

FLIGHT

INT. AIRPORT MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

An attractive YOUNG WOMAN crosses naked through the frame as we hear a phone ringing. Smoke hangs in the air and empty beers clutter the motel table as we hear a man's voice answer the phone.

VOICE

For the love of Christ!

WHIP WHITAKER rises into frame and inhabits the room like a lazy ape at the zoo. WHIP wears his 40 some years of life experience like a medal. Both his forearms bare blurred Navy tattoos and his large boxers rest dangerously low, near to what used to be his waist. He aggressively drains the last four inches of beer from a clear bottle and cracks the last fresh one. He's pacing with the phone attached to his ear.

The YOUNG WOMAN bends over to pick up her clothes revealing a fluorescent orange thong. We witness her ass as a tanned glass vase with a perfect crack down the middle. Whip smiles, having taken' it all in...

WHIP

I've been up since the crack 'a dawn. What check? Tuition? How much does it cost to go there?

The YOUNG WOMAN has re-lit the last half of a joint and is puffing it to life as WHIP is beckoning with his large hands.

The YOUNG WOMAN, looking more like a stripper by the second, hands the joint to WHIP who takes a masterful drag. WHIP shakes his head in violent disapproval to what he hears on the phone. He exhales in anger as he shouts into the phone.

WHIP (cont'd)

NO! NO! NO! You decided he needed private school...oh he's my son because you need a tuition check...that's great Derby, I'm glad you tracked me down in Houston to shake me down for money. Does Batch even like the fucking school? No I've never seen it. Yeah I wonder why not too. I gotta 9 o'clock flight, sit tight 'till I get back to Tulsa. No, I'll call you.

WHIP hangs up the phone and makes quick work of the last beer as he stares through his thoughts and out the window.

YOUNG WOMAN
(Oklahoman Twang)
Wuz that your wife?

WHIP
That was my ex-wife. But you
Trina, you could be my second or
third wife if you'd just C'mere.

The YOUNG WOMAN we now know as TRINA smiles seductively...

TRINA
Whip, our flight's at 9 we best go
to it.

TRINA pulls on a tight navy blue skirt and is buttoning a
white blouse as she hands WHIP his pants.

WHIP
Yeah, I'm feelin' a little light-
headed. I shoul'da ate somethin'.

WHIP leans over the motel table, picks up a soda straw that's
been cut in half. He efficiently sniffs up the last line of
a white powder. He pulls the straw from his nose and inhales
hard. He places the straw in his mouth and sucks out
whatever's left. Whip washes it down with his beer and tries
to put on his pants.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

We see a terminal full of commuters waiting to board a
shuttle. We follow a MAN and his YOUNG SON down the boarding
ramp to find the YOUNG WOMAN from the motel to be the FLIGHT
ATTENDANT smiling as she welcomes the passengers.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - NIGHT

A young PILOT with a military haircut and neatly ironed
clothes goes through his pre-flight check. His name is KEN
EVANS and he's fresh out of the air force.

WHIP shuffles unbuttoned into the cock pit and plops unevenly
into the Captain's chair.

WHIP
Co-pilot Evans, my pleasure to
share the chair with ya'. Run and
get me a coffee would ya' sport.
It's been a long day.

EVANS

It's 9 a.m.....

WHIP

Black, lots of sugar.

EVANS reluctantly goes for coffee.

EXT. HOUSTON AIRPORT RUNWAY - DAY

The morning has been consumed by black clouds and driving rain. Jet Liners taxi and take off while an electrical storm cooks up. We see the "OK AIR" moniker on the tail.

INT. JR-88 - JET LINER - DAY

Passengers settle as the OK AIR JR-88 lumbers along the tarmac, headed for the runway.

We follow TRINA whose ass looks as good in a tight navy skirt as it does split bare with orange fluorescence. An OLDER FLIGHT ATTENDANT speaks into a mic.

OLDER FLIGHT ATTENDANT

Ladies and gentlemen we've been cleared for take-off. Today's flight to Tulsa should take 95 minutes. Flight attendants please take your seats.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

We see WHIP looking moist with anxiety as he stares out the window at the black morning. We see what he sees out the window...nothing...the rain pounds. Whip leans close to the windshield in an attempt to improve his view.

CO-PILOT EVANS reaches down and throws a switch. The windshield wipers go on. We can now see very clearly the path of lights the plane is to follow. WHIP looks to EVANS, smiles with stoned eyes.

WHIP

Thanks junior.

EVANS is very nervous about WHIP's apparent struggle for control. WHIP inhales his coffee and tries to sit back.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The passengers are pressed into their seats like blades of grass as the breeze of the plane's momentum moves them towards flight. The main lights in the cabin go out and the small glow of the aisle lights lead us back to the cockpit.

INT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - DAY

WHIP mans the stick as he squints his eyes and tries to keep the nose between the lights of the runway.

WHIP

It's like a video game right?

WHIP laughs and turns to his co-pilot. EVANS is visibly nervous. The plane jerks up and we can hear the fuselage flex as we leave the ground.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The straining sound stops as the plane has left the ground. The passengers ease forward as the force subsides a bit now that they're airborne.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

The plane is loping up as the rain continues to pound the windshield. The ascent is a little bumpy as ground wind tosses the plane side to side. Co-pilot EVANS is communicating with Air Traffic Control...

EVANS

First Officer Evans from OK 227,
outbound to Tulsa. Roughly 2000
feet, visibility poor, strong
eastern winds.

EVANS looks nervously to WHIP who smiles and begins to sing.

WHIP

(singing)

*This is ground control to Major
Tom, we've really made the grade,
planet earth is blue and there's
nothing left to do...*

We hear the Air Control response throughout the cockpit.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL
227...you should clear that bad air
in under 3 minutes and advise you
to keep the southern path of your
plan. We've got high wind and
storms 30 miles west of Tulsa over.

EVANS
Did you get that? We should stay
south after we get to altitude-

WHIP
Gottit skippy. I'm just tryin' to
get birdie here outta this wind
bowl...how tall are we now?

EVANS
9 thousand feet.

THE PLANE TAKES A VIOLENT DIP

EVANS' headset falls off and all the loose equipment and
coffee cups are thrown to the ground.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The passengers audibly howl as the roller coaster dip stuffs
most of their stomachs in to their throats. A few overhead
luggage bins fly open and bags and coats rain down.

BOTH ATTENDANTS calmly collect the luggage and stow it in the
kitchen. They talk loudly for the benefit of the passengers.

TRINA
This happened last week, always
bumpy outta Houston. Right Meg?

MARGARET
Yeah, Houston's always bumpy in the
fall.

The OLDER STEWARDESS plays along as she grabs the mic...

OLDER STEWARDESS (cont'd)
Ladies and Gentlemen, we apologize,
Houston tends to be bumpy in the
spring. Until we clear this air we
ask that you stay seated with your
seatbelts fastened.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

EVANS nervously combs his charts and chatters with Control.

EVANS

OK 227, we're experiencing large pockets of bad air, can you update me on-

WHIP

Point me to the river. I'm gonna go a little south now and find some smooth air-

EVANS

Captain-

WHIP

Kid, just do it-

EVANS

26N...13E should put us right over the river...

SUDDENLY -- THE PLANE FALLS 200 FEET IN 3 SECONDS

A huge air pocket pulls the rug out from under the JR-88. From the cockpit we can hear the passengers scream. EVANS holds on to his headset and babbles into his mic.

EVANS

(frantic)

Control, the Captain had me navigate to the river. We're only at 13 thousand feet and we're already 28 miles from Houston-

WHIP

Evans, shut up and check my trim. Keep me flat.

WHIP remains cool as he rides more bad air. The plane now bounces rapidly over a non-stop succession of speed bumps.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The passengers clutch each other as they rattle like bobble head dolls, it's getting worse.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

WHIP pushes the throttle and the plane accelerates making the bumps shorter and more violent.

EVANS

Why are you speeding up?

WHIP

I'd like to spend less time in this shitty air if you don't mind.

WHIP pushes the 17-year-old Johnson-Ridgefield JR-88 directly into a huge black cloud. He begins to dip the nose towards the ground.

EVANS

Why are we losing altitude?

WHIP

I wanna pick up some speed, she's old, she ain't got the zing I need to get outta this quick.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The passengers list forward as the nose dive figures to be the end. They howl in fear.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

EVANS calls out to WHIP and to Air Control...

EVANS

We're only at 7 thousand feet!

WHIP

Just tell me when we're at 5 thousand, what's my speed?

EVANS

(terrified)

7500 feet, 685 km's...

WHIP

Here we go...

The shaking gets incredibly violent, we hear screams from the cabin. WHIP starts to hum the David Bowie song again...

WHIP (cont'd)
Are we below 5 grand?

EVANS
4800-

WHIP
You're useless Evans, shit.
(He looks at the dark sky)
C'mon show me your crack
sweetheart...

We see a line of light in the horizon.

WHIP (cont'd)
Finally, daylight.

WHIP banks the plane hard, pointing it directly at the crack in the darkness. He again accelerates and begins to lift the nose up. The plane is banking, rising and accelerating.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The screaming passengers go quiet with the strange new development. The shaking has eased from a 10 to a 5.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

WHIP has the plane almost out of its bank. As we level off we can see a clearer sky. EVANS is cheery...

EVANS
We're at 11 thousand feet, some
visibility, 575 kilometers. Oh my
God...it's over.

WHIP
How far off are we?

The plane is gliding smooth as silk, continuing to rise.

EVANS
We're not. If we tick up to 25
North we're back on the plan. That
was incredible sir.

WHIP
How tall are we?

EVANS
16 thousand.

WHIP

When we get to 30, I'm gonna make an appearance in the cabin, it will relax everyone.

EVANS looks at him and nods.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

The passengers are all abuzz as they feel better about the flight. The ATTENDANTS walk the aisles, smiling and reassuring the passengers.

INT. CABIN - GALLEY - DAY

WHIP exits the cockpit and ducks into the galley. He opens a bottle of orange juice and takes a large swig. He then pours most of it in the sink. He pulls 3 small vodka bottles from the liquor cart. He routinely empties the vodka into the orange juice bottle. He replaces the cap. Whip shakes the bottle and takes a healthy pull, downing nearly half.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

WHIP emerges into the passenger cabin and greets the passengers with his orange juice bottle. He flicks off the seat belt sign and grabs the mic.

WHIP

Folks, this is Captain Whitaker. I apologize for the bumps, but Texas just doesn't seem to like us Okies. Must be the beatin' the Sooners put on the 'Horns last fall. Feel free to stretch out and relax.

CUT TO:

EXT. THREE STORY APARTMENT BUILDING - TULSA - DAY

We glance the cheap architecture of this prefab 1982 apartment building in downtown Tulsa. Next to the apartment building is a convenient store.

INT. APARTMENT - TULSA - DAY

We are panning framed photos on a bureau. We stop on a black and white photo of a beautiful mother and daughter. The daughter in the photo is 24 and mom is 50 and gorgeous.

We pull back from the photo to find the DAUGHTER five years later looking frayed. She frantically roots through the junk on the dresser top, looking for something.

The DAUGHTER manically paces her dumpy apartment. She picks up a beaten cordless phone and dials a number off a match book. She waits...

DAUGHTER

Hello, Robert...this is Nicole. I washed your hair at the salon? I was wondering if you wanted to set up a massage appointment today? What? Yeah, I'll make it a really happy ending...where are you located?

NICOLE rifles among melted candles and ashtrays and burnt foils looking for a pen. She pulls a pencil out of the mess and begins to scrawl on the wall.

NICOLE (cont'd)

362 North Daytona, unit C. I'll be there in 30 minutes? Me too.

NICOLE hangs up the phone and places it on the bureau, she looks again at the photo of she and her mom.

NICOLE begins to pull her messy hair into a ponytail and makes her way back to the coffee table. She sorts through the burnt foils, inspecting them for residue. She picks the best of the litter and uses a butane lighter to fire the foil as she sucks the vapors through a straw, she holds in the vapor in hopes of any high. She exhales frustrated. Picks up a cheap cell phone, dials...

NICOLE (cont'd)

It's Nic, do you have any? Are you gonna be at the shop? I'll be there in 10 minutes. No, you have to front me. I'll come right back and give you the money-

She hangs up. BANG BANG BANG....Someone pounds on the door.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A small muscular man is pounding on her door.

FRAN

Yo, it's Fran. If there ain't money in my box by tonight, you're out. No bullshit. I know you're in there I see your car downstairs.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

NICOLE grabs a folded massage table and forces it out the window. She aims it and we watch as it falls 8 feet and smashes onto the already dented hood of a 1976 Toyota Celica. She climbs out the window and scales down the fire escape. She hangs. Her thin, bruised arms like beaten meat hooks suspend her as she swings out and lets go. She lands ass first on the hood of her car. She rolls off the roof and collects the rickety table, cramming it into the hatchback.

EXT. TULSA GHETTO - DAY

NICOLE gets out of her Celica and slams the door twice before it closes. She walks up to a ratty electronics store...

INT. RATTY ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

An OLD BIKER GUY is manning the counter of what looks to be part pawn shop, part legitimate electronics store. NICOLE walks to the rear of the store where she climbs a small wooden staircase and blasts through a brown door at the top.

INT. ROOM ATOP THE RATTY ELECTRONICS STORE - DAY

NICOLE enters to reveal a large loft space that provides room for a porno set. Cheap couches and area rugs define two separate sets. Large office plants border one of the sets as the bright lights illuminate everything. A GIRL WITH DYED-BLONDE HAIR stands naked next to the couch smoking a joint as she shaves her crotch with a man's electric razor.

NICOLE approaches a young tattooed man with jet black hair. He's talking with an OLDER ASIAN MAN as they groom a pile of coke for snorting.

NICOLE

Kip-

KIP
Nicole, hey baby...

He sniffs a quick line and gets up to kiss her, she turns her cheek avoiding the coke-frozen kiss.

KIP (cont'd)
Nicole, this is Tiki Pot. He's my partner in this new series and he's gonna produce and today he's gonna be my director of photography.

NICOLE
Kip I need you to front me 2 grams.

KIP
Tiki and I are trying to put the narrative back in porn.

TIKI does a line and comes up babbling.

TIKI POT
She do anal, two thousand, one hour.

NICOLE
I don't do porn, lemme see the "h."

KIP
Nico we're trying to do an Othello theme where the Moor finds you in bed with your nurse and-

NICOLE
He fucks me in the ass?

KIP
Well...yeah.

TIKI POT
College kid, very clean...WILL?!

A tall thin African-American Kid joins them. He has a bath towel wrapped around his waist.

KIP (cont'd)
Show her the pipe-

WILL drops the towel...

NICOLE
Fuck you Tiki, you put that in your ass and call me in the morning.

NICOLE walks away. KIP follows her...at the door.

NICOLE (cont'd)
Kip can you please just front me...

KIP
Uh, yeah I can..it's just you were
clean for a while and...
(she begins to cry)
Sweetheart, don't cry.

KIP hugs her quickly and pulls a small tin foil brick from his vest pocket.

KIP
Nico this is the taliban baby, very
big time. It will take you down.

NICOLE
I can handle it.

KIP (cont'd)
Promise me you'll cook this with
some coke, it's very big time.

NICOLE
I'm just gonna smoke it, I was
clean. I haven't done needles in
weeks.

KIP
Okay but take a little coke and if
you start going down just whiff a
little. Okay?

KIP hands her a tiny baggy of coke. He kisses her cheek.

EXT. CONDO COMPLEX - TULSA - DAY

We see a decent middle class condo complex. NICOLE's Celica is parked out front.

INT. CONDO COMPLEX - TULSA - DAY

A MAN in his early 60's wears a terry cloth robe and a bad blonde toupee as he lets NICOLE into his condo. He holds a scotch glass in one hand and a fly swatter in the other.

NICOLE struggles with the wobbly table, through the door and into the small living room. She quickly sets it up. ROBERT puts an uncomfortable hand on her shoulder.

ROBERT (cont'd)
Would you like a drink?

NICOLE ducks his aging mitt and cruises out of the room.

NICOLE
No thank you, I just need you to
get on the table, do you have some
sheets?

He hands her two folded sheets. He's used to a room service
hand job.

ROBERT uses a remote control to start the stereo. Chuck
Mangione's late 70's anthem "Feel So Good" pebbles out of
the sound system. ROBERT smiles as he uses the fly swatter
to conduct the music. NICOLE runs to the bathroom.

INT. ROBERT'S BATHROOM - DAY

NICOLE places heroin on a foil and begins to cook it. She
uses a straw to inhale the burning vapors off the foil.

She places the straw down and begins to fold up the dope when
she is overwhelmed with the effect of her high. She grabs
the counter as she scrambles to find the coke. She
accidentally dumps the whole bag on the counter. She uses the
straw to inhale as much of the white life saver as she can.
She shakes her head, just what the doctor ordered. Licking
her finger she ingests the last of the coke. Perfectly high.

INT. ROBERT'S CONDO - DAY

NICOLE is beaming with euphoria as she scats along to the
familiar brass riff and places a small folded towel over
ROBERT's eyes. NICOLE pulls down the sheet. She now
realizes that she has no lotion for this task.

NICOLE
(happy as a lark)
You don't have any lotion do you
Bob? I must I have some in my bag.

INT. ROBERT'S BATHROOM - DAY

NICOLE glides into the bathroom and scours it for
lotion...none. She glides out.

INT. ROBERT'S KITCHEN - DAY

NICOLE stands, smiling catatonically in the middle of the small kitchen. She finally clicks back into her task, the refrigerator. She opens it...there is a few beers, a take out container and a jar of mayonnaise. She pulls out the jar of mayo. She holds it up, even she can't help but smile at her brilliant choice for improvisation.

INT. ROBERT'S CONDO - DAY

NICOLE returns to find that she left ROBERT exposed with his eyes covered. She stifles a laugh.

NICOLE reaches her hand into the jar of mayo and pulls out a large dollop. She places it on his lower abdomen.

ROBERT
Smells nice.

NICOLE
Oh, yeah Bobbo really nice...

She grabs another handful of mayo and plops it on Robert's chest. We can't help but laugh with her. She's infectious, cute and now safe in her own world, laughing away.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

WHIP is now passed out in the seat next to EVANS. WHIP wears black eye shades as his head bobs in deep sleep.

EVANS maintains a military posture as he monitors the plane's progress. The flight is smooth and the sky appears clear.

BANG! THE PLANE SUDDENLY TURNS SIDEWAYS

The loud explosion wakes WHIP who pushes up his sleeping shades and reaches for his water.

WHIP
The fuck was that?

EVANS
That elevator feels really stiff.

WHIP
Don't force it.

EVANS does, we hear a big mechanical snap.

EVANS
I've lost left trim sir, we're
pulling right, hard.

WHIP
Shit! It's locked up, ease up on
left trim don't-

BANG! THE PLANE TURNS VIOLENTLY AND BEGINS A NOSE DIVE.

EVANS
(panic)
I have no trim at all, now.

WHIP sits up and pulls on a headset.

WHIP
Control this is OK 227, we've lost
all three hydraulics-

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL
OK 227, altitude and speed.

WHIP
28 thousand feet, 550 kilometers.
But we are in uncontrolled descent.
WHOOOAAAAA!!!!

The plane starts to bank to the right, WHIP puts his hand against the wall to stay in his seat. EVANS throws up from adrenalized fear. The passengers shriek with terror.

Both FLIGHT ATTENDANTS fall into the cockpit.

TRINA
Everyone's belted in, are we going
down?

The plane banks again and begins to roll.

WHIP
Evans thrust right, don't fight the
roll. Don't panic. Relax. Roll —
it. Thrust, roll.

