CLOSE on a mud-streaked AIRFIELD in mist and driving RAIN. A Lockheed ELECTRA sits. Sleek, twin-engine, state-of-the-art, its metallic surface battered by the monsoon. Waiting.
PULL BACK to see...

...our VIEW down onto the landing strip is from an open-sided, thatched roof BAR high above the airfield. And peering down through the mist and rain...

...a WOMAN in grimy flight clothes gazes at the plane. Slender. Feminine. At first glance, fragile. Then the gray eyes change like the sea, as a stray thought transforms her. Something fierce lives there.

SUPERIMPOSE: LAE, NEW GUINEA - 1937.

FRED (O.S.)
Sure I can't talk you inta somethin' more adventurous?

She turns. FRED NOONAN is tall and lean, ruggedly handsome in a reckless way. His flight clothes as rumpled and dirt-streaked as her own. He carries his bottle of tequila, and a Coke which he sets down for her.

AMELIA
Adventurous? You've got the wrong girl, Mister. You should know that by now.

Her eyes study him. Assessing something as he pours himself four fingers.

FRED
Actually. I knew that the moment I met ol' George.

He sips his drink. She says nothing.

FRED (CONT'D)
I like how you don't talk about him.

AMELIA
That why I get so many chances to not do it?

FRED
Well. Natural curiosity.

His charming smile. She's thinking more about the tequila. She reaches to take his bottle and glass. Moves them to her side of the table.
FRED
I mean, why would a guy who needs to run the show. Pick the one girl he knew could kick his tail?

No response. Just her clear direct gaze.

FRED (CONT’D)
I'll bet he knew that. First time he met you.

She looks out to sea.

AMELIA
He thought I hated him. He never knew I was fascinated.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE, NEW YORK - DAY

Alone by the window, he gazes at the city. A powerfully built man in a perfectly-tailored suit. The face at once strong and elegant, capable of every emotion. Yet just now, there are none to be seen. Even as...

...a door OPENS. A pretty SECRETARY enters soundlessly, sits respectfully. Waits, her pen suspended above her steno pad. Does he know she's there?

SUPERIMPOSE: NEW YORK, LATER 1937.

GEORGE
(without turning)
The first time I met her she sat in that chair.

The secretary doesn't know whether to write that down. And still with his back to her...

GEORGE (CONT’D)
You may as well write it down, Mary. Write it all down. Even the parts that are confused or graceless or boring.

He turns with a soft smile to put her at ease.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
We'll see if I remember how to edit.

She smiles back. She likes him, as much as her level of being awed by him permits. She begins to write, as...
GEORGE (CONT’D)
I'd kept her waiting two hours.
She hated me on sight, but she
thought I couldn't tell.

His gaze drifts to a bookcase crammed with volumes. And one
object, oddly out of place. A stuffed CAT, with boots and a
green frock coat. It wears a confident ironic smile.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
She was a person who cherished her
privacy and was devoting her life
to social work. And there I was...

His smile is kind. And honestly self-mocking.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Self-obsessed. Wallowing in the
glory of my authors and celebrity
acquaintances. A vain, fast-
talking, manipulator. But then I
guess you know all that, don't you?

She looks up reproachfully. Nothing of the kind, and you
know it.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Oh, yes. And the kind of man who
fishes for compliments.

He's made her laugh.

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. RECEPTION AREA - DAY

She is younger, dressed conservatively. The calm at the
center of a storm. Agents, authors, couriers, peddlers come
and go. But she has her legs drawn up beneath her, pouring
through a small stack of volumes. As if preparing for an
exam.

SUPERIMPOSE:  G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS PUBLISHING CO. 1928.

GEORGE (V.O.)
The waiting made her furious.
She undoubtedly felt I was
establishing my dominance and
importance.

She doesn't look furious at all. Thumbing through WE by COL.
CHARLES LINDBERGH. Photos of Lindy beside the Spirit of St.
Louis in Paris.
GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Actually, I hadn’t given her a thought. Oblivious as usual. Which, perhaps, was even worse.

Now, SKYWARD by ADM. RICHARD BYRD. Photos of the explorer preparing for his flight over the North Pole. One of Byrd with George himself, displaying considerable gravitas.

AMELIA (V.O.)
I figured he’d be pompous.

Her eye travels over the stack of books. Adventurers, explorers, celebrities. On an end table, a framed photo of George with the great Lindbergh.

A pretty SECRETARY comes to summon her. Amelia rises, smooths the wrinkles from her brown suit. They head down the corridor.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I knew, of course, that he wasn’t going to choose me. I had no discernible qualifications whatsoever.

They reach the door, already ajar. It says GEORGE PALMER PUTNAM on a small bronze plate. The secretary gingerly pushes it open...

...revealing George on the phone in crisp shirtsleeves and suspenders. He paces, prowls, trailing the cord behind him, negotiating non-stop even as he flips through a pile of messages. Off again, stalking the room. Dashing, electric, masterful.

AMELIA (V.O)
But to be rejected by this... parasite. A man who had given up any life of his own to flutter near the famous.

He glances up, realizing for the first time that she is there. Sit, please. But she doesn’t.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I didn’t know whether to laugh or throw something at the jerk.

He gestures again, more commandingly. Sit. She doesn’t move, she doesn’t smile. She doesn’t take her steady gaze from him. He hangs up the phone.

They stare at each other for a frozen beat. He breaks the moment with a charming smile...
GEORGE
Miss Earhart?

AMELIA
Mr. Putnam?

GEORGE (softly)
I asked you to sit.

AMELIA
Was that the thing you did with your hand? Sadly, I don't speak dog.

His smile now only a trace. But more genuine.

GEORGE
Ah. Well, stand if you like.

Amelia sits.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
I'm told you want to fly the Atlantic Ocean.

AMELIA
I do.

GEORGE
In the 12 months since Lindbergh, 55 people in 18 planes have tried. Three planes made it. Fourteen people have died.

AMELIA
I'll make it.

GEORGE
Three women died trying. Two others escaped with their lives. If you do make it, you'd be the first. Which...is the real attraction for both of us, I suspect.

She nods. No smile.

AMELIA
Always nice to know what the real attraction is.

His smile. Beginning to enjoy this conversation.
GEORGE
The plane was bought from Adm. Byrd by Amy Guest, a socialite who wanted the record for herself. Her family wouldn't tolerate the danger. She has asked for a replacement...

He gestures. Perhaps you.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
...who is American, educated, well-spoken, a flyer, preferably physically attractive...

AMELIA
Why would that matter?

GEORGE
Because she wants the world to pay attention. And pretty girls command more attention.

AMELIA
Was that your advice?

GEORGE
Sure. My role is selling this event to the public. There will be a contract for the girl's story with the New York Times. Also a book to be published over her name.

Understood...?

GEORGE (CONT’D)
But all the money from these will go to Mrs. Guest.

AMELIA
Except for the part that goes to you.

GEORGE
Which will be as great as I can manage, I assure you.

AMELIA
You said she wants a flyer.

GEORGE
Don't get your hopes up. The celebrated Wilmer Stultz will be the pilot. There'll be a male copilot and navigator. The woman will be purely a passenger.
He waits for reaction. She keeps her mouth shut.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
That's good for your chances. Because your level of flying experience wouldn't place you anywhere near the group that would be considered for this. If the woman were to do any flying at all.

No punches pulled. Not his style.

AMELIA
Why would anyone want a book from a passenger?

GEORGE
Because the hook is that we're making the woman the commander. The pilot will sign a contract saying he is under her direction and control. It's her ship, her flight.

AMELIA
Good for my chances, you said. What are my chan...

GEORGE
The job's yours.

She blinks. Stunned speechless.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
I chose you the moment you walked through the door.

He smiles his charming smile. Several phones are RINGING.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Now assuming my awful manners haven't soured you on the enterprise. May I give you a lift to the station?

Amelia rises. Is she pissed at being toyed with?

AMELIA
You're a busy man, Mr. Putnam. I can find my way.

The look holds. He shrugs. You probably can.
INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - LATER

Two figures on the platform. Her train is ready to leave.

GEORGE
I honestly feel an apology is in order.

AMELIA
Fine. What have I done?

She watches his smile.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I didn't mind waiting. Caught up on my reading. Knitted a sweater.

GEORGE
I mean an apology. For what's coming.

His voice softens.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
I'm going to be pretty controlling these next few months. How you dress, move, cut your hair. Speak in public. It's all part of the package we're selling.

AMELIA
We.

GEORGE
That's right. If you're not in there selling with me, it won't work.

The smile turns friendly.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
You're the star. I'm no one at all.

AMELIA
Spoken like a gentleman.

She steps up onto the train. Extends her hand like a man. He shakes it firmly. The train begins to move. She watches his cheery wave as she rolls away.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Of course a gentleman. Would have paid for my ticket.
INT. TRAIN - LATER

Gazing out the window as she rattles toward Boston. She looks down now to a notebook in her lap. As she flips pages, we see it is a collection of hand-written POEMS and thoughts. She writes...

