-bye scene.

GIRL
Oh, good-bye, Bill! Have your picture taken as soon as you get there and send me one!

As she runs, she dodges posts. We HEAR the chug chug of a steam engine pulling from a station.

SOLDIER
I will.

She runs through crowd of people standing on side of runway.

GIRL
Don't you go getting fat or anything.

She's running faster.

SOLDIER
Don't worry, I won't. Okay, here -- hurry!

He tosses her his watch.

GIRL
Oh, but it's your watch. You shouldn't. You'll need it.

She is now knocking down posts as she keeps up with the accelerating plane.

SOLDIER

Good-bye, darling.

GIRL

Oh, Bill, I'll keep it. I'll keep it with me all the time.

SOLDIER

So long, darling. Good-bye. Take care of yourself.

GIRL

Bill! Bill! Good-bye, Bill.

SOLDIER

Good-bye, darling.

GIRL

Good-bye, darling. I love you. I love you, darling.

SOLDIER

Good-bye, darling.

A TRAIN WHISTLE sounds. She stops running and waves.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

GROUND CONTROLLER (v.o.)

Flight two-zero-niner, you are cleared for takeoff.

OVEUR

Roger.

MURDOCK

(turning to Oveur)

Huh?

Oveur throws console lever into second gear.

GROUND CONTROLLER (v.o.)

L.A. departure frequency two-point-niner.

OVEUR

Roger.

MURDOCK

(turning to Oveur)
Huh?

BASTA

(to tower)
Request vector...over.

OVEUR

(turning to Basta)
What?

GROUND CONTROLLER (v.o.)
Flight two-zero-niner, cleared for vector
three...two four.

MURDOCK

We have clearance, Clarence.

OVEUR

Roger, Roger. What's our vector, Victor?

Oveur throws console lever into third.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Flight 209 takes off, flying erratically.

BASTA (v.o.)
Tower radioed clearance, over.

OVEUR (v.o.)
That's Clarence Oveur...over.

BASTA (v.o.)
Roger.

MURDOCK (v.o.)
Huh?

TOWER (v.o.)
Roger, over.

OVEUR (v.o.)
What?!

MURDOCK (v.o.)
Huh?

INSERT - SEAT BELT AND SMOKING SIGNS

going off.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Striker walks to rear of plane and looks out window. He swallows a couple of pills. Randy approaches.

RANDY

Do you feel all right, sir?

STRIKER

Oh -- I haven't flown for a long time.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Elaine is handing out magazines.

OVEUR (v.o.)

Good evening, this is Captain Oveur speaking. We'll be cruising at thirty-six, thousand feet, and arrival time in Chicago is ten-forty-five Central Time. The temperature there is sixty-two degrees, with a twenty percent chance of precipitation. And now here's Victor with People in the news.

BASTA (v.o.)

Thank you, Clarence. Ali McGraw announced another spin on the marriage-go-round. And who's the lucky guy? You guessed it. None other than Olympic gymnast...

Elaine approaches Mrs. Elderly. Striker's seat is vacant.

ELAINE

Would you like something to read?

MRS. ELDERLY

Do you have anything light?

Elaine hands her a small piece of paper.

ELAINE

How about this leaflet: 'Famous Jewish Sports Legends?'

MRS. ELDERLY

(taking pamphlet)

Yes. Thank you.

Elaine turns and is shocked to see Striker approaching his seat.

ELAINE

Ted, what are you doing here?

STRIKER

Elaine, I've got to talk to you.

ELAINE

You...you shouldn't have come. I don't have time now.

MRS. SCHIFF

Oh, stewardess...

ELAINE

Excuse me.

Striker sits down.

MRS. ELDERLY

No wonder you're upset. She's lovely. And a darling figure. Supple, pouting breasts. Firm thighs. It's a shame you're not getting along.

STRIKER

Yes, I know. Things used to be different. I remember when we first met. It was during the war.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGUMBA BAR - NIGHT

Striker is seated at bar in a smoke-filled room. An assortment of unsavory characters are hanging around the bar.

STRIKER (v.o.)

I was in the Air Force, stationed in Drambuie, on the Barbary Coast. I used to hang out in the Magumba Bar.

Shapely female legs walking on bar stop in front of Striker. SLEAZY TROMBONE MUSIC. CAMERA PANS UP shapely female in tight fitting dress. She is playing the sleazy trombone music.

STRIKER (v.o.)

It was a rough place. You would count on a fight breaking out almost every night.

Two GIRL SCOUTS are slugging it out old Western style --

breaking tables and chairs.

INT. MAGUMBA BAR - JUKEBOX AREA - NIGHT

An unsavory CHARACTER puts a quarter in the jukebox. One Girl Scout bashes the other against the jukebox buttons.

INSERT - LIGHTED SIGN

**"E-5
MAKE ANOTHER SELECTION"**

DISCO TUNE plays. Girl Scout is bashed against jukebox again.

INSERT - LIGHTED SIGN

**"B-17
MAKE ANOTHER SELECTION"**

Girl Scout bashes again.

INSERT - LIGHTED SIGN

**"A-12
THANK YOU"**

The unsavory Character nods approvingly at selections.

INT. MAGUMBA BAR DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Patrons are dancing a la John Travolta.

STRIKER (v.o.)
I didn't go there that night to fall in
love, I just dropped in for a couple of
drinks.

BACK TO STRIKER

He turns to look toward dance floor.

STRIKER (v.o.)
But suddenly there she was.

STRIKER'S POV

Elaine dancing with grizzly looking cutthroat.

STRIKER (v.o.)
I was captivated, entranced.

BACK TO STRIKER

STRIKER (v.o.)

It hit me like a thunderbolt. I had to ask the guy next to me to pinch me to make sure I wasn't dreaming.

Striker asks the burly LONGSHOREMAN next to him to to pinch him. Longshoreman gives him a look and moves away cautiously.

STRIKER (v.o.)

I was afraid to approach her, but that night, fate was on my side.

Elaine's dancing partner is stabbed in the back and falls to the ground. No one notices but Striker who eagerly fills in. They make a perfect disco couple. The other dancers make a circle around them.

They begin with fancy disco steps, move on to flips and seemingly impossible acrobatics, finally ending with incredible stunts: Striker, jumping through flaming hoops and Elaine, hanging from a chandelier by her teeth and twirling.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAGUMBA BAR DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

Bar is closing, chairs on tables, bartender sweeping floor, Elaine and Striker dancing slowly in center of room. One final Girl Scout flies into FRAME and falls in a lifeless heap at their feet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

STRIKER

We laughed, we talked, we danced, I never wanted it to end and I guess I still don't. But enough about me. I hope this hasn't been boring for you.

CAMERA WIDENS to reveal Mrs. Elderly's legs dangling next to him. She has hung herself.

STRIKER

It's just that when I start to talk about Elaine, I get so carried away -- I lose all track of time -- not unlike Oliver in

'Jesus: the Man.'

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Milton, carrying a tray with two cups of coffee, approaches Bernice.

MILTON

I happened to be passing, and I thought you might like some corfee.

BERNICE

That's very nice of you. Thank you.

She takes a cup.

BERNICE

Ah, won't you sit down?

MILTON

Thank you. Cream?

BERNICE

No, thank you. I take it black. Like my men.

MILTON

Were you vacationing in Los Angeles?

BERNICE

Well, it really wasn't a vacation. You see, I'm a teacher in the New York City school system, and I was attending a seminar on visual aids to education. Are you from L.A.?

MILTON

No. I'm from Washington, D.C. I'm a lobbyist for the Small Businessmen's Association.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Elaine is taking orders from a couple and their eight year old son.

ELAINE

Would you like to order dinner now?

MR. HAMMEN

Yes. Steak for Joey and my wife and I will have the fish.

JOEY

When can I see the cockpit, Dad?

MR. HAMMEN

Well, I think that the pilots are too busy flying the plane for that, Joey.

JOEY

Aw, gee whiz.

ELAINE

I tell you what, Joey. I'll talk to the Captain and see what I can arrange.

JOEY

Gee! That'd be swell!

Elaine moves on to the two Black Dudes.

ELAINE

Would you gentlemen care to order your dinners?

The Black Dudes point to their selections on the menu.

BLACK DUDE #1

'Ey ma' muh fuh wha' fo', shi!

SUBTITLES APPEAR: "I WOULD LIKE THE STEAK, PLEASE."

BLACK DUDE #2

Shi' mo cain ma foh mess wi' ain?!

SUBTITLES APPEAR: "I'LL HAVE THE FISH, THANK YOU."

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Randy is taking dinner orders from Hari Krishnas.

RANDY

May I take your dinner order?

HARI KRISHNA #1

No, thank you, we brought our own vegetables.

HARI KRISHNA #2

But we would like some hot water for our tea, please.

Randy moves on.

HARI KRISHNA #1

Did you catch the jugs on that broad?

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - STEWARDESS ALCOVE - NIGHT

Elaine is replacing a magazine and catches sight of Striker.

ELAINE'S POV - STRIKER

Boring another passenger.

BACK TO ELAINE

She moves into the alcove and begins to pour coffee. CAMERA MOVES INTO CLOSEUP of Elaine.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Striker and Elaine are running. She falls down at the water's edge, exhausted. Striker drops to his knees and they embrace passionately. A huge wave washes over them covering them completely. When the wave recedes, they're still locked in the same embrace. They are covered with seaweed. Fish are flopping around in the sand.

ELAINE

Oh, Ted, I never knew I could be so happy. These past few months have been wonderful. Tomorrow why don't we drive up the coast to that little seafood place and...

Striker frowns.

ELAINE

What's the matter?

STRIKER

My orders came through. My squadron ships out tomorrow. I'll be leading a very important mission.

ELAINE

Oh, Ted, please be careful. I worry about you so much.

STRIKER

I love you, Elaine.

ELAINE

I love you.

They embrace. Another huge wave washes in and covers them completely.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STEWARDESS ALCOVE - NIGHT

Elaine comes back to reality.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

In level flight.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

GROUND CONTROL (v.o.)

Flight two-zero-niner, this is Denver Flight Control. You're approaching some rough weather. Please climb to forty-two thousand feet.

OVEUR

Roger, Denver.

There is a KNOCK on the cockpit door. Elaine and Joey enter.

ELAINE

We have a visitor.

OVEUR

Hello.

MURDOCK

Hi.

ELAINE

This is Captain Oveur. Mister Murdock and Mister Johnson. This is Joey Hammen.

MURDOCK

Come on up here. You can see better.

OVEUR

Joey, here's something we give our special visitors. Would you like to have it?

He gives Joey a small toy airplane and puts his arm around him.

JOEY

Thank you. Thanks a lot!

OVEUR

Have you ever been in a cockpit before?

JOEY

No, sir. I've never been up in a plane before.

OVEUR

Have you ever seen a grown man naked?

MURDOCK

Do you want me to check the weather, Clarence?

OVEUR

(looking at Joey)
No, why don't you take care of it?

ELAINE

We'd better get back now.

OVEUR

Joey can stay up here for a while if he'd like to.

JOEY

Could I?

ELAINE

Okay, if you don't get in the way.

Elaine exits. Murdock picks up phone.

MURDOCK

Flight two-zero-niner to Denver radio.
Climbing to cruise at forty-two thousand.
Will report again over Lincoln. Over and out.

Joey has been paying very close attention to Murdock, and suddenly recognizes him.

JOEY

Wait a minute. I know you. You're Kareem Abdul Jabbar. You play basketball for the Los Angeles Lakers!

MURDOCK

I'm sorry, son, but you must have me confused with someone else. My name is

Roger Murdock. I'm the co-pilot.

He turns to Basta.