The clumsy liner does a slow ungraceful roll. The plane is completely inverted.

INT. PLANE CABIN - DAY

We watch as the PASSENGERS scream as the plane rolls over and they are suspended upside down.

INT. FLIGHT DECK - DAY

EVANS hangs in his straps as his harness is too loose.

WHIP

You gottit kid, you gottit.

EVANS reaches for the yoke but WHIP stops him.

WHIP

Don't roll it back, not yet. We're stable. We can fly like this.

EVANS

I can't reach the pedals!

WHIP

Relax kid you gottit. I'm gonna help you.

WHIP unhooks himself and falls to the ceiling. He pulls a small case to just below EVANS and he climbs up and pushes the young pilot into his chair.

WHIP

Pull those straps. Tight. Tell control we are stable, inverted at 12,000 feet, 480 kilometers. Find a field.

EVANS seems calmed by WHIP'S workaday attitude about their insane tragedy.

The plane has begun to swirl with debris and dust. We hear the rhythmic thump of the oil pumps in the engines. Oil is leaving the engines.

WHIP walks to the cabin headset. He looks at his passengers all hanging upside down. A few people have fallen to the ceiling center aisle. Mayhem swirls but WHIP outshouts it.

WHIP

TIGHTEN YOUR SEATBELTS TIGHT. WE ARE GONNA ROLL THE PLANE BACK OVER AND THEN EMERGENCY LAND. WE ARE STABLE, I REPEAT WE ARE STABLE.

(MORE)

WHIP (cont'd)

I PROMISE YOU THAT WE WILL ALL WALK OFF THIS PLANE! ONCE THE PLANE HAS RIGHTED ITSELF, THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE FALLEN OUT OF YOUR CHAIRS RE-FIND YOUR SEATS AND BELT IN, TIGHT.

WHIP puts down the handset and is about to return to the cockpit when he sees a SMALL BOY of about 6 years old. The BOY sits calmly on one of the small TV monitors that protrude from the ceiling. He stares at WHIP, he then waves. WHIP is frozen...what to do?

WHIP runs down the ceiling and grabs the boy and runs back towards the cabin. PASSENGERS scream and grab at WHIP as he runs back to the front.

WHIP

(handing him off)

Son this is Margaret, she's gonna hold you.

EVANS

GET IN YOUR CHAIR WE NEED TO ROLL IT BACK!!!

WHIP

We can't! Not until we have an open field. As soon as we roll that broken elevator is gonna put us nose down in the ground.

WHIP looks to the FLIGHT ATTENDANTS. MARGARET is crying, but tough. TRINA is holding the BOY.

WHIP

Trina in the jump seat with..what's your name sweetie?

BOY

Jackson.

WHIP

Jackson, hold on to Trina.

WHIP boosts them into the upside down jump seat. He then grabs the headset and barks at air traffic control.

WHIP

This is Captain Whitaker. We are steady at 7000 feet, we need to descend to 500 feet and then roll and then put it down.

CONTROL

Captain, we advise attempting a roll at 9000 feet which gives you time to correct--

WHIP

No, find me a fucking open field, we have an elevator that's fixed in place. As soon as we roll the nose will go down.

CONTROL

We have a clearing in 20 miles.

WHIP

Evans start taking us down.
Margaret, get in my chair.

WHIP helps her into his chair and pushes her up so she can strap in tight.

EVANS

Control we are at 5000 feet with 10 miles to go.

WHIP looks at MARGARET who holds on to her straps as her gold cross necklace hangs perfectly in his line of sight.

WHIP takes in the swirl of dust and smoke as the grind of the engines gets louder as they are becoming completely oil-deprived. He is calm, comfortable with his fate.

EVANS

1000 feet 400 kilometers.

WHIP

Don't slow down too much we need to thrust through the roll.

EVANS is breathing heavy as his face is beet red from the blood rushing to it.

WHIP

Okay Evans, you gottit kid, you're a star. Deep breath.

CONTROL

You are approaching the clearing.

WHIP

Okay, on my count of three we're gonna roll over.

(MORE)

WHIP (cont'd)

Margaret you need to pull too. To your right. Show me your right.

MARGARET.

(she lifts her right hand)
Okay?

WHIP

Great. Evans when we roll you're gonna thrust both sides and when we flatten out, you need to put the landing gear out and go full thrust for at least half a minute.

EVANS

But we don't have any hydraulics.

WHIP

I'm gonna try to manually trim the plane from the floor.

A quiet, dire moment between them, EVANS swallows hard.

EVANS

Roger that. Control we are at 700 feet and preparing for roll.

CONTROL

Roger 227, God speed.

WHIP

Okay, one, two, three...

The plane does a clumsy roll to the right...and gets stuck perfectly on its side.

WHIP

THRUST, BOTH SIDES!!!!

EVANS pushes the thrust and the plane finishes its roll. We are again right side up as WHIP tumbles off the wall and to the ground.

The PLANE makes that familiar metallic grunt as the elevator is attempting to force the nose down.

WHIP lays flat on his stomach as he trims the plane by hand.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

227 do you read?

The transmission now blares throughout the cockpit.

WHIP

Yeah, 227...I'm trying to manually trim the plane...

The plane banks to the right again. As the angle gets steeper, the shrieks of terror from the passengers rise...

WHIP

Fuck! It's tearing my hands to shreds.

The plane lists back to flat. EVANS gets up and gets in the CAPTAIN's chair. VOMIT covers his shirt.

WHIP (cont'd)

You with me junior?

EVANS

We're losing speed and altitude.

WHIP

When we start to dive you have to accelerate.

The plane starts to dive.

WHIP (cont'd)

Thrust it kid...harder, HARDER!

The plane lists faster as the speed picks up. WHIP struggles to trim the plane, he's pulling the cables from the floor.

WHIP (CONT'D) (cont'd)

We gotta put her down.

EVANS

Are the hydraulics back?

WHIP

The only thing keeping this plane from rolling over is my right leg, when it breaks she's gonna do a cartwheel. So while we're still horizontal just take her down.

The plane begins to roll. WHIP pulls on the cable and digs his leg further in. We feel the plane is about to go over.

WHIP

AAAAHHHHH!!! GUN IT KID!! GUN IT!!

EVANS tries to reach the throttle, but he can't. MARGARET dives on to the panel and pushes. The plane lurches back to horizontal. The PASSENGERS howl.

WHIP (cont'd)

Take us down Kid, we gotta go down.

EVANS begins to dip the nose.

WHIP (cont'd)

Dump the fuel. Girls, strap in.

EVANS

We're at 500 feet we can't dump..

WHIP

DUMP THE FUEL NOW!!!

MARGARET stares out the windshield, tears run down her face.

WHIP (cont'd)

Margaret?

MARGARET.

Yeah Whip?

WHIP

What's your son's name?

EVANS

We're below 400 feet.

The plane slightly rolls, WHIP levels it out.

MARGARET.

Trevor, why?

EVANS

300 feet, I can see the field.

WHIP

Do you love him?

MARGARET nods with tears in her eyes.

WHIP (cont'd)

Say "I love you Trevor."

MARGARET.

Why?

WHIP

The black box.

The cockpit is quiet as the reality of their last words on earth being played over and over again on CNN resonates.

MARGARET.

I love you Trevor, be a good boy,
mommy loves you.

EVANS

250 feet.

WHIP

Are we flat?

EVANS

Perfectly.

WHIP

Right before we touch, gun it and
pull your nose up.

EVANS

Are you sure?

WHIP

Do what I tell you kid-

EVANS

Below 200 feet.

WHIP

Wait, wait, wait.....NOW!!!

BOOM! The plane's tail hits first and breaks off creating
drag that dissipates some of the plane's speed.

WHIP pulls with all his might to keep the plane flat as the
belly of the plane makes impact.

WHIP (cont'd)

THRUST!!! NOSE UP!!!!

EVANS closes his eyes as he blindly follows WHIPS orders.

EXT. OKLAHOMA - CATTLE FIELD - DAY

The tail-less plane smashes on its belly and the wings fall
off sending the tube of the fuselage sliding along the field.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN - DAY

We see the hole left by the tail's removal. Daylight fills the cabin as the wings shear off. The sound is deafening. The passengers all have their heads in their laps.

EXT. OKLAHOMA - CATTLE FIELD - DAY

Through a fence we see the sleepy field. All at once the fuselage engulfs the frame obliterating the fence.

INT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT - DAY

The TV plays as NICOLE makes her way to the coffee table. She begins to prepare a foil, but thinks better of it. She pulls open a small drawer in the coffee table. She removes a syringe and cleans the needle with her mouth.

She cooks the heroin in a ceramic ladle and prepares the "shot." She finds an abandoned bra and "ties off." She quickly finds a vein in her arm and aggressively delivers the needle. She unties the bra and lights a cigarette. She puts the cigarette in the ashtray as she rifles through her purse. She pulls out gum, a brush...She's holding the brush when the first heavy wave of narcotic death washes over her. She leans back and uses the wall to support her.

NICOLE

Oh man...

She puts her arms out at her sides, euphoria. A slow, sloppy smile breaks across her face. She exhales slowly. She reaches for the burning cigarette when the second wave of heavy drugs hits. NICOLE looks up with fear.

NICOLE (cont'd)

Oh no, oh no, oh no...

She reaches for the phone but there's no way to stem the tide of the oncoming overdose. Her arms stretch out in a frozen reach as her body sinks back against the wall. Her eyelids flutter as she slips unconscious. We cut to her old TV...

ON HER TELEVISION - WE WATCH

Dr. Phil who is interrupted by a newscast. A man in a field cups his ear as he awaits instruction to speak.

NEWSCASTER

Carlos Strong in a field in Stapleton, Oklahoma, where minutes ago a passenger plane went down. The JR-88 was bound for Tulsa, but fell 20 miles short and crashed in this abandoned ranch field.

NICOLE IS BLUE AND LIFELESS

Her eyes stare unfixed as all her color has flushed. Breathless like a porcelain doll she hears nothing of the plane crash.

The second floor window is open allowing the Tulsa breeze to blow the yellow curtain into the room creating a veil for our dead doll as it brushes over her face.

Michael Doughty's "The Only Answer" begins to build. It pulls us out the window and into the grey uncertain sky. A low siren takes over our music and eventually dominates...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

The Father of the FATHER-SON team we saw boarding the plane is covered in soot as he clutches his luggage as if it were his son. He calls out for his son...

FATHER

Jackson! Never listens. Jackson!?

We realize that shock has preempted rational thought as the Father continues to look for his son, believing that he's just being mischievous and not that he is one of many victims of a horrible plane crash.

The emergency room is wrought with panic and confusion as crash victims are wheeled and carried in. Some people are remarkably untouched but dazed. EVANS lays lifeless on a gurney with blood covering his face. MARGARET barely stands covering her left eye with a hand full of blood.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - TRIAGE - DAY

Two paramedics work hard trying to resuscitate a young woman. We see the woman's face, it's NICOLE. She's blue and not responsive. The paramedics finally give up.

PARAMEDIC #1

She's done. It's over.

Crash victims chaotically fill the triage area. A seasoned FEMALE DOCTOR barges in and looks at the two paramedics.

FEMALE DOCTOR

What's the status?

PARAMEDIC #1

We just lost her.

FEMALE DOCTOR

Put her in conference room one, that's where we're identifying all the deceased. Go to the loading dock through the cafeteria and grab more victims, GO!

PARAMEDICS wheel NICOLE's lifeless body through a double door. They push into a conference room where gurneys with dead bodies are piling up. They pull a sheet over NICOLE.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - DAY

What is normally the low key loading dock for this small Midwest hospital is a receiving area for crash victims. Emergency vehicles, pick up trucks and cars all carry victims. Some walk, some are carried and some are dead.

Our Paramedics jump into the fray and reach into a station wagon where an OLD MAN is struggling with a body. We see that it's TRINA, the YOUNG STEWARDESS.

OLD MAN

She was babblin' a mile a minute when she got in then she laid down.

We see TRINA's lifeless eyes, the PARAMEDICS exchange a knowing look...she's gone.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Another gurney is wheeled in, a sheet is pulled over a body. The door shuts behind the HOSPITAL AIDE that scurried out. The room is quiet, the sound of furious efforts to preserve life can be heard in the hallway.

INT. HOSPITAL RECEPTION DESK - DAY

A nurse is busy fielding frantic phone calls about the crash. Suddenly she looks up as someone is standing over her. It's NICOLE. She's white and covered with vomit, but alive.

NICOLE

Can I get a cup of water?

The NURSE continues her phone work while handing NICOLE a bottle of water. NICOLE glides to a mellow waiting area and takes a seat. A tranquil muzak version of Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to do With it" wafts through vents. A YOUNG WOMAN is sitting opposite her.

YOUNG WOMAN

Where were you sitting?

NICOLE

What?

YOUNG WOMAN

Where on the plane were you sitting? Do you remember?

NICOLE

I was on a plane? I don't think I was...

YOUNG WOMAN

There was a plane crash. People are dead.

NICOLE

I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

The YOUNG WOMAN begins to cry. NICOLE hugs her in an attempt to console her. NICOLE passes out and the YOUNG WOMAN helps her rest into the chair.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- EVENING

WHIP's eyes open to see the halogen overhead lights of a hospital room.

DOCTOR

Mr. Whitaker, welcome to St. Francis Hospital in Ferris, Oklahoma. I know you were heading for Tulsa, but you fell a few miles short. The numbness in your right leg will remain for another day, it's normal.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (cont'd)

We're in the process of draining some fluids outta there. You didn't break any bones, you have some deep bruising in your thigh and some cartilage tears in your knee. You were not fully conscious when you got to us. You'll be with us for just a coupla days so relax. There is a gentleman that has made sure that you were undisturbed. He has spent a day and a half waiting to see you. He can answer any non-medical questions you might have. You're gonna be fine sir, okay?

WHIP studies the DOCTOR and looks at the NURSE before he quietly nods. The DOCTOR leaves as WHIP begins to study his body. His right leg is wrapped, his hands are torn...

CHARLIE (O.C.)

Hey cowboy.

WHIP

Charlie Anderson.

CHARLIE ANDERSON is a late 50's former military pilot who carries that familiar air of Texas comfort and entitlement.

CHARLIE

How you feelin' Whip? Honestly?
You look better than the last time
I saw you.

(off Whip's look)

Pilots' union event in San Antonio?
Maybe two years ago now. You were
giving back your dinner off the
seventh floor balcony.

WHIP manages a half smile through his scratched face as he pretends to remember the embarrassing night.

CHARLIE moves close to WHIP and puts a hand on his head.

CHARLIE

That was some move you pulled up
there kid, you saved a lot of
lives.

WHIP is moved by the first realization of survival.

WHIP

How's the crew?

CHARLIE

Most of them are here in the hospital. Ken Evans your co-pilot took a bad shot to the head. He's gonna be okay. He'll fully recover but they're keepin' him in a coma to let the brain swelling go down.

WHIP nods, sensing bad news coming.

CHARLIE

We lost two flight attendants; Steve Demarco and Katrina Keith.

WHIP tries to exhale as the loss of TRINA sinks in.

WHIP

I knew Trina, we spent some time together.

CHARLIE tries to put a reassuring hand on WHIP's shoulder.

WHIP (CONT'D)

What about Margaret Walsh?

CHARLIE

She's okay. She injured her eye, but she's fine. She's here too.

WHIP

Did any passengers die?

CHARLIE

There was 106 people on board including the flight crew, and 98 of them survived the crash.

WHIP

Eight people died.

CHARLIE

2 crew, 6 passengers. 52 people were treated and released. 46 people remain in the hospital and only 3 of those cases are still listed as critical.

WHIP

That plane was fucked Charlie.

CHARLIE

What you did was a miracle.
There's a parking lot full of news
vans out there ready to put a crown
on your head and call you king.

WHIP

Fuck all that.

CHARLIE

That's why I'm here.

WHIP

You gonna save me?

CHARLIE

I'm the regional president for the
WPA.

WHIP

You're the president of the pilots'
union? Where have I been?

CHARLIE

No, I'm the regional president.
When your plane went down the Union
called me in Dallas because they
knew we were friends, so I hopped
down here to be the first face
you'd see.

WHIP

I'm glad it's you. It's good to
see you.

WHIP starts to weep as he needs to begin the long process of
expressing this trauma.

CHARLIE

It's good to see you too Cowboy.
You're gonna be okay. We're gonna
take care of you. That's my job.

WHIP nods as he wipes his eyes on his heavily bandaged hand.

CHARLIE

We'll protect you. Okay?

WHIP

Okay.

CHARLIE

And I know you and Derby have been divorced for a long time but maybe she and...your son?

WHIP

Yeah, my son, Batch.

CHARLIE

How old's he now?

WHIP

15.

CHARLIE

Wow, you weren't even married when we flew for Pan Am. We're dinosaurs, Whip. Do you want me to reach out to Derby and see if she wants to come?

WHIP thinks about his long since fractured family...

WHIP

No, I'll call her.

CHARLIE

Okay. I'm gonna head back to Dallas tonight but I'd like to be here for your co-pilot when he wakes up.

WHIP

Okay. Can you call my friend Harling Mays and ask him to come right away. 609-237-1184.

CHARLIE jots the info on his index card.

CHARLIE

You gottit cowboy.

WHIP

Thanks Charlie, I really...

(Whip begins to crack)

It means a lot to me that you came.

CHARLIE

Listen Brother, if I went down you'd come for me? Right?

WHIP

Anywhere Charlie, anywhere.

CHARLIE
Get some rest now.

WHIP nods trying to pull it together. CHARLIE kisses WHIP's forehead before he leaves.

We watch as CHARLIE walks down the hospital hall through eerie pools of halogen lights, a hospital at rest.

INT. PASSENGER CABIN -- FLIGHT 227 -- DAY

WHIP is standing on the ceiling of the plane as flight 227 flies inverted. A SMALL BOY sits peacefully on the monitor that shows MADAGASCAR still playing.

The PASSENGERS all howl wildly with panic as the boy looks at WHIP. WHIP reaches to pick him up but we now see that the boy has become a 15 YEAR OLD TEENAGER with a large BLACK SPIDER on his shoulder. WHIP recoils in fear. The BOY smiles and points to WHIP's shirt, we see his shirt is covered with SPIDERS. WHIP begins violently scrubbing the bugs off his body.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- EVENING

WHIP wakes in a sweat-drenched fit. A NURSE enters as he has upset the I.V. pole and the leg restraint.

NURSE
Okay, you're okay. Lay back.

WHIP relaxes as he becomes familiar with his surroundings.

NURSE
Did you have a nightmare?
(Whip nods)
It's okay.

HARLING MAYS (O.C.)
If this is gonna turn into a sponge bath, I'll come back.

We now see HARLING MAYS.

HARLING has long hair with no style and wears a long sleeve tee-shirt with a Mexican sunset airbrushed on it.

NURSE
Sir-

WHIP

It's okay, Harling.

HARLING MAYS

That's right sweetie, I'm on the list, Harling Mays. Some say they Harling knew me. Honey can you hustle us a couple of daiquiris and a cocktail weenie. On second thought just bring the booze, I brought my own cocktail weenie.

No reaction as the NURSE finishes resetting WHIP's leg.

HARLING MAYS

She's offended, and she should be. I'm a pig. And I hate me. That's what we have in common Nurse Ratchet...we both hate me.

And she's gone. HARLING turns to WHIP.

HARLING MAYS

Whip? What the fuck my man? I was watchin' this shit for almost 2 days saying "sweet Jesus, what a fuckin' stud that pilot was." I didn't think for a minute it was you. You're a hero, no shit. You will never pay for another drink in this life time. There is crazy news people all over downstairs, look out the window.