AMELIA (V.O.)
Courage is the price that life exacts
For granting peace

We SUPERIMPOSE over her image the wall of a little girl’s bedroom, filled with treasured NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS about women doctors, officials, bank presidents, women who had established themselves in positions previously thought to be available only to men.

AMELIA (V.O.)
The soul that knows it not
Knows no release
From little things

DISSOLVE TO HER MEMORY OF...

EXT. FIELD, DES MOINES - DAY

Two LITTLE GIRLS, maybe 10 years old, walking in a field. Amelia and a girlfriend. They stop, hearing...

The DRONING of an engine, a small red plane APPEARING above the treetops. The pilot seeing two girls alone in the field, SWOOPS down to BUZZ them. Amelia's friend runs for her life. But Amelia stands still, throws her arms WIDE, and the plane...

...DROPS lower, and LOWER, as it CLOSES straight in on the slender girl with her outstretched arms. LOUDER and FASTER, as if intent on winning some impulsive duel of wills. The aircraft SCREAMS past, just above her head.

AMELIA (V.O.)
As the little red airplane passed by, it said something to me.

Amelia beams. She fills her lungs, transported.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I don't think I've ever stopped listening.

HOLD on her, hair and uniform whipping in the breeze.

SMASH CUT TO...
INT. AMELIA'S PLANE - DAY

Amelia flying her little yellow Kinner. Feeling the freedom she thrilled to as a child.

AMELIA (V.O.)
Ten years, 28 jobs and an unspeakable number of crashes later, I hadn't changed my mind.

She LIFTS the nose of the tiny craft. Begins to CLIMB.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I even had my own plane. Bought with my last dime.

At the apex of her climb, she FLIPS into a breathtaking LOOP THE LOOP, as...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Course in the early days of flying...

...her engine SPUTTERS. Then STALLS. The plane DIPS into a TAIL-SPIN, PLUNGING downward...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
...crashing was so common, you almost forgot it could kill you...

Amelia STRUGGLING to start the engine, the little plane HURTLING toward earth, SPINNING as it goes.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
...until it did.

The engine COUGHS to life and at the last second she SWOOPS harrowingly above the ground to SOAR FREE.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Almost.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY

A small HANGAR in a lonely field. See a group of...

...MECHANICS in their grease-stained jumpsuits. Three big guys and one little one working on an engine that's been pulled from Amelia's Kinner. When the little guy comes up for air...

...he isn't a guy at all.
AMELIA
Got it. I think.

INT. DENISON HOUSE, BOSTON – DAY

SAM CHAPMAN, a handsome young man is being led down an institutional hallway and out onto the grounds of this venerable settlement house. He finds...

...Amelia sitting cross-legged on the grass. Reading to a group of CHINESE GIRLS, who hang on her every animated word. On the periphery, ADULTS sit, taking in the story. They are of various ethnicities, homeless or handicapped or immigrant. Two are blind. Amelia sees Sam...

AMELIA
Girls, this is Mr. Samuel Chapman.
Sam, say hullo to the Octopus Club.

The Octopus Club waves to Sam. The adults wave, too.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
You're just in time. Alice has come through the Looking Glass, and things are getting, well...

OCTOPUS CLUB
(on cue)
REALLY STRANGE!

AMELIA
They are, actually.

She pats the grass beside her. Sam has no choice but to sit.

EXT. GROUNDS – LATER

Amelia and Sam walk a wooded path beside the grounds. Through the chain link fence, they watch other social workers playing with groups of children.

SAM
And it's a secret.

AMELIA
Has to be. Competition, you know. Millionaire heiresses, hot shot girl pilots. If George knew I told you, he'd have me publicly flogged.

She looks over.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
So long as he could sell tickets.

He's not smiling.

SAM
And no one else knows.

AMELIA
Marion. She's giving me a leave of absence.

SAM
I would think so. Your name will be in all the papers, and not just Boston. Denison House stands to come in for funding, national attention.

AMELIA
Specially if I don't make it.

SAM
Don't joke about that.

She wasn't joking at all.

SAM (CONT’D)
You'll make it. And then you'll have opportunities to work in aviation. Anywhere you want.

She laughs.

AMELIA
Well, I'll have impressive credentials as a long-distance passenger. That's not exactly a career in aviation.

She looks up at his eyes.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I'm not going anywhere, social work is my life. After all the years of false starts, I found the thing I'm meant to do.

Keep walking. She gives him time to say...

SAM
And where does that leave us?
AMELIA
You do love to look on the dark side. Whatever did you see in a sunny character like me?

She gives him a sweet playful smile. It doesn't reassure him.

SAM
It's not as if I'd been putting pressure on you.

AMELIA
What love means to you. What it requires. Is the pressure.

He stops walking.

SAM
I love you. Is that such a terrible problem?

She gazes at him. Can he even hear this?

AMELIA
The problem is what it's always been. The problem is me.

11
INT. WALDORF ASTORIA HOTEL - DAY

MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL footage, accompanied by their signature fanfare theme. Hotel conference room jammed with press. A sexy brunette in a sweater that seems to be made of strips of GOLD FOIL steps to a bank of microphones. Flashes start POPPING.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The Queen of Diamonds Mabel Boll, about to become the first female to fly the Atlantic in the wake of Lindbergh's historic journey, regales an eager world press...

The sound switches to Mabel at the mikes...

MABEL
Okay, boys. I'll take any questions you wanna throw my way. Except about what's behind this sweater.

The boys ROAR. Mabel keeps her smile tight.

MABEL (CONT’D)
The story. Behind it. Of course.
As the laughter CONTINUES...

INT. HANGAR, EAST BOSTON AIRPORT - NIGHT

The heavy door rolls OPEN. George and Amelia enter the brightly-lit hangar to see two men working on the FRIENDSHIP, a sea-plane with golden wings. Its red-orange fuselage stands beside gigantic PONTOONS, each 29 feet long. The pontoons have been opened, and the men are attaching them to the plane.

They turn toward us now. BILL STULTZ is short and wiry with quick eyes. Only 28, he seems weathered by his adventures and the streaks of gray through his hair. He is not necessarily happy to see us.

AMELIA (V.O.)
George had told me Stultz was Adm. Byrd's favorite pilot, fearless, gifted. He drank. But George said it never affected his work.

George waves as we approach. Bill and Amelia seem locked on each other.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
When he said it, I must have had a funny look. So I just said, 'Yeh, I grew up around a guy like that.'

GEORGE
Boys, I'd like to introduce your commander, Miss Amelia Earhart.

AMELIA
We felt 'commander' was less grandiose than, say, 'empress.'

Bill doesn’t smile. The other man does...

GEORGE
Say hello to Slim Gordon your navigator.

She is shaking hands in that strong, direct way.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
And Bill Stultz here, simply the most talented pilot working.

She takes Bill's powerful hand. The look between them calm, yet somehow intense. As if each is establishing a tone for their relationship.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
We've got Byrd's pilot, we've got his plane...

AMELIA
You mean the Admiral flies on those?

The pontoons. She does not seem admiring.

GEORGE
Nope, those are new, personally suggested by the old man himself.

Bill nods on that. Sure were.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
This way, if you're forced down at sea, you can wait for a rescue.

AMELIA
Hmmn. What does that do to our fuel?

BILL
Costs us at least 400 gallons. Don't bother bringing clothes for Paris, we'll be lucky to hit the nearest beach in Ireland. Real lucky.

GEORGE
The Admiral estimates the pontoons only cut our range by 200 miles.

But Amelia looks to Bill. That's not really possible is it?

BILL
The Admiral is the Admiral. He gets to estimate any damn thing he wants. All we have to do is figure out how to fly without petrol.

She turns to George with challenging eyes.

BILL (CONT’D)
Don't go blaming the bookseller. He's been all through this with Mrs. Guest, but she worships the Admiral. And it's money that puts planes in the air.

AMELIA
I wonder if it can keep them up there. Not that I've ever had enough to try.
Bill’s small smile. Maybe the girl’s all right.

EXT. DOCK - LATER

George and Amelia approach a waiting motorboat, as the lights of Boston glimmer across the harbor. His head is down. She’s watching his profile.

AMELIA
Sorry. I’ll try keeping my mouth shut.

GEORGE
What I ought to try. Is listening to you once in awhile.

He meant that. And she seems oddly touched.

AMELIA
Careful. I could get to like it.

No reaction from him. He hops into the boat. Turns, holds out his hand. She hesitates. Clearly doesn’t need his help to jump into a boat. Their eyes lock. We are watching her decide. And then...

She reaches to clasp his hand. Hops down beside him.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Thank you, Simpkin. Thank you for everything.

(a smile)
Simpkin.

AMELIA
It's in a book. Oh, that's right. You read the ones you publish.

Her smile is friendly, not flirtatious. She goes to sit in the bow. He doesn't follow. But he is watching.

EXT. ROOF, COPLEY PLAZA HOTEL - DAY

Amelia in a flying outfit. Hands on her hips as if posing.