MURDOCK

Ah, Victor, why don't you get the coordinates on the altitude vector and find out the ratio of direct velocity over engine speed?

Victor is puzzled.

JOEY

You are Kareem. I've seen you play. My Dad's got season tickets!

MURDOCK

I think you should go back to your seat now, Joey. Right, Clarence?

OVEUR

No, he's not bothering anyone. Let him stay up here.

MURDOCK

All right. But just remember, my name is Roger Murdock.

He points to his nametag.

MURDOCK

I'm an airline pilot.

(to Oveur)

Ah, Clarence, according to my calculations, with this tailwind we ought to be able to make up an additional fifteen minutes over the Rockies.

JOEY

I think you're the greatest. But my Dad says you don't work hard enough on defense.

MURDOCK

(into microphone)

Denver Control, this is Flight two-zero-niner intersecting Victor Airway seven-niner-niner.

JOEY

...and that lots of times you don't even run down court.

MURDOCK

We are turning left to a heading of zero-niner-niner.

JOEY

...and that you don't really try, except during the playoffs.

MURDOCK

The hell I don't! I'm out there busting my buns every night.

Murdock realizes he has given himself away. He quickly looks to see if Oveur is listening. Oveur is busy checking instruments. Murdock grabs Joey by the collar and whispers angrily.

MURDOCK

Listen, kid, I've been hearing that crap ever since I was at UCLA. Tell your old man to drag Unseld and Lanier up and down the court for forty-eight minutes.

(into mike)

Ah...Denver Control, this is Flight two-zero-niner continuing on a heading two-niner-niner...niner, ah...niner...niner.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Elaine is seated next to Striker.

STRIKER

Elaine, just hear me out. I know things haven't been right for a long time. But it will be different...like it was in the beginning. Remember?

ELAINE

I remember everything. All I have are memories.

Soft MUSIC begins.

ELAINE

Mostly I remember...the nights when we were together. I remember how you used to hold me...and how I used to sit on your face and wriggle...and then afterwards how we'd watch until the sun came up. When it did, it was almost like...like each new day was created...only for us.

STRIKER

That's the way I've always wanted it to be, Elaine.

ELAINE

But it won't be. Not as long as you insist on living in the past!

Elaine leaves, teary-eyed.

CLOSEUP - STRIKER

SUPERIMPOSE:

EXT. SKY - DAY

Fighter plane diving.

SQUADRON LEADER (v.o.)

You're too low, Ted! You're too low!

Fighter plane CRASHES.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Sign in front reads:

**U.S. ARMY PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL
PENTATHOL AVAILABLE**

Master Charge, Visa, Carte Blanche

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Striker is lying in bed painting a canvas. Elaine is seated at bedside.

ELAINE

You got a telegram from headquarters today.

STRIKER

Headquarters!? What is it?

ELAINE

It's a big building where the generals meet. But that's not important right now.

They've cleared you of any blame for what happened on that raid. Isn't that good news?

INSERT - STRIKER'S PAINTING

A surreal image of a soldier contorted like a pretzel clutching a machine gun in one hand and a crying infant in the other.

BACK TO HOSPITAL - DAY

STRIKER

Is it? Because of my mistake six men didn't return from that raid.

ELAINE

Seven. Lieutenant Zipp died this morning. Ted, Doctor Sandler says you'll be out in a week. Isn't that wonderful?

In the b.g., a doctor in a white lab coat is attending a patient. When he turns around WE SEE he is wearing an STP insignia on his back.

STRIKER

I wish I could say the same for George Zipp.

ELAINE

Be patient, Ted. No one expects you to get over this immediately.

Striker is despondent.

SGT. McCOBB (o.s.)

Hey, Striker!

INT. HOSPITAL - ANGLE - SGT. McCOBB - DAY

He is posing for Striker's painting, contorted like a pretzel, holding a machine gun in one hand and crying baby in the other.

SGT. McCOBB

How about a break? I'm getting tired!

STRIKER

All right. Take five.

McCobb untangles himself and walks off.

INT. HOSPITAL - CLOSEUP - ELAINE - DAY

ELAINE

I found a wonderful apartment for us. It's got a brick fireplace and a cute little bedroom with mirrors on the ceiling. And...

CAPTAIN GELINE (o.s.)

I'm off course. Red Leader!!! Look out!!

STRIKER

That's Captain Geline. He thinks he's a pilot, still fighting the war.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Captain Geline agonizing and making bombing and machine gun noises.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

LIEUTENANT HURWITZ (o.s.)

Groan.

ELAINE

What's his problem?

STRIKER

That's Lieutennt Hurwitz. Severe shell shock. He thinks he's Ethel Merman.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Strapped to the bed is ETHEL MERMAN singing "EVERYTHING'S COMING UP ROSES." She breaks loose from the straps for a grand finale. Two attendants attempt to restrain her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - BACK TO STRIKER - NIGHT

RANDY

Excuse me, sir. Would you like some coffee before we serve dinner?

STRIKER

No. No thank you.

Randy moves on to the Hammens.

RANDY

Would either of you like another cup of coffee?

MRS. HAMMEN

I will, but Jim won't.

MR. HAMMEN

Yes, I think I will have another cup of coffee.

CAMERA ZOOMS to CLOSEUP of Mrs. Hammen.

MRS. HAMMEN'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)

Jim never has a second cup of coffee at home.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Randy approaches Sister Angelina. The guitar is on the seat next to her.

RANDY

Excuse me, Sister?

SISTER ANGELINA

Yes?

RANDY

There's a little girl on board who's ill and...

SISTER ANGELINA

Oh yes, I saw. Poor child.

RANDY

Could I borrow your guitar? I thought I might be able to cheer her up.

SISTER ANGELINA

Of course.

Randy takes the guitar and walks down the aisle. The guitar clonks people on the back of the head. Randy approaches Lisa.

RANDY

Is it all right if I talk to your daughter?

MRS. DAVIS

Oh, I think that would be nice.

RANDY

(to Lisa, who is reading)

Hi!

LISA

Hi!

RANDY

I'm Randy.

LISA

I'm Lisa. Oh, you have a guitar!

RANDY

I thought maybe you'd like to hear a song.

LISA

Oh, I'd love to.

RANDY

Okay, this is one of my favorites.

Randy is sitting on the edge of the gurney as she strums three opening chords.

RANDY

(strumming and singing in ballad tempo)

'I've traveled the banks of the River Jordan, to find where it flows to the sea.'

Stewardesses and passengers notice the singer and peer around corners and over seat backs. A man's head peers upside down from the TOP OF THE FRAME.

RANDY

'I looked in the eyes of the cold and the hungry and saw that I was looking at me.'

As singing continues, Shirley and Jack look at each other with saccherine smiles, the Hammens do the same, then the Krishnas, then the Black Dudes. Finally, everyone is smiling sweetly at each other.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock and Oveur smile sweetly at each other...

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

RANDY

(singing and playing the
guitar)

'And I wanted to know if life had a
purpose, and what it all means in the end.
In the silence I listened to the voices
inside me, and they told me again and
again.'

Tempo Jumps to rock pace.

RANDY

'There is only one river. There is only
one sea.'

Randy, in her growing enthusiasm, swings her guitar,
knocking the I.V. connection tube from Lisa's arm. The I.V.
squirts, and Lisa turns pale and hollowcheeked. No one else
notices.

RANDY

'And it flows through you, and it flows
through me. There is only one people, we
are one and the same.'

Lisa manages to reconnect her I.V.

RANDY

(still singing)

'We are all one spirit, one name. We are
the Father, we are the son.'

Randy again knocks I.V. from Lisa's arm with guitar as the
passengers start to get into the music.

RANDY

'In the Dawn of Creation. We are one.'

Mrs. Davis rushes to reconnect Lisa's I.V. Lisa doesn't
react. Mrs. Davis pounds Lisa's chest.

RANDY & PASSENGERS

'We are only one people, we are one and
the same.'

As Lisa revives, Randy swings her guitar and clonks Mrs.
Davis on the head.

RANDY & PASSENGERS

'We are all one spirit on Earth, one
name.'

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

RANDY & PASSENGERS (v.o.)

'We are the Father, we are the son, and in
the Dawn of Creation we are one.'

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine enters with dinners.

OVEUR

Hey, we've been waiting for you. A little
bit late tonight.

ELAINE

Who wants to be first?

MURDOCK

Go ahead, Clarence, I got it.

Oveur removes his headset, Elaine puts tray down.

ELAINE

How's the weather?

MURDOCK

Not so good. We've got some heavy stuff
ahead of us. It might get rough again
unless we can climb on top. But our
airspeed is holding steady at six hundred
ten knots.

ELAINE

That's great. By the way, Joey Hammen
asked me if you would autograph this
basketball.

Murdock autographs it reluctantly.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

A JAPANESE GENERAL, dressed in World War II uniform, is now
seated next to Striker.

STRIKER

After the war, I just wanted to get as far
away from things as possible. So Elaine
and I joined the Peace Corps. We were
assigned to an isolated tribe, the
Molombos.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. AFRICAN VILLAGE - DAY

Striker and Elaine are being escorted to the chief's hut by two GUARDS. We hear Jungle Animal SOUNDS. The chief is standing in front of his hut surrounded by several TRIBESMEN who are making the jungle animal sounds.

STRIKER (v.o.)

They had never seen Americans before.

When Striker and Elaine arrive, the CHIEF holds up his hands and the sounds stop.

STRIKER (v.o.)

At first, they didn't know what to think of us; but soon we gained their trust.

The Chief extends his right hand for conventional handshake. Striker shows him power grip. When the Chief is pleased, Striker gives him five. The Chief pauses then decks Striker.

STRIKER (v.o.)

It really was a challenge during the year introducing them to our Western culture.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - ANOTHER AREA - DAY

Elaine is having a Supperware party for native women.

ELAINE

Also, Supperware products are ideal for storing leftovers to help stretch your food dollar. This two quart "Seals-M-Rite" container with a special "Close-M-Tite" lid keeps hotdog buns fresh for days and prevents sugared cereals from sticking.

She scoops a ladle of corn mush from a carved wooden bowl into a Supperware container.

ELAINE

Meat and dairy products are protected against unwanted refrigerator odors when sealed in this non-slip pastel colored "Freez-o-leer".

When she burps the lid, the Supperware makes a human burp **SOUND**.

EXT. JUNGLE - ANOTHER AREA - DAY

Striker nailing crude basketball rim and net to tree.

STRIKER (v.o.)

You must understand that these people had been completely isolated from civilization.

Striker demonstrates a two-handed set shot to natives. He misses.

STRIKER (v.o.)

No one had ever outlined a physical fitness program for them and they had no athletic equipment.

Native examines basketball for first time. After two slow dribbles, he gracefully feints lefts, then, dribbling through his legs, sinks a two-hand, over-the-head, reverse dunk shot.

STRIKER (v.o.)

We also emphasized nutrition and taught them to watch their diets.

Another native hits a long jump shot.

STRIKER (v.o.)

The exercise improved their physical fitness and condition.

One shot after another swishes through the basketball rim.

STRIKER (v.o.)

My working with them seemed to reinforce our objectives of group cooperation and controlled-competitive activity.

Striker approaches Elaine who is standing on the sideline. As they talk, the natives are passing the ball around and shooting baskets Harlem Globetrotter fashion.

STRIKER

I think they're getting the hang of it!
When we re-enlist I'll teach them
baseball!

ELAINE

Ted, I don't want to stay here. It's time for us to go back home -- to the plans we made before the war.

STRIKER

A lot of people made plans before the war.
Like George Zipp.

Elaine walks away, dejectedly. CAMERA STAYS with Striker as he pours Gator-Ade into a glass.

STRIKER (v.o.)