HARLING pulls up the shade and WHIP squints to see...

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- PARKING LOT -- DAY

From WHIP's window we can see a slew of News Vans with signal towers as well as reporters milling about, a small zoo.

WHIP

Oh shit...

HARLING MAYS

You're a rock star man.

WHIP's hands shake as he grabs the bed frame. HARLING takes notice and shifts gears.

HARLING MAYS

You okay Captain Whitaker? Easy...

HARLING helps him get settled. We see the beads of sweat on WHIP's lip and forehead.

WHIP

The meds they're giving me are fucking me up -- I'm all shaky and dried out. I can't sleep good.

HARLING MAYS

Want me to get a Doctor, we'll tear this guy a new sphincter. You just saved a 100 people from death, they should get your fuckin' meds right.

HARLING is heading out of the room, WHIP stops him...

WHIP

No Harling, leave it alone. But I need you to get me some smokes.

HARLING re-approaches the bed and hands WHIP a pack of smokes from his pocket.

HARLING MAYS

Here is a pack and a half, enjoy. You fucking earned it -- you smoke your nuts off chief. If I were you I'd fire up right here in the god damn room. Fuck'em, you're immortal, you're a fucking god man.

WHIP

Harling...

WHIP motions with his hands to "calm down." He motions him to come near to the bed.

HARLING MAYS

Sorry Whip, it's just, this is big time man. You're a hero in a time when we really need heroes.

WHIP

Shut up Harling. Get me a carton of reds, soft pack.

(Harling nods)

And get 2 big glass bottles of orange juice, they're 2 quarts each. And get a quart of vodka, and pour out half the orange juice and fill them half with vodka but put it all in a duffle bag with some tee shirts...

HARLING MAYS

Gottit, no worries. Done and done.

WHIP

I'm tryin' to get outta here late tomorrow. You gotta come and get me, take me home. Alright?

HARLING MAYS

You gottit boss, anything else? You need a stroke mag? Like Jugs? Or Beaver? If I was in here I'd just be jerkin' it all day.

WHIP tries to smile but HARLING reads his quiet desperation.

HARLING MAYS

Okay, lay back and breathe Captain, I'll be back in a flash, lemme handle this.

HARLING puts his hand on WHIP's forehead in an attempt to reassure him. A quiet moment before HARLING slips out.

HARLING exits and walks the same halogen hallway that CHARLIE ANDERSON did, time seems to travel through that tunnel.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- EVENING

WHIP wakes up in the silence of his room. He is breathing heavy as he scans the room. He notices a small nylon duffle bag sticking out of the drawer of the bed stand.

A glass bottle of orange juice rests on the second shelf. WHIP scoots over and begins to examine the drawers, finding his smokes, the other orange juice bottle, some socks and tee shirts tucked inside.

WHIP looks around the room and also notices a WHEEL CHAIR that has been placed next to his bed.

WHIP carefully grabs the orange juice bottle with both hands. He gingerly takes it from the bed stand and rests it on his navel still supported by both hands. WHIP uses the inside of his forearm to hold the bottle still while he tries to spin off the cap. After a moment of resistance, the top pops off and WHIP again grabs the bottle with both hands.

WHIP carefully raises the bottle to his mouth, any tremble in his hands continues to settle until they are as smooth as a surgeon's.

He gets the large mouth of the bottle to his lips and carefully tips the angle to allow the cold liquid to tumble into his throat. Careful not to spill a drop, WHIP is able to breathe and rest with the bottle still fixed to his mouth.

WHIP finally returns the bottle to its stable position on his navel, we notice the bottle is now half full.

WHIP's head relaxes into the pillow as the comfort of the alcohol warms him.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

NICOLE lights a cigarette and leans against the wall of a wide hospital stairwell. Peace.

The door swings open and no one appears to be on the other side. NICOLE leans in to see...WHIP's leg protrudes into the door frame. NICOLE opens the door and holds it so WHIP can push himself into the sanctity of the stairwell.

WHIP

Thank you.

WHIP wheels his chair against a wall and pulls a pack of smokes from the saddle bag in his wheel chair.

WHIP

I didn't think anyone would have the same devious thought about using the fire stairs to have a smoke...

NICOLE smiles, awkward around men when she is not loaded. NICOLE drops her smoke and stamps it out. We see that it was far from finished and WHIP stops her.

WHIP

Don't go. I'll be quiet.

She looks at him. He offers her a cigarette. She takes it.

WHIP

We don't have to talk. Be nice to just smoke with someone.

And they do. They sit in silence as the stairwell fills up with smoke. After a long beat...

NICOLE

Were you on the plane?

WHIP studies her, she's beautiful in an exhausted way...

WHIP
Yeah, I was. Were you?

NICOLE
No.

Again it falls silent as we let them smoke and think in the sanctity of the fire stairs.

DARKNESS COVERS THE SCREEN

Suddenly a flash pops across the screen. We hear hurried voices, "I'm next."... "Did you get it?"... "Lemme use yours".. ANOTHER FLASH and now we see what WHIP sees.

NURSES BOTH MALE AND FEMALE CROWD HIS ROOM

WHIP is waking up as the nursing staff is taking turns having their photo taken with him. Like a prized marlin hanging from a hoist at the foot of a dock, WHIP looks expressionless as another photo is taken. A LARGE MALE NURSE enters...

LARGE MALE NURSE
OUT! ENOUGH!! EVERYONE OUT!!! My
apologies Mr. Whitaker.

WHIP looks at the LARGE MALE NURSE who stands next to WHIP with a bath towel, shower cap and a white robe.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- BATHROOM -- DAY

The shower runs as we hear water pounding against the plastic shower stall. WHIP holds one of the many metal railings in the shower as water cascades down his beaten face.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

WHIP quietly smokes in the solitude of the stairwell. His hair is wet. He is fresh from the shower and wearing a tee shirt and khakis. He uses a cane to help support himself.

The door opens revealing NICOLE. She joins him. A moment...

NICOLE
You're a new man.

WHIP
Nothin' a shower can't fix.

NICOLE
I'm really happy I found you.

WHIP
You missed me?

NICOLE
I missed your cigarettes.

WHIP smiles as he offers her a smoke.

We hear a metallic rattle and WHIP and NICOLE look to the stairs to see a GAUNT YOUNG MAN making his way to their landing. He is dressed in a hospital gown and carrying an I.V. pole on which hangs a small bag of clear liquid. The man's hair has completely left him and his skin is gray and eyes hollowed from his battle with cancer.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
Can I bum a smoke?

WHIP offers him a cigarette. He takes it and fires it up with a lighter he keeps stowed in the pocket of his gown.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
I should quit, my cancer might get cancer.
(silence)
Joke. You guys in the plane crash?

WHIP
I was.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
Tough deal, but you walked away or it looks like you limped away.

WHIP
Yeah, I'm actually goin' home.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
Home. Home for me is the basement, they keep cancer treatment in the basement.

WHIP
So you're living here?

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
No. I'm dying here.

WHIP
What kind of cancer?

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
Fibro-mixzoid sarcoma, soft tissue
sarcoma. Very rare, God chose me.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN laughs.

WHIP
You believe in God?

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
Fuck yeah bitch. You're a stupid
fucker if you don't believe in God.

The GOD topic has silenced the stairwell...

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
As soon as you realize that the
random events in your life are
God...you will live a much better
life. You spend your life
believing that you have all the
control over what happens.
Bullshit. Your parents drank, out
of your control, the plane you're
on goes down, out of your control.
God gives you cancer. I have no
control over that. Did God give me
cancer? You bet your ass God gave
me cancer. You think if I begged
for Cancer God would have given it
to me? No...because I assure you I
have begged for God to take it away
- and guess what? I have no
control over that.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN smokes the cig to the nub and rubs the
remains against the smooth concrete wall.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
Can I get another smoke? What's
wrong with you honey? You're
beautiful, do you know that? Do I
scare you? People either have to
pretend they don't see me or
they're drawn to me. It's funny
because people see me as being
close to the other side -- they
feel like I have power or wisdom.

WHIP
What do you tell them?

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

I give them answers. Who knows?
Death gives you perspective. I
lived my life so indecisive, but
now that I'm dying everything is so
clear. It all makes sense somehow.
I'm sorry but I can't get over how
beautiful you are? Look at your
arm, you an addict?

NICOLE looks at him. She nods.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

What's your name?

NICOLE

Nicole.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

What do you do in the world Nicole?

She laughs, what a question.

NICOLE

Not much. I was a photographer and
then I was a masseuse and I washed
hair at a salon sometimes.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

Where is it? I'll come by, I'm
easy, you can wash my head.

(she smiles)

Do you think you're gonna die?

NICOLE laughs to keep from weeping.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

You're not. You're not gonna die.

The men watch as NICOLE quietly cries, it's powerful.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

Don't you love her?

WHIP

I don't know her.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN

Bullshit, I do. Random act of God?
Don't think so. Survive a plane
crash to meet a gorgeous girl in a
stairwell. Fuck you man.

(he reflects, then...)

(MORE)

GAUNT YOUNG MAN (cont'd)
 I'm sure they're looking for me.
 My family just showed up from the
 east coast. You know it's bad when
 they start flying in. Every
 morning is special now, I'm so
 grateful. It's a trip, wish I
 could bottle this feeling I
 have...about how beautiful every
 breath of life is..

GAUNT YOUNG MAN starts laughing. WHIP joins him.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
 Can I get a smoke for the road.

WHIP
 Here's a pack.

GAUNT YOUNG MAN
 Thank you, I'll pass them out in
 the cancer ward. Take care Nicole,
 you're gonna be okay.

The GAUNT YOUNG MAN leaves, clanging away with his I.V. pole.

NICOLE wipes away her tears, we see her hospital bracelet as
 well as her track marks.

NICOLE
 Chemo brain. Chemo makes you act
 drunk.

WHIP
 Yeah?

NICOLE
 They call it chemo brain, my mom
 used to slur her words and get all
 chatty.

WHIP
 Your mom had cancer.

NICOLE
 Breast cancer, she was only 54.

It's quiet.

WHIP
 Is that why you think you're gonna
 die? Why did he ask you that?

NICOLE

Heroin addicts who use needles tend to die. Especially women for some reason.

WHIP

Is that right?

NICOLE

I have a pamphlet to prove it. A girl from AA just came to see me --
(it's quiet)
That guy was a trip. He made it feel like, I dunno...

WHIP

We were the last people left on the planet?

NICOLE

Yeah and together we should save the world.

WHIP

Well, where should we live? If we were gonna save the world, where should we do that?

NICOLE laughs.

WHIP

What?

NICOLE

You don't want me.

WHIP laughs.

NICOLE

What?

WHIP

You don't want me either.

NICOLE's laugh tapers off as she senses his honesty.

WHIP

Where do you live?

NICOLE

Why you wanna come visit? It's luxurious.

(Whip waits)

(MORE)

NICOLE (cont'd)
I live in downtown Tulsa near the
bus station.

WHIP
The luxurious bus station?

NICOLE
Yeah.

WHIP
I'll come visit you.

NICOLE
You're sweet.

WHIP
I will. What's your address?

She measures him.

NICOLE
284 East Taylor Street apt. 2D.

WHIP writes it on the inside top of his cigarette box.

WHIP
You're a masseuse?

NICOLE
Yeah.

WHIP
What kind of masseuse?

NICOLE
I've been every kind of masseuse
there is.

There is strong tension between them. An orderly busts
through the door and hustles up the stairs. This breaks
their stare.

WHIP
Good luck Nicole.

NICOLE
You too.

WHIP leaves NICOLE where he found her.

EXT. ST. FRANCIS HOSPITAL -- LOADING DOCK -- DAY

WHIP limps out of the service exit of the hospital and is shadowed by an ORDERLY who places a small duffle bag of WHIP's stuff in HARLING's trunk.

HARLING leans against his green 2001 Cadillac STS talking on his cell phone while smoking a cigarette. The Rolling Stones, "Gimme Shelter" begins to build...

HARLING tosses his smoke and hugs WHIP who hangs on tight.

HARLING MAYS

This is how they get the Stones out of Madison Square Garden man. 4 smoked black limos fly outta the VIP driveway and the fans and media hound them. Those limos? Empty. Meanwhile, Mick and the boys out the service exit into delivery vans -- casual, rock star type shit.

HARLING helps him into the front seat and they pull away.

EXT. HOSPITAL -- DAY

We see media mayhem collected in front of the hospital. Trucks with towers, cameramen, stringers and newscasters add to catering trucks and coffee stands as the vultures wait for the carrion of sound bytes and footage of survivors.

INT. HARLING'S CADDY -- DAY

HARLING lights another cigarette and hands one to WHIP who takes it. WHIP is silent as the CADDY slips past the news circus. HARLING deftly slides the top off the cooler in between the men on the front seat...revealing cold Becks. He pulls out a cold bottle and uses a bottle opener that's been screwed to the dash of his car next to the radio to open the beer. WHIP takes a pull as HARLING grabs one for himself... "Gimme Shelter" continues to dominate...

EXT. OKLAHOMA RURAL SUBURBAN ROAD - DAY

We see HARLING's CADDY tooling along this somewhat country road. We can see that what used to be large farms has gone through the baby boom which has left it peppered with housing developments. Some old farms remain.

EXT. OKLAHOMA RURAL SUBURBAN ROAD - WHIP'S RANCH - DAY

Built in the 1900's, the Whitaker Ranch was the home of Whip's grandfather. Whip didn't live in this house as a boy, but he grew up here on weekends and holidays. When his grandfather passed, his father got it and it ultimately landed in Whip's hands. After his divorce, Whip moved in and has been here for almost 10 years. There's something beautiful about a small Oklahoma cattle ranch with no cattle.

HARLING's CADDY pulls into a long dirt driveway that approaches a one story ranch house.

WHIP gets out of the car and with the use of a crutch and a cane he makes his way to the back door. HARLING follows behind with WHIP's duffle bag in hand. WHIP turns.

WHIP

Just throw that inside there.

HARLING does and looks at WHIP.

HARLING MAYS

Am I not invited in?

WHIP

No, but at some point can you get my car back from the airport. The keys are with Richie the guy in the booth at the employee lot. Okay?

HARLING MAYS

Yeah. Does the truck run?

WHIP looks to an older work truck parked near the garage.

WHIP

Should.

HARLING MAYS

You alright man?

WHIP

I'm good, thanks Harling.

HARLING nods as he lights a smoke and walks away.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DAY

WHIP ambles in and leans the cane against the dining room table and uses just the crutch to support his aching frame.

The interior of the house bears the fading patina of a proud American Family. The occasional military photo or ash tray joins wood furniture and braided oval rugs as we see that Whip has done little other than add a large modern TV.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- KITCHEN -- DAY

WHIP goes to the sink and picks up a bottle of gin. He unscrews the cap and sniffs the contents. He slowly tips the bottle and pours it into the sink. WHIP watches intently as the bottle empties down the drain.

WHIP rummages through a medicine cabinet grabbing bottles of pills, rolling papers and a 2 different bags of pot.

We cut through shots of; bottles being dumped down the sink which now has the faucet running to offset the pungent smell of alcohol.

A cigarette dangles from WHIP's mouth as he shows the focus and determination of a serial killer cleaning his kill site.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

WHIP uses just his cane now as he drags a garbage bag full of empty liquor bottles to his truck. He pulls down the back lift gate and tosses the bag of empties in the back.

WHIP leans against the kitchen counter as he stares out the window at the empty cattle fields that run forever as does the landscape of his mind as he quietly tries to grasp the horror he endured and the reality of his survival.

A phone rings and rings. An answering machine picks up...

ANSWERING MACHINE

...Hey Cowboy, it's Charlie, Listen
I'm back in town, your co-pilot
woke up, nice kid and ahhh...I
stopped by your room tonight but
they said you went home...so I
guess you're feelin' pretty good
but um..I really want to see you,
how 'bout breakfast, I'm at the
Omni downtown. There's an
executive buffet on the 16th floor -
10 o'clock, okay, see you tomorrow.

WHIP stands still as the machine beeps, ending the message.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- EXECUTIVE BUFFET -- MORNING

The executive buffet is a staple at the Omni hotel. A long center table with silver trays houses eggs and breakfast meats kept warm by sterno cans burning beneath them. Fruit and bagels and a staff of servers cater to the business elite of Tulsa.

CHARLIE ANDERSON sits at a corner table with a young, well-dressed man. CHARLIE and the YOUNG MAN are chatting in jocular spirit when WHIP approaches, walking with his cane.

CHARLIE

Whip, hey buddy. Grab a seat.

WHIP does, studies the YOUNG MAN with CHARLIE.

CHARLIE

Whip this is Hugh Lang, he's an attorney from Chicago.

WHIP shakes hands with HUGH.

HUGH LANG

Nice to meet you Captain Whitaker.

CHARLIE

Siddown. Coffee?

(Whip nods)

Miss..can we get some fresh coffee?

She smiles and nods, she's off to get the coffee.

CHARLIE

We were just talking about your copilot. He told a newspaper that "God landed that plane."

WHIP

God landed the plane?

WHIP just stares at the two men who have large buffet plates surrounding them. WHIP hasn't had a drink in two days.

CHARLIE

I too believe that God landed that plane. The same way I believe that God should hit the buffet, the turkey sausage is excellent.

WHIP

I'm good with coffee.

WHIP is quiet, anxious to hear the purpose of the meeting.

CHARLIE

Whip as you know when a plane crashes, the NTSB sends a "go team" to the crash site immediately.

WHIP

They find the black box?

CHARLIE

Perfectly intact. They also secured the crash site and began collecting data. It's an active investigation.

(Whip leans away from him)

Whip, this is just us. Hugh is on our team, he's an attorney who specializes in criminal negligence-

WHIP

Why do we need him?

The WAITRESS returns with the coffee, it's quiet as they wait for her to finish. She does.

CHARLIE

Relax. Every crash gets looked at from every possible angle.

HUGH LANG

Death demands responsibility. Eight dead in that plane, someone has to pay.

CHARLIE

The Airline will try to prove equipment failure.

HUGH LANG

Which would make the manufacturer responsible.

WHIP

The plane fell apart at 30 thousand feet.

CHARLIE

The manufacturer of the plane will try to prove poor maintenance of the equipment by the airline.

HUGH LANG

Or pilot error.

WHIP

I had to fly that plane inverted, that means upside down Hugh. Do you get the picture? 100 passengers in a big lazy old jetliner hanging upside down at 30 thousand feet. Do you have any idea what that sounds like?

HUGH LANG

I do. I heard the black box last night.

WHIP

Are you a pilot?

HUGH LANG

No I'm not.

WHIP

Then you don't know what the fuck you're talking about.

CHARLIE

It's the NTSB's ball game. They run the investigation and they will ultimately rule on the cause.

HUGH LANG

They interview the entire flight crew and the passengers, they hold public hearings-

WHIP

Charlie, what do I need to know? I'm already tired of this guy.

HUGH LANG

The NTSB 'go team' collects blood, skin and hair from the flight crew for a toxicology report.

WHIP studies the two men, trying to read their poker hands.

WHIP

When did they do that?

HUGH LANG

In the hospital that night. Do you remember having your blood drawn or talking with an NTSB official at all on the night of the crash?

WHIP looks at CHARLIE and then to HUGH...

WHIP

No. I don't remember that.

HUGH makes a note of WHIP's response on a legal pad.

WHIP

Do they have the results of these blood tests?

CHARLIE

Yeah, they do.

The WAITRESS checks in.

WAITRESS

Anything else for you gentlemen?

WHIP

Did I just see warm cinnamon rolls come out?