AMELIA (V.O.)
There’s a Beatrix Potter story about a cat named Simpkin.

PULL BACK to see the PHOTOGRAPHER, George beside him. They are on a hotel rooftop, precariously high above Boston.
AMELIA (V.O.)
He wasn’t happy unless he had several mice, each under a different teacup. So he could never become bored.

We see that Amelia’s POSE looks exactly the SAME as a photo of CHARLES LINDBERGH in the photographer’s hand. It is labeled ‘LUCKY LINDY.’

AMELIA (V.O.)
The illusion of activity was essential for him to feel at peace.

The photographer now shows George ANOTHER PHOTO of Lindbergh in a different pose.

AMELIA
What are you boys doing over there?

GEORGE
Trying to make you look like a girl.

George studies the photo, then goes to Amelia and begins moving her body into the new pose. Tilting her head to Lindbergh's angle.

AMELIA (V.O.)
I wondered. Was I Mr. Putnam’s 43rd mouse? Or his 307th.

Now touching her, adjusting her coat, fluffing a bit of her hair, pulling the collar around to frame her face...

GEORGE
The more we can make you look like a girl, the better.

AMELIA
Oh god, is it worth the effort?

He cocks his head, studies her. Nah, guess not.

GEORGE
Wondering who should play you in the film of all this. I'm thinking Chaplin.

AMELIA
Valentino's not available?

He shakes his head sadly. Adjusts her collar once more. This time, his hands linger.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
Two things. One, Chaplin can't
play me because he's perfect for
you. And two, you have company.

She glances to where a WOMAN, beautiful and aristocratic, is
being helped onto the roof. George's face lights to see her.
He rushes over, sweeps her into his arms, kisses her
tenderly. Amelia smiles to see this, makes her like them
both.

GEORGE
Amelia Earhart, this is Dorothy
Binney Putnam.

The women trade smiles. They shake hands, holding eye
contact.

DOROTHY
Great to meet you. George talks
so much about you.
(a wink)
In fact, lately, you're all he
does talk about.

George steps in close, and the photographer SNAPS a three-
shot. And another.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Hold those smiles for one more,
please.

EXT. JEFFREY YACHT CLUB HARBOR, EAST BOSTON - EARLY LIGHT 15
The FRIENDSHIP bobbing on its pontoons. Bill and Slim are
off-loading equipment and other gear from the plane to a
TUGBOAT filled with support crew and family. The plane's
engines REV in the predawn stillness. PULL BACK to see...

EXT. YACHT CLUB DOCK - EARLY LIGHT 16
...the yacht club dock. George and Amelia alone at the
railing. She's wearing her leather flight jacket and boots.
They stare out at the plane, so frail and awkward. From her
bag now, she pulls three ENVELOPES...

Puts them in George's hand. Straight, unblinking...

AMELIA
Popping off letters. For my dad,
my mom, my sis. You know. In
case.
He stares down. Rocked by the weight of this against the simplicity of her words. The top envelope says: DEAREST DAD.

GEORGE
I'm honored. That you'd leave these with me.

AMELIA
Who else? If I do pop off, it's your fault.

Said in her sunny way. But she's not kidding. It takes a beat before he can offer...

GEORGE
I'll call them once you're safely on your way.

AMELIA
Sam will handle that. They trust him.

That registers.

GEORGE
I've figured out the Simpkin thing, you know.

AMELIA
Have you.

GEORGE
Sure. There are so few books I haven't published, it was easy to find.

Well...?

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Beatrix Potter, the Tailor of Gloucester. He's a cat in a green frock coat.

AMELIA
But why is he you?

Oh.

GEORGE
He's brilliant, charismatic...

AMELIA
So you haven't actually read it. Do you actually read?
...neurotic, compulsive, manipulative. Am I getting warmer?

She sighs.

AMELIA
Pray I make it. Or the secret pops off with me.

A held look. A friendly...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Well. See ya.

She walks off down the dock toward the Friendship.

He stands watching her go.

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. SMALL HOTEL, NEWFOUNDLAND - MORNING

Amelia alone, leaving her hotel room in her flight jacket. Locking the door.

SUPERIMPOSE: FIRST STOP: CANADA

AMELIA (V.O.)
Our first hop was to Canada, to start from as close as we could get to Ireland. Just in case we couldn’t get the thing in the air and had to row.

She walks briskly down the corridor.

AMELIA (V.O.)
The fuel was going to be so close, every single mile counted.

Turns a corner. Approaches the dining room door.

AMELIA (V.O.)
George told me to keep to my room, just in case there was a reporter or two somewhere.

She enters the hotel dining room. Stops cold. Across the room a disgruntled Bill and a sheepish Slim stare at her from their breakfast, surrounded by 15 REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS. Holy shit. Half a dozen CAMERAS RISE as one. It is a defining moment. And Amelia...

Cocks her head. Throws an effortless golden smile.
AMELIA
Hi there, boys. How are the ham and eggs?

The FLASHES EXPLODE as one. They keep POPPING as Amelia makes her way to them.

BILL
Don't blame us, lady. I think somebody's starting to sell books.

The reporters are handing her their morning editions. The New York Times front page headline: BOSTON GIRL STARTS FOR ATLANTIC HOP.

There beneath the headline, the glamorous PHOTO we watched being taken on the Copley Hotel roof, Lady Lindy. Next to it, an earlier photo of her as a demure social worker.

Amelia is sifting through the other papers, grinning and shaking her head.

REPORTER
Say, Amelia. What have you got for Mabel Boll to chew on?

AMELIA
Now why would a famous gal like Mabel give a thought to someone like me? I don't have a single sweater made out of gold.

The boys ROAR, Slim louder than anyone. Even Bill cracks a smile. They're shouting, teasing, YOU CAN'T KID US!

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Hey, not even silver.

The boys make room. Bill rises to hold Amelia's chair. A friendly murmur...

BILL
The ham's a little tough, Commander. But the bacon's swell.

MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL footage, accompanied by their signature fanfare theme. Once more, the hotel conference room jammed with press. Today Mabel wears a luxurious silver fox coat, shimmies up to a bank of microphones at the podium. Flashes start POPPING.
ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The Queen of Diamonds Mabel Boll,
upstaged by upstart social worker,
seems madder than a rich wet hen.
Hey Mabel, tell us about your rival!

The sound switches to Mabel leaning her sultry voice to the mikes...

MABEL
Well, how would any woman feel about some tart who steals her man?

Reporters furiously writing, more flashes EXPLODE.

MABEL (CONT’D)
Bill Stultz and I were going to make history together, until this poor little social worker and her sugar daddy, oh excuse me, ‘publisher,’ started throwing money and I don't know what else at him.

REPORTER
Mabel, are you implying Miss Earhart used her feminine charms on your pilot?

MABEL
I don't know, Charlie, I never seen her. Has she got any?

LAUGHTER, they're all calling out. She shows them a smoky smile, but stays on message.

MABEL (CONT’D)
Well, she had to use something on somebody to get from nowhere to here. You figure it out, or wait til George Putnam feeds it to you.

Two dozen questions at once. She's not even listening.

MABEL (CONT’D)
We're going to Canada, waiting for some good weather on the Atlantic, and then we'll kick Little Miss Whoozis in the keester.

REPORTER
What makes you so cocky that she won't leave first?
Rusty, we can carry enough fuel to go to China. That thing they're flying can't load enough gas to make Yonkers. Tell that to Putnam's girlie. And while you're at it...

She snuggles the gleaming fox fur around her.

Tell her I do wear silver. So I'm two up on her.

EXT. HARBOR, TREPASSEY, NEWFOUNDLAND - EARLY MORNING

MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL CONTINUES. We are looking at foggy, bleak Trepassey Harbor as the Friendship makes an unsuccessful attempt to take off.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Eleven days of failure for plucky Amelia Earhart and her crew. If it isn't storms over the Atlantic, it's the inability of the seaplane's pontoons to lift from the sea.

SERIES OF ANGLES. One failed take-off after another.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Perhaps it's for the best. Remember, no woman has beat the jinx of the Atlantic and three have died trying. Including a princess and the niece of former President Woodrow Wilson.

The plane's engine SPUTTERS and STALLS. It floats on the sea.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Maybe this one's not to be. Hey, Mabel! How's your weather report?

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR, NEWFOUNDLAND - LATE NIGHT

Amelia coming down the hotel corridor. She passes a room, and hearing DRUNKEN LAUGHTER from a group of MEN within the room...

She stops. Stares at the door with more concern than anger.
INT. ROOM - SAME MOMENT

Bill, Slim and three of the REPORTERS are drinking up a storm.

BILL
EXPLORER, MY ASS. BYRD COULDN'T FIND A PUBIC HAIR IN A WHOREHOUSE AT RUSH HOUR!

INT. HOTEL ROOM, NEWFOUNDLAND - LATER

Amelia curled up on her bed with CHARTS of the Atlantic spread everywhere. From next door, the sound of drunken men CONTINUE.

Amelia looks down from her charts. Her mind going to...