I guess it was at that moment that I first realized Elaine had doubts about our relationship. And that as much as anything else led to my drinking problem.

Striker has a problem drinking. He raises his glass of Gator-Ade, then suddenly pours it on his forehead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

STRIKER

We did come back to the States. I tried a number of jobs...Well, I could go on for hours, but I'd probably start to bore you.

The Japanese General is kneeling on the seat committing Hari Kari.

STRIKER

You know, I really couldn't blame Elaine. She wanted a career. I was offered a job at Boeing but I couldn't bring myself to take it...

EXT. LAX PASSENGER LOADING AREA - NIGHT

The businessman waiting in Striker's cab checks his watch.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Shirley is ill and holding her stomach in pain.

SHIRLEY

Oh, I can't stand it.

JACK

What is it?

Elaine approaches.

ELAINE

Yes?

SHIRLEY

My, stomach. I haven't felt this awful since we saw that Lina Wertmuller film.

ELAINE

I'll see if I can find some Dramamine.

Elaine exits.

SHIRLEY

OOOOOO.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - STEWARDESS ALCOVE - NIGHT

Elaine is on the phone.

ELAINE

Captain, one of the women passengers is very sick.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Joey enters to retrieve basketball. Murdock is wearing goggles.

OVEUR

Airsick?

ELAINE

I think so, but I've never seen it so acute.

OVEUR

Find out if there's a doctor on board, as quietly as you can.

Oveur hangs up phone.

OVEUR

Joey, have you ever been in a Turkish prison?

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

MR. HAMMEN

(nauseous)

Oooh, I shouldn't have had that second cup

of coffee.

He grabs for motion sickness bag. CAMERA ZOOMS to CLOSEUP of Mrs. Hammen.

MRS. HAMMEN'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)
Jim never vomits at home.

EXT. AIRPLANE

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Elaine is speaking to couple.

ELAINE

I'm sorry I had to wake you. I'm just looking for a doctor. There's nothing to worry about.

Middle-aged lady, MRS. YAFFE, having overheard this conversation, beckons to Elaine.

MRS. YAFFE

Stewardess, I think the man next to me is a doctor.

The MAN next to her is wearing a surgical cap with mask. Hanging around his neck is a stethoscope. He's sleeping.

ELAINE

Sir. Excuse me, sir. I'm sorry to have to wake you. Are you a doctor?

DR. RUMACK

That's right.

ELAINE

We have some passengers who are very sick. Could you come and take a look at them?

DR. RUMACK

Yes. Yes, of course.

Rumack picks up bag and exits with Elaine.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Rumack and Elaine enter. Rumack stoops over to Shirley, and surgical instrument is slapped into his hand from o.s. He pokes her stomach with his hand.

DR. RUMACK

Pain there?

She winces and nods.

DR. RUMACK

May I see your tongue, please?

She sticks her tongue out. Rumack pulls on it until it is obviously too long. He continues to pull, and the tongue becomes multi-colored magician's scarves. Then he pulls out a bouquet of flowers followed by a white dove.

DR. RUMACK

I'll be back in a minute.

Rumack takes Elaine aside.

DR. RUMACK

You'd better tell the Captain. We've got to land as soon as we can. This woman has to be gotten to a hospital.

ELAINE

A hospital? What is it?

DR. RUMACK

It's a big building with patients. But that's not important right now. Tell the Captain I must speak to him.

ELAINE

Certainly.

EXT. AIRPLANE - THUNDER AND LIGHTNING - NIGHT

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

OVEUR

(into mike)

Thank you, Omaha. Two-zero-niner out.

(to Basta)

Victor, we're running into a heavy storm, can you...

Oveur turns to see Basta slumped over the console.

Dramatic MUSIC.

OVEUR

Victor! Roger, take over!

Oveur lifts Basta onto ground.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock, flying the plane alone, wipes his brow and appears ill.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - OUTSIDE COCKPIT DOOR - NIGHT

DR. RUMACK

Captain, how soon can we land?

OVEUR

I can't tell.

DR. ROMACK

You can tell me. I'm a doctor!

OVEUR

No. I mean I'm just not sure.

DR. RUMACK

Can't you take a guess?

OVEUR

Well...not for another two hours.

DR. RUMACK

You can't take a guess for another two hours?

OVEUR

No, I mean we can't land for another two hours. Fog has closed down everything this side of the mountains. We've got to go through to Chicago!

Suddenly, the plane rocks violently. Rumack and Oveur lose balance.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning -- plane is flying erratically.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Murdock, unconscious, is slumped over controls. Oveur and

Rumack burst into cockpit. Oveur gets into pilot's seat.
Elaine enters.

OVEUR

(excitedly)
Get him out of there!

INSERT - ALTIMETER AND FLIGHT CONTROLS

Altitude is fluctuating.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Oveur struggles with controls. They extricate Murdock from behind the wheel. He is wearing shorts, kneepads, and basketball shoes.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

climbing and diving.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers are being tossed about. A woman, applying lipstick, smears it over her face.

INSERT - LIGHTED SYMBOLS

-- cigarette with line slashed through, and couple copulating with line slashed through.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Randy loses her balance and shoves dinner into a passenger's face.

INT. COCKPIT - OVEUR - NIGHT

struggling with controls, finally regains level flight.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning -- plane levels off.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

The St. Christopher statue is holding a motion discomtort bag to its mouth.

OVEUR

What is it, Doctor? What's happening?

DR. RUMACK

I'm not sure. I haven't seen anything like this since the Lina Wertmuller Film Festival.

Rumack and Elaine are now standing face-to-face. Oveur, in the f.g., is at controls.

DR. RUMACK

What was it we had for dinner tonight?

ELAINE

Well, we had a choice. Steak or fish.

DR. RUMACK

Yes, yes, I remember. I had lasagna.

He points to Johnson.

DR. RUMACK

What did he have?

ELAINE

He had fish.

Randy enters cockpit.

RANDY

We have two more sick people, and the rest of the passengers are worried.

OVEUR

I'll take care of the passengers. Elaine, find out what the two sick people had for dinner.

(into P.A.)

This is Captain Oveur speaking.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers are listening to P.A.

OVEUR (v.o.)

It's been a little bumpy up here but we'll be past it in a few minutes.

Randy and Elaine drag Murodck and Basta down center aisle.

OVEUR (v.o.)

A couple points of interest: we're just now passing over the Hoover Dam and later on, our course will take us just south of

the Grand Canyon.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

OVEUR

Meanwhile, relax and enjoy the rest of your flight. Okay? Okay!

He hangs up phone and turns to Rumack.

OVEUR

That should do it.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Absolute pandemonium. Passengers are yelling, screaming, tearing their hair out, climbing about.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

OVEUR

(into microphone)

Chicago, this is flight two-zero-niner. We're in trouble.

INT. O'HARE WEATHER CENTER - CLOSEUP - TYPEWRITER - NIGHT

CAMERA PULLS OUT to reveal DISPATCHER typing Oveur's message.

OVEUR (v.o.)

We've got to have all altitudes below us cleared and priority approach and landing in Chicago. Over.

DISPATCHER

We read you. Stand by, two-zero-niner.

When he tries to remove paper from typewriter, it rips in half.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Randy approaches Hammens. Mr. Hammen is sick.

RANDY

Yes?

MRS. HAMMEN

Oh, Stewardess. My husband is very sick.
Can you do something, please?

RANDY

Well, the doctor will be with you in just
a moment. One thing: do you know what he
had for dinner?

MRS. HAMMEN

Yes, of course. We both had fish. Why?

RANDY

Oh, it's nothing to be alarmed about.
We'll get back to you very quickly.

She turns to walk toward CAMERA with horrified expression.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine enters, turns to face Rumack. Oveur is at controls in
f.g.

ELAINE

Doctor Rumack, Mister Hammen ate fish. And
Randy says there are five more cases, and
they ate fish, too.

DR. RUMACK

Let's see now. The co-pilot had fish. What
did the navigator eat?

ELAINE

He had fish, too.

Oveur is picking up on the conversation.

DR. RUMACK

All right, now we know what we're up
against. Every passenger on this plane who
ate fish for dinner will become violently
ill within the next half hour.

Oveur looks down at his dinner tray and sees skeleton of the
fish he just ate.

ELAINE

Just how serious is it, doctor?

DR. RUMACK

Extremely serious. It starts with a slight
fever.

Oveur experiences what the doctor is describing.

DR. RUMACK

Then a dryness in the throat. As the virus penetrates the red blood cells the victim becomes dizzy and begins to experience a rash and itching. From there the poison works its way into the central nervous system causing severe muscle spasms, followed by the inevitable drooling. At this point, the entire digestive system is rendered useless, causing the complete collapse of the lower bowels, accompanied by uncontrollable flatulence...until finally the poor bastard is reduced to a quivering, wasted piece of jelly.

Oveur passes out and pitches forward onto the controls. Rumack and Elaine lose balance as plane dives.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning as plane is diving.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers are being tossed about. A woman, applying rouge, smears it all over her face.

INT. CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - CLOSEUP - A PLATE OF JELLO

wiggling. CAMERA PANS UP to braless woman whose breasts are wiggling.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

As they finally untangle Oveur from the wheel, he gains semi-consciousness.

OVEUR

(gasping)

Turn...on...automatic pilot.

Oveur passes out.

ELAINE

Uh, automatic pilot...automatic pilot?

INSERT - ELAINE'S POV - CONTROL PANEL - NIGHT

ELAINE

is frantically searching for automatic pilot button.

ELAINE

There it is!

INSERT - SWITCH MARKED "AUTOMATIC PILOT"

Elaine's hand tenuously reaches for and turns switch to "ON".

INT. COCKPIT - CO-PILOT'S SEAT - NIGHT

SOUND of rushing air as instantly inflatable balloon pilot takes shape in seat with hands on wheel. His uniform and cap are painted on, and he has an alert "leave the driving to us" expression on his face. The plane immediately regains level flight, and Elaine and Rumack sigh in relief.

DR. RUMACK

I'll get back to the passengers.

Rumack exits.

McCROSKY (v.o.)

(over radio)

Come in two-zero-niner. This is Chicago.
Flight two-zero-niner, come in, please.

Elaine picks up mike while still standing.

ELAINE

This is Elaine Dickinson. I'm the stewardess. Captain Oveur is passed out on the floor, and we've lost the co-pilot and navigator, too. We're in terrible trouble. Over.

OVEUR (o.s.)

Groan!

McCROSKY (v.o.)

Elaine! Roger, Roger! I read you. This is Steve McCroskey at Chicago Air Control.

ELAINE

Hi, Steve!

McCROSKY (v.o.)

Now listen carefully. Is the automatic pilot on? Over.

ELAINE

Yes. Yes, it is. Over.

OVEUR (o.s.)

Huh?

MCCROSKEY (v.o.)

Very good. Now, Elaine, where are you?
Over.

ELAINE

I'm standing over Oveur. Over.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

MCCROSKEY

(into mike)

All right, Elaine. Just hold on. We'll be
back to you in a minute.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal dispatch is a beehive of
activity. The Chief Dispatcher, STEVE McCROSKEY, is barking
orders to AIR CONTROLLER #1.

MCCROSKEY

Hold all takeoffs. I don't want another
plane in the air. When the 508 reports,
bring it straight in.

Air Controller #1 exits quickly. McCroskey picks up phone.

MCCROSKEY

Put out a general bulletin to suspend all
meal service on flights out of Los
Angeles.

He hangs up phone and talks to AIR CONTROLLER #2.

MCCROSKEY

Tell all dispatchers to remain at their
posts. It's going to be a long night.