WAITRESS

Yes sir.

WHIP

Bring me one wouldya? Actually bring me two, okay sweetie?

WAITRESS

Comin' up.

It is awkwardly silent as the question hangs...

HUGH LANG

An initial report shows alcohol in your bloodstream at a level of .13.

They all digest the information as the WAITRESS delivers the cinnamon rolls. She leaves. It's still quiet.

WHIP

What does that mean? I had a beer the night before I flew and what? — That made the tail of the plane explode?

CHARLIE

Separate issues Whip-

WHIP

I need a lawyer.

CHARLIE

Hugh is your lawyer.

WHIP

I need a bigger lawyer. A lawyer who understands that I flew a broken plane and with out me behind the wheel there'd be 100 funerals not 8.

HUGH LANG

We're talking about lawsuits not funerals. Somebody has-

WHIP

To write checks, well it's not me I promise you that. And as long as they're writing checks, write me one because someone put me in a broken plane. I'd love a check.

CHARLIE

Easy Whip, let's focus on the bad toxicology report.

HUGH LANG

A report that states that you were drunk and high on cocaine, felonies punishable by 20 years in jail. And if your intoxication is proven to have caused the death of the eight passengers you'll get 8 counts of manslaughter. That could be life in prison. Can I now do my job on your behalf and kill this tox report.

WHIP is listening. CHARLIE tries to reign it in.

CHARLIE

He'll get it done, Whip. It's what his entire life is about. Trust me, trust him.

HUGH LANG

Your crew will be interviewed so I need to know if they have any reason to suspect that you were impaired while flying?

WHIP

No. Well, my co-pilot Evans...I don't really know him and Margaret Walsh, she's like a sister to me.
(They wait for more)
The other two are dead.

HUGH LANG

I'm already checking backgrounds on Evans and Walsh.

CHARLIE

Don't worry Whip, you're gonna walk away the hero you deserve to be.

WHIP

I'm not worried Charlie, I promise you that. No one could have landed that plane like I did, no one.

The WAITRESS returns with the cinnamon rolls. WHIP stands.

CHARLIE

Whip we need to stay close on this.

WHIP

I'm sure you'll find me Charlie.

WHIP exits as HUGH and CHARLIE exchange looks.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- ELEVATOR -- DAY

WHIP gets in the elevator as his world begins to spin. The gravity of his legal situation makes his adrenaline pump with quiet panic. There are vacationers in the elevator making jokes with their kids, WHIP could not be farther away.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- LOBBY -- DAY

The lobby is crowded and alive with convention goers with name tags as WHIP's beating heart carries him to the bar.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- LOUNG -- DAY

WHIP approaches the bar and stands between two jocular men in polo shirts, shorts and cell phones attached to their belts. WHIP stares at the bottles behind the bar...

WHIP

Can I get orange juice?

BARTENDER

Just orange juice, sure.

WHIP

And a double shot of stoli.

The BARTENDER nods in acknowledgement of the order as the TV above the bar blares CNN news...

TV (O.S.)

...will return from Geneva and address congress before the vote on Wednesday. Now the search continues for answers to the tragedy that caused OK air's flight 227 to crash in a Oklahoma field.

The BARTENDER places the juice and the shot in front of WHIP who places a 20 dollar bill on the bar while watching TV.

TV -- MONITOR -- WE SEE WHAT WHIP IS WATCHING

We hear and see only snippets of the newscast, focusing instead on WHIP's quiet torture as business men in bad leisure wear get drunk and laugh too loudly at jokes that aren't funny, oblivious to the TV and its watcher...

TV -- TYLER

Eye witnesses have claimed they saw the plane flying upside down and corkscrewing through the air and then righting itself only to crash into the open field. Both pilots survived the crash and were hospitalized, but both are expected to make full recoveries.

PASSENGER

We were in a nose dive and
(he chokes up)

People were screaming and crying and then the plane turned upside down and we had to hold on to our seat belts to keep from falling out of our chairs...I saw a kid fall to the floor.

WHIP wipes a bead of sweat from his lip.

TV -- TYLER

With speculation pointing towards a mechanical problem with this plane it is widely believed that the actions of this pilot and crew aboard flight 227 are nothing short of heroic.

WHIP looks around the bar to realize that only he was watching the TV. He downs the shot in a flash and walks away leaving the juice untouched.

EXT. QWIK STOP -- DRIVE THROUGH BEVERAGE -- DAY

The MAN at the drive through liquor window hands WHIP a box of beer and a bottle of Vodka. WHIP pulls away...

INT. WHIP'S TRUCK -- DAY

WHIP opens a beer and takes a liberal pull. He pulls out his cigarettes along with a stray piece of paper. WHIP studies the paper, realizing that it's the old cigarette box top that has NICOLE's address scrawled on the side.

EXT. THREE STORY APARTMENT BUILDING -- TULSA -- DAY

We follow a baseball bat being carried by a short, muscular man that we pull out to recognize as FRAN, NICOLE's landlord.

EXT. NICOLE'S APARTMENT FRONT DOOR -- TULSA -- DAY

NICOLE's door was shattered and then had a large piece of plastic taped over the door frame. The plastic has been pulled open and we see some articles of NICOLE's life stacked in the hallway next to the door.

NICOLE comes out of the apartment carrying beaten portfolios with bent photos dripping out of them. She's gentle as she places them next to random photography equipment; a tripod, an extension chord. Suddenly FRAN is upon her...

FRAN

The guy in 1D just told me you stayed here last night?!

NICOLE

Franny relax, I'm just getting my shit outta here, okay?

FRAN

Even after I keep your deposit, you owe me 1100.

NICOLE

Fran, listen-

FRAN points the bat at her head.

FRAN

Who do you think broke down this fucking door to let the paramedics in there? Huh?! -- You gotta pay for all this.

NICOLE starts to cower in the corner by the door.

EXT. THREE STORY APARTMENT BUILDING -- TULSA -- DAY

WHIP parks his truck at a fire hydrant right in front of NICOLE's building. He opens a fresh beer and gets out.

EXT. NICOLE'S FRONT DOOR -- DAY

NICOLE is pleading with FRAN as the situation has escalated.

NICOLE

I'm sorry. Just let me get my shit and get outta here. I will pay you when I can. Please Fran.

FRAN places the bat against her shoulder and gently shoves her to the wall, like a cat swatting a mouse.

FRAN

Just take a shower with me. It's been a long time, c'mon.

NICOLE

No. I'm not doin' that anymore.

FRAN

If I had a bag a dope you'd be on your knees in my shower, right?
(shoves her with the bat)
Right?

FRAN shoves her again with the bat. He appears about to grab her when his face is engulfed with a hand. That hand forces FRAN's head into the wall and pins it there, it's WHIP.

WHIP

The fuck are you doin'?

WHIP flings FRAN away from the wall. FRAN stumbles and falls as the bat goes flying to the ground and rolls away. WHIP licks the foaming top of his excited beer.

WHIP

Keep your fucking hands off her.

WHIP looks to NICOLE who is crying but about to laugh in relief from WHIP's rescue.

WHIP

You okay?

(she nods)

Is this all the stuff you want from here?

NICOLE

I just have one more little bag inside.

WHIP

Get it and go wait in my blue truck right out front.

WHIP hands her his keys. FRAN has gotten up and stands a safe distance from WHIP as he starts in...

FRAN

She owes me 1100 bucks plus damages.

WHIP

You wanna spend a thousand bucks suing her? Or do you want to make a cash deal with me?

NICOLE comes out of the apartment and scurries down the steps. A couple of strange neighbors have gathered to witness the exchange...

FRAN

Give me 700 in cash.

WHIP

You're a hairy little creep...with your baseball bat bullshit...
(sorts through his cash)
I'll give you 400 in cash.

FRAN sorts the options...none...he tentatively takes the cash.

WHIP

Good boy, now can someone get that box and put it in my truck.

A NEIGHBOR picks it up as WHIP grabs the lighter shoulder bag and they head downstairs.

INT. WHIP'S TRUCK -- DUSK

NICOLE stares out the window as the city disappears.

WHIP pulls a beer from the box and offers it to Nicole. NICOLE smiles, thinks about it...she shakes her head, "no."

WHIP pops the top and takes a drink.

NICOLE

What's your name?

WHIP looks to her, she to him. They begin to laugh at the absurdity. When it subsides...

WHIP

Whip.

NICOLE nods. A long moment quietly passes.

NICOLE

Thank you.

EXT./INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- NIGHT

WHIP's truck sits outside the ranch.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

We find WHIP sitting in front of some empty beer bottles and a half bottle of vodka. We can hear Michael Doughty's "The Pink Life" coming from the bed room...NICOLE enters the living room wrapped in a towel, fresh from a shower. WHIP studies her, she looks beautiful and innocent.

NICOLE

I was gonna lay down, get some rest.

WHIP

Okay.

NICOLE
Will you come in here?

WHIP looks at her, he puts down his beer and follows her.

INT. WHIP'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

WHIP limps without his cane as NICOLE gently helps him take off his pants and she guides him to a seated position on the end of the bed. She removes his shirt and the extent of his bruises and cuts are amazing. WHIP is stoic, almost ashamed of the injuries. NICOLE is very gentle as she caresses his body examining the damage.

NICOLE stands in front of WHIP and pulls her towel off. She wraps her arms around his head and pulls him into her naked frame. She begins to kiss him and gingerly stroke his beaten body as she attempts to soothe him sexually.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. FLIGHT DECK -- FLIGHT 227 -- DAY

WHIP fights and forces the plane through the full roll. WHIP flops to the floor of the cockpit and grabs the trim cables and anchors himself in an attempt to keep the wings level.

WHIP
Just take us down kid, down, I'll
keep us level as long as I can.

WHIP looks up to see TRINA standing in the doorway of the cockpit. She has a 6-year-old boy gripped to her waist.

WHIP
Take him to the jump seat, strap
both of you in together.

TRINA holds her look to WHIP, knowing it could be her last. The SMALL BOY looks at WHIP, TRINA pulls him away.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- WHIP'S BEDROOM -- DAY

WHIP sits at the edge of his bed having just woken from this nightmare. He wears boxers and no shirt as he looks at his hands that are still healing from the cable burns.

NICOLE sleeps angelically on her side of the bed.

WHIP hears something and goes to his window to see a car coming up his driveway. He painfully pulls on jeans and heads to his door.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

WHIP limps from the bedroom towards the kitchen. He stops at a wooden gun cabinet and turns the key that rests in the lock, opening the door. He pulls a Remington 740 double barrel shot gun from the collection and heads to the door.

INT./EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- KITCHEN DOOR -- DAY

WHIP opens the door to find HUGH in his driveway.

WHIP casts a strange figure with his bare chest, boxers and brandishing a hunting rifle. They stare at each other.

HUGH

Do you wanna shoot me or can I come inside?

WHIP

C'mon in. I'll shoot you inside.

HUGH walks past WHIP and inside the house.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DAY

HUGH enters and takes in the bachelor's house as WHIP puts the gun away. WHIP waits before offering in a quiet tone...

WHIP

So you just decided to drop by?

HUGH

Your answering machine is off and you never answer your cell phone. I called your cell 10 times.

WHIP

It was on the plane.

HUGH nods as the explanation lands. HUGH takes in WHIP's house and senses someone else is there.

HUGH

I thought we'd take a ride.

WHIP measures HUGH's intention...

WHIP
Okay, gimme a minute.

HUGH nods as WHIP goes to get dressed.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- BEDROOM -- DAY

WHIP re-enters the bedroom to find NICOLE still sleeping. WHIP quietly pulls on a shirt and grabs his shoes. WHIP stops to pull the blanket over NICOLE's exposed foot.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CORN FIELD -- DAY

From the air we see HUGH's Crown Vic making its way up a dirt road as it approaches a check point with security guards.

EXT. CRASH FIELD -- CHECK POINT -- CORN FIELD -- DAY

HUGH flashes a smile and his clearance tag to an NTSB OFFICIAL who waves him through.

EXT. CRASH FIELD -- OKLAHOMA CORN FIELD -- DAY

HUGH stops the car and kills the engine. He looks to WHIP who is obviously taken by the sights he has yet to see.

HUGH pulls a pilots' union windbreaker from the back seat and hands it to WHIP.

HUGH
Put this on, you can be a union rep
today.

HUGH gets out as WHIP slowly puts the windbreaker on.

EXT. CRASH FIELD - DAY

We see a small village of press being tightly confined to a roped off area. The press appear a bit worn out, frustrated with a lack of access to the actual wreckage. It's been days with not much news.

Inside the crash site we see a small group of investigators with NTSB jackets following the lead of a confident woman.

WHIP stops to look at the NTSB group, he turns to HUGH.

WHIP

Who is she?

HUGH

That's Kitty Higgins, she's the head of the investigation for the NTSB.

HUGH heads up the bluff as WHIP lingers to watch KITTY.

EXT. CRASH FIELD -- BLUFF -- DAY

WHIP joins HUGH on a small bluff that acts as an entrance to a large open field. We can see a border of yellow tape and chain link fence that seem to stretch for miles as it encloses the crash field.

Concentrations of workers search for pieces of the plane and measure holes in the ground.

We can see a huge black crater that was obviously the initial impact point. A deep ravine continues from the crater and travels nearly a quarter of a mile.

The fuselage has remained intact and rests a few hundred yards from where they're standing. One wing is stuck in the ground on the border of the impact crater. The other wing remains attached to the fuselage but only by a thread, it's obvious that it made brutal contact with the body of the plane and severed the fuselage in front of the tail.

HUGH

You okay?

WHIP

Sweet dreams and flyin' machines in pieces on the ground.

HUGH

How's that?

WHIP

Fire and rain, it's a song.

WHIP walks away with the use of his cane, drawn into the crash field by the force of his curious awe.

IMPACT CRATER

WHIP stands at the top of the impact crater and looks in. Fresh beautiful black dirt has been packed smooth by the sleek metal skin of the flying whale. It is an awesome dent in the earth that WHIP can't help but be drawn to.

WHIP sees two huge flatbed TRUCKS angling near one of the wings. HUGH joins him.

HUGH

They're gonna take the plane to
Tulsa International to reassemble
it in a hangar.

WHIP

Where's the tail?

HUGH

NTSB already took it to the hangar.

WHIP circles the crater to get a closer look at the wing that is planted in the ground. WORKERS are digging around the base of the wing preparing for it's removal. The WORKERS look up at WHIP. HUGH is again on his heels.

HUGH

You can see the initial impact
sheared the right wing clean off.

WHIP

Which was good...

HUGH

Great. If only the left wing had
come clean off at impact I think
everyone would have walked off that
plane.

WHIP

The left wing partially pulled away-

HUGH

It snapped but stayed connected at
the rear. So it whipped back
towards the plane, hit the body in
front of the tail. If you were
sitting in the last 6 or 7 rows on
that side, it was like being hit by
a train.

WHIP gets quiet, honest.

WHIP

I drank a lot the night before that flight. I drank that morning too and I used cocaine to straighten up.

HUGH

I know, it's in the toxicology report.

WHIP

But that's not the reason this happened.

WHIP looks away, spotting the fuselage.

WHIP walks towards the fuselage which rests at the foot of a small hill. We hear voices; a low murmur that gets louder, chanting. WHIP walks to the top of the small hill to find...

PENTECOSTAL MASS IN PROGRESS

A MINISTER in a dark purple cloak calls from the old testament as the CONGREGATION responds in unison. There are at least 50 people sitting in white folding chairs at the foot of the hill. A small brook babbles behind them.

HUGH again joins WHIP.

HUGH

The John the Baptist First Pentecostal Mission. That's their church up there.

WHIP looks beyond the brook to see a small 1900's church standing nearly a half a mile across the field.

HUGH

They use this stream to baptize their followers. They were out here the day you went down.

PENTECOSTAL MINISTER

We watch as he raises his arms outstretched and his parishioners stand and join him as they pray in unison.

HUGH

They helped pull survivors out of the wreckage.

(MORE)

HUGH (cont'd)

They pulled them across that stream which they take as a sign that God sent them those survivors for baptism.

WHIP

I remember being wet.

HUGH

They now come out here every day and have a mass 30 minutes prior to the crash and then they sit in silent prayer for 10 minutes at 11:36..which is when you went down.

WHIP is overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crash field and the WORSHIPPERS. The wind has picked up and their jackets shudder around them as WHIP again walks towards the plane.

THE NOSE OF THE PLANE

Rests flush to the ground with a slight turn to the right.

WHIP

Why'd you bring me here?

HUGH

I needed you to see it.

WHIP

Trying to scare me? I was on this fucking plane that was scary enough.

HUGH

I need to know that you can handle this, seeing all this. Slides and recounts, the cockpit recordings, crying mothers of dead children.

WHIP

They can't blame this all on me and drinking. This is not my fault. I don't know why the plane went down.

HUGH

It was an act of God.

(Whip studies him)

Remember the bad storm you took off in? I'm gonna fight to get the NTSB to place "act of God" on the probable causes list.

WHIP stares at HUGH. WHIP laughs incredulously.

HUGH

It would help us legally and financially. It might keep you out of prison.

WHIP

An act of God? Who's God would do this?

WHIP motions to the crash field. It's quiet before WHIP walks away from HUGH and towards the plane.

WHIP gets to the very front of the nose and tentatively reaches his hand to touch it. He does.

HUGH

The owner of the airline is on our side and he's got a big friend in Washington?

WHIP

How big?

HUGH

He's from Texas. He wants to sit down with us.

WHIP

I really need to get outta here.

HUGH

And you can't drink. You're under the microscope. You can't be out buying liquor, no bars, no drugs. Can you stop on your own? We can help you. I'm trying to save you.

WHIP

You're trying to save an airline and a union.

HUGH

Captain-

WHIP

I'm fine, I won't drink. I can do it. Alone.

WHIP puts his hand on the windshield of the dead plane before walking away.

We again hear the faint chants of the Pentecostals. HUGH studies WHIP before following him.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

WHIP walks in and immediately stalks the windows watching to see that HUGH's car leaves the property.

NICOLE walks into the room.

NICOLE
Who was that?

WHIP
Guy I work with.

NICOLE tries a different tack.

NICOLE
This woman came and took me to an AA meeting today.

WHIP stares into space, his mind a million miles away.

NICOLE
Then I got really into cleaning, can you tell? I even did laundry.

WHIP
I don't even know you. You seem like a nice girl, it's just...I don't know what you're doing here.

NICOLE
You brought me here.

WHIP
I know.

It's quiet.

NICOLE
You told me you were on the plane, you never told me you were flying the plane.

This stops WHIP cold, they size each other up.

WHIP
Yeah. I was one of the pilots.

NICOLE

All day the news was playing the recordings from the flight. They keep playing the minute before the crash where you ask the Stewardess if she loves her son Trevor.

WHIP looks at her remembering the exchange.

NICOLE

Sounds like you saved a lot of people.

WHIP

I did. I saved 98 people. I shouldn't be standing here. We should all be fucking dead.

It's quiet. Nicole feels awkward.

NICOLE

Why are you angry to be alive?

WHIP

They're investigating...the way I flew the plane. I was rough with it during take off. There was a storm.

NICOLE

News didn't mention that.

WHIP

I could go to jail.

NICOLE

Doesn't seem right. To go to jail for saving people.

WHIP lights a smoke.

NICOLE

I have 5 days completely clean and...I feel really good.

(beat)

I'm trying AA for real this time, I called them and this woman Terry showed up and took me to a meeting and I'm going again tomorrow and someone has a job interview for me. It's actually...it's good.

WHIP finally looks to her.

NICOLE

You should come with me to a meeting.

WHIP

I'm not an alcoholic.