FLASHBACK: EXT. HOUSE, ATCHISON, KANSAS - DAY

Seven-year-old KIDS dressed as cowboys and Indians are gathered on the front lawn of a white clapboard home. We CLOSE on a clear-eyed tomboy with war paint and tousled hair, AMELIA at seven, looking up excitedly as a car pulls to the curb.

Her FATHER climbs slowly from the car, WOBLES his way across the lawn. The kids part to let him through, the confusion and disappointment on every face. He ignores them all, even Amelia. The front door opens...

...Amelia's MOTHER gazes at him with shame and disdain. As she helps him stagger inside...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Amelia in her flight gear, sitting on the edge of her bed, an open TELEGRAM lies beside her. Her elbows rest on her knees. Her hands are locked together. Her profile is stony, determined. TILT DOWN to the telegram...

It reads: WEATHER PERMITTING, MABEL FLIES THIS AFTERNOON.

She grabs her flight bag, leaves the room. She only has to travel as far as the next door. POUNDS on it. Waits. Pounds LOUDER with both fists.

Slim opens the door. Looking bad. Bill sits up in bed, groggy, disoriented.

BILL
Christ, what time is...
AMELIA
Time to fly. Get up, get dressed, we're going now.

She is calm and angry at once. A powerful combination. Slim pulls his pants off a chair.

BILL
Where's the weather report?

She goes to his bed. Hands him a slip of paper. He blinks, still waking up. Reads.

BILL (CONT'D)
It's not good enough.

AMELIA
Great. Maybe Mabel will think so, too. Because if she doesn't, she's going to Paris and you're going home. Today.

BILL
It's not good enough.

AMELIA
It's fine, there's a tail wind all the way, we'll off-load to 700 gallons, which gets us off the water and the wind gets us to Ireland.

BILL
We've had better than this and we haven't gone.

AMELIA
But this is the day Mabel's ready, so we're going now. The weather is going to get better and we'll be there to enjoy it.

BILL
You're serious.

AMELIA
Just as serious as you're hung over.
(to Slim)
You go now, get the late weather, we'll meet you at the plane.

Go. Now! Slim pulls on his shoes, grabs his jacket, his bag. Looks to Bill, but the pilot is glaring at his commander.
AMELIA (CONT’D)  
(quiet)  
Slim, get out. I've got this.

A beat. Slim goes, the door shuts quietly. Amelia sits on the edge of Bill's bed.

AMELIA (CONT’D)  
I've loved one person unconditionally, Bill. He is the most caring and generous and charming and flat-out funny guy I'll ever know. He's my father.

Her eyes are burning with this. And Bill keeps quiet. Anyone would.

AMELIA (CONT’D)  
He's a drunk. And he's let me down all my life.

She leans closer.

AMELIA (CONT’D)  
Now you get out of that bed. And you fly that god-damned thing to Ireland. Or I swear to you, Bill...

Just above a whisper...

AMELIA (CONT’D)  
I swear to you I will. Or die trying.

You got that? Do you?

AMELIA (CONT’D)  
And either way. You're going to be living with it.

EXT. TREPASSEY HARBOR - LATER

It's dark and cold. Bill and Amelia stand at the dock beside their plane. He's drinking coffee as they watch Slim come down the quay with a slip of paper in his hand. Amelia steps forward to take it. Reads with neutral eyes.

AMELIA  
Good. Slim, start the engines.

She still hasn't given the paper to Bill. Slim steps onto a pontoon. Starts CRANKING up the propellers. As the engine KICKS to life...
She hands the weather report to Bill. He reads. Looks to her eyes.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
You signed a contract. You've got a direct instruction from me to go. That report indicates some degree of risk and it's a risk I'm taking.

BILL
Have a nice flight.

AMELIA
Thanks.

She motions to Slim, get on board. The navigator grins, starts to climb up, looking back at Bill...

SLIM
Hey, I'm scared shitless of this dame.

She climbs up after him. One look back...

AMELIA
Read tomorrow's papers, Bill. We'll both be in them.

And disappears. Alone on the dock, Bill hears the engines REV. Jesus, God, she's going to do it. He takes a step toward the plane, but her head appears in the hatch...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
So, to take off, you pull back on the thing, right?

Her perfectly straight, innocent face. He BUSTS out laughing. This fucking girl.

Tosses his coffee. Climbs aboard.

INT. FRIENDSHIP - MOMENTS LATER

WITH Amelia as she locks the hatch. For the first time, we can see the inside of the plane. The cabin is too small for anyone to stand. The plane has been emptied of everything but two huge elliptical FUEL TANKS.

She wedges herself between the gigantic tanks. Bill pulls the throttle and the Fokker Tri-motor LURCHES forward, STRAINING against the surface of the sea in a rattling, throbbing desperately VIBRATING all-out attempt.
Amelia crawls to the tiny window, her face to the glass as chop and spray FLY PAST like shrapnel, and the engines WHINE and PULSE louder...

...twenty seconds, thirty. Still on the surface. Forty seconds, fifty, her eyes shut, her forehead bangs against the glass, come on, sixty seconds, and at 67...

EXT. HARBOR - SAME MOMENT

...the seaplane LIFTS, struggles, then SOARS FREE.

INT. FRIENDSHIP - DAY/NIGHT

Amelia kneels at the tiny window. A kid on a rainy day. Only outside this window is impenetrable FOG and a STORM that ROCKS the plane like the shock waves of endless explosions. As she braces herself against the hull...

...water DRIPS onto her from a loose seam. Could this be dangerous? She looks around. Through the opening between the elliptical fuel tanks...

...Bill and Slim at the controls. Bill is banging on something beside the instrument panel. Beneath his seat, she sees the TOOLBOX. The water drips on her faster. She crawls forward toward the boys, arriving to see...

...Bill POUNDING what we can now see is his RADIO. His face is red, angry. She watches for a beat.

AMELIA

YOU OKAY?

BILL

BE BETTER IF OUR DAMN RADIO WOULD JOIN THE PARTY!

He never turns to her, but she studies him. Is he impaired or simply frustrated? She slips the toolbox from beneath his seat and crawls back to the leak. But as she opens the box...

...there, among the wrench and pliers, a BOTTLE of whiskey. She stares at it as we SNAP TO...

FLASHBACK: EXT. AMELIA'S HOUSE, ATCHISON, KANSAS - DAY

RAPID SERIES OF ANGLES. War-painted Amelia looking up from the cowboy she's tied to a tree. The car pulling to the curb. Out climbs...
...her FATHER glassy-eyed. Stumbling through the children. Her MOTHER at the door.

ANGLE. Amelia still in war paint enters her parents' room. She knows just where to go. Opens a drawer, digs beneath crisply starched shirts. Finds the BOTTLE.

ANGLE. Amelia in the bathroom, POURING the bottle out into the sink. She looks up in the mirror to see...

...her father in the doorway. She turns straight to him. MEETS his eyes, direct and unafraid.

INT. FRIENDSHIP

BACK to Amelia with Bill's bottle, as the battered plane lurches every which way in the storm. She lifts it from the toolbox. Hides it in the camera bag, as suddenly the plane DROPS fifty feet, and Amelia is SLAMMED against the ceiling, then crashes back to the floor. Dazed, she sees Bill turned around...

BILL

HOLD ONTO SOMETHING FOR CRISSAKE!

She GRABS the leg of the navigation table which has been bolted down. Stares out the window, wondering if she'll make it.

AMELIA (V.O.)
Dearest Dad. Hooray for the last grand adventure. I wish I had won, but it was worthwhile anyway. You know that. I have no faith we'll meet anywhere again, but I wish we might.

HOLD on the gray eyes. DISSOLVE TO...

LATER. Amelia at the window, still opaque with fog. Suddenly, the plane SWOOPS down toward a clearing in the clouds. There to the south, a FREIGHTER running across our path. No land in sight.

Amelia SCRAWLS a note, ties it to an ORANGE from her flight bag, and crawls back to the boys.

AMELIA (CONT'D)

HOW FAR TO LAND?

The boys are studying the freighter.
BILL
RADIO'S STILL OUT. NO WAY TO
COMPUTE WINDSPEED AND DRIFT IN THE
FOG, SO GOD ONLY KNOWS WHERE
IRELAND IS.

Checks his watch.

BILL (CONT'D)
NINETEEN HOURS PLUS. WE'VE GOT
MAYBE AN HOUR OF PETROL LEFT.
PROBABLY LESS.

She shows him the note and the orange.

AMELIA
WESTERN UNION, SPECIAL DELIVERY.

Bill has to smile. Are you serious? As a heart attack.
Okay, he tries to get closer to the ship, but we're jerked
and buffeted as we swing past and Amelia...

...DROPS the orange toward the freighter, watching the heavy
winds CARRY it two hundred yards WIDE of the mark. Our three
stare grimly.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
IF WE LAND NEAR THEM, WE'VE GOT A
RESCUE.

Their eyes are locked.

BILL
THINK THOSE RIDICULOUS SKIS COULD
HOLD US UP IN THIS KIND OF SEA?