Air Controller #2 exits. McCroskey notices he is out of
coffee and turns to AIR CONTROLLER HINSHAW.

MCCROSKEY

And how about some coffee, Johnny?

HINSHAW

No thanks.

AIR CONTROLLER #3 enters.

MCCROSKEY

I want the weather on every landing field
on this side of the Rockies, no matter
what the size.

Air Controller #3 exits. AIR CONTROLLER #4 enters.

MCCROSKEY

Do you understand?

Air Controller #4 exits. AIR CONTROLLER #5 enters.

MCCROSKEY

Any place where there's a chance to land
this plane.

Air Controller #5 exits. SIAMESE TWINS enter.

MCCROSKEY

Stan, go upstairs to the tower and get a
runway diagram. Terry, check down on the
field for emergency equipment.

Siamese Twins leave. In the b.g. we see them trying to walk
in opposite directions. Air Controller #1 enters.

AIR CONTROLLER #1

Chief, there's fog down to the deck
everywhere east of the Rockies. There's no
possible place they can land. They'll have
to come through to Chicago.

MCCROSKEY

Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit
smoking.

He lights up a cigarette. McCroskey walks toward a table and
leans on his hands.

MCCROSKEY

I want the best available man on this. A
man who knows this plane inside and out
and won't crack under pressure.

HINSHAW

How about Sal Mineo?

MCCROSKEY

Get me Rex Kramer!

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Lightning and THUNDER.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine is in the pilot's seat and the inflated automatic pilot is in co-pilot's seat.

McCROSKY (v.o.)

Now, Elaine, right next to the throttle is the air speed gauge. What speed does it indicate?

ELAINE

Three hundred twenty miles per hour.

INSERT - AIR SPEED GAUGE

BACK TO SCENE

We see, but Elaine does not notice, the automatic pilot very slowly beginning to deflate.

McCROSKY (v.o.)

Good. Now check your altitude. That's the dial just below and to the right of the air speed indicator.

ELAINE

Thirty-five thousand feet.

INSERT - ALTIMETER

Altitude is dropping.

BACK TO SCENE

ELAINE

No, wait. Now it says thirty-four thousand feet. It's dropping! It's dropping fast! Why is it doing that?

By now the automatic pilot is really slumped over as it is quite deflated. It is staring at her with a half smile. Elaine notices it.

ELAINE

Oh, my God! The automatic pilot! It's deflating!

McCROSKY (v.o.)

All right, Elaine, don't worry. We have an

auxiliary inflation system. Just follow my instructions.

ELAINE

Okay, but please hurry! We're dropping fast!

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers are being tossed about. Rumack is examining a female patient.

DR. RUMACK

What the hell's going on up there?

Rumack starts toward cockpit.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

MCCROSKEY (v.o.)

Now, Elaine, don't panic. On the belt line of the automatic pilot there is a hollow tube. Can you see that?

ELAINE

Yes. Yes, I can see it.

MCCROSKEY (v.o.)

Good. Now that's the manual inflation nozzle. Pull it out and blow it up like a balloon.

Elaine kneels over automatic pilot's crotch, puts tube in her mouth and blows. Automatic pilot inflates. Rumack bursts into cockpit.

RUMACK'S POV

Back of automatic pilot with Elaine kneeling over its crotch.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - OUTSIDE OF COCKPIT - NIGHT

Rumack slams the door in disbelief.

CLOSEUP - AUTOMATIC PILOT

with a big smile on its face.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Passengers are relieved as plane regains level flight.

EXT. AIRPLANE - THROUGH COCKPIT WINDOW - NIGHT

Elaine and automatic pilot are relaxed in their seats. Both are smoking cigarettes.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Rumack enters.

DR. RUMACK

Elaine, you're a member of this crew. Can you face some unpleasant facts?

ELAINE

No.

DR. RUMACK

All right. Unless I can get all these people to a hospital quickly, I can't even be sure of saving their lives. Now, is there anyone else on board who can land this plane?

ELAINE

Well...

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Striker, struggling with drinking problem, pours drink between his cheek and ear.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

ELAINE

No. No one that I know of.

DR. RUMACK

I think you ought to know what our chances are. The life of everyone on board depends on just one thing: finding someone back there who not only can fly this plane, but who didn't have fish for dinner.

CAMERA ZOOMS into CLOSEUP of Elaine's face as she realizes the severity of the situation.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers are listening to P.A.

ELAINE (v.o.)

Ladies and gentlemen, this is your stewardess speaking. We regret any inconvenience the sudden cabin movement might have caused.

Randy drags unconscious pilot, Oveur, down center aisle.

ELAINE (v.o.)

This is due to periodic air pockets we encounter. There is no reason to become alarmed, and we hope you enjoy the rest of your flight. By the way, is there anyone on board who knows how to fly a plane?

Absolute pandemonium. Passengers are yelling, screaming, tearing their hair out and climbing around. A naked woman runs down the aisle. Sister Mary is choking a Krishna. Two passengers are dueling with swords. A Spanish-speaking lady waits for her husband to translate the announcement, then panics.

INT. KRAMER'S HOUSE

SOUND of car screeching to a stop. PAUL CAREY, twenty-four year-old, cleancut, naive-looking, navigator trainee enters and pushes doorbell. We HEAR the typical eight-note chime progression. The CHIMES then play the Air Force Fight song. A dog BARKS and MRS. KRAMER opens the door.

CAREY

Hello, I'm Paul Carey from the airline. I'm here to pick up Captain Kramer.

MRS. KRAMER

Oh, yes. Come in, Paul. Rex will be right out.

INT. KRAMER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

When Carey enters, a big dog jumps on him with its paws on his chest.

MRS. KRAMER

Shep, sit...sit! So, I understand you've

got a real emergency down there.

CAREY

(holding off dog)
Well, to tell the truth, they really
didn't fill me in on many of the details.
Just told me to pick up Captain Kramer.

MRS. KRAMER

Something about a plane with no pilot?

Carey begins to lose battle with the dog, while trying to remain polite.

CAREY

Yeah, something like that, but as I say,
they didn't have time to tell me very
much.

MRS. KRAMER

Shep, no! I'll bet you have exciting
things happen all the time down there.

Shep is growling and Carey's arm is locked firmly in his Jaws.

CAREY

Well...the airline business...does have...
its moments...

Shep pins Carey against the wall, ripping his sleeve.

CAREY

...but after...awhile...you begin to...
(gasp)
...get used to it.

MRS. KRAMER

Shep, no! He gets so excited when new
people are here.

We hear a THUD and loud growling.

MRS. KRAMER

Are you a pilot yourself?

Carey is on the floor desperately fighting off the dog,
which is on top of him.

CAREY

I'm...in a...argh...navigator training
program.

KRAMER enters, buttoning his coat.

KRAMER

It's unbelievable! How many times have I warned those people about food inspection?

Kramer is tying his tie in the mirror. In the corner of the mirror, Carey is being thrashed by the dog.

KRAMER

The airport management, the F.A.A., and the airlines, they're all cheats and liars! All right, let's get out of here.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Randy is talking to Krishnas.

RANDY

Sorry to bother you. We were just looking for someone with flying experience.

Randy exits. They return to reading their PLAYRAMA magazine with a female Hari Krishna in a sexy pose on the cover.

HARI KRISHNA #1

Hari Rama?

HARI KRISHNA #2

Rama Rama.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Striker is sitting next to a MAN FROM INDIA in a business suit and turban.

STRIKER

You see, the day we left the village it was raining, so we had to take a special jeep to the main road...

The Indian is dousing himself with a can of gasoline. In b.g. Randy is talking to passengers.

STRIKER

In fact, we were lucky to even get a jeep since just the day before the only one we

had broke down -- it had a bad axle...

The Indian lights a match to immolate himself. Randy approaches.

RANDY

Excuse me, sir. There's been a little problem in the cockpit and I was wondering...

STRIKER

The cockpit? What is it?

RANDY

It's the little room at the front of the plane where the pilots sit. But that's not important right now. The first officer is ill and the Captain would like someone with flying experience to help him with the radio. Do you know anything about planes?

The Indian holds the match, awaiting the outcome.

STRIKER

Well, I flew in the war, but that was a long time ago. I wouldn't know anything about it.

RANDY

Would you go up, please?

He has a moment of indecision. The Indian encourages Striker with an adamant nod. Striker gets up to leave. The Indian, relieved, blows out the match.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Jack is sitting across the aisle from a 65-year-old conservatively dressed SPINSTER. He pulls a flask from his coat pocket and takes a swig. She eyes him disapprovingly.

JACK

Would ya like a little whiskey, ma'am?

SPINSTER

(insulted)
Certainly not.

She inserts a two inch straw in her nose and snorts a couple lines of cocaine off a piece of glass.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker enters.

STRIKER

(to Rumack and Randy)
The stewardess said...

STRIKER'S POV

Empty pilot's seat and inflated automatic pilot.

STRIKER

Both pilots!

DR. RUMACK

Can you fly this airplane and land it?

STRIKER

Surely you can't be serious.

DR. RUMACK

I am serious, and don't call me Shirley!
What flying experience have you had?

STRIKER

Well, I flew single-engine fighters in the
Air Force, but this plane has four
engines. It's an entirely different kind
of flying...all together!!!

RANDY/RUMACK

(all together)
It's an entirely different kind of flying.

STRIKER

Besides, I haven't touched any kind of
plane in six years.

DR. RUMACK

Mister Striker. I know nothing about
flying. All I know is this: you're the
only person on this plane who can possibly
fly it. You're the only chance we've got.

DRAMATIC MUSIC as Striker turns to face the controls.

STRIKER'S POV

CAMERA PANS controls. CAMERA KEEPS PANNING and PANNING as WE
SEE more and more controls ad absurdum.

EXT. LAX PASSENGER LOADING AREA - NIGHT

INSERT METER - \$115.25. The businessman in Striker's cab checks his watch.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

McCROSKY

(to Air Controller)

Tell Omaha to acknowledge and standby.

(into phone)

Get every piece of emergency equipment you can reach.

(to Air Controller)

Alert at every mile of the way from here to the mountains.

Hinshaw grabs Air Controller #1's tummy.

HINSHAW

Would anyone care for a roll and coffee?

Phone RINGS.

AIR CONTROLLER #2

Chief?

McCROSKY

We'll need a pre-landing flight check.

Tell 'em I'm in the dispatch office and I want it here fast.

AIR CONTROLLER #2

It's your wife.

McCROSKY

(into phone)

I want the kids in bed by nine. I want the dog fed, the yard watered, and the gate locked. And get a note to the milkman -- no more cheese!

He slams down the phone. He leans his hands on the desk.

McCROSKY

Where the hell is Kramer?

On the wall behind him there is a picture of McCroskey leaning his hands on a desk.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Kramer and a mutilated Carey are en route to airport. Kramer is at the wheel. Through rear window is obvious REAR PROJECTION of passing road.

KRAMER

(into phone)

No, we can't do that; the risk of a flameout is too great. Keep him 24,000. No, feet!

He hangs up phone.

KRAMER

One of the passengers is going to land that plane.

CAREY

Is that possible?

KRAMER

Possible, but it's a hundred to one shot. Thousand to one. I know this guy.

CAREY

You do? Who is it?

We hear A THUNK. REAR PROJECTION shows he has run over a bicyclist, who stands and gives the finger.

KRAMER

His name is Ted Striker. I flew with him during the war. And that won't make my job any easier tonight.

REAR PROJECTION SPEEDS UP to obvious FAST MOTION.

KRAMER

Ted Striker was a crack flight leader up to a point. But he was one of those men who, well, let's just say he felt too much inside. Maybe you know the kind.

Now REAR PROJECTION indicates car is turning and then weaving, but Kramer does not move wheel.