NICOLE

I'm sorry, I wasn't saying...is it really weird to have me here? I can go. The woman from AA said she has room in her house.

WHIP

Stay.

(he gets close)

Stay here. I want you to stay here.

NICOLE offers the same coy smile that she's been trading on her whole life. She goes to him...

NICOLE

Really?

WHIP returns a vulnerable nod.

A WIDE SHOT OF CONTOURED CONCRETE FILLS THE FRAME

We race up the side of a monolith to reveal the American Flag flapping proudly in a row of state flags at the top of an enormous FOOTBALL STADIUM:

EXT. OKLAHOMA HERD FOOTBALL STADIUM -- DAY

From the sky we see the huge state of the art football stadium, home of the Oklahoma Herd of the IFL. We sweep over and into the dark bowl of the stadium, ultimately landing on a row of dark glass windows -- the OWNERS' OFFICES. We hear MR. CARR before we see him...

MR. CARR (O.S.)

I never wanted that fuckin' airline. Either did my brother.

INT. CARR'S OFFICE - OKLAHOMA HERD FOOTBALL STADIUM -- DAY

A huge office with a glass wall that looks out at the fifty yard line. We are high above the field, if GOD was a football fan -- this would be his office. CARR continues...

MR. CARR

It was my father that wanted it. I like football.

Ornate, wood furniture helps to announce the political feel of MR. CARR's world. Presidential photos and commendations pepper the walls. It's quiet...

HUGH LANG

I like football.

Everyone looks to HUGH as it gets oddly silent...

CHARLIE

Everyone in Oklahoma likes football.

MR. CARR

Yeah...So what's the deal Charlie? How big a check you think I'm gonna have to write?

CHARLIE

Well the NTSB has to finish their investigation and then list the probable causes of the crash-

MR. CARR

Not my first clam bake, I know the process I'm just trying to look ahead and anticipate my damages. We offered the families of the deceased a million dollars each. That's 6 million dollars.

CHARLIE

There were 8 dead on the plane-

HUGH LANG

The 2 crew members don't get settlements like the passengers. That's a workman's comp claim, it's a union thing Charlie -- they do a dangerous job and they know it.

MR. CARR

You're the lawyer for the pilots' union?

HUGH LANG

No, I'm Hugh Lang, the lawyer that the Union brought in to handle the criminal side of Captain Whitaker's situation.

MR. CARR

Yes, and what is Mr. Whitaker's situation? NTSB came by last week. We had to give them access to our hangars and aircraft, maintenance records.

(shakes his head)

Both them and the FAA are up my ass with a flashlight, and everyone is curious about Captain Whitaker.

HUGH LANG

We brought him with us, he's in your waiting area, we figured you might want to meet him.

MR. CARR

After the meeting.

CHARLIE

I flew with him. He's a great pilot.

MR. CARR

Is he a drunk?

CHARLIE

He's a heavy drinker.

INT. MR. CARR'S OFFICE -- WAITING AREA -- DAY

WHIP stands in a ruffled shirt and ill-fitting suit jacket as he peruses the many glass cases of athletic and civic awards. WHIP unconsciously twirls an unlit cigarette like a tiny baton between his eager fingers while reading the triumphs of the Carr Dynasty. The Carr's are rich, Oklahoma Oil Brats with political ties. Whip needs a smoke as he smiles at the CUTE BLONDE RECEPTIONIST.

INT. CARR'S OFFICE -- OKLAHOMA HERD FOOTBALL STADIUM -- DAY

CARR continues to dominate.

MR. CARR

(to Charlie)

What do you plan to do about the NTSB blood test that says he was fucked up on booze and coke? This guy's a real peach.

CHARLIE

We will discredit the report, we're confident we can kill it. That's Hugh's area of expertise. Uh..Hugh?

HUGH LANG

Did they use a preservative in the vials because blood will ferment and register in an alcohol test. Let's say he had trace cocaine in his system, there is a military study that suggests pilots in a stressful scenario act quicker when under the influence of a stimulant. Trust me, I can handle this.

MR. CARR

I like this guy Charlie, he makes me wanna go out and sniff a few lines and fly a jet.

CHARLIE

We're gonna fight to push all the fault on the manufacturer.

MR. CARR

Oh you think Boeing is gonna just open their check book and buy us all lunch? Good fucking luck. What's my exposure Jim?

CARR'S BUSINESS GUY

The airline is worth 200 million, the rewards to the families could top that. It'd kill the airline.

MR. CARR

Fuck the airline. The insurance companies can have the fuckin' airline, I just don't want them to come sniffing in my other pockets.

CHARLIE

Speaking for the pilots' union? We don't want your airline to go away.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)

We enjoy your contract with us and we will protect Captain Whitaker and in turn protect your airline.

MR. CARR

That's sweet Charlie but if the NTSB releases a toxicology report that shows that my drunk pilot crashed this plane? We're all fucked.

HUGH LANG

There will not be a toxicology report, that's my job.

MR. CARR

Not only do we have a pilot, but we've got a drunk pilot.

CHARLIE

Everyday we're waiting for the release of the toxicology report, but so far we've been lucky.

MR. CARR

Lucky?! Are you that fuckin' dumb?! You think they're waiting for a light news day to splash the headline, "drunk, coke-addled pilot crashes a plane?!"

EVERYONE goes quiet as CARR's anger commands silence.

MR. CARR

My brother's in DC on his knees at the foot of the throne begging for forgiveness. And so far it's working. They've got their boot on the neck of this girl runnin' the show for the NTSB and she is pissed. Can you handle that?

HUGH can't stifle a laugh. They look to him.

HUGH LANG

Charming take Mr. Carr seeing as I talk to Kitty Higgins twice a day. I'm familiar with this process and I've had success with the NTSB.

CHARLIE

We are all in this together.

CARR looks to his lawyer who nods...

CARR'S ATTORNEY

We're still sorting out the best way to go forward legally, we might split from you and go alone.

CHARLIE and HUGH compare poker faces...

HUGH

To go it alone? Without us? Would be what the French call "a big fucking mistake."

CHARLIE

Okay Mr. Carr, just know that we are willing to help.

MR. CARR

Great, Mr. Lang keep us updated.
(remembers)

Oh yeah, Captain Whitaker's outside. Does he know he's going to jail?

HUGH

I haven't had a client go to jail yet.

MR. CARR

He's going to jail. He belongs in jail. You bet your bippy he's going to jail, the question is...is he gonna fucking die in jail.

HUGH LANG

You're wrong, Mr. Carr.

CARR'S ATTORNEY

If they cite his intoxication as the primary cause of the crash, that's felony murder, 8 counts.

MR. CARR

That's life. Life in prison, what we in Oklahoma call "all day long."

HUGH LANG

And when I prove it was a design flaw or an act of God?

MR. CARR

Then everyone around here gets their Christmas bonus. Good Luck, Happy Holidays.

They consider this for a moment.

CARR'S ATTORNEY

It's still a felony to fly a plane
when you're drunk and on cocaine.

MR. CARR

That's jail. Coupla years in jail.

HUGH

And you hired him, he's your
responsibility.

They consider this for a moment.

HUGH

Responsibility is an expensive word
in this discussion Mr. Carr.

It goes quiet as everyone reflects on that reality.

INT. CARR'S OFFICE -- WAITING ROOM -- DAY

WHIP stands up as the meeting spills into the waiting room.
Handshakes are exchanged and CHARLIE puts an arm around WHIP
TRYING TO PRESENT HIM TO CARR...

CHARLIE

Mr. Carr, this is Captain Whitaker.

CARR looks up from the handful of messages that the
RECEPTIONIST has handed him. CARR nods, sizing WHIP up.
WHIP returns the nod as HUGH leads him away like a
heavyweight being returned to his corner after pre-fight
instructions.

EXT. KWIKI MART - CONVENIENT STORE -- DUSK OF THE SAME DAY

WHIP's truck is parked to the side of a rural convenient
store. We see WHIP walk out of the store, carrying a brown
grocery bag. He is pulling off his suit jacket.

EXT. BEHIND THE CONVENIENT STORE -- MOMENTS LATER

WHIP tosses his jacket in his truck as he pulls a pint of
vodka from the bag which he also tosses in the truck.

WHIP stands behind the store next to a dumpster. He looks over a corn field as he opens the pint bottle and takes a long much needed drink of the vodka. He shakes his head and catches his breath before taking another significant drink.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

WHIP gets out of his truck and carries a grocery bag towards a big old barn at the beginning of the farm.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- BARN -- DUSK

WHIP unlocks a padlock and removes a chain. He opens the large wooden latch and pulls the huge door wide open.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- BARN -- DUSK

We look in to find a large two-story, open ceiling barn that is junked full of farm equipment and old furniture.

WHIP walks towards the center of the barn, pushing a hand mower out of the way to find...

AN OLD SEAPLANE PARTIALLY COVERED BY A BIG CANVAS TARP

WHIP pulls off the tarp to reveal the 1969 Beach Craft Sea Plane complete with skis, covered in dust and bird shit from the years of stagnant storage.

WHIP retrieves the grocery bag he was carrying and pulls a six pack from the bag and cracks a beer as he marvels at the little piece of aviation history resting in his barn.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- KEN EVANS' ROOM -- EVENING

The hospital room has been transformed into a TV studio. Bright light blares from a light box affixed to a pole at the foot of EVANS' bed. A MONITOR shows ANDERSON COOPER at his desk conducting the interview live via video conference.

VICKI EVANS, KEN's young wife sits at EVANS' side as a large gold cross dangles over the collar of her turtle neck.

ANDERSON COOPER

You say at that point you had no idea what was wrong with the plane?

EVANS

Sir, I knew very early on that something was wrong. I began to trouble shoot the problem. Each aircraft has a series of checklists that offer solutions, I did what every pilot is trained to do.

ANDERSON COOPER

Was it difficult to stay focused as the plane lost control?

EVANS

The only thoughts I had outside of the task at hand were of God and his grace for me.

ANDERSON is stymied by the religious elephant tossed on his desk. He redirects...

ANDERSON COOPER

Have you had any contact with Captain Whitaker?

EVANS

No sir, I have not. He and his family are in our prayers.

VICKI EVANS reaches over and hugs her husband.

TELEVISION IN WHIP'S LIVING ROOM

We are now in WHIP'S living room watching ANDERSON COOPER...

ANDERSON COOPER

We tried to reach Captain Whitaker and the pilots' union sent us a statement from Captain Whitaker that reads, "I appreciate the prayers and support I've received from countless sources but I've decided to spend this time quietly at home surrounded by my family and loved ones."

We pull away from the TV to find WHIP sitting on the couch. A large bottle of vodka appears empty amidst many dead beers and an ashtray that overflows.

WHIP moves in drunken slow motion as he attempts to free a cigarette from the pack and light it.

He freezes at one point and places his hands straight out in front of himself, a strange, involuntary drunken reset. His stare is a 1000 miles offshore, he is anywhere but on this planet. Oblivion.

We see the headlights of a car in the drive way.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DOOR -- NIGHT

The door pushes open as NICOLE returns home.

NICOLE

Hey.

(Whip doesn't look)

Whip?

NICOLE goes close to see WHIP look at her with a non-focused stare. She sees the table and reads the situation.

NICOLE

Let's go to bed okay?

NICOLE turns off the TV and tries gently to get WHIP to stand up. WHIP stands with her help then shoves her away and freezes in his stance. In his oblivion he tries to focus.

WHIP

Don't, don't, don't! I'll get him.

NICOLE backs away as she watches the blacked-out ballet play itself out in slow, tragic fashion. WHIP motions to his lips as if he is smoking. He freezes and then steps forward and trips into the coffee table. Whip rolls to the ground.

NICOLE waits for him to come to a stop before she again intercedes. This time she removes his shoes and socks.

NICOLE checks WHIP's face to see his eyes partially opened but passed out. She feels his neck for a pulse and uses her entire center to pull him towards the bedroom.

EXT. CRASH FIELD -- OKLAHOMA CORN FIELD -- DAY

The SKY seems to spin as we hear chaos all around us. We see a man in a PURPLE CLOAK standing above us pulling at us. We realize that we are WHIPS's POV just after the crash. The MINISTER is pulling WHIP away from the wreck. We hear rushing water as WHIP is being pulled across the small brook behind the church.

We finally see WHIP from the MINISTER's perspective, WHIP's hands are bleeding and it is evidenced by his attempt to wipe them on his White Pilot's uniform. WHIP's eyes roll in his head as he comes in and out of consciousness.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DAWN

A beautiful morning is breaking over the small mountains behind WHIP's old ranch.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- PORCH -- MORNING

NICOLE sits silently staring at a candle on the table in front of her. An AA Book rests on the table.

WHIP enters fresh from his dream. He has pulled on jeans and a sweatshirt and is holding a large plastic bottle of soda which he takes large swigs from in an attempt to rehydrate.

WHIP

Morning.

NICOLE

Are you okay? You were in bad shape when I got home.

WHIP

Tired. Guess I drank a bit.

NICOLE

A bit?

WHIP

You wanna count the fuckin' beers? They're still in the garbage. Vodka too, is that okay with you?

NICOLE

It's more than okay Whip.

WHIP

Good.

It's quiet as they let the awkward exchange pass.

NICOLE

I've been watching the sky change as the sun rises. Beautiful.

WHIP lights a smoke and sits down.

WHIP

This was my grandfather's ranch.
My dad grew up here.

NICOLE

Both your parents are gone?

WHIP

My mom died almost ten years ago,
my dad died in 2000. I got
divorced in 01 and moved in here.

NICOLE

It's beautiful.

WHIP

Your dad still alive?

NICOLE

Think he lives in Colorado.

WHIP

You got no relationship with him.

NICOLE

He drank. It was my mom that
raised me. She was incredible.

NICOLE lights a cigarette as the memories are tough.

NICOLE

She held it together for so long, I
couldn't tell how sick she was.
Even through chemo she looked
beautiful.

NICOLE leans over and blows out the candle.

NICOLE

They gave her very heavy meds for
pain. Dilauded, morphine, oxy-
cotton. I started taking them with
her. We would get all medicated
and sit in our back yard and talk
and talk and watch the sun go down.
We'd be so stoned that we couldn't
get up to go inside when it got
dark.

(laughs, fights the pain)

(MORE)

NICOLE (cont'd)

I know it sounds fucking crazy to get hooked on dope with your mom, but she was dying and we spent her last seven months together like teenagers, trading stories about boys and whatever. She loved me and when she died I felt like any love that was meant for me in this world died with her.

It is quiet as WHIP and NICOLE stare at the landscape.

NICOLE

After that I did a lot of pills. The guy I gotten from had a harder time getting pills then he did getting heroin. I finally gave in one night, did heroin. It was supposed to be one night. That night lasted three years.

They both look out to see the beautiful new day that has just broken over the cattle plains on WHIP's ranch.

A CHURCH BELL SWINGS INSIDE A STONE BELFRY

The blue sky is the perfect backdrop as we reveal...

EXT. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS CATHOLIC CHURCH -- DAY

WHIP in a dark suit walks amidst mourners who file out of the church. The center of attention is a large distraught woman in her 60's being consoled by what appears to be her son and his wife. The WOMAN wears a pin that holds a photo of TRINA.

WHIP stands at the bottom of the steps and watches the mourners file out, looking for someone. Suddenly he looks down to see a 9 year-old BOY standing in front of him. The BOY locks eyes with him.

BOY

Thank you.

WHIP

What?

BOY

Thank you.

(Whip stares at him)

I'm Trevor. You saved my mom.

WHIP looks up to see MARGARET WALSH walking towards us. WHIP smiles, obviously uncomfortable. MARGARET hugs him.

MARGARET.
It's great to see you Whip.

WHIP
You too Margaret.

MARGARET.
Trevor, find dad. He's by Mr. Benton, there.
(Trevor goes)
She looked beautiful in there.
(Whip is blank)
Trina looked beautiful...didn't you think Whip? Like she was gonna wake up and smile.

WHIP
I didn't go in. I couldn't.

MARGARET is sensing WHIP's struggle.

MARGARET.
Are you okay Whip? You should come to the counseling group. The union has great people for us to talk to.

WHIP
No. I can't, really. I will, but I needed to talk to you...I'm in the middle of this investigation. The NTSB is investigating the crash-

MARGARET.
I know I'm going in to see them next week.

WHIP
I'm nervous because I was out the night before the crash at dinner-

MARGARET.
With Trina...

WHIP
Yeah and I had two glasses of wine. They're gonna ask you about my condition that morning and if you thought I had anything to drink.

MARGARET appears speechless...

WHIP

What?

MARGARET.

I've known you 11 years Whip and you're gonna stand here and tell me you and Trina went to dinner and you drank two glasses of wine? Sounds like a nice restaurant Whip, which one was it?

WHIP

You have to tell them it was an ordinary day. I mean it was an ordinary day, you know I was in shape to fly. You have a problem with saying that?

MARGARET.

It's a lie. Trina told me you two hadn't been to sleep.

WHIP

My lack of sleep made the plane fall apart, huh Margaret? I'm just trying to get it straight. You think that another pilot would have been able to land that plane and save more lives?

MARGARET.

I didn't say that Whip. I can't imagine another pilot doing-

WHIP

Well can you imagine Trevor at this same church looking at you in that box up there? Or my son having to come and see me in prison for the next 40 years until I die?

MARGARET's tears come easy as WHIP has struck a blow.

MARGARET.

Please Whip, enough. Don't you think we've all had enough.

WHIP

I need this Margaret.

MARGARET.

What do you want me to say?

WHIP

It was an ordinary day. The storm right after we took off was very severe, but as far as the flight crew was concerned it was a perfectly ordinary day.

WHIP studies her awkwardly as her husband and son are suddenly upon them. WHIP gives MARGARET a perfunctory hug and slinks away after a quick handshake with her husband.

EXT. WALGREEN'S SUPER CENTER -- TULSA -- DAY

We find NICOLE looking cleaned up with her hair pulled back and a sweater that covers her neck. She sits in a small office as a muzak version of "Puttin on the Ritz" plays...

She appears judged and uncomfortable as we cut to a FAT BEARDED MAN sitting on the opposite side of the desk from her. He has glasses and appears smart if not for the powder blue Walgreen's Vest that is clearly 2 sizes too small and is overly adorned with inspirational and jokey pins.

FAT BEARDED GUY

So you took all these pictures?

NICOLE

Yes. I did. I shot all those photos. Pictures.

FAT BEARDED GUY

Do you have any experience with portrait photography?

He motions towards the wall where we see a 7 year progression of shots of him and his family in front of a Christmas backdrop. In each photo we see his waist size grow and every third picture there is a new baby girl.

NICOLE

Honestly? No, I've never done portrait photography.

She senses he doesn't like her. She wants out of that room.

FAT BEARDED GUY

How many stops did you push the aperture in this photo to catch the motion of his hand.

He opens her portfolio in front of her to show a rock singer leaning low to the ground with a mic stand in his hand.

NICOLE
I pushed two full stops.

FAT BEARDED GUY
Incredible, because I can tell how dark it was in there.

NICOLE
(smiles)
Yeah, it was but I lit a small place center stage from behind and hoped at some point in the night he'd hit it.

FAT BEARDED GUY
I guess he did, it's beautiful.

NICOLE
Thank you.

FAT BEARDED GUY
This isn't rocket surgery. I got a pin somewhere that says that. It's keeping kids sitting and trying to sell the big picture package.

NICOLE
Okay.

FAT BEARDED GUY
You're a friend of Terry's?

NICOLE
Yeah.

FAT BEARDED GUY
How's it going? You okay?

NICOLE
Yes, thank you she's been great.

He nods, takes a beat.