She's been wondering the same.

BILL (CONT'D)
YOU SAID WE WERE GOING TO MAKE IT.
ARE YOU A LIAR?

AMELIA
NOT ON THIS OCCASION.

A rare smile...

BILL
WELL, THEN.

And SWOOPS back on course. Amelia's hand squeezes his
shoulder. DISSOLVE TO...

LATER. Amelia crouched behind Bill's seat. Fog starting to
break up.
Her face drawn, she almost seems to be holding her breath. Something down below. As we drop, we hear the engines SPUTTER.

AMELIA
WHEN'S THAT HOUR OF FUEL RUN OUT?

BILL
EIGHTEEN MINUTES AGO. WHY?

She glances over to Slim, who is busy unwrapping a sandwich. She can't believe this. He takes a healthy bite.

AMELIA
THE LONGER I OBSERVE MEN THE MORE I AM AWESTRUCK. BY THEIR CAPACITY FOR DENIAL.

She crawls back to the navigation table. As she looks out her window, a SANDWICH SAILS past! She WHIPS around...Slim's arms raised in jubilation. Down below...

Land.

EXT. SHORE, BURRY PORT, WALES – DAY

The little plane sputtering, shuddering, as Bill drops in for a splashdown. We PAN to the shore...

...a rural railroad dock. Deserted except for THREE WORKERS who glance up as the Friendship taxis to a buoy a few hundred yards offshore. Amelia at the hatch, tiny in distance, WAVES a towel...

...one friendly worker takes off his coat and WAVES back. Then all three guys go back to work. SNAP TO...

REVERSE ANGLE. From the Friendship, we watch the workers ignoring us. Bill and Slim HOLLER and jump up and down on the pontoons. Nobody cares. Amelia sits in the doorway, her legs swinging free.

AMELIA
Out of gas. May have to swim for it.

LATER. Amelia alone. Six pages written by her side. Still working, as a rowboat pulls up. Bill stands in the bow. Calls to her...

BILL
Mr. Putnam phoned. He says there's a fella coming from London. Hilton Railey.
AMELIA
Oh, yeh. Very important man. More important than any of us.

Really? Yep.

BILL
He says ya mustn't come ashore til he gets here. No matter what.

Great. She doesn't like it, but there it is. She waves, so long.

BILL (CONT'D)
Some kind of royalty, is he?

She nods.

AMELIA
Public relations.

Goes back to work. DISSOLVE TO...

LATER. Amelia sits with her papers in her lap, dangling her feet from the hatch. Alone. Hear the BUZZ of...

...a PLANE dropping slowly from the sky, gliding onto the water on its pontoons. She stares at it. Gathers up her things.

LATER. Amelia sitting in a tiny dinghy, behind her the Friendship in distance. She is being rowed to shore. Our VIEW is over the back of the man rowing. Amelia is staring past him, vaguely apprehensive.

REVERSE ANGLE. She's looking at TWO THOUSAND WELSHMEN swarming the docks. You can't even see the sand.

The crowd is silent and staring. No cheers. As if they were staring at an alien or an animal in the zoo. Bill and Slim help pull the dinghy to the rocky shore. But when Amelia jumps out, the crowd...

...begins to soberly APPLAUD, and slowly CLOSES IN around her. At first she seems pleased, trying to shake every hand thrust toward her. She doesn't see that Bill and Slim have been shunted to the back. Suddenly...

...people get BOLDER. CLAPPING her on the back, reaching to TOUCH her, someone SNATCHES her scarf, she looks around frantically for Bill and Slim as...

...a SHERIFF and three DEPUTIES muscle their way to her using billy clubs to push people back. They surround Amelia, begin to escort her to the station...
SHERIFF
Sorry Ma'am. Shoulda brought more men.

AMELIA
No, really, this is very sweet, it's an honor. I'm actually enjoying it.

SHERIFF
That's a good thing.

She looks at him as they are jostled along.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
Because you're stuck with it.
From here on.

She is brought to a smiling avuncular HILTON RAILEY, standing beside the closest thing Burry Port has to a limo. She throws an affectionate arm around him, kisses his cheek.

AMELIA
Hullo, Hilton.

Railey stands back as FLASHBULBS catch the moment. He's brought photographers with him. And more.

RAILEY
Amelia, say hullo to Allen Raymond of the New York Times.

A hearty handshake. She holds out her sheets of paper.

AMELIA
I believe you've come for these.

Both men regard the pages as if they were gold bullion. Come for these indeed.

EXT. SOUTHAMPTON - DAY

MOVIE TONE FOOTAGE of Amelia being welcomed by a SEA OF PEOPLE on the dock at Southampton. A mob. Folks spilling into the water. Ships circling, fireboats spray, every craft BLARES its horn. Police hold back the screaming throng as FLASHES EXPLODE and NEWSREEL CAMERAS CHURN. Amelia at the center of the storm. Welcomed by AMY GUEST and the lady LORD MAYOR of Southampton.

Throughout, we see SUPERIMPOSED IMAGES of the article she gave Railey, displaying her byline, on the front pages of the London Times, New York Times, the Times of India, Sydney Morning Herald, the Toronto Star, Le Monde, as her story echoes around the world. These IMAGES CONTINUE OVER...
QUICK SERIES OF ANGLES. Amelia cheering animatedly at the races...watching tennis at Wimbledon...front row gallery at the House of Commons, as...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
A whirlwind week for Boston's Amelia Earhart, our own Lady Lindy. Races at Ascot on Gold Cup day...watching Helen Wills Moody play at Wimbledon...Lady Astor's guest at the House of Commons...

INT. HYDE PARK HOTEL, LONDON - DAY

MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL CONTINUES. The British press are gathered in a huge Victorian parlor. Dark woods, rich leather, a bank of microphones, an electric expectancy...

Bill and Slim stand next to a seated Amy. Amelia steps to the microphones...

AMELIA
I was a passenger on this journey. Just a passenger. Everything that was done to bring us across was done by Wilmer Stultz and Slim Gordon. All the praise...

REPORTER
(calls out)
But you can fly, can't you?

Amelia stares at the man. Conflicting agendas.

AMELIA
This flight was solely to the credit of Bill and Slim. Women should know, however, that I have had 500 hours solo flying and once held the women's altitude record.

REPORTER
So you could have done it yourself!

AMELIA
This particular flight, under these conditions, I wonder if anyone but Bill Stultz could have pulled it off. But certainly, one day a woman will do this. As easily, as skillfully, as professionally as any man.

Such calm self-possession. Such confidence in that.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
Aviation is clear today for the pioneer. And if the pioneer has good ideas nobody will ask whether the pioneer is a man or woman.

Polite applause. Mostly from women. She looks around the room.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I hear your doubt. That doubt is our challenge. This is where our Atlantic flight, or any other good flight by a woman can help...

She nods. To them, to herself.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
It starts women thinking.

EXT. BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY - DAY
Ticker tape PARADE down Broadway, crowds lining the streets, leaning from windows to welcome Amelia home.

SUPERIMPOSE: NEW YORK CITY
Amelia sits in an open car between Bill and Slim, WAVING to everyone. In the front seat, George and Dorothy share the moment.

EXT. RECEPTION HALL - DAY
Amelia flanked by George and Dorothy, coming out of a reception hall. Amelia glances to George...

AMELIA
Guess you can burn those letters.

Dorothy wonders. Letters?

GEORGE
I saved them for your book.

One simple shake of Amelia’s head. A soft...

AMELIA
The book’s yours. The letters are mine.

He smiles. Bows in submission.

GEORGE
You’re the boss.
DOROTHY
Hey, that’s my job.
(to Amelia)
Do you think there’s enough of him to boss for the two of us?

Amelia still looking at George. Laughs.

AMELIA
Barely enough for one.

A battery of reporters and flashbulbs wait by our motorcade.

REPORTER
Miss Earhart, can you tell us something about your future plans?

She likes this question. Fixes the man with that clear, honest gaze.

AMELIA
Well, being a social worker by trade and passion, I'll be going back to work at Denison House when all this fun is over.

She sends the guy a smile, and a dozen FLASHES catch it.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
...if I haven't been fired.

George holds the door of their limo. She looks up to him with a mischievious smile. And with no warning...

...Amelia bypasses the limo, climbs into the SIDECAR of a cop's motorcycle, and SMACKS its side. The cop looks up to George, who...

...nods, go for it. And the cop DOES, wheeling out into traffic, opening up the SIREN, as everyone laughs or cheers or darts into the street desperate for a fleeting photo.

George watching her go. Dorothy watching George.

REPORTER
Mr. Putnam, sir. How did a social worker like Miss Earhart become comfortable as a celebrity so quickly?

George smiles. His eyes still following Amelia.

GEORGE
The truth is, she was a celebrity on smaller stages all her life.
(MORE)
GEORGE (cont'd)
This is just when the rest of us discovered her.

And Dorothy. Watches this, too.