KRAMER

It takes a certain type to perform under pressure. Striker didn't have it.

By now REAR PROJECTION is cowboys and Indians on horseback chasing and shooting at Kramer's car.

KRAMER

Ate his heart out over every name on the casualty lists. The upshot of it is that he went all to pieces on one particular mission. Let's just hope it doesn't happen again tonight.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker is in pilot's seat. Rumack is standing behind him.

STRIKER

Let's see, altitude twenty-four thousand feet, level flight, air speed four hundred sixty knots, course zero niner zero, trim, mixture, landing gear, balance.

Elaine enters.

ELAINE

Ted! What are you doing? You can't fly this plane!

STRIKER

That's what I've been trying to tell these people.

DR. RUMACK

Elaine, I haven't time to put this gently, so I'll be very direct. Everyone of us on this plane is in a desperate situation. Mister Striker is the only hope we've got.

STRIKER

Let's see. Those are the flaps, that's the thrust, this must turn on the landing lights.

He flips a switch. The plane dives.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

The plane is diving.

INT. LAVATORY - JACK

Jack is standing at toilet. He is jolted back and forth against the walls.

INSERT - SIGN

flashing: RETURN TO SEAT
 GOBACKEN SIDONNA

INT. COCKPIT NIGHT

STRIKER
 (into mike)
 Mayday!

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

STRIKER (v.o.)
Mayday! Mayday!

McCROSKY
 (surprised)
Mayday? What the hell is that for?

HINSHAW
It's the Russian New Year! We'll have a
parade! They'll serve hot hors d'oeuvres!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker flips switch and rights plane.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Level flight.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

McCROSKY (v.o.)
Two-zero-niner, are you okay up there?

STRIKER
Yeah, I was just trying out the landing
lights.

Elaine and Rumack exchange glances.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

MRS. HAMMEN
I've got to get out of here! I can't stand
it! I've got to get out of here!

Randy pushes up and shakes Mrs. Hammen by the shoulders.

RANDY

Calm down. Get hold of yourself!

JACK

Stewardess, let me handle this.

Randy leaves, Jack shakes Mrs. Hammen by the shoulders.

JACK

Get hold of yourself! Get hold of yourself!

DR. RUMACK

(to Jack)

Get back to your seat; I'll take care of this.

Jack leaves; Rumack shakes Mrs. Hammen by the shoulders.

DR. RUMACK

Calm down. Calm down. Get hold of yourself!

Sister Angelina taps Rumack on the shoulder.

SISTER ANGELINA

(to Rumack)

Doctor, you're wanted on the phone.

Sister Angelina starts shaking Mrs. Hammen.

SISTER ANGELINA

Everything will be all right. Please get hold of yourself.

We see a line of passengers behind Sister Angelina waiting to shake Mrs. Hammen.

EXT. AIRFIELD - SIGN - NIGHT

reads: CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
OVER 16 BILLION PLANES LANDED

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - NIGHT

As Kramer rushes through the lobby, he is approached by a series of religious zealots. In quick succession he decks each one karate style, shooting the last zealot twenty feet away with a .44 Magnum.

INT. TERMINAL BUILDING - LONG SHOT - NIGHT

P.A. #1 (v.o.)
Your attention, please. Flight four-one-seven now departing the B Concourse, gate six.

P.A. #2 (v.o.)
Your attention, please. Flight twenty-seven now arriving the B Concourse, gate six.

There is a LOUD CRASH, and the SCENE SHAKES.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

AIR CONTROLLER #1

(into phone)
This guy doing the flying has no airline experience at all. He'll be a menace to himself and everything else in the air...
(he pauses to listen)
...Yes, birds too.

Kramer enters, picks up clipboard, and reads it.

McCROSKY
(into phone)
Okay, okay. He's a terrible risk, but what other choice have we got?

McCroskey hangs up phone.

McCROSKY
Well, that's the whole story, Rex, everything we know.

KRAMER

All right, Steve, let's face a few facts.

Kramer whips off his sunglasses. Underneath is another pair of sunglasses.

KRAMER

As you know, I flew with this man, Striker, during the war. He'll have enough on his mind without remembering those days when -- well, when things weren't so good.

McCROSKY
Well, right now things aren't so good. And while we're talking there are a hundred and thirty-eight lives waiting on us for a decision.

KRAMER

Let me tell you something, Steve. Striker was a top-notch squadron leader -- a long time ago...

A spear slams into the wall behind Kramer.

KRAMER

...but my feeling is that when the going gets rough upstairs tonight, Ted Striker's gonna fold up.

MCCROSKEY

Look, Rex -- I want you to get on the horn and talk this guy down! You're going to have to let him get the feel of this airplane on the way; you'll have to talk him onto the approach; and so help me, you'll have to talk him right down to the ground!

A watermelon falls from TOP OF FRAME, splattering on the table.

KRAMER

Very well then. Put Striker on the speaker.

MCCROSKEY

Okay, you can use the radio over there. Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit drinking.

He pulls a flask from the drawer and takes a swig.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

Kramer at dispatch radio. He picks up mike.

KRAMER

Striker, Striker, this is Captain Rex Kramer speaking.

McCroskey joins Kramer at dispatch radio.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

DRAMATIC MUSIC as we see Striker's ominous look of recognition.

STRIKER

(dramatically)
Yes, Captain Kramer. Read you loud and
clear.

INT. DISPATCH - NIGHT

Kramer sits at the mike. An Air Controller is standing next to him, but only his mid-section is in FRAME.

KRAMER

All right. It's obvious you remember me.

The Air Controller is scratching his behind.

KRAMER

So what do you say you and I just forget
about everything except what we have to do
now?

The Air Controller is now scratching his crotch.

KRAMER

You and I are going to bring this plane in
together.

The Air Controller's hand is now inside his pants
straightening out his underwear.

KRAMER

Before we start, I'd like to say
something. I know that right now things
must look pretty rough up there.

The Air Controller is now hopping around with both hands
inside his pants.

KRAMER

But if you do what I tell you, when I tell
you to do it, there's no reason you can't
bring that plane in.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

STRIKER

Let's not kid each other, Kramer. You know
I've never flown a bucket like this. I'm
going to need all the luck there is.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

KRAMER

Stand by, Striker.

(to McCroskey)

The one hope we have is to build this man up. I've got to give him all the confidence I can.

(into microphone)

All right, Striker, have you ever flown a multi-engine plane before?

STRIKER (v.o.)

No. Never.

KRAMER

Shit!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker over hears conversation on radio.

KRAMER (v.o.)

This is a goddamn waste of time. There's no way he can land this plane! Route 'em into Lake Michigan and at least avoid killing innocent people!

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

MCCROSKEY

Grab hold of yourself! You've got to talk them down. You're the only chance they've got!

Kramer lights cigarette.

KRAMER

(into mike)

All right, Striker, now you listen to me and you listen close. Flying is no different than riding a bicycle...it just happens to be a lot harder to put baseball cards in the spokes. Now, if you just follow my instructions...

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Two vultures are sitting on back of Striker's seat.

KRAMER (v.o.)

...there's no reason why you shouldn't have complete confidence in your chances to come out of this thing alive and in one piece.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

KRAMER

First, I want you to familiarize yourself with the controls. Later we'll run through the landing procedure.

Kramer takes a last drag on his cigarette and tosses it out the window. McCroskey plugs his ears with his fingers and ducks as though Kramer had thrown a grenade. There is an **EXPLOSION O.S.**

KRAMER

All right. Now I'd like you to disengage the automatic pilot. But watch any violent movement of the controls, like you used to make in Spitfires and Phantoms.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

STRIKER

(into microphone)

Okay, I'm going to unlock the automatic pilot.

Striker switches off automatic pilot button. Automatic pilot shoots upward out of the seat. Elaine is thrown to the floor. Striker struggles desperately to control the plane.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

flying erratically.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

KRAMER (v.o.)

(matter of factly)

Just remember, the controls will feel very heavy compared to a fighter.

Striker is fighting the wheel and the autopilot which is drifting in his way. Finally, he throws the autopilot to the rear of the cockpit.

KRAMER (v.o.)

Don't worry about that. It's perfectly normal. You must watch your airspeed closely. Don't let it fall below 520. Both your rudder pedals and elevator trim will have additional play due to increased drag, but you can compensate by lowering manifold pressure below 154. Now there's

one other thing. Have you someone up there who can work the radio and leave you free for flying?

STRIKER

Yes! The stewardess is here with me!

Elaine rises. The autopilot is on her back, its hands clinging to her breasts. She removes it and seats it at engineer's console.

KRAMER (v.o.)

Have her take the co-pilot's seat.

Elaine takes her seat as Striker regains control of the plane. He hands Elaine the mike.

STRIKER

The radio's all yours now. And keep an eye on that number three engine. It's running a little hot.

INSERT - NUMBER THREE ENGINE GAUGE

A LITTLE HOT is blinking.

BACK TO INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

KRAMER (v.o.)

Striker, what kind of weather are you in up there?

ELAINE

(into microphone)
Rain.

STRIKER

And a little ice.

ELAINE

And a little ice!

KRAMER (v.o.)

How's it handling?

STRIKER

Sluggish. Like a wet sponge.

ELAINE

(into microphone)
Sluggish. Like a wet sponge.

KRAMER (v.o.)
(patronizing)
All right, Striker, you're doing just fine.

STRIKER
(to Elaine)
It's a damn good thing he doesn't know how much I hate his guts.

ELAINE
(into microphone)
It's a damn good thing you don't know how much he hates your guts.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

A Black Dude is holding his stomach in pain.

BLACK DUDE
Oooooooh.

Randy approaches.

RANDY
Can I get something for you?

BLACK DUDE
Cain fo' gwine sho fi cun for.

RANDY
I'm sorry. I don't understand.

MRS. SCHIFF, a middle-aged woman, is seated behind the Black Dudes.

MRS. SCHIFF
Oh, stewardess, I can speak jive. He said he's in great pain and wants to know if you can help him.

RANDY
Tell him to relax and I'll be back as quickly as I can with some medicine.

Randy exits.

MRS. SCHIFF
Shi gwine man chitlun down for mo sho.

BLACK DUDE
(indignantlly)

Shi man I ain neba mo fo gwine ain.

They engage in an argument in jive talk, with Mrs. Schiff getting the best of it. She swaggers off in typical black dude fashion.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Sister Angelina is singing to the Krishnas.

SISTER ANGELINA

'...I sit by the telephone for hours. I love when men send me flowers. I enjoy being a girl.'

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Jack is comforting an ailing Shirley. She is perspiring.

JACK

How ya doing, honey?

SHIRLEY

Oh Jack, I'm so warm. I'm burning up.

JACK

Here.

He reaches up and opens the overhead air nozzle. Air rushes out with hurricane force. As Jack struggles to turn off nozzle, Shirley is blown about, an adjacent passenger's papers go flying from a briefcase, a Hari Krishna's toga flies up revealing polka dot boxer shorts. An extra's toupe flies off.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

SOFT MUSIC.

MILTON

After my wife died, I felt like a fifth wheel. You know, so many years being with one person -- a very wonderful person -- makes you always think of yourself as part of a pair...When Ethel passed away, I was lost. I couldn't function socially and I couldn't function in business.

BERNICE

Well, after a thing like that you wouldn't be expected to.

MILTON

But I think it's time we stopped talking about me. A woman like you -- why haven't you ever married?

BERNICE

Well, I'm afraid that's a question that's all too easy to answer.

MILTON

I know the answer -- Career. A smart woman like you became so involved in your work, you didn't have time for marriage.

BERNICE

I wish I could fool myself into believing that that's the reason. The truth of the matter is, nobody ever asked me.