FAT BEARDED GUY
Can you train tomorrow? We'll pay you for the training and you can start right away.

NICOLE
Yes, no problem. What time?

FAT BEARDED GUY
Be here tomorrow at 10. Oh, here's
a vest. No jeans okay?

NICOLE
Okay, great. Thank you.

He smiles at her and she leaves feeling great.

EXT. ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH -- TULSA -- DUSK

A small two story church in a modest neighborhood shows a
small throng of folks shuffling inside.

INT. ST. FRANCIS CATHOLIC CHURCH -- TULSA -- DUSK

People are taking their seats as we find a WOMAN fixing her
hair. NICOLE appears next to her and sits down. The WOMAN
hugs NICOLE who smiles.

Suddenly WHIP joins them, sitting in the aisle seat next to
NICOLE. NICOLE puts her arm around the obviously
uncomfortable WHIP who still wears the suit from the funeral.

NICOLE
(sotto to Whip)
I got the job.
(Whip smiles)
Thank you for coming with me.

WHIP nods. A woman is finishing an announcement...

WOMAN
..and tonight we have one speaker
and his name is Trenton.

A MAN approaches the podium with serious reverence...

A.A. SPEAKER # 1
I'm Trenton I'm an alcoholic.

THE ASSEMBLY
(in unison)
Hi Trenton.

A.A. SPEAKER # 1
I have to start off by telling you
that I love the taste of liquor.
(MORE)

A.A. SPEAKER # 1 (cont'd)
 I love the taste of liquor so much
 that if I had a dog who pissed
 bourbon I'd tie him to the bed and
 suck his dick.

The room erupts with laughter. NICOLE is really taken by the candor of the speaker as she joins the room in laughter.

We pan the faces and everyone seems immediately connected. Except WHIP who leans over to NICOLE.

WHIP
 You can find a ride home?

NICOLE's spirit sinks. She recovers with a smile and a nod.

NICOLE
 Yeah, no problem, I'll see you
 there.

WHIP quickly escapes as if from a fire. We hear more laughter as TRENTON continues his funny story...

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- KEN EVANS' ROOM -- EVENING

The hospital room continues to be a media hub as a local news crew is taking their bite out of the EVAN's news hoagie.

VICKI EVANS, KEN's young wife sits at EVANS' side as a carved wooden cross hangs around the neck of her white shirt.

WHIP enters the room and is met with protestation...

WHIP
 I'm the other pilot. Easy.

The PRODUCERS begin to buzz into their mics about him...

EVANS looks to the foot of his bed to see WHIP. The room goes quiet to witness the exchange.

WHIP
 How're you feeling?

EVANS stares at WHIP with a blank look.

EVANS
 Happy to be alive.

VICKI EVANS
 Blessed to be alive.

WHIP

I'm Captain Whitaker, I was flying-

VICKI EVANS

I know who you are.

WHIP senses an unwelcome undercurrent. He locks eyes with EVANS trying to read him. Silence before EVANS calls out...

EVANS

CAN EVERYONE CLEAR OUT OF HERE
PLEASE!

(to his wife)

Vick, you stay.

Everyone files out as a crew member places a chair next to the bed for WHIP to sit in. He does. It's again quiet.

WHIP

I didn't mean to disrupt your whole day I know they been swamping you with interviews. You were great on Anderson Cooper.

EVANS smiles at WHIP.

EVANS

Both my legs were crushed and my pelvis snapped. I'll probably never walk again, least not without a walker or braces.

WHIP

I'm sorry John.

EVANS

That plane was doomed the second you sat in the chair. You reeked like gin or somethin'. I called Vicki from the plane before we took off. That's when the rain kicked up.

VICKI nods, holding her cross with the chain across her lips.

WHIP

I don't know how much you remember John, but the plane started to fall apart.

EVANS

I remember everything until we crashed. I know what went on.

WHIP

What are we talking about?

EVANS

I don't know Captain Whitaker, what are we talking about?

WHIP

I just wanted to get a sense from you what you thought caused the crash.

EVANS

Was it the fact that you got on the plane drunk from the night before?

WHIP goes white and drops his head.

EVANS

The NTSB is coming back tomorrow to finish taking a deposition from me about the events on the flight.

WHIP

You think you'd be alive with out me on that plane?

EVANS

No, we'd all be dead. But are you gonna argue that your physical state was tip top?

WHIP

I'm not gonna argue anything with you.

WHIP gets up.

EVANS

Sit, please sit.

(Whip sits)

I never shared my opinion about your physical state the morning of the flight. I've never said word.

WHIP sits and studies EVANS.

EVANS

The flight was pre-ordained. I've prayed about it Captain. Vicki and I have prayed on it. There's only one judge --

VICKI EVANS
Praise Jesus.

EVANS
And he has a higher plan for you
sir. This event although tragic in
its loss of life is also a
celebration of life.

EVANS begins to mist up with sincere inspiration.

EVANS
Nothing happens in God's world by
mistake.

VICKI EVANS
Praise Jesus.

EVANS
Captain, will you pray with me?

WHIP stares into EVANS' eyes and sees a believer's
conviction. EVANS reaches out his hand to WHIP.

WHIP slowly moves out of his chair and kneels at the side of
EVANS' bed. WHIP takes EVANS' hand and bows his head as he
reaches for VICKI's at the same time. It's quiet before...

EVANS
Jesus our savior we thank you for
blessing Captain Whitaker with
courage and wisdom. In his light
we were saved. Praise Jesus.

VICKI EVANS
Praise Jesus.

It is quiet for an extended beat. Finally...

WHIP
Praise Jesus.

WHIP looks at EVANS and his WIFE who's heads are bowed with
reverence.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- BARN -- NIGHT

We find WHIP drenched in sweat, lost in the clean and prep of
the small plane. He has obviously been sneaking out here to
work on the plane as it looks markedly more sea worthy.

INT. WALGREEN'S SUPER CENTER -- TULSA -- DAY

We see two FAT BOY TWINS sitting on a hay bale with a country farm back drop hanging behind them. One of the boys appears to have been crying. The BOYS are calm as a voice coaxes them...

NICOLE (O.C.)
Okay Riley, Regan say "flowers"...

RILEY
Nope, not gonna say it.

NICOLE
Then say "farts"...

The BOYS smile and then laugh as NICOLE fires off five quick photos. She keeps the boys laughing as she shoots them.

A PHOTO OF THE TWO FAT TWINS LOOKING ANGELIC AND LAUGHING

The PROUD MOM signs a credit card receipt and hands NICOLE a 20 dollar bill.

PROUD MOM
Thank you, you are amazing. No one's ever gotten them to shut up long enough for a picture.

NICOLE
Oh, thank you -- they were great.

The MOM walks away and NICOLE stares at the money in awe.

INT. WALGREEN'S SUPER CENTER -- TULSA -- LATER THAT DAY

NICOLE has her jacket on and her vest in her hand as she winds through the store after a long day of work. She stops in front of a clearance rack.

NICOLE begins to sort through the jackets. She stops on a nice sturdy navy blue men's work coat. She smiles as she pulls it from the rack.

EXT. WALGREEN'S SUPER CENTER -- TULSA -- NIGHT

NICOLE exits the store and makes her way to Whip's truck. When she arrives there she is surprised by HUGH LANG.

NICOLE

Oh my God.

HUGH LANG

Sorry. Sorry, it's me Ms. Devlin,
Hugh Lang.

NICOLE studies him, she nods as she leans against the truck.

NICOLE

Is Whip okay? What happened?

HUGH LANG

Nothing happened. He's fine. Can
I buy you a cup of coffee? Please.

NICOLE puts her stuff inside the truck and shuts it.

INT. DINER -- NIGHT

NICOLE has both hands wrapped around a hot mug of coffee as
HUGH puts sugar in his. She waits.

HUGH LANG

You haven't known Whip that long,
you met in the hospital?

NICOLE

I'd be more comfortable having this
conversation with Whip here.

HUGH LANG

Actually we can't do that-

NICOLE

I'm just gonna tell him everything.
We tell each other everything.
We've both done so much lying in
our lives that it's nice to just be
honest for once.

NICOLE realizes she's going on...

HUGH LANG

That must be nice.

NICOLE

It is. So let me use your cell
phone and I'll call him and-

HUGH LANG

You really care about him.

NICOLE
I'm gonna go home, we can talk
there if you want.

HUGH LANG
You can't stay there anymore.

NICOLE freezes as again she sees her security challenged.

HUGH LANG
You have to leave there.

NICOLE
Wait till I tell him this, he'll
kill you. He needs me.

HUGH LANG
He needs you to leave, I need you
to leave.

NICOLE
Who the fuck are you?

HUGH LANG
I'm the guy who's building a case
to keep him out of prison for the
rest of his natural life. And for
the next few weeks I need to paint
him as the model citizen. I can't
have him living with--

NICOLE
What? Living with what?

HUGH LANG
Nicole Devlin born March 6, 1976 --
Colorado Springs -- 1993 first
misdemeanor theft, by the 90's you
had 3 tries at state ordered drug
rehabilitation. You've been on
state supported methadone treatment
on and off for the last 4 years.
Criminal trespass...

NICOLE
You think I'm a criminal?

HUGH LANG
I think you're a drug addict.

NICOLE
I'm clean, I've been clean for a
week, I go to meetings everyday.

HUGH LANG

I know you do. I have great faith that you're gonna make it. But if you have any true feelings for Whip you will take your shit and get out of his house. You're getting your life together, but he's struggling and so are we. I need to do everything possible to put him in the best light and do not take this personally when I say that you living in his house and driving his cars is just not helping him. In fact it's very damaging. We have investigators so do they.

NICOLE starts to crack, she can't believe what she's hearing.

HUGH LANG

We have a place for you to stay. We're gonna take care of you, but right now believe me when I say the best thing for both of you is for you to leave, quietly in the night. I can make life really easy for you...but I can make it really hard for you too. Okay?

NICOLE nods slowly as her mind races.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DRIVEWAY -- NIGHT

NICOLE gets out of the truck carrying her bag and the jacket she bought for WHIP. She looks to the house which is dark. She looks towards the barn and sees bright light escaping through the sagging doors and split wood walls.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- BARN -- NIGHT

NICOLE slowly approaches the almost glowing barn door. Her curiosity compels her to pull it open.

INT./EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- BARN -- NIGHT

The door swings open to find the sea plane pointed towards the driveway with an aged patina but revitalized shine.

WHIP emerges from the cockpit. He's drunk but energized like an excited kid. He runs up and kisses her.

WHIP
Looks great right?

NICOLE
It's kind of...beautiful.

WHIP
It's a 1969 beech craft, it was my
dad's. He kept it perfect. I've
let it go.

NICOLE takes in this cool trinket of aviation history.

NICOLE
It's got...

WHIP
Skis, yeah, it's a fishing and
hunting plane. I really learned to
fly in this plane. You can land it
anywhere.

WHIP laughs, remembering...

WHIP
My friend Harling and I flew it to
Mexico. That was like 1996.

NICOLE
Mexico? In this?

WHIP
We set off for an overnight fishing
trip two hours south of here. We
ended up in Tampico which is at the
equator.

NICOLE
You're insane.

WHIP
It was like a picture on a post
card. The white sand and sky blue
water...the most beautiful place
I've ever been.

NICOLE
Was the water warm?

WHIP
Yeah, really warm.

NICOLE
That's my kind of place.

WHIP
Let's go.

NICOLE
Sure, why not.

NICOLE laughs thinking they're playing a game.

WHIP
Let's go tomorrow. We'll just go.
Start over.

NICOLE realizes he's serious as he opens another beer.

NICOLE
We can't Whip.

WHIP
It's a beautiful beach south of the
Tropic of Cancer, it's paradise.

NICOLE
I'm worried about you. You need
help Whip. I think you need rehab.
Didn't Charlie tell you he'd help
you get into a place?

WHIP
Charlie's got his own agenda.

NICOLE
I don't. I want to see you get
better. I want you to be okay.

WHIP
I'm fine thanks.

NICOLE
No you're not, you're really not.

WHIP
You go to a couple of AA meetings —
and all of a sudden you know what's
best for me? Worry about yourself.

NICOLE
We're the same Whip, you and me
we're the same-

WHIP

We're not-

NICOLE

We are-

WHIP

I didn't suck dick to get high.
And don't give me a whole...your
mom died and dad drank and
bullshit, bullshit, bullshit --

NICOLE

Never Whip, I never in my life-

WHIP

Is that why you shot dope?

NICOLE

That's not fair-

WHIP

Well there's a lot of people out
there who lost their mom who've
never had a drink in their life.

NICOLE

You're sick Whip.

WHIP

I drink and I blame it on me. I'm
happy to. I've got an ex-wife and
a son I don't see. Why? Because I
drink. I choose to drink.

NICOLE

Do you? You choose it? I don't
see a lot of choice goin' on around
here.

NICOLE walks away, leaving WHIP with his plane and his dream
of freedom.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- WHIP'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

NICOLE sits on the bed. WHIP appears in the doorway.

WHIP

I was loaded when I crashed that
plane.

(MORE)

WHIP (cont'd)

With this investigation going on, I don't know what's gonna happen. I could go to jail. I have to leave tomorrow.

NICOLE

You helped me Whip. You really saved me.

WHIP

Come with me. I need help, I do.

NICOLE

You're willing to get help?

WHIP

Yeah. When we get to Mexico we can go to the local hospital. I'll do it for you. Anything you want.

NICOLE looks at the sincere love in his eyes.

WHIP

We'll leave before noon. I'll be sober. I'm a great pilot. You'll get to see so much. It's beautiful. I promise if you don't like it or if I don't clean up? You can leave. I won't force you to stay.

This is the most sincere plea she's ever heard.

NICOLE

Come here.

He leans towards her and they kiss. She pulls him on to bed.

NICOLE

I'll need a bathing suit.

WHIP

No, no bathing suits in Tampico.

She laughs and they roll around high on their dream.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- KITCHEN -- EARLY MORNING

NICOLE is dressed and sitting at the kitchen table with a view to the open bedroom. She has all her possessions in two bags at her feet. She composes a short note.

She quietly stands and takes the Navy Blue Jacket out of the Walgreens' bag and gently hangs it on the back of the kitchen chair. She takes a last look at the bedroom and leaves.

INT. WALGREEN'S SUPER CENTER -- TULSA -- MORNING

We see NICOLE hug her boss who now holds her work vest. NICOLE exits the store and gets in CHARLIE's car.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- LATE SUNNY MORNING

WHIP frantically storms around his house, desperate for a sign of NICOLE. He finds the note and reads it. The reality of her disappearance sets in as his energy drains and he moves towards the window and stares out at the barn.

EXT. FEDERAL COURT BUILDING -- OKLAHOMA CITY - DAY

KITTY HIGGINS storms down the open outdoor corridor of the Federal Building complex. HUGH catches her...

HUGH LANG

Kitty.

KITTY HIGGINS

(tries to check her rage)

There was a single mom killed in that crash. Her two teenage daughters were waiting for her at the airport in Tulsa, she never showed up.

HUGH LANG

It's tragic and those families-

KITTY HIGGINS

Those families wanna know why. I feel personally compelled to tell the families everything I can about the plane crash. Everything.

HUGH LANG

His toxicology and the crash of the plane are not related issues.

(she stops to listen)

The plane fell apart.

KITTY HIGGINS

He drank on the plane Hugh. I had hard science that told me so.

(MORE)

KITTY HIGGINS (cont'd)
He drank on the fucking plane, 20
minutes before it fell out of the
sky.

HUGH LANG
But there were special
circumstances here.

KITTY HIGGINS
I know that the owner of the
airline has big buddies in DC.

HUGH LANG
We're all politicians Kitty.

KITTY HIGGINS
You crushed all of our evidence
with regards to Captain Whitaker.

HUGH LANG
He earned it, just give me that and
we will never talk about this
again. Whitaker saved 100 lives.

KITTY HIGGINS
It's a felony to fly a plane drunk
and high. The FAA who is supposed
to protect people who buy tickets
and get on planes expecting safe
flights just sat on their hands --
and let you "lawyer" the evidence
away -- When did we abandon the
truth? -- What's so different?!

HUGH LANG
Everything is different. The day
those planes hit the buildings,
the margin in the airline industry
got squeezed to the bone. Not a
dime to be made in commercial
airlines. The last thing the White
House wants to see is any airline
go under.

KITTY HIGGINS
I'll be happy to see this White
House pack their bags go. See you
at the hearing.

HUGH LANG
You still gonna put Whitaker on the
stand?

KITTY HIGGINS

It's only a hearing and yes I have to. Part of the charade I guess.

HUGH LANG

I'm sorry about all this. It's fucked up.

KITTY HIGGINS

That it is.

HUGH LANG

The families will be well taken care of financially...

KITTY tries to smile, tries to pretend that matters. She walks away, somewhat defeated. HUGH watches her go before turning to see...

EXT. FEDERAL COURT BUILDING -- OKLAHOMA CITY -- DAY

We see the memorial of all of those lost in the bombing of the Murrah Building. Rows of chairs, each of the 168 chairs symbolizing a loss. Some chairs have flowers on the seats.

Hugh stares at the rows of chairs lost in thought.

INT. WHITAKER RANCH -- LIVING ROOM -- DAY

CHARLIE and HUGH walk into the living room where we find WHIP sitting calmly in front of a glass of beer poured from a cheap quart bottle designed for street drunks.

CHARLIE

Hey Cowboy, I need you to come with me and Hugh.

WHIP appears stoned and disengaged.

WHIP

Today's not good Charlie. Can't talk to anyone today. Come back tomorrow.

HUGH shifts feet and walks towards the door, exasperated.

CHARLIE

It's just you and me and Hugh, we gotta go for a drive.

CHARLIE re-approaches WHIP...helps him to stand.

WHIP

Charlie, we can't...I-

CHARLIE tries to pull WHIP towards the door and WHIP flings CHARLIE's hand from his arm and violently recoils.

WHIP

Get your fucking hands offa me.

CHARLIE

We'll bring some beers--

CHARLIE looks to HUGH who nods.

EXT. TULSA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- HANGAR -- RAINY DAY

CHARLIE waits for WHIP to finish his cigarette as rain pounds the tarmac outside a hangar. WHIP watches the rain.

INT. TULSA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- HANGAR -- DAY

CHARLIE leads WHIP inside the enormous hangar that we now see houses the remains of flight 227. The JR-88 has all of its pieces laying as close together as possible. Like the skeleton of a T-Rex in a museum, the sight is awesome, breathtaking.

CHARLIE

Whip you're gonna have to appear at a public hearing.

WHIP wades through the puzzle of twisted metal, rubber and plastic parts. The hangar is lit by large halogen strip lights that cast a green pallor on the plane.

HUGH

We've won. This is what we call in my profession a "walk over."

CHARLIE

But these hearings can be tough.

HUGH

You just need to stay sharp and on course and answer the questions... correctly.

CHARLIE

It's no longer a question of your condition but the condition of the plane.

WHIP

I flew a broken plane.

HUGH

But was it broken when you got in it? Or did you break it?

This picks directly at the scab of WHIP's guilt.

CHARLIE

We've pushed for an "act of God" as a primary cause. The storm you took off in was intense.

HUGH

But you flew this 17 year old plane like a crop duster at an air show to clear that weather.

WHIP

Fuck you, you don't know the first fucking thing about what I did-

HUGH

I'm just trying to give you an opportunity to hear some of the things they might suggest. You can't react.

CHARLIE

Whip, we know what you did. I've read pieces of the NTSB report that they've shared with us and I gotta say, you really did a heroic thing up there that day.