EXT. PUTNAM HOME, RYE, NEW YORK - DAY

Amelia in a sunlit garden ringed by trees. She sits at a folding table, writing longhand. A large dog lies at her feet.

AMELIA (V.O.)
So they took me home with them to Rye. And I lived there, while I wrote my book.

PULL BACK to see our view has been George's. He sits at an antique writing desk, watching her through a picture window. He rises slowly. We see that he has been reviewing a CONTRACT, which he takes with him.

ANGLE. Amelia writing, looking up to see George coming down the back porch steps to the garden.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I thought he'd be a tyrant and that I would have to manage him.

He smiles as he approaches. She goes back to work.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Instead he was kind and generous. And only picked the fights he needed to win.

He drops the contract on her table. She looks at it.

GEORGE
Lucky Strike endorsement. I wrote the copy myself.

AMELIA
What does it say? 'I don't smoke but you should?'

GEORGE
It says Lucky Strikes were the only cigarettes aboard the Friendship. That's true.

AMELIA
True and misleading. Why would I sign that?

GEORGE
So Bill and Slim get paid.
Oh. His smile simple, comfortable.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
If you're too proud to take tobacco money, donate it to Byrd's expedition, and we get great publicity.

She stares at him with hard eyes. His smile just becomes more relaxed. An easy win, no big deal. She begins to sign the contract. He places a stack of letters in front of her.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
This week's marriage proposals. The top one's the most creative. It's from Sing Sing.

She starts to read. Her eyes widen. Goodness.

AMELIA (reads)
'...in the prison yard, so everyone can watch and share in our...' (looks up) Did you write the copy on this one, too?

DOROTHY (O.S., approaching)
Have you no shame, George? No sense of the scandal you create?

They look up. She has a tray of lemonade and cookies.

DOROTHY (CONT’D)
You make her work for nothing. At least you can feed her. (to Amelia)
Are you done yet? If not, make him write the rest, he will anyway.

INT. AUDITORIUM, BARNARD COLLEGE, NEW YORK - NIGHT
A women's college. The hall is packed.

GEORGE (V.O.)
The lecture and publicity schedule was fierce. I was with her pretty much all the time.

Amelia and George alone in the wings.
GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
This was the moment of opportunity. Could we launch her into Lindbergh status as a permanent icon, before her name fell out of the newspapers.

He re-ties her scarf. Checking out the effect.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
We had separate agendas. For her, it was the advancement of aviation and of women.

He very slightly rearranges her hair, as if every lock matters.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
As for me, I liked to tell myself it was about the money. Though there was never much of that left over.

She stands for inspection, with her trace of a teasing smile. He holds out his hand and she gives him her note cards.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Really, it was about the chance to be around her.

He flips through the cards, frowning as he goes.

AMELIA (George imitation)
This will never do, A.E., simply unacceptable.

He looks up. She starts pacing around, gesturing as he would...

AMELIA (George imitation)
You need more ammunition in these cards, and where's the goddamned humor, for Chrissake? By which I mean something actually funny!

He's trying to look annoyed. It isn't easy.

AMELIA (George imitation)
And please remember not to turn your pretty little backside to the crowd when you use your pointer, it's your face they're paying to see. Well, most of them.

She WHIPS around. He's deadpan.
AMELIA (George imitation)
And another thing. Your hats.
Are a menace.

Staring at each other.

GEORGE (softly)
Everything about you. Is a menace.

The stare holds. Because this is the moment.

AMELIA (V.O.)
I remember the first kiss.

It is only one step. Her hand goes to his chest. Her eyes close, as...

She brings her mouth to his. Tender and strong. And deep. It is an act of decision.

A held look. No one smiles. We hear her name ANNOUNCED from the podium. But she keeps looking at him. And as the APPLAUSE CONTINUES, she finally...

...turns. STRIDES onto the stage, with one graceful wave, she brings the applause to a crescendo.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Of course, I knew all the stories that Dorothy had been having a torrid affair with Fred Upton. Everyone did.

She steps to the microphone. The crowd quiets.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
But I didn't kiss him because I felt sorry for him. Or because it would mean the world to him.

INTERCUT. George in the wings. His heart in his eyes.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I did it. Because I wanted to.

He looks down. He's still holding her cards.

INT. HOTEL, CHICAGO - DAY

Hotel corridor. An elevator OPENS and ELINOR SMITH a striking young woman emerges. Looks at a slip of paper. Nervous. Heads down the hallway to a door. As she gathers herself to knock, she looks scared enough to pass out.
George answers the door, looking gracious and suave. They shake hands. Then, Amelia appears, warmly clasping the girl's hand, and Elinor looks as starstruck as a teenager at the Oscars.

AMELIA
It's so good to meet you. I've been following your career with a great deal of admiration.

ELINOR
Um. Thanks, and. You, too.

AMELIA
Feel like a drink?

GEORGE
Amelia! What would her mother say?

AMELIA
Relax, George. I meant a Coke.

As she leads Elinor into the sitting room of their suite, the girl's eye falls on the door to the bedroom. It is slightly ajar, revealing an unmade double bed. Unseen by the others, the kid reacts. Oh, my.

LATER. Tea in the sitting room. Elinor leaning forward, guileless, eager...

ELINOR
They're saying you get $500 a week on the lecture circuit.

GEORGE
On a bad week.

AMELIA
On a good week.

The girl looks from one to the other.

AMELIA
All depends. On whether you want the sell or the real.

ELINOR
Oh, I don't underestimate the value of selling. It's why I'm here.

GEORGE
A 16-year-old girl sets an altitude record, then makes headlines illegally flying under the four bridges of the East River. You don't seem to need much help selling yourself.
ELINOR
Well, actually Mr. Putnam, I was hoping you could do to me what you've done to her.

Inadvertently, her eyes flick to the bedroom door. Catching this, our couple shares a dry smile. The kid sees that. Uh-oh.

ELINOR (CONT’D)
What I mean is. It's a good thing. That's why I want it.

Now our couple is trying not to laugh.

GEORGE
Just so we're clear, young lady. What is your primary ambition?

ELINOR (straight back)
To take Amelia's place as the number one female pilot.

The honesty, the suddenness, leave George atypically dumbstruck.

AMELIA
Well, good for you! I would have expected nothing less. You want a tip?

ELINOR
I do.

AMELIA
Keep doing what you're doing.

The girl nods, seriously. Okay.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
And don't let anyone turn you around.

INT. PUTNAM HOUSE - CHRISTMAS DAY

Holiday party in progress. Christmas decorations everywhere. A small crowd around the living room bar where George is telling a story.

Now we see Dorothy standing, drinking, watching George with hard eyes. She turns on her heels and walks OUT into the garden. George sees this, excuses himself, follows her, as we PAN to...
...Amelia standing with a group of guests. She’s seen it all.

EXT. GARDEN - MOMENTS LATER

Here she comes along the roses, still drinking, still fuming. A figure comes up behind her. Falls in step.

GEORGE
Lovely party, huh?

DOROTHY
Depends on your point of view. I've been listening to some idiot brag about his girlfriend.

Still walking. She never looks at him.

GEORGE
Well, in that case, for your information, it is a lovely party indeed. Anything on your mind?

DOROTHY
It's not so much that my husband is having an affair with his meal ticket. It's just a pity we can't have one honest conversation about it.

GEORGE
What's wrong with this one? A promising start, I'd say, in the honesty department.

She finishes her drink. Throws the glass away. From our ANGLE we can now see Amelia in the window, watching them.

DOROTHY
If this is what you call an honest talk, I'd say you need some practice.

GEORGE
Great. Let's try one about you and Fred Upton.

She stops walking. Turns in shock, to see his easy smile.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Well, I'm waiting for our practice conversation. Hoping I'll learn something. About honesty.
She GLARES at him, and storms off. He lets her go. Hear a car engine TURN OVER. Dorothy PEELING OUT. George reflects. As he walks back toward the party, he now sees Amelia in the window. He stops. Their look holds.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE NIGHT

George at the kitchen table in dim light. It's very late. A HAND places a steaming mug of coffee before him. Followed by a slice of pie. A fork. He smiles. And softly...

GEORGE
Dorothy and I are through.

She sits beside him. Very close.

AMELIA
For a long, long time.

GEORGE
It's different now.

She looks at him. Squints. How?

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Marry me.

Oh. A breath.

AMELIA
I can't do that.

GEORGE
If you give it a chance, you'll learn to love me.

He seems so sunny and strong. What can he be feeling?

AMELIA
I already love you. That's why I can't marry you.

GEORGE (a murmur)
Well, that explains it. For a minute there, I thought you were stuck for an excuse.

She comes close enough to kiss.

AMELIA
I know me. And you don't. Not really.

GEORGE
What if I promise not to learn?
AMELIA
The day will come. When I will run away. And when it does...

He stops her with a kiss.

GEORGE
If you love me. I'll take my chances.

He stares in her troubled eyes. There is no answer.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Race you to bed.