MILTON

You know, here we are having coffee together, and discussing education and business and economy...and we don't even know each other's names...full names I mean.

BERNICE

Mine's Eleanor. Eleanor Schiff.

MILTON

That's a lovely name. Mine's Milton...Milt Ettenhenim. But my friends call me 'Bubbles.'

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Randy approaches Mrs. Schiff.

RANDY

Would you care for a soft drink?

MRS. SCHIFF

I'd be glad to.

Randy hands a large bottle of Coca Cola wrapped in a baby blanket to Ms. Schiff, who cradles it in her arms.

MRS. SCHIFF

Oooh, such a nice soft drink.

INT. O'HARE WEATHER CENTER - CLOSEUP ON TYPEWRITER

CAMERA PULLS OUT to reveal Dispatcher typing message.

RADIO (v.o.)

National Weather Service reporting Omaha
fogged in. Visibility zero.

The Dispatcher attempts to remove the message, but it is stuck in the cartridge. He yanks on it, but the paper stretches out like rubber. The scene now becomes like a cartoon. He lodges his feet against the typewriter and pulls until the paper stretches to his face. He grumbles in Donald Duck voice. The typewriter snaps back and hits him.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

McCROSKY

(to Air Controller #2)

Macias, get me Captain Oveur's wife on the phone. We'd better let her know what's going on.

Air Controller #1 rushes in holding a piece of paper and hands it to McCroskey.

AIR CONTROLLER #1

Steve, this weather bulletin just came off the wire.

McCroskey frowns and hands it to Hinshaw.

McCROSKY

Johnny, what can you make out of this?

HINSHAW

This? Why, I could make a hat or a broach...

McCroskey grabs the note from him.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

MRS. OVEUR is in bed. Phone on night table RINGS. She reaches for it sleepily.

MRS. OVEUR

Hello?

AIR CONTROLLER #2 (v.o.)

Missus Oveur?

MRS. OVEUR

Yes, this is Missus Oveur.

AIR CONTROLLER #2 (v.o.)
This is Ed Macias calling from the
airport. There's some trouble on your
husband's flight.

SHOT WIDENS to reveal she is sleeping with a horse.

AIR CONTROLLER #2 (v.o.)
We don't know how serious it is yet, but
Harry Ballard thought you'd want to get
down here right away.

MRS. OVEUR
I'll be right down.

She hangs up the phone and rises.

MRS. OVEUR
I've got to go to the airport. You can let
yourself out the back door. There's juice
in the refrigerator.

HORSE
(sounding like Mr. Ed)
Did you finish? Was I good?

MRS. OVEUR
Oh, you're all so concerned about
performance!

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning; turbulent weather.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Randy approaches Mrs. Schiff, who is caring for a drink.

RANDY
Would you care for another drink?

MRS. SCHIFF
No, thank you, I'm still nursing this one.

She is bottle feeding the Coke bottle.

MRS. SCHIFF
(to bottle)
There, just a little bit more -- and then
burpie time and a good nap!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine hangs up phone.

ELAINE

Doctor Rumack says the sick people are getting worse and we're running out of time.

Striker is perspiring.

STRIKER'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)

(echoing)

I've got to concentrate, concentrate, entrate, I've got to concentrate, oncentrate, oncentrate.

He becomes aware of ECHO.

STRIKER'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)

(echoing)

Hell, hello, ello, ello, ello, lo, lo.
Echo, echo, echo, cho, cho, o, o, o, o, o.
Pinch hitting for Pedro Bourbone, Manny Mota, Mota, Mota, Mota.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Nose down.

ELAINE (v.o.)

(hysterically)

Ted, the altitude! We're falling, we're falling!

INSERT - GAUGE INDICATING DROPPING ALTITUDE

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning. Flying nose down.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

A Woman applying eye makeup, smears it over her face.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

DRAMATIC MUSIC as Striker is struggling with the controls. Windshield wipers are moving as though directing music. St. Christopher statue is holding an umbrella. Striker regains control of the plane.

INT. CABIN ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

JACK

(to Rumack)

What's going on? We have a right to know the truth!

DR. RUMACK

(to passengers)

All right. I'm going to level with you. The most important thing now is that you should all be calm, because there's no reason to panic.

Rumack's nose elongates slightly.

DR. RUMACK

Now, it is true that one of the flight crew has been taken ill...slightly ill.

His nose is getting longer.

DR. RUMACK

But the other two pilots are just fine and at the controls flying the plane.

Rumack's nose is a foot long.

DR. RUMACK

The weather in Chicago is clear as a bell, and there's no reason that we won't land on schedule...

ANGLE

Passengers listening. His nose grows THROUGH FRAME.

DR. RUMACK

...safe and sound and free to pursue a life of religious fulfillment.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

STRIKER

(into microphone)

Chicago, the passengers are beginning to panic. When do we start down?

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into microphone)

Not just yet, we'll have you in radar

range any second now.

EXT. O'HARE AIRPORT - REVOLVING RADAR ANTENNA - NIGHT

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

KRAMER

(to McCroskey)
I don't understand it. He should have been
in range ten minutes ago.

MCCROSKEY

(into microphone)
Gunderson, check the radar range. Anything
yet?

INT. RADAR ROOM

GUNDERSON opens door of Amana Radar Range and peers in.
There is a turkey inside.

GUNDERSON

(into microphone)
About two more minutes, Chief.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

MCCROSKEY

Two more minutes! They could be miles off
course.

KRAMER

That's impossible. They're on instruments!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine, Randy, Rumack, and Striker are playing trumpet,
clarinet, saxophone and bass fiddle in Benny Goodman swing
band style.

INT. CHCICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

KRAMER

This is gonna be a real sweat.
(into mike)
Gunderson, let me know when you get
anything.

MCCROSKEY

I can't take much more of this! Johnny,
how about some more coffee?

HINSHAW

Would you like half of my provolone and
roast beef?

MCCROSKEY

Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit
amphetamines.

He pops a couple pills. Fifteen REPORTERS, Cameramen, etc.
enter with Air Controller #1.

AIR CONTROLLER #1

(to McCroskey)

Steve, these reporters won't leave without
a statement.

REPORTER #1

How much longer can the sick passengers
hold out?

MCCROSKEY

Half hour...maybe forty-five minutes.

REPORTER #2

Who's flying the plane?

Air Controller #2 enters and hands McCroskey a note. Hands
holding microphones are thrust INTO FRAME in front of
McCroskey. One hand is holding an ice cream cone.

MCCROSKEY

One of the passengers. But he's an
experienced air force pilot who flew
during the war so there's no cause for
alarm. Hinshaw, take over.

McCroskey exits.

REPORTER #3

Have the families been notified?

HINSHAW

I think Florence Henderson knows about it!

REPORTER #1

What are the chances of bringing this
plane in safely?

HINSHAW

What are the chances of returning
something to Montgomery Ward the week
after Christmas?

REPORTER #1

(beckoning to door)

All right, boys. Let's get some pictures.

Three men with cameras enter and begin to remove framed pictures from walls.

NEWSPAPERS

coming off press. SUPERIMPOSE:

CLASSIC MONTAGE OF:

Series of spinning newspapers. CAMERA ZOOMS IN to each as it stops spinning so that we can read headlines. Headlines are:

"CHICAGO TIMES"

"DISASTER LOOMS FOR AIRLINE PASSENGERS"

"NEW YORK TRIBUNE"

"CHICAGO PREPARES FOR CRASH LANDING"

"NATIONAL INQUIRER"

"BOY TRAPPED IN REFRIGERATOR EATS OWN FOOT"

CAMERA ZOOMS in to:

SPINNING TELEVISION SET

NEWSCASTER

Stricken Airliner Approaches Chicago!

DISSOLVE TO:

ARAB NEWS SET

Arab newscast.

DISSOLVE TO:

JAPANESE NEWS SET

Japanese newscast.

DISSOLVE TO:

AFRICAN TV NEWSCAST

NEWSCASTER is an African in native dress with a bone in his nose. There is a graphic of an airplane behind him and he is beating on a hollow log with sticks. The CAMERA ANGLE CHANGES and he switches to look into NEW CAMERA, and continues beating.

DISSOLVE TO:

CBS' SIXTY MINUTES "POINT-COUNTERPOINT" SET

JACK KILPATRICK

Shana, they bought their tickets, they knew what they were getting into. I say, let 'em crash!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT - (STOCK)

SCREAMING firetrucks, police cars, and ambulances.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Lightning and THUNDER.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

DR. RUMACK

Will the hospital equipment be at the airport?

STRIKER

Yes, everything they've got. How are the passengers doing?

DR. RUMACK

I won't deceive you, Mister Striker. We're running out of time.

STRIKER

Surely there must be something you can do.

DR. RUMACK

I'm doing everything I can! -- And stop calling me Shirley!

Rumack leaves.

STRIKER'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)

I've got to stay calm. If I can just keep my wits about me, I can't mess this one up.

ELAINE'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)
Maybe I have been too harsh with him. If I
had given him more support in the
beginning, maybe things would be
different.

STRIKER'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)
Forget it. It's not your fault.

ELAINE'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)
That's sweet of you, Ted. I appreciate the
thought.

We hear both of their thoughts simultaneously.

STRIKER'S
THOUGHTS (v.o.)
You know, Elaine, I just
wanted to tell you...

ELAINE'S
THOUGHTS (v.o.)
It's just that I feel so
helpless and...

STRIKER'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)
Go ahead.

ELAINE'S THOUGHTS (v.o.)
No, no. You were first.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Jack is seated across the aisle from Mrs. Hammen. He falls
asleep and slumps over.

MRS. HAMMEN
(hysterically)
He's dead. He's dead!

Jack wakes up. Disgustedly:

JACK
No, I'm not dead.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Mrs. Schiff is holding the bottle to her shoulder and
patting it. It BURPS.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Sister Angelina is singing to the two black dudes.

SISTER ANGELINA
'What you want,

Baby I got,
What you need,
You know I got it.
All I'm askin' for
Is a little respect
When you come home.'

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - STEWARDESS' ALCOVE - NIGHT

Rumack pours a cup of water. Randy begins to weep.

DR. RUMACK

Randy, are you all right?

RANDY

Doctor Rumack, I'm scared. I've never been so scared. And besides, I'm twenty-six and I'm not married.

DR. RUMACK

Randy, we're going to make it. You've got to believe that.

Mrs. Hammen enters alcove.

MRS. HAMMEN

Lorison, do you have any idea when we'll be landing?

DR. RUMACK

It will be pretty soon. How are you bearing up?

MRS. HAMMEN

Well, to be honest, I'm very scared. But at least I've got a husband.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Revolving radar antenna.

INT. CHICAGO WEATHER CENTER - CLOSEUP

of typewriter. CAMERA PULLS OUT to REVEAL Dispatcher typing message.

RADIO (v.o.)

National Weather Service reporting Chicago ceiling zero, visibility one hundred feet.

With great care the Dispatcher turns the knob on carriage until the paper comes out clean. Relishing his victory, he

talks in Donald Duck voice.

DISPATCHER

Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy.

As he starts toward the door, the room caves in on him.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

McCroskey and Kramer are at watercooler. McCroskey is filling cup while Kramer drinks.

MCCROSKEY

Rex, I've decided that the best thing to do is to foam the runway -- let him do a wheels-up landing. It'd be a lot simpler.

Kramer throws cup into wastebasket. McCroskey drinks.

KRAMER

(filling up another cup)

No, the risk of fire is too great. If she starts burning, you write off all those people who can't get out of there on their own power.

McCroskey throws cup into wastebasket. Kramer drinks.

MCCROSKEY

(filling up another cup)

Well that's better than writing them all off? Are you going to play God with a hundred and 38 lives?