WHIP

Fuck you Charlie, don't try to prop me up to save your fucking union-

HUGH LANG

He's not propping you up!

WHIP

Another fucking country heard from, what's your agenda fucko?

HUGH

It is my job to defend white collar scumbags -- that's what I do. And when I met you I couldn't believe what a flip, drunk, arrogant scumbag you were.

CHARLIE

Hugh-

HUGH

Let me finish please. But I did the research and heard the analysis from the experts. I'm in awe of what you did. And I don't know what you think of me-

WHIP

I think you're a fucking scumbag.

HUGH LANG

You have no capacity to accept the responsibility for the miracle you performed and the lives you saved.

WHIP

Can we go now?

HUGH gets big as he has to add the final piece of credence to the coronation.

HUGH LANG

THE NTSB AND THE FAA TOOK 10 EXPERIENCED PILOTS AND PLACED THEM IN SIMULATORS. THEY RECREATED THE DAMAGE TO YOUR AIRCRAFT AND MADE THEM LAND THE PLANE!

HUGH is so loud and emotional even WHIP lends focus.

HUGH LANG

Do you know how many were able to safely land this plane?

Everyone waits for the response as HUGH acknowledges the debris around them...

HUGH LANG

Not one. Every pilot crashed and killed everyone on board.

WHIP

Great. Let's go. I wanna go home.

HUGH LANG
He's unbelievable.

WHIP
You wanna talk about me like I'm
dead? Like I'm not fucking here?

HUGH
I'm running out of faith that he's
gonna make it.

WHIP
I thought you killed my toxicology
report?

HUGH
I did. They have no physical proof
that you were intoxicated on that
plane. And no eye witness claims.

CHARLIE
But they can ask you anything they
want. They can ask you if you were
intoxicated but-

WHIP
My word against their's?

CHARLIE
Your word against the world.

WHIP
I don't see a problem.

HUGH LANG
They've found a piece of evidence
that could suggest that you drank
on the plane.

This stops WHIP cold. CHARLIE pipes up...

CHARLIE
They found two little vodka bottles-

HUGH
In the trash that was in the
galley. Because of the turbulence
at the beginning of the flight and
then the crash, there was never any
drink service on the flight.

CHARLIE

The only people who had access to those bottles and could have drank them were the flight crew.

HUGH

Margaret and Evans had clean tox reports, Demarco is dead and had a clean tox report.

CHARLIE

That leaves you and Trina.

HUGH

They will probably ask you if it's possible that Trina drank those bottles. You will only be asked your opinion.

WHIP

It's funny that they found two bottles.

HUGH

Why?

WHIP

Because I drank three on the plane, one's missing.

HUGH explodes in frustration.

HUGH LANG

I'm trying to keep you out of prison. I'm trying to save your life!

WHIP

What fucking life?! Don't kill yourself on my account Hugh.

HUGH

Okay, I'm done here. The hearing's in three days. Charlie it's your job to keep him straight that long.— Let's get him to the car.

WHIP

Yeah Charlie get him to the car. Sober him up long enough to save the union's contract and if he can tell a great weepy hero's tale to the NTSB then the fat fuck who owns the airline will get to keep his billions. Fuck you. I shoulda died on that plane.

CHARLIE tries to lead him away from HUGH.

WHIP

I did die on that plane, I been dead for weeks now. You tell me Hugh, what are you fighting for? To preserve my quality of life? You tell me Hugh, what's the quality of my life? What's the fucking quality of my fucking life?

WHIP walks away and exits the hangar door.

EXT. TULSA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT -- HANGAR -- RAINY DAY

WHIP stands in the rain watching planes take off. CHARLIE joins him with a lit cigarette that he hands to WHIP. WHIP happily takes it. WHIP is again content to smoke in the rain watching the planes take off.

CHARLIE

I'm gonna come by the ranch in a coupla days, maybe I'll stay with you or we'll get you a nice hotel room to relax in, get you through the hearing.

WHIP nods.

CHARLIE

You earned this Whip. Do you believe that? We've set the table for you. Okay? You're gonna be okay.

WHIP nods, obviously at the end of his tether. CHARLIE hugs WHIP who couldn't feel more alone in the world.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DRIVEWAY -- SUNNY DAY

WHIP is now clearly blacked out as he stumbles around the plane. WHIP reaches inside and turns on the plane. We hear the sputtering of the propeller. WHIP kicks the wheel anchors away and drunkenly climbs into the cockpit.

We now watch as WHIP drunkenly drives the plane like a tractor down the service road of the ranch. He's measuring the distance of the trip as he accelerates and begins to leave the ground for small stretches like the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk.

INT. SMALL SEA PLANE COCKPIT -- DUSK

WHIP isn't used to the underpowered prop plane as he tries to get it above 100 feet. Through his windshield we see the boundaries of the ranch. WHIP starts to flip switches and gain altitude, unsteady flight the whole way.

We watch from a distance as our drunken ace tries to push the little plane around, getting to know it a little better.

INT. SMALL SEA PLANE COCKPIT -- DUSK

WHIP is talking to himself as he tries to climb.

WHIP

C'mon little dog get up now, all the pups are up. God there is no power in this thing, C'mon.

We hear the engine wind up, too high, it begins to strain as WHIP continues to push the plane nose up.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

We watch as WHIP pushes the plane straight up like a stunt in an aerial show. The engine's strained whine is concerning. We then hear it begin to cough.

INT. SMALL SEA PLANE COCKPIT -- DUSK

WHIP now levels the plane out. He shakes his head and punches the ceiling.

WHIP

Fuck!

We see that blood flows freely from his knuckles. He is calmer now as he shakes his head with quiet resolve.

WHIP leans over and shuts the plane off. It is suddenly quiet as WHIP leans back and accepts the stillness of his decision. The perfect silence is eerie.

WHIP leans further back and closes his eyes as he exhales deeply, a man trying to accept his fate.

INT. CARR'S OFFICE -- OKLAHOMA HERD FOOTBALL STADIUM -- DAY

HUGH enters CARR's office to find all of the same players as the last time. Only now everyone's holding a champagne flute. HUGH quietly accepts a glass and enjoys the infectious spirit of white guys who just saved themselves hundreds of millions.

INT. COCKPIT -- SEA PLANE -- DAY

The plane begins to accelerate in its dive, WHIP again tries to relax into his decision but the wait is getting unbearable. WHIP's mind races, he thinks of NICOLE and his son, the crash and the crash site.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

We watch from afar as we see the silent plane accelerating towards the low mountain range a few miles away.

INT. SEA PLANE -- DUSK

WHIP opens his eyes and the fighter in him takes over. Like a drowning victim grasping for his last breath he grabs the yoke and pulls up.

WHIP reaches for the key and cranks it. The small prop sputters but doesn't fully turn.

WHIP

C'mon, gimme gas in the lines,
light up now.

We hear the prop try to spin as the plane continues to glide, no power. WHIP is frantically trying to tighten his seat belt. The plane does a slow corkscrew as gravity pulls it towards earth like a large oak leaf.

WHIP

Fuck, fuck, fuck. C'mon go.

WHIP fights the plane to get it back over. He rights it but it still is sinking. He adjusts his attack and starts to try to glide the plane, barely able to maneuver it.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

We are now able to see that WHIP is only a few hundred feet above the field of the ranch and losing altitude rapidly. The plane isn't nose down but it's close.

INT. SMALL SEA PLANE COCKPIT -- DUSK

WHIP is calming down as he tries to start the plane. The altimeter begins to chime loudly trying to wake what it thinks is a sleeping pilot. WHIP gets calmer as the ground appears closer by the second. WHIP finally decides to not fight the dive. He relaxes into the dive and pushes the plane into it, gaining speed.

WHIP

Okay, let's try more speed, last chance. Kick over, kick over...

The engine jumps with new life and almost starts. WHIP tries again and the prop turns and stays spinning. We hear the engine firing up fully but we realize that we are seconds from the ground as we can see it rapidly approaching.

WHIP

Shit, that's it...mountains, up, up-

The landscape speeds quickly across the windshield. We clearly see that the mountains are approaching at an unavoidable pace.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DUSK

We watch as the plane races directly towards the base of the mountains. Just before impact the nose rises but...

INT. SMALL SEA PLANE COCKPIT -- DUSK

The mountains come clear into focus as impact is eminent.

WHIP

Ah, here we go...

The plane strikes the mountain belly first and bounces. It hits a second time and WHIP is able to keep the plane straight. We stay in the cockpit as the plane fishtails like an old Buick. WHIP controls the slide and maneuvers the plane towards an old fence line on the ranch.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- DAY

We see the plane side swipe the fence and lose momentum. It grinds to a halt. The windshield gets popped out and WHIP climbs out of the hole.

WHIP struggles to catch his breath as he falls to his knees, relieved to be alive.

EXT. WHITAKER RANCH -- FRONT DOOR -- NIGHT

CHARLIE stands at the door with a small duffle bag, a coffee carrier and a bag of take out. WHIP opens the door. WHIP looks sober, scared and beaten. He's shaky and unshaven.

WHIP
Thanks for coming Charlie.

CHARLIE
Anytime. I'm glad you called.

CHARLIE smiles a comforting smile as he walks past WHIP and into the house.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- OKLAHOMA -- NIGHT

WHIP walks with CHARLIE and HUGH through the lobby of the OMNI. It's days later as WHIP looks completely cleaned up and rested. The best we've ever seen him look. He is well groomed, well dressed and carrying a suit in a wardrobe bag. They get to the elevator and wait. HUGH can't help it...

HUGH
You look great.

WHIP
(humble smile)
Thank you. I quit drinking, first time in years. I feel really good.

HUGH LANG
We got you a nice big suite on the second floor. I prepped the room myself.

CHARLIE

We're now on the tenth. He didn't want to be near the elevator.

HUGH nods as the elevator door opens.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- GUEST HALLWAY -- NIGHT

CHARLIE leads WHIP and HUGH to a room where we find a plain clothes security guard sitting out front.

HUGH LANG

Officer Edmonds?

OFFICER EDMONDS

Yes sir.

HUGH LANG

I'm Hugh Lang and this is Mr. Whitaker, he will be staying here tonight.

OFFICER EDMONDS

Nice to meet you sir, any problems you let me know.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- WHIP'S ROOM -- NIGHT

WHIP puts his wardrobe bag on a chair near the window and opens the curtains, we see the Tulsa skyline at night.

HUGH LANG

Well, Whip we just wanted to make this as easy for you as possible. When you get up in the morning we will come up and have coffee with you here in the room.

CHARLIE

The hearing starts at 10, so we should plan on 9 for breakfast here in the room.

WHIP

And the guy outside the door?

HUGH LANG

He's an off duty Tulsa policeman.

CHARLIE

Nice guy, any troubles he'll handle it.

HUGH LANG

It's overkill, I know but my job was to take care of you and this is my last day on the job. We just didn't want anything keeping you up. The over eager reporter who finds you...nothing.

CHARLIE

Relax, order up a steak, get a movie.

WHIP is staring out the window. HUGH gestures to CHARLIE for him to leave so they can be alone.

CHARLIE

Okay, cowboy, I'm out. I'll see you for coffee at 9.

WHIP

See you in the morning Charlie.

CHARLIE leaves and HUGH lets the moment build. WHIP finally looks to him...

HUGH LANG

Any good lawyer will tell you that anyone who goes to trial is guilty, that's a fact. But the way our system is set up we're able to separate guilt from punishment. No one's God would look at what you did in that airplane and decide you need to be punished. Does that mean anything to you?

WHIP laughs a little.

HUGH LANG

I'll see you in the morning.

The two respectfully nod. HUGH leaves and the door shuts behind him. WHIP unbuttons his shirt and pulls it out of his waist line. We follow his gaze out the window as the night continues to darken.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- WHIP'S ROOM -- LATER

We find WHIP lying shirtless on the bed surrounded by the remnants of his room service dinner. A steak with chocolate cake and many 8 oz. Coke bottles strewn around the tray. Only a plastic barrel of fried chicken keeps this from looking like the "last meal" of a death row inmate.

The clock reads "12:07"...WHIP turns off the TV and only the reading lamp on his night stand remains lit. WHIP stares at the ceiling in silence reflecting on the last few months.

The clock now reads "2:43" and WHIP is reading the Bible that he pulled from the night stand. Bored and restless, WHIP puts down the bible and rubs his face. He finally removes his pants and gets under the covers. He turns out the light.

The clock now reads "3:28" and it is quiet for a moment before we hear the exasperated exhale of a man who can't sleep. The light goes on and WHIP gets out of bed. He moves to the curtains and pulls them open. Tulsa sleeps.

WHIP goes to the mini fridge and opens it. We see a cadre of tiny liquor bottles glowing like jewels in a chest. WHIP stares at them, vodka, gin, bourbon. WHIP reaches in and grabs a ginger ale and shuts the door.

Above the mini fridge is a bar that furnishes high ball glasses and an ice bucket. A small stereo rests on the bar. Whip turns it on and searches for a station, he finds a song.

HOTEL RADIO

*This is ground control to major
Tom, we've really made the grade,
planet earth is blue and there's
nothing I can do...*

WHIP sits on the bed and drinks his soda as David Bowie continues to serenade him.

We still hear the radio playing as we check the clock, "4:38." WHIP is now laying out his outfit as he meticulously prepares his clothes. He lays out his pants, shirt and socks on the unused bed next to the one he can't fall asleep in.

SHOWER

We see WHIP through the clouded glass of the shower stall as he's decided to give up trying to sleep.

BATHROOM MIRROR

WHIP shaves very methodically as we still hear the low chatter of the DJ's from the other room.

WHIP IN A TOWEL

WHIP stands clean shaven and smoking as he stands near the window looking out at Tulsa as day breaks.

The clock reads, "6:35."

WHIP gets dressed and packs up his bags and gets ready for the day. The clock reads "7:09."

WHIP paces around the room. He re-approaches the mini fridge and opens it. Again we see the liquored jewels. WHIP begins to unload the little jewels as he roots through them to find the other ginger ale that was buried behind them all. WHIP slowly puts back each little bottle; the bourbons, the gins, and finally the three vodka bottles. He stops when he holds the last vodka bottle, he considers it. It's a mini Smirnoff bottle. WHIP closes the fridge and goes to the window with the bottle in his hand.

WHIP looks out over Tulsa as he cracks the tiny top on the tiny bottle. WHIP smells the contents, he pulls it away from his nose to check the label again. WHIP is about to re-screw the cap when he casually places the small glass neck to his lips and downs the contents in one pull. Gone. Empty.

WHIP places the empty on the window sill and stares out at Tulsa. He releases a long breath of relief. He is still for only a moment before he returns to the mini fridge and takes out the other two bottles of vodka. WHIP quickly empties them into a high ball glass that he adds orange juice to.

WHIP lifts the drink and stirs it with his finger before downing half of it as he walks to the night stand to retrieve his cigarettes. WHIP lights a cigarette and takes a long drag. He exhales and relaxes even further. He finishes his drink in one gulp.

MINI FRIDGE

The mini fridge is empty as WHIP has taken out all of its contents and arranged them on the bar top. The gins have been emptied and the beers are all open.

WHIP stands at the window, the room is full of smoke and he drinks a beer as he sways. He is heavily intoxicated and his exhaustion is hurting his drinking stamina. He crumbles to a seated position on the window sill as his head droops with exhaustion and alcohol. The alarm goes off and WHIP raises his head to see the clock, "8:25."

WHIP staggers to the clock and fumbles with the controls. He eventually just rips it from the wall. WHIP is unsteady as he downs the dregs of his beer and makes his way back to the bar where he places it next to the rest of the empties.

WHIP rubs his face with his hands as he attempts to keep from passing out. He lumbers towards the bathroom.

BATHROOM

We watch from behind as WHIP struggles with his belt and zipper. He sways, using the sink as balance. He urinates mostly in the toilet. He finishes and zips up, leaving his belt undone he reaches over to flush and falls almost face first between the toilet and the tub. Crash.

EXT. OMNI HOTEL -- GUEST HALLWAY -- WHIP'S ROOM -- DAY

OFFICER EDMONDS stands up as CHARLIE approaches with a coffee in his hand.

CHARLIE

Good morning, how's our man?

OFFICER EDMONDS

Not a peep.

CHARLIE knocks on the door and checks his watch as he waits for WHIP to answer. CHARLIE cocks his head, knocks again.

HUGH LANG arrives with a brief case and a fine looking suit.

HUGH LANG

What are we doing?

CHARLIE

I think your pilot overslept.

HUGH LANG

You didn't let any girls in there last night did you?

OFFICER EDMONDS
No sir, not a soul. No one came in
or out.

They all wait awkwardly as HUGH checks his watch and knocks
again on the door. More silence...

OFFICER EDMONDS
I have a room key.

CHARLIE takes the room key and lets himself in.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- WHIP'S ROOM -- MORNING

CHARLIE carefully enters WHIP's room, he is spooked by the
silence. He sees the empty bottles and closes his eyes and
says a silent prayer as he heads for the bathroom...

BATHROOM -- MORNING

CHARLIE is stopped by the sight of WHIP's lifeless body
wedged between the tub and the toilet, "Is he dead?"

CHARLIE
HUGH!!! GET IN HERE!!!

CHARLIE turns WHIP over to see his non-responsive face. HUGH
arrives and freaks out.

HUGH LANG
Is he dead?

CHARLIE
I DON'T KNOW!!!

HUGH LANG
IS HE DEAD?!

WHIP
Yes!!! I'm dead!!!

CHARLIE shows immediate relief that WHIP is breathing.
OFFICER EDMONDS has joined them.

OFFICER EDMONDS
Should I get an ambulance.

CHARLIE
Yes!

HUGH LANG

Wait!...just wait Charlie...let's think about this.

The two stare at each other and realize they are both breathing heavily from the shock and stress of their predicament.

CHARLIE

Get him to the bed, Officer Edmonds can you wait outside and don't let anyone in here? Thank you.

EDMONDS leaves obediently. CHARLIE and HUGH drag WHIP out of the bathroom and flop him on the bed. HUGH takes in the scene of empties and explodes.

HUGH LANG

Son of a bitch, you worthless motherfucker, I wasted months in this shit hole of a state clearing the decks for you...you piece of shit. You just fuck it off like the piss drunk you are...

HUGH grabs at WHIP's collar and WHIP actually sits up reaches for HUGH, a nice sign of life from WHIP.

CHARLIE

WOAH!!! WOAH!!! WOAH!!! Enough! Hugh, if you don't calm down I'm gonna throw you out the fucking window.

(a beat)

What time is it?

HUGH LANG

9:14, the hearing is in 46 minutes.

CHARLIE

How much grace do you think we got?

WHIP

Amazing grace...how sweet the sound..that saved a wretch like me—

HUGH LANG

Shut the fuck up you drunk...

WHIP

I once was lost and now I'm found was blind but...now..well I'm still kinda blind.

CHARLIE

We probably have an hour before we really need to get him to the hearing and it's just downstairs.

HUGH LANG

We need a wheel chair.

WHIP

Call Harling Mays.

CHARLIE

Harling's got a wheel chair?

WHIP

Harling's got cocaine.

HUGH LANG

Cocaine? Cocaine?!

CHARLIE

It would straighten him out considerably. What's Harling's number?

HUGH LANG

This is fucking insane. And criminal.

WHIP

609-237-1184. We're in 609 so just...

CHARLIE

(dialing)

237...1184...

WHIP

Tell him I need bananas...

INT. APARTMENT - TULSA -- MORNING

We hear the sound of a cell phone ringing with an electronic ring tone of Wagner's "Flight of the Valkyries." We scan passed a mostly nude college girl who is slightly Rubenesque. We find the hairy leg a big man hanging off the bed. It's HARLING.