EXT. AIRFIELD - DAY - NEWSREEL

Amelia and nearly 20 WOMEN lined up in front of planes. Waving, smiling, talking to each other.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Amelia Earhart and a bevy of lovely competitors say hello to the press announcing the First Women's Air Derby, racing from Santa Monica to Cleveland. Dubbed by Will Rogers 'the Powder Puff Derby,' these gals certainly know how to capture our attention.

The next ANGLE shows Amelia watching some of her colleagues bouncing playfully on a see-saw. She smiles tolerantly, but maybe there's a little too much cheesecake for her taste.

INT. RECEPTION AREA, PUTNAM'S - DAY

The crowded waiting room. We CLOSE on a young woman we scarcely recognize. It is Elinor. Though less than a year has passed, she seems much older. Sophisticated, poised.

ANGLE. A secretary leads Elinor down the corridor to George's office. As they enter, George is pacing on the phone.

GEORGE (into phone)
Because Amelia invented the Powder Puff Derby for female pilots. Then the men running the damn race suddenly decide every woman has to carry a male navigator, and start from east of the Rockies so they won't crash into the mountains!

Listens, impatient.
GEORGE (into phone)
I'll tell you why it's a front page story. Because Amelia pulled every woman out of the race. So the organizers had to roll over and give in, or they'd have lost their shirts. You want me to write your headline?

He glances over. Elinor in the doorway.

GEORGE (into phone)
Call you back. I've got a very important guest.

He hangs up, gesturing graciously for her to sit. As she does...

ELINOR
Wish I was important enough for you to manage.

GEORGE
Well, I've just got one client. And most days she's more than I can manage.

Even Elinor's smile seems older, more capable of subtlety.

ELINOR
Get in line behind the boys she smacked around on the Derby.

He grins back. You bet.

ELINOR (CONT'D)
Some of the gal flyers had their doubts about her...well, her skill level. But she's everyone's champion now.

GEORGE
And both of those things. Are the reasons I called you.

Strange words. He has her attention.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
I think it would be huge for women flyers if Amelia won the Derby. The publicity would put the race, and all of you, up there with the boys.
ELINOR
I'm not sure she has much of a chance, Mr. Putnam.

GEORGE
Well, the one shot would be putting her in a far more powerful plane than anything she's flown. We're thinking the Lockheed Vega.

The girl's shock. He really means this.

ELINOR
Sir, I've test piloted the Vega. It's way more than she could ever handle. It wouldn't be safe, let alone successful.

He smiles.

GEORGE
That's why I'm thinking of you flying with her. You could handle the cross-country flying, the more difficult bits, and I'd pay you $75 a week.

Elinor WHISTLES low.

ELINOR
Well, I think that's the most generous opportunity I've ever been offered.

He stares at her.

GEORGE
There's just one thing. Obviously, it has to appear that Amelia did all the flying. So when pictures are taken, you'll stand off to one side.

Her eyes narrow. He's completely serious.

ELINOR
In that case, I'll get my own plane and win the race myself.

GEORGE
You haven't changed.

No smile at all.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
Unfortunately for you, neither have I.

The look in his eye is not to be ignored.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
You can't win if you can't get a plane to enter. Let me predict that you won't.

The voice calm and low and riveting.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
In fact. If you reject my generosity, you may come to regret it. For a long, long time.

ELINOR
That's a threat.

GEORGE
I'm an intensely loyal person, Elinor. And this is what my loyalty requires.

She's glaring. Reeling. Trapped.

ELINOR
She's the one who said I shouldn't let anybody turn me around.

GEORGE
She probably meant me.

So honest, the words confuse her.

ELINOR
Obviously, she doesn't see me as a threat.

GEORGE
Oh, sure she does.

A straight smile...

GEORGE (CONT’D)
She just doesn't care.

...which silently fades.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
My job. Is to care for her.

DISSOLVE TO...
INT. OAK ROOM, PLAZA HOTEL, NEW YORK - NIGHT

LONG ANGLE. Sophisticated watering hole. Crowded tonight. PAN to find George alone, waiting. A waiter leads Amelia to the table. George stands, smiling. But the smile is not returned. We CLOSE as they sit...

GEORGE
What’s wrong?

AMELIA (clearly furious)
What could be wrong? I had such a lovely afternoon with Elinor Smith.

Oh.

GEORGE
She told you that I shut her out of the Derby. And that’s true.

AMELIA
And when were you going to tell me?

GEORGE (calm, straight)
Never. I knew you’d go crazy. And I felt it needed to be done.

She can scarcely believe this.

AMELIA
What? You think I wanted it done, but just let you do the dirty work?

GEORGE
I didn’t say that.

AMELIA
Because I’m no angel. Business is competition and competition is rough, and I thank my stars that you’re there making this life happen for me, but...

GEORGE
You’re making your life hap...

AMELIA
But this is different.

It is.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
If women are going to stab women in the back, then women are going nowhere.
Are you listening?

GEORGE
From here on, I’ll just stab men in the back.

AMELIA
You didn’t do this for business, anyway.

GEORGE
I did it for fun?

AMELIA
You did it because you love me.

That stops him.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
And when we’re married, you mustn’t ever...

Now she stops. Because his eyes are wide.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
What’s the big shock? I thought you wanted to get married.

Full beat.

GEORGE
I did. I do.

AMELIA
Well, then.

His eyes moving over her face.

GEORGE
What about what you said? The day will come when you run away.

She nods. It will.

AMELIA
You’ll be destroyed. And part of me will, too. And I think we both know it.

And yet.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Sometimes things happen that way. You’re not better safe than sorry.

Tears stand in his eyes. He is so happy.
AMELIA (a whisper) (CONT’D)
Yes?

GEORGE (a whisper)
Hell yes.

INT. GEORGE'S MOTHER'S HOME, NOANK, CONNECTICUT - DAY

Through a window, a dry, wintered garden. Snow falling, at once soft and heavy. Beyond, Morgan Point Lighthouse, Fisher's Island Sound, Long Island Sound. One lonely fishing boat braves the cold water. PULL BACK to see...

...Amelia at the breakfast table in a windowed room. She is writing, and as she does...

SUPERIMPOSE: WEDDING DAY. CONNECTICUT, 1931.

...her eyes are swimming with tears. She brushes at them. Stares down at her work. Continues.

ANGLE. The parlor. George, his MOTHER, the MINISTER, a small number of close FRIENDS. From the doorway, Amelia beckons George. The letter is in her hand.

EXT. HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Amelia holds tight to George's hand, leading him out into the falling snow. She turns, fixes him with a look. Hands him the letter. And steps back. As if giving him space.

At first, he smiles. What is this? She gestures for him to read. As he begins, there is nothing for a few seconds. Then...

AMELIA (V.O.)
...I want you to understand I shall not hold you to any medieval code of faithfulness to me. Nor shall I consider myself bound to you similarly.

Snow falling. Absolute silence.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
If we can be honest I think the difficulties which may arise may best be avoided should you or I become interested deeply, or in passing, with anyone else.

She gazes intently, her heart in her eyes. He never looks up.
AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Please let us not interfere with the other's work or play, nor let the world see our private joys or disagreements.

And then...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I must exact a cruel promise. And that is you will let me go in a year if we find no happiness together.

He stops on this. His thoughts unreadable.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I will try to do my best in every way. And give you that part of me you know and seem to want.

He folds the letter carefully. Places it in his pocket. And smiles.

GEORGE
My Amelia. Brutal in her frankness. Beautiful in her honesty.

He steps to her. Looks in her eyes. They kiss.

INT. PARLOR - LATER

LONG ANGLE. The minister reading the vows. The witnesses standing silent. Two black cats rubbing against George's ankles.

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. KITCHEN, RYE - MORNING

George at the breakfast table. His eggs and toast ignored for the moment, he's reading a magazine article. PAN to Amelia, sipping her coffee. Watching him.

GEORGE (reads aloud)
'Why I Believe Women Pilots Can't Fly The Atlantic. An outspoken warning by Lady Heath.'

(reading)
'...pure suicide for any woman today...it is madness for them to attempt it and...'

He looks up to her.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
‘...at least the first dozen will be drowned.’ And we're reading this, because...?

AMELIA
I might fly to Paris.

Silence.

GEORGE
Which is actually across the Atlantic.

AMELIA
Hence, the article.

Ah. He nods.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I'm thinking of doing it solo.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Would you mind?

He butters his toast.

GEORGE
Not at all. When would you like to go?

EXT. GARDEN, RYE - DAY

CLOSE on Amelia as she kneels, carefully putting new plants into the ground. We see patience, concentration. Contentment. After a moment...

AMELIA
I’m surprised you’re all right with this...

WIDEN ANGLE. George kneeling beside her. Happily planting his own.

GEORGE
Really.

AMELIA
Mmm-hmmn. I was braced for the lecture. Five years since Lindbergh, no one's made it solo, so many of them died.

He looks at her work. Reaches over. Starts packing the earth HARDER around her plant. She just watches, then...
GEORGE
    Well, they were only men. This is different.

She reaches to his plant and starts LOOSENING the soil...