Kramer throws cup into wastebasket as McCroskey drinks.

KRAMER

(filling up another cup)

No. A belly landing isn't all that simple. It takes a good pilot to keep from smearin' himself all over the runway.

McCroskey throws cup into wastebasket as Kramer drinks.

MCCROSKEY

(filling up another cup)

If Striker has the guts to try this, he deserves the best shot we can give him. We've gotta foam that runway.

Kramer throws cup into wastebasket as McCroskey drinks.

KRAMER

(taking another cup)
His only shot's with the wheels down. I've
seen foam tear a man's guts out.

McCroskey throws cup into wastebasket. Kramer throws cup
into wastebasket.

MCCROSKEY

And if Striker goes to pieces?

KRAMER

(taking another cup)
That's a risk we'll just have to take.

Kramer throws cup into wastebasket. McCroskey throws cup
into wastebasket. They burp.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker is looking at controls. Lightning is flashing on his
face.

INSERT - ALTIMETER

SUPERIMPOSE fighter plane. Then STOCK FOOTAGE of early
experimental planes crashing.

VOICE (v.o.)

Stay in formation. Targets just ahead.
Target should be clear if you go in low
enough. You'll have to decide.
(echoing)
You'll have to decide. You'll have to
decide...So, decide already.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Sudden dramatic MUSIC. The cockpit shakes. Engine number
three is flaming out.

INSERT - CONTROL PANEL - GAUGE FOR ENGINE #3

BACK TO SCENE

STRIKER

Rats! I've lost number three.

ELAINE

What happened, Ted? What went wrong?

STRIKER

Oil pressure. I forgot to check the oil pressure. When Kramer hears about this, the shit's gonna hit the fan.

INT. DISPATCH - CLOSEUP - FAN - NIGHT

The shit hits it. PULL BACK to include:

KRAMER

I told him to watch that oil temperature. What the hell's he doing up there?

He picks up the mike.

KRAMER

Striker, that plane can't land itself! It takes a pilot who can handle pressure.

MCCROSKEY

Ease up, Rex! He hasn't flown for years! It's not his fault. It could happen to any pilot.

HINSHAW

It happened to Barbara Stanwyck!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

STRIKER

He's right. I can't take the pressure. I was crazy to think I could land this plane.

ELAINE

But Ted, you're the only...

STRIKER

I don't care. I just don't have what it takes. They'd be better off with someone who'd never flown before.

As Striker leaves he puts autopilot into pilot's seat. Elaine is on the verge of tears.

DRAMATIC MUSIC.

INT. DISPATCH - NIGHT

Air Controller #2 enters.

AIR CONTROLLER #2

Bad news. The fog's getting thicker.

HINSHAW

And Liz Taylor is getting larger!

MCCROSKEY

Ya know, this would be a tough landing for anyone to make. Maybe, if we hold them off for a bit we'll get a break in the weather.

KRAMER

All right, but let's wait until they reach the control area.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Outside stewardess' alcove. Striker fills a cup from drinking fountain then pours it on his head. He sits down dejectedly on stewardess' fold-out seat. Rumack approaches.

STRIKER

I know what you're going to say, so save your breath.

Rumack sits.

DR. RUMACK

No. I haven't a thing to say. You've done the best you could. You really have. The best you could. I guess we can't expect to win 'em all. I want to tell you something I've kept to myself for years. I was in the war myself -- the Medical Corps. I was on duty late one night when a badly wounded pilot was brought in from a raid. He could barely talk, but he looked at me and he said, "Doc. The odds were against us up there but we went in anyway, and I'm glad we did. The captain made the right decision." The pilot's name was George Zipp.

Striker looks up. Notre Dame Fight Song is heard in b.g.

STRIKER

George Zipp said that?

DR. RUMACK

And the last thing he said to me, "Doc," he said, "Sometime when the crew is up against it and the breaks are beating the boys, tell them to go out there with all they've got and win just one for the Zipper. I don't know where I'll be then, Doc," he said, "but I won't smell too good. That's for sure."

STRIKER

(rejuvenated)

Excuse me, Doc, I've got a plane to land.

Striker boldly starts toward cockpit.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker enters. Elaine, unaware of his return, is listening to Kramer on the radio.

KRAMER (v.o.)

All right, you'd better stay up there for a bit. As soon as the fog lifts, we'll bring you in.

STRIKER

I'll take it, Elaine.

She turns to face him. A dramatic moment. Striker enters pilot seat and takes mike from Elaine's hand.

STRIKER

Listen to me, Kramer. Doctor Rumack says the sick people are in critical condition and every minute counts. We've got to land now!

KRAMER (v.o.)

Don't be a fool, Striker. You know what a landing like this means. You more than anybody. I'm ordering you to stay up there!

STRIKER

No dice, Chicago. I'm giving the orders, and we're coming in...I guess the foot's on the other hand now, isn't it, Kramer?

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

MCCROSKEY

He'll never bring it down in this soup.

Never! Not one chance in a million.

KRAMER

I know. I know. But it's his ship now, his command; he's in charge, he's the boss, the head man, the top dog, the big cheese, the head honcho...

Air Controller #2 rushes up to McCroskey and Kramer, carrying a newspaper.

AIR CONTROLLER #2

Chief, look at this!

Kramer grabs newspaper.

KRAMER

(reading)

'Passengers Certain to Die?!?!?!?!'

MCCROSKEY

'Airline Negligent?!?!?!?!'

He hands the paper to Hinshaw.

HINSHAW

(looking at newspaper)

There's a sale at Penny's!

McCroskey grabs paper from Hinshaw.

KRAMER

(to men in Dispatch)

All right, I'll need three men up in the tower.

(pointing)

You, Neubauer. You, Macias.

HINSHAW

Me John. Big tree.

He puts his ear to the ground.

HINSHAW

Wagon train comes three, maybe four day away.

KRAMER

(into microphone)

Stand by, Striker. I'm going to the tower. And good luck.

Kramer exits.

McCROSKY
(into phone)
We're going to the tower.

McCroskey exits.

HINSHAW
(excitedly)
The tower! Oh! Rapunzel! Rapunzel!

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Randy is talking to passengers and demonstrating.

RANDY
In a moment we'll ask you to assume crash
positions. Your life jackets are located
under your seat.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

Jack and Shirley are watching.

RANDY (v.o.)
Remove the jacket and unfold it so that
the red arrow points up.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - ANOTHER AREA - NIGHT

The Krishnas are watching.

RANDY (v.o.)
Place the jacket over your head, and when
I give the word pull the cord under the
left side flap.

BACK TO RANDY

She pulls the cord and it inflates into a child's duck-shaped inner tube.

INT. CHICAGO TOWER - NIGHT

Hinshaw, Kramer, and McCroskey enter. Three Controllers are there. One is wearing a black striped shirt.

STRIPED CONTROLLER

We're all ready, sir.

As he makes introductions, they shake hands.

STRIPED CONTROLLER

Captain McCroskey, this is Captain Roberts. Captain Kramer, this is Captain Colosimo. Captain Hinshaw, Captain Gatz. Captain Kramer, Captain Gatz. Captain Hinshaw, Captain Roberts.

KRAMER

All right. Colosimo, you'll work the relay. Roberts, double check all air traffic within five miles.

Roberts is scratching his ear.

KRAMER

And get that finger out of your ear. You don't know where that finger's been! Gunderson?

GUNDERSON

Yes, Captain?

KRAMER

Did you decide on a runway yet?

GUNDERSON

Runway niner. It's the longest, and directly into the wind.

HINSHAW

And the foliage looks so pretty this time of year.

Gunderson exits.

KRAMER

(into mike)

Striker, you're going to have to work fast. After this message, do not acknowledge any transmission unless you want to ask a question. Do you understand? Striker, Striker, do you read me?

INT. TOWER - DIFFERENT ANGLE - NIGHT

Mrs. Oveur enters.

MRS. OVEUR

Steve!

MCCROSKEY

Linda, your husband and the others are
alive but unconscious.

HINSHAW

Just like Gerald Ford!

MCCROSKEY

Now there's a chance we can save them if
Striker can get this plane down on time.

MRS. OVEUR

That isn't much of a chance, is it?

HINSHAW

(appalled)

Where did you get that dress? It's an eye-
sore!

INT. RADAR ROOM

Gunderson and an assistant are seated in front of radar
screens. One of them is a video anti-aircraft game.

GUNDERSON

(into microphone)

Eight miles. Turn right to heading zero
eight niner.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into microphone)

You are now eight miles from the airport.
Turn right to a heading of zero eight
niner, throttle back slightly and begin to
lose altitude to fifteen hundred feet.

ELAINE (v.o.)

We're now at twelve hundred feet, leveling
off.

KRAMER

(to McCroskey)

Steve, I want every light you can get
poured on that field.

MCCROSKEY

It's being done right now.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

A truck is dumping a variety of lamps, fixtures, and light bulbs onto the runway.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into mike)

Tower to all emergency vehicles. Runway is niner.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Ambulances, fire trucks, and police cars start to move.

KRAMER (v.o.)

(over P.A.)

Airport vehicles take positions one and two.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into microphone)

Civilian equipment, number three.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Ambulances, firetrucks, and police cars speed toward runway. They are followed by a baggage truck, fuel truck, a taxi, Coke truck, an ice cream truck, farm machinery, and a cement mixer.

KRAMER (v.o.)

(over P.A.)

Air Force positions number four and five.
All ambulances to position three.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

HINSHAW

(into mike)

It's a twister! It's a twister! Toto!...
Auntie Em!

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

THUNDER and lightning.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

KRAMER (v.o.)

All right, Striker, put down twenty degrees of flap. When your flaps are down, retrim for level flight.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers are wearing headsets and watching in-flight movie. Randy approaches Mrs. Schiff.

MRS. SCHIFF

Stewardess, how soon 'til we land?

RANDY

It won't be long now. Try not to worry.

Mrs. Schiff puts on a headset and watches movie. The movie is airplanes crashing and burning.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

flying erratically.

INSERT - ALTIMETER

fluctuating.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

A woman, applying facial makeup, smears it all over her face.

INT. RADAR ROOM

GUNDERSON

He's all over the place! Nine hundred feet up to thirteen hundred feet! What an asshole!

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Watch your altitude, Striker. It's too erratic. You can't come straight in. You've got enough fuel left for two hours flying. You've got to stay up there 'til we get a break in the weather.

INT. COCKPIT

Striker reaches for microphone.

STRIKER

I'll take it, Elaine.
(into mike)

Listen, Kramer, I'm coming in. Do you hear me? I'm coming in right now! We have people up here who will die in less than an hour, never mind two. I may bend your precious airplane, but I'll get it down! Now get on with the landing check. I'm putting the gear down now.

As he activates landing gear, Randy enters.

RANDY

Mr. Striker, the passengers are ready.

STRIKER

Thank you, Randy. You better leave sweetheart. You might get hurt in here.

Randy leaves. There is a CRASH and Randy screams.

ELAINE

Ted...

STRIKER

Yes?

ELAINE

I wanted you to know -- now -- I'm very proud.

STRIKER

Tell them the gear is down and we're ready to land.

ELAINE

(into mike)
The gear is down.

INT. TOWER

ELAINE (v.o.)

And we're ready to land.

MCCROSKEY

He may not be able to fly, but he's sure got guts.

Kramer nods.

EXT. LAX PASSENGER LOADING AREA - BUSINESSMAN - NIGHT

in Striker's cab checks his watch.

BUSINESSMAN

Well, I'll give him another twenty minutes, but that's it.

INSERT - METER

reads \$389.10.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Fog, THUNDER, and lightning.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

MILTON

I'm sure we'll both make it...but just in case one of us...well, is there a message you'd like me to give someone?