We see the cell phone sitting next to a plate of cocaine residue and cheap beer bottles. From out of frame comes a slender hand that picks up the phone and shakes the hairy HARLING.

That hand we now see belongs to a SKINNY NAKED BOY, who just spent a scary and regrettable evening with his girlfriend, HARLING and an ounce of cocaine. The BOY shakes HARLING who reaches for the phone.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- WHIP'S ROOM -- MORNING

CHARLIE prays for a voice on the other end...it appears...

CHARLIE

Harling? Harling this is Charlie
I'm a friend of Whip's...yeah. We
need you to do a very early very
discreet...uhm...Whip needs bananas
and you need to bring them to the
Omni hotel downtown...how many
bunches of bananas?

(Whip holds up 3 fingers)

3 is the answer I'm getting -- you
will be well compensated but..like
hundreds..many hundreds...but you
have to be here in 30 minutes, than
as close to that as you can...yes,
the Omni room 1027, use the
valet...someone will meet you
downstairs..okay.

CHARLIE hangs up and looks at WHIP who is mostly passed out
again. CHARLIE looks to HUGH.

HUGH LANG

Billions of dollars hang in the
balance.

CHARLIE

They hang on the arrival of an 80
dollar bag of cocaine.

HUGH LANG

Well let's wake him up as much as
we can before it gets here.

BATHROOM SINK

We watch as a bucket of ice is poured into a sink full of
water. We pull out to reveal WHIP shirtless now, standing
unsteadily, flanked by WHIP and CHARLIE.

HUGH grabs WHIP by the back of the head and dunks his face in
the freezing water of the sink.

WHIP

Fuck a duck! What the fuck man?!!!

HUGH takes a brief humane pause before dunking WHIP's head again.

EXT. OMNI HOTEL -- VALET -- MORNING

HARLING steps out of his green Cadillac wearing a big Hawaiian shirt, draw string army pants and leather sandals. He wears a black fanny pack and is smoking a cigarette.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- WHIP'S ROOM -- MORNING

WHIP's hair is slicked back and he has a towel around his neck as he tries to sip coffee. CHARLIE sits opposite him at the small table by the window.

CHARLIE

We're gonna have to go, we can't wait anymore...it's 10:05. Are you up for trying this?

WHIP

I actually think a drink might help me.

CHARLIE

No fucking way cowboy. Let's go.

CHARLIE tries to help WHIP to his feet just as the door bursts open and HARLING and HUGH storm in.

HARLING MAYS

(singing)

Come mista tally man tally me
banana...Whip, what's the deal man
you look like you're hurtin' for
certain...

HARLING un-clips his fanny pack and places it on the table. An anxious HUGH grabs the fanny pack which sets HARLING into a frenzy. HARLING grabs HUGH and rips the fanny back away.

HARLING MAYS

YOU DO NOT TOUCH THE MERCH
MOTHERFUCKER!!!

It's quiet as HARLING gives orders.

HARLING MAYS

Everyone except Whip and myself
take three steps from the table.

(they do)

You get me two glasses of water,
you give me a credit card and a 20
dollar bill.

CHARLIE and HUGH comply. HARLING sits down and begins a
masterful ballet of cocaine manipulation. He pours out a
small baggie of white powder and begins grooming it with the
credit card.

WHIP's head sags as he again appears ready to pass out.

HARLING MAYS

Okay Whip just two small whiffs
first, one on each side, just a
primer.

HARLING holds the rolled up 20 dollar bill just above the
line of coke. WHIP slowly manages to place his face in
position to ingest the coke. It's tense as his head wobbles.
He finally zeroes in and snorts the first line. HARLING
quickly switches nostrils and WHIP sniffs the other side.

HARLING MAYS

Atta boy, head back now. Swallow.
Water, chief, you! Water.

HUGH puts the glass of water to WHIP's mouth. WHIP drinks.

HARLING is placing a small scoop of cocaine in the slightly
hollowed out end of a cigarette. He holds it up as he lights
it.

HARLING MAYS

Little coco puff buddy. C'mon
banana man. Who's the banana man?

WHIP's head levels a look to Harling with a smile that leads
us to believe that he is actually making a rally.

HARLING MAYS

Good man, focus up big dog. Here's
the train comin' to you.

HARLING takes a puff and holds it as he extends the cocaine
laden cigarette to WHIP. WHIP is more nimble now as he cocks
his head in acceptance of the cigarette. WHIP takes a drag
and holds it.

HARLING MAYS
(still holding the smoke)
Keep it down big dog, banana boat's
comin' -- tell me the banana boat's
comin'...

WHIP finally exhales the smoke, HARLING does the same. WHIP
smiles.

WHIP
The banana boat is here.

HARLING MAYS
Nothing can keep you down dog.
Nothing keeps the big dog down.

CHARLIE
Okay, we gotta go.

HARLING has crafted 4 big lines now, he snorts one himself in
record time. Looks to HUGH and CHARLIE.

HARLING MAYS
You guys are up.

CHARLIE
No, I'm good. Hugh?

HUGH LANG
Are you fucking crazy?

WHIP jumps in and sniffs 2 huge lines. He looks to HARLING.

WHIP
Thanks brother, I'm back. You can
go.

HARLING gathers his things, stands and hugs WHIP. It's a
long hug.

HARLING MAYS
I love you man.

WHIP
I love you too.

HUGH and CHARLIE are quiet as they watch the strange but
sincere drug fueled emotion pass between two very old
friends.

HARLING MAYS
My work here is done. See you all
on the dark side of the moon.

HARLING leaves and CHARLIE takes charge.

CHARLIE

Hugh, why don't you go down to the hearing room and tell them we are on our way down.

HUGH nods and grabs his briefcase and leaves. WHIP is on his feet and buttoning his shirt and fixing his tie, it is miraculous how the coke revived him.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

WHIP

I'm still fucking drunk but I'm wide awake and I can at least walk.

CHARLIE

Thank you for doing this. It's the best thing for everybody.

They walk out of the room.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- BALL ROOM -- NTSB HEARING -- DAY

The back of the room is manned with TV cameras and reporters on cell phones. Banquet chairs are set in tight rows and filled with people.

The front of the room has a short riser where two long rectangular tables stand together side by side. The twelve chairs around the table are occupied by the 12 voting members of the NTSB Board. HUGH approaches KITTY HIGGINS head of the NTSB investigating committee.

HUGH

Good morning Miss Higgins.

KITTY HIGGINS

Mr. Lang. Where's your client?

HUGH LANG

He and Charlie Anderson are making — their way down from upstairs.

KITTY HIGGINS

We're gonna start, when we call him let's hope he's here.

KITTY HIGGINS dismisses him by turning her back and opening a small attache she was carrying.

HUGH looks out over the rustling crowd as the circus builds. He exchanges a nod with MR. CARR who has shown up to see his interests protected.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- ELEVATOR -- DAY

CHARLIE and WHIP ride the elevator with a YOUNG MOM and her SON. CHARLIE looks back to check on WHIP who has anchored himself in the corner. We watch as a small trickle of blood escapes from WHIP's left nostril. CHARLIE pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and hands it to WHIP.

CHARLIE

Your nose...

It takes WHIP a moment to even register that CHARLIE is talking to him. WHIP accepts the handkerchief and wipes his nose. WHIP sees blood on the cloth and tilts his head back.

We now see that there is a mirrored ceiling to the elevator. WHIP tries to study his reflection in the ceiling as he holds the hankie to his nose. WHIP begins to wobble and CHARLIE helps him fall to his knees as his balance has left him.

INT. OMNI HOTEL -- BALL ROOM -- NTSB HEARING -- DAY

The room is being called to order as the pre-hearing orders and agenda are read by an officer of the NTSB.

NTSB OFFICER

...on today's date of October 17th, 2006. This hearing is open to the public and all findings and judgements will be released upon a final determination of the probable causes of the accident of OK air flight 227 on-

WHIP AND CHARLIE

Enter the back of the ballroom and begin to slowly walk the aisle towards the risers that house the NTSB hearing committee. WHIP is conscious not to rely on CHARLIE for balance, he walks slowly with great focus.

NTSB OFFICER

...on this day we call Captain William Whitaker to appear. Mr. Whitaker are you present?

The NTSB panel looks out to the sea of faces. We see HUGH LANG stand and nervously scour the crowd.

WHIP AND CHARLIE

Are mid-aisle as the once quiet crowd begins to murmur as they take note of WHIP's approach to the stage. WHIP quickens his pace as he feels the eyes of the world on him. The same competitive spirit that took over during the crash has again gripped him. He announces himself.

WHIP

I'm Captain Whitaker.

Anyone who wasn't before...is now fixed on the man that has become somewhat legendary.

WHIP reaches the stage and uses a handrail to pull himself up. He favors his right leg slightly, accenting the injury he suffered in the crash.

NTSB OFFICER

Sir will you state your full legal name for the record.

WHIP

William Robert Whitaker.

NTSB OFFICER

Placing your right hand over your heart please raise your left and read the oath placed before you...

WHIP places his hand on his heart and studies the card placed in front of him. He pauses for a moment, he might wobble...

WHIP

I William Robert Whitaker...
Swear to tell the whole truth with regards to any and all questions leveled on behalf of the NTSB's inquiry into the accident of OK air flight's 227 on October 17th 2006.

NTSB OFFICER

Thank you sir. Kitty Higgins the executive director of this inquiry will now depose the witness.

KITTY HIGGINS springs up with an annoyed swagger. She retrieves a small set of index cards from her case.

KITTY HIGGINS
 Captain Whitaker as a matter of
 course we need to walk through the
 events on the plane with you.

She looks to WHIP who smartly decides to dab at his nose with
 the hankie, fresh blood. He nods at KITTY.

KITTY HIGGINS
 9:41 OK Air flight 227 left Houston
 bound for Tulsa.

WE SEE A SHOT OF THE FLIGHT WHEELS UP ON A RAINY TARMAC

KITTY HIGGINS
 At 9:46 there was a transmission
 from your co-pilot announcing
 extreme weather turbulence with a
 request to find smoother air.

We see HUGH and CHARLIE listening with poker faces.

KITTY HIGGINS
 You flew out of the weather by
 accelerating and descending to 5
 thousand feet you eventually found
 smooth air.

WHIP M.O.S. LAUGHING INTO THE MIC WITH THE PASSENGERS.

KITTY HIGGINS
 At 10:17 after flying 27 minutes
 without incident the transponder
 recorded a loss in altitude of 4800
 feet in what was considered a "full
 pitch nose down."

WHIP SITS UP FROM HIS DRUNKEN SLEEP AND REALIZES THE DANGER

KITTY HIGGINS
 Are you okay Mr. Whitaker?
 It's your right to understand how
 the NTSB is interpreting the
 events. You can add any details
 you'd like.

WHIP looks ashen as the booze and chemicals are still
 coursing through his exhausted frame.

WHIP
 I heard a metallic bang.

KITTY HIGGINS

The tail screw snapped and the elevator locked in a fixed position. Forcing the plane into a dive. The loss of the elevator was and I quote our report a "catastrophic event, from which recovery was improbable and stable flight impossible."

Everyone goes quiet as those words resonate. KITTY's tone changes as she understands how hard this is for some people to hear as they think of their loved ones spending their last living minutes on this earth in sheer terror.

KITTY HIGGINS

From 10:19 until 10:32 the events on the aircraft are...again I quote, "bold and remarkable"...

WE SEE WHIP IN THE COCKPIT TRYING TO FIGHT THE PITCH.

KITTY HIGGINS

"the fact that Captain Whitaker demanded that they stay inverted while descending to an extremely low altitude shows a miraculous intuition that in this instance saved 98 lives."

WHIP appears dazed as the retell has put him somewhere else. WHIP has all he can do to stay upright, the coke is beginning to fail him.

KITTY HIGGINS

You've always known that the failure of the elevator was the cause of this crash. But you kept quiet. Because you knew the rough paces that you put this 18 year old plane through were the reason the tail screw snapped. Am I right Captain Whitaker? You know you exceeded the maximums for speed and pitch during the first 11 minutes of that flight. We have the data that proves it.

WHIP stares at his accuser, white with sweat and chemicals. We see HUGH grind his jaw as this line of questioning has him on tilt. KITTY goes on.

KITTY HIGGINS

I wanna show you something.

KITTY presents a long metal screw the size of a trombone.

KITTY HIGGINS

This is the tail screw. As you can see the threads on this screw are almost entirely gone. "Substandard thread life" is how we reported it. This part was suggested as a maintenance replacement in January of '05. It was never replaced. This had 1200 additional hours of flight on it. It was a ticking time bomb.

WHIP

Nose down. No control.

WE ARE BACK INSIDE THE PLANE WITH THE PASSENGERS SCREAMING AS THEY HANG UPSIDE DOWN IN THEIR SEATS.

KITTY HIGGINS

It finally blew up. This accident had nothing to do with your maneuvers during the storm.

WHIP looks at the screw, hiding an emotional sense of relief. KITTY steps closer and re-engages him.

KITTY HIGGINS

Do you realize Captain Whitaker that what you did was probably the most amazing piece of commercial flying on record?

People clap as we see the father from the plane fight back tears. The applause turns into an actual ovation. The assembly jumps at the chance to embrace their hero.

KITTY HIGGINS

Before we cover the pre-flight data — let me quickly cover a few questions I'm required to ask. Mr. Whitaker on the three days leading up to the day of the accident Saturday, October 14th, Sunday October 15th or Monday October 16th of 2006 did you consume any alcohol or other intoxicating elements?

WHIP sits up straight and looks KITTY in the eye...

WHIP

No.

HUGH AND CHARLIE

Sit stone faced in the second row feeling the relief of months of hard work.

NTSB STAGE

KITTY HIGGINS continues with a rote posture...

KITTY HIGGINS

On the morning of the accident, Tuesday October 17th did you consume any alcohol or ingest any chemicals or drugs that may have impaired your ability to perform your job?

WHIP

No.

NTSB STAGE

KITTY wraps up this line of questions...

KITTY HIGGINS

Mr. Whitaker do you now or have you ever had a problem with alcohol dependency, alcoholism or drug addiction?

WHIP waits for her to look at him...this takes a while...

WHIP

No.

HUGH maintains a poker face, CHARLIE appears relieved.

KITTY HIGGINS

Two small Smirnoff Vodka bottles were recovered in the trash of the galley. The only people with access to those bottles would have been you and the deceased flight attendant Katrina Keith.

(MORE)

KITTY HIGGINS (cont'd)
Is is your opinion that Ms. Keith
could have consumed that alcohol?

WHIP sits up to face KITTY. He considers his answer.

WHIP
No. She couldn't have.

The assembly reacts. KITTY stops and measures WHIP...

KITTY HIGGINS
Captain Whitaker why do you say she
couldn't have?

WHIP
I should say 'she didn't.' Because
I did.

The crowd gasps, unsure of what they just heard...

HUGH AND CHARLIE

Sit straight up, mouths open...he made a mistake.

KITTY HIGGINS
For the record Mr. Whitaker will
you be clear about what you said
about the vodka bottles that were
found on the plane.

HUGH and CHARLIE stand now and begin to approach the stage.

CHARLIE
Miss Higgins, I'm Charlie Anderson
the president of the pilots'-

NTSB OFFICER
Mr. Anderson if you don't clear the
stage, security will remove you.

WHIP leans very close to the microphone.

WHIP
I drank the vodka bottles on the
plane, before the accident.

The noise in the ballroom gets bigger.

KITTY HIGGINS
Mr. Whitaker would you like me to
repeat the first two questions in
this battery?

WHIP

Yes.

KITTY HIGGINS

On the three nights before the accident October 14th-

WHIP

October 14th, 15th and 16th and 17th I was intoxicated. I drank alcohol on all of those days. I drank to excess.

KITTY HIGGINS

Mr. Whitaker on the morning of October-

WHIP

I was drunk. I'm drunk right now, Miss Higgins because I'm an alcoholic.

A shoving match has broken out as REPORTERS have tried to get close enough to take pictures of WHIP. Distraught spectators begin to harangue WHIP. CHARLIE has made his way to WHIP.

CHARLIE

Whip, let's go.

NTSB OFFICER

Security clear the room, please.

SECURITY GUARDS begin to storm the room and force people towards the exit.

WHIP

I'm not leaving Charlie.

CHARLIE

Get up Whip, we'll figure this out.

WHIP gets up, squares to CHARLIE.

WHIP

There's nothing to figure out!!! I'm staying until I've answered every fucking question.

CHARLIE

You are not in the right state of mind.

WHIP

I'm in the only state of mind I
fucking know Charlie, got it. Get
the fuck off of me.

WHIP shoves CHARLIE who grabs him and throws him against the table. They brawl as SECURITY jumps in to split them up. Chaos erupts further as REPORTERS outnumber SECURITY. Flash Bulbs pop repeatedly and large lights are aimed at the fracas on stage as video is taken of the bizarre melee.

EXT. FEDERAL PENITENTIARY -- MARYLAND -- DAY

A sunny shot of the large grounds of this Federal Prison. We hear a collection of male voices reciting the Lord's Prayer.

INT. FEDERAL PENITENTIARY -- MARYLAND -- DAY

A large room houses an AA meeting for about 50 inmates wearing white jumpsuits. WHIP stands and joins in the Lord's Prayer which ends the meeting.

INT. FEDERAL PENITENTIARY -- GUEST YARD -- DAY

WHIP is led to a lone picnic table in a fence enclosed courtyard. The GUARD waits for WHIP to sit, he does.

WHIP

Who's my visitor? Is it Nicole?

GUARD

I'm not sure, he'll be right out.

WHIP nods as the GUARD walks off. We see the rolling Maryland landscape that would be breath taking if not for the razor-wired fence that lines the boundaries of the prison. A breeze picks up and WHIP points his face in the direction of the wind as he closes his eyes and enjoys the simple pleasures of sun on his face and wind in his hair.

GUARD

You have 40 minutes.

WHIP looks to realize that the 14 year old boy that we met in WHIP's drunken dream on the plane is now a 17 year old boy standing before him. WHIP is shocked that his son has come to visit.

WHIP

Batch. I haven't heard from your mom, is she waiting inside?

BATCH

No, I got a ride with a friend.

BATCH

I just turned 17.

WHIP

Sure, June 7th, happy birthday. This is a real surprise I haven't seen you in...

WHIP chokes up. BATCH nods. It's intense. BATCH pulls out a notebook.

BATCH

College counselor thought I should come.

WHIP

Great.

BATCH

I'm writing essays for college applications. One suggested an essay titled, "the most fascinating person I've never met..."

WHIP studies him and laughs...

WHIP

That's me? Is that really me?

BATCH nods and tries to smile, but we see the innocence of a 5 year old boy trying to wrestle with 17 year old disappointment. He fights cracking into tears.

WHIP

Listen Batch, it means everything to me that you came here. You are an amazing kid and anything I can do to help you.

(Batch nods)

You deserve great things. What can I do right now for you?

BATCH opens a notebook and reads...

BATCH

Who are you?

WHIP smiles...a great question. He begins to alternately laugh and sob as there is great relief in the promise of a connection with his son.

We pull up from the table and the courtyard as we watch WHIP begin to tell the animated story of his life to his son. The beginning of the first real relationship of WHIP's life.

EXT. FEDERAL PENITENTIARY -- MARYLAND -- PARKING LOT -- DAY

We focus on a gold Toyota Prius. As we get closer we see a lazy foot hanging out of the driver side window. We find the foot belongs to NICOLE who stares out the window as she listens to Chet Baker's "Let's Get Lost"...we continue up and out as if to the sky looking for another plane to crash...