BERNICE

No. I'm all alone.

MILTON

Just in case I don't have a chance to say goodbye, I want you to know that I haven't spent so many pleasant hours for many years.

BERNICE

That's a very nice compliment, and I'd like to say that...you've done the same for me.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Dr. Rumack pokes his head in the door.

DR. RUMACK

I just wanted to tell you both good luck. We're all counting on you.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Now, Striker...hold your present heading, put down full flap, bring your air speed back to a hundred and thirty-five, then I want you to take hold of the throttle...

HINSHAW

And stick it in your ear.

KRAMER

And stick it in your ear.

McCroskey gives Hinshaw a disapproving look.

HINSHAW

(a la Froggy, the Gremlin)
I'll be good, I will, I will.

INT. RADAR ROOM

GUNDERSON

Captain, he's dropping off fast. Almost
seven hundred.

INT. TOWER

KRAMER

Striker, get back to a thousand feet!

INT. RADAR ROOM

Assistant Radar Operator unloads clothes from radar screen/
wash machine door and puts them into basket.

GUNDERSON

He's below seven hundred now and he's
still going down! 675! 650! 625! 600!

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

It knocks the radio tower off a building and heads past the
John Hancock Building.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Striker, you're coming in too low! What's
your altitude?

STRIKER (v.o.)

I don't know. How high was the eighty-
ninth floor of the John Hancock Building?

INT. RADAR ROOM

GUNDERSON

He's right on the heading.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

All right, he's on final now! Put out all runway lights except niner.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Ambulance attendants, firemen, and emergency vehicles are in readiness.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Turn on your landing lights, Striker. It's the switch above your right knee.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker reaches for button above his left knee.

KRAMER (v.o.)

No. I said your right knee.

Striker pushes button over his right knee.

EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

Landing lights come on.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

McCroskey, Kramer, and Mrs. Oveur are nervously watching the sky.

KRAMER

All right, now just listen carefully. You should be able to see the runway at three hundred feet.

Mrs. Oveur clutches Kramer's arm anxiously.

KRAMER

Aim to touchdown a third of the way along. There's a slight crosswind from the right, so be ready for it.

Mrs. Oveur is clutching Kramer's arm with both hands.

KRAMER

If you land too fast, use your emergency

brakes. The red handle is right in front of you.

Now Mrs. Oveur, still watching the sky, has both arms around Kramer's waist, massaging his chest with her hands.

KRAMER

If that doesn't stop you...

Kramer is suddenly aware of what Mrs. Oveur is doing. He gives her a look and she removes her hands.

KRAMER

If that doesn't stop you, cut the four ignition switches over the co-pilot's head.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker looks for switches.

INSERT - IGNITION SWITCHES

INT. COCKPIT

STRIKER

See them, Elaine?

ELAINE

Uh-huh.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Do you see us now? You should be able to see the field now.

EXT. AIRPLANE - THROUGH COCKPIT WINDOW - NIGHT

Striker and Elaine are searching for airfield.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

Kramer and McCroskey are tensely trying to spot plane. Mrs. Oveur is watching, prayerfully.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Searchlights scan field.

EXT. TOWER - NIGHT

Revolving beacon searches.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

MCCROSKEY

It sure is quiet out there.

KRAMER

Yeah -- too quiet.

MCCROSKEY

Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit sniffing glue.

He pulls a tube of airplane glue from his shirt pocket and sniffs.

EXT. AIRPLANE - THROUGH COCKPIT WINDOW - NIGHT

Striker and Elaine are searching for airfield.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

Kramer and Mrs. Oveur are anxiously watching the sky. McCroskey is glazed.

KRAMER

(excited)

There he is!

(into microphone)

Striker, you're coming in too fast!

STRIKER (v.o.)

I know! I know!

ELAINE (v.o.)

(into microphone)

He knows! He knows!

MCCROSKEY

Wow!

EXT. RUNWAY - STRIKER'S POV - NIGHT

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into microphone)

Sound your alarm bell now.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine rings alarm bell.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Alarm BELL RINGS. Randy is standing in center aisle.

RANDY

All right, now, everybody get in crash positions.

Passengers assume various awkward poses as though plane had just crashed.

EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

Ambulance attendants anxiously watch sky.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT (PROCESS)

Striker sees airport and points it out to Elaine.

INSERT - AIR SPEED GAUGE

Speed is increasing.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

ELAINE

Airspeed one twenty-five, one thirty...

She raises her head to look out cockpit window.

EXT. RUNWAY - ELAINE'S POV - NIGHT (STOCK)

The runway lights go out.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker and Elaine look at each other, panicked.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

Hinshaw has just pulled a plug from an electrical outlet.

HINSHAW

Just kidding!

EXT. RUNWAY - ELAINE'S POV - NIGHT

Runway lights go back on.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker and Elaine are relieved.

ELAINE

...one thirty-five, one forty.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Striker, now listen to me. You're coming down too fast!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker is struggling with steering wheel and sweating.

KRAMER (v.o.)

Put down thirty degrees of flap!

Striker is sweating profusely as he struggles in vain with the flap switch.

STRIKER

It's stuck. It won't move!

He bangs the control panel and "TILT" light up.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

McCroskey is staring at radio equipment.

KRAMER

Bring it down! Easy!

MCCROSKEY

Look at all those buttons! Oh that's beautiful! Just beautiful!

EXT. RUNWAY - STRIKER'S POV - NIGHT

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

KRAMER (v.o.)

Watch your nose! It's too low!

Striker is struggling with wheel. The wheel begins to fight back, pushing Striker.

KRAMER (v.o.)

You're coming in too hot!

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Remember your brakes and switches! Get ready to flare it out! You're coming in too fast! Watch your speed!

MCCROSKEY

(hysterical)

He's coming right at us!

McCroskey turns and leaps through tower window. All activity momentarily stops. Everyone looks back at window. Then activity resumes.

KRAMER

You're coming in too hot! Put down full flaps! Watch your nose!

EXT. RUNWAY - STRIKER'S POV - NIGHT

Runway swerving underneath him.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Now ease her down! Down!

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Plane is a few feet from ground.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Lift the nose! Throttle back!

EXT. RUNWAY - STRIKER'S POV - NIGHT

Closer to ground.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker pushes wheel forward as tires SCREECH.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

The brake! Pull the red handle!

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Striker pulls red handle. It comes off in his hand. He

pushes brake with feet.

EXT. RUNWAY - CLOSEUP - TIRES - NIGHT

SCREECHING.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Dr. Rumack pokes his head in the door.

DR. RUMACK

I just wanted to tell you both good luck.
We're all counting on you.

EXT. RUNWAY - STRIKER'S POV - NIGHT

Runway passing underneath.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into microphone)
Hold her steady, hold her steady!

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

skidding.

INT. O'HARE TERMINAL BUILDING - GATE 7 - NIGHT

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)

You attention, please. Trans American
Flight 209 non-stop from Los Angeles is
now arriving at Gate seven...Gate eight...

People in Gate seven waiting area move to Gate eight.

INT. COCKPIT - STRIKER - NIGHT

is struggling with controls, sweating profusely.

INT. TOWER

KRAMER

Pull a lever!

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

skidding.

INT. COCKPIT - STRIKER - NIGHT

is struggling with controls. Water is gushing down his face
ridiculously.

INT. O'HARE TERMINAL BUILDING - GATE 13 - NIGHT

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)
...209 arriving gate thirteen...gate
fourteen....gate fifteen...

People in Gate thirteen move to Gate fourteen.

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

skidding.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Push a button!

INT. COCKPIT - STRIKER - NIGHT

Striker is struggling with controls.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

(into microphone)
You're too low! You're too low!

INT. O'HARE TERMINAL BUILDING - NIGHT

P.A. SYSTEM (v.o.)
...gate twenty-three...twenty four...
twenty-five...

People are running THROUGH FRAME right to left.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Ground crewman with red flashlights nonchalantly directs
plane. Suddenly he realizes the plane is not stopping. He
throws his flashlight at the plane and runs off, terrified.

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

skidding.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Randy approaches a passenger in crash position.

RANDY

Can we help arrange hotel accommodations
or a rent-a-car during your stay in
Chicago?

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Landing gear snaps off; plane starts to slide on its belly.

PLANE

is heading toward a building. On the side of the building is
a billboard with a man drinking milk.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elaine screams and covers her face. St. Christopher statue
covers its face.

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

is getting closer to building. Billboard man is looking at
plane, terrified.

INT. TOWER - MRS. OVEUR - NIGHT

is screaming.

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

is skidding.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

HINSHAW

(seated in wheelchair)

Wheel me to the West Wing. I wish to view
the Degas.

EXT. RUNWAY - PLANE - NIGHT

skids to a stop.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

Kramer sighs in relief as controllers and Mrs. Oveur dash
from room.

INT. CHICAGO DISPATCH - NIGHT

Controllers celebrate safe landing, reporters rush from
room.

INT. DISPATCH LOBBY - NIGHT

Five reporters run into bank of phone booths and the booths topple over.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

SCREAMING ambulances race toward plane.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - NIGHT

Passengers rise slowly, shaken but uninjured. Milton and Bernice look at each other, relieved, and embrace. Mrs. Schiff gets up to leave.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Rumack pokes his head in door.

DR. RUMACK

I just wanted to tell you both good luck.
We're all counting on you.

Striker and Elaine get up to leave cockpit.

KRAMER (v.o.)

Striker, Striker, are you all right?

STRIKER

(into microphone)
Yeah, we're okay.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

KRAMER

Ted, that was probably the lousiest
landing in the history of this airport.
But there are some of us here...

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

KRAMER (v.o.)

...particularly me, who'd like to buy you
a drink and shake your hand.

Striker and Elaine leave.

KRAMER (v.o.)

...and, Ted, I just want you to know, that
when the going got tough up there, when
the chips were down...

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - BOARDING AREA - NIGHT

Randy is assisting Jack and Shirley, the Hammens, and the nun from the plane.

RANDY

Hurry now. Please be careful.

INT. TOWER - NIGHT

Air controllers leave as Kramer continues.

KRAMER

...Lonliness, that's the bottom line. I was never happy as a child. Christmas, Ted, what does it mean to you? For me, it was a living hell. Do you know what it's like to fall in the mud and get kicked? In the head? By an iron boot? Of course you don't. No one does. That never happens. Sorry, Ted. Dumb question. Strike that.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - BOARDING AREA - NIGHT

Randy is assisting Hari Krishnas and Black Dudes from plane.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

McCroskey, dressed in wet suit and flippers and oxygen tank is moving as though swimming under water.

MCCROSKEY (v.o.)

I didn't know that the electric eel was approaching so rapidly nor that hidden in the coral reef was a family of poisonous sea urchins.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

Lisa Davis and her mother enter ambulance. It pulls from FRAME. We HEAR a loud screech and crash.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Kramer is still droning on.

KRAMER (v.o.)

(into mike)

...and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes, Ted. Neither they man servant, nor they maid servant, nor thine ox, nor

thine ass.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

ROMANTIC MUSIC.

Striker and Elaine are alone on the runway. Behind them is flight 209. They embrace and kiss as CAMERA ARCS around. MUSIC SWELLS. Suddenly the ENGINES REV UP. Astonished, they look up to the cockpit.

EXT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

Automatic pilot is at controls. He salutes Striker and Elaine and winks at CAMERA.

EXT. RUNWAY - NIGHT

The plane begins to taxi on its belly, shooting off sparks and making a tremendous scraping SOUND. Arm in arm, Striker and Elaine wave good-bye as the plane takes off into the night sky.

FADE OUT.