AMELIA
    I was waiting to hear that I'm only doing this because I was just a passenger last time, and I'd rather die than go on living as a fraud.

No one cracks a smile. It's like Laurel and Hardy in a food fight where each lets the other take his best shot. George reaches now, starts REPACKING her soil...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
    But you don’t think that, do you, dear?

GEORGE
    Of course not. But if I did...

She SMACKS his hand. He just keeps working. She finally grins, smacks him HARDER. He doesn't seem to notice.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
    ...all the more reason to say yes.

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EXT. TEETERBORO AIRPORT - DUSK

AERIAL ANGLE. In the sun's last light, two figures walk slowly, far below us. The Vega waits.

CLOSE ANGLE. They stand beneath the wing. Her ground crew in far distance, giving them their moment. Her look is not breezy and cavalier this time, but tender and intimate. She knows the fear beneath his easy smile.

He produces a RING, a band of black fibers.

GEORGE
    Elephant hair, I think you wear it on your toe. It's good luck.

He puts it in her hand.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
    Anyway. That's what the elephant told me.

Amelia looks at the ring. Turns it in her fingers.
AMELIA
I think luck has rules. And I try to respect them. My favorite is...

She glances up.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
We make our own luck, you and I. Remember that.

He will remember that. And more.

GEORGE
Do you have money?

AMELIA
No.

He pulls out a twenty dollar bill. Hands it to her.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
All this?

GEORGE
Sure.

AMELIA
Thank god, I thought you were going to tear it in half.

GEORGE
I spent our money on ocean liner passage to go bring you back. It's non-refundable. So try to do your part.

She nods. She'll try. He doesn't want to leave her yet.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
So the Simpkin thing. What was all that?

AMELIA
I put it in a letter. Which you'll get if I don't make it. So...mixed emotions, huh?

He shakes his head.

GEORGE (very soft)
Either way, something to look forward to.

She puts her hands on his face. She doesn't want to leave him either.
AMELIA (murmurs)
Stake up the peonies, huh? They're messy when they bloom on the ground, and...

And.

AMELIA (a whisper)
I want to see their heads high. When I come home.

She leans up to kiss him. And again. Feeling in her eyes that he will never forget.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
See ya.

INT. VEGA - NIGHT

Amelia alone. Starry night. 12,000 feet below are ICEBERGS. A single fishing boat.

AMELIA (V.O.)
The weather report wasn't perfect. But we knew our real chance was to take weather that others wouldn't.

Ahead, towering CLOUDS in moonlight. Too high to fly over.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I closed the deal by choosing May 20, five years to the day from Lindbergh's flight. It was too good a sell for George to resist. What we didn't know...

EXT. VEGA - LATER

A terrifying STORM BATTERS the plane, which bobs and darts and dips like a leaf in a gale.

AMELIA (V.O.)
...was that my altimeter would conk out. Never to return.

INT. VEGA - SAME MOMENT

Amelia fights for control as the plane is TOSSED and SHAKEN.

AMELIA (V.O.)
The only way to have any sense of altitude, was to keep dropping toward the sea.

(MORE)
AMELIA (cont'd)
When the engines sputtered, that was my low-level limit.

A sudden JOLT knocks her OUT of her seat. She scrambles back, as we see WHITECAPS A FEW FEET BELOW. She JERKS the nose UP, the engine COUGHS...

...and CLIMBS.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I was too busy to grasp how impossible the situation had become. The joke was...

LATER. Flying in and out of cloud cover.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
All those months flying only with instruments, I should have been practicing without them.

PAN to the windshield. A small GLOW at the surface of a vibrating engine. Amelia hasn't noticed.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I started to wonder if luck was paying me back. For thinking I knew the rules.

A small BLUE FLAME LICKS out into the night.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Then I smelled burning oil.

She sees it now. The flame coming through a broken weld in the manifold ring.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
A bad weld, already a small flame. It would be hours back to Canada, trying to find an unlit field, landing with a heavy fuel load.

She stares at the little flame. Is it growing bigger?

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I told myself, push on. After all, if it was a stupid choice...

LATER. Flying in blackness. Rising, as the engines seem sluggish.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
...no one would ever know.

Suddenly, a FILM of SLUSH on the windscreen.
AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
With seemingly no warning, there was ice. The controls froze.

And the Vega DIVES into a DIZZYING SPIN.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Through the spin I had one thought, it would be warmer lower, the ice would melt, I just had to regain control...

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EXT. VEGA - SAME MOMENT

The SPINNING plane PLUNGING...

AMELIA (V.O.)
...before I hit the water.

And ARCING at last to SWOOP above the whitecaps. Way close for comfort. SMASH CUT TO...

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INT. VEGA - SAME MOMENT

Amelia REELING in her seat, her fingers FUMBLING in her flight bag, for...

AMELIA (V.O.)
...or passed out.

...SMELLING SALTS, she inhales, again, blinks, starts to climb...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The ice happened twice more, and I began to lose heart. Then I remembered Lindbergh's book saying the same thing happened to him.

The sea DISAPPEARS below. Only cloud.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
So I figured, if he's twice as good, I just have to be twice as lucky...

DISSOLVE TO...

HOURS LATER. Amelia seriously fatigued. She breaks through cloud into DAZZLING SUNLIGHT, and blinks, blinded.
AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I'd read that part in George's reception room that first day.
Bless him for keeping me waiting.

The FUEL GAUGE reads EMPTY. She switches on the RESERVE TANK. And as she DROPS back down into opaque clouds...

...she feels something. Her fingertips go to her left shoulder, and come away...

Wet. Slick.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The cockpit gauge was defective.
There was a steady trickle of fuel down my neck.

She looks around helplessly for a way to stem the dripping.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Toss-up whether the bigger danger was running out of gas or going up in a fireball. I had my answer in less than an hour, when...

DISSOLVE TO...

LATER. Amelia beyond exhaustion. Staring fixedly at something we can't see. Until we PAN through the wind screen to the leak in the manifold weld. The BLUE FLAME is startlingly LARGER, now LICKING its way along the surface of the fuselage...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The manifold weld began to separate. I gauged the likelihood of explosion at somewhere between probable and inevitable.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

Arms folded, George stares out his window. He hasn't slept or eaten. PAN to his desk. The phone is OFF the hook. The door opens softly...

SECRETARY (O.S.)
Mr. Putnam? Line three.

He turns and looks at her. The girl's eyes go down and he BOLTS to the phone, SNATCHES the receiver, SLAMS the button...

GEORGE (into phone)
Putnam.
A full beat.

VOICE (O.S.)
Sir, this is Douglas McGuire of the Press Association. I'm sorry to tell you that Miss Earhart's plane has crashed in a field, short of Le Bourget airport.

SMASH CUT TO...

57 EXT. SKY - DAY

A plane swooping downward through cloud and fog. The SOUND of George's call CONTINUES...

GEORGE (O.S.)
Is she all right?

MCGUIRE (O.S.)
If the crash is as reported, sir, I'm afraid not. There were terrible flames.

LOWER, it's dropping fast, maybe too fast, WOBBLING in a crosswind, here comes the GROUND, and...

GEORGE (O.S.)
Are they completely sure it's her plane?

MCGUIRE (O.S.)
Yes sir, absolutely.

...the Vega RIGHTS itself and GLIDES in for as fine a landing as a bumpy meadow could allow. COWS look up as she rolls past, toward...

...one lone astonished FARM WORKER. She cuts her engines, leans from the hatch...

AMELIA
Excuse me, sir. Where am I?

A blink. The truth...

MAN
In Gallagher's pasture.

One more beat.

MAN (CONT'D)
Where are ya supposed to be?
AMELIA
When I left, I was aiming for Paris.

Oh.

MAN (very sad)
Ya missed, y'know.
(points)
It's over there.

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY
MOVIETONE NEWSREEL FOOTAGE of Amelia arriving at New York Harbor to an overwhelming reception.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Amelia Earhart arrives to a tumultuous New York reception after her whirlwind tour of Europe, in which our Queen of the Skies danced with her royal counterpart the Prince of Wales, before meeting both Benito Mussolini and the Pope.

The MAYOR, the GOVERNOR, every dignitary that could get an invitation is there to greet her.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
The second human to fly the Atlantic solo, she is the only one ever to fly it twice. And she set the record, man or woman, for the fastest crossing. Fourteen hours 54 minutes.

As she waves to the crowd...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Now it’s America’s turn to show our girl what we think of her!

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. BACKSTAGE, CONSTITUTIONAL HALL, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT
We are standing in the wings. Through the curtains, we GLIMPSE the eager, packed house in an auditorium. From the stage, a speaker DRONES, but backstage...

...George peeks out at the throng. When he looks back, we see Amelia, her troubled face. The folded newspaper in her hand.
AMELIA (reads)
‘Only an average flyer, she has
pushed herself to the front by
following the tactics of the
feminists...

She looks up to him.

GEORGE
Well, I’m glad someone besides me
finally noticed.

His smile is light. Her eyes watching him. Then...

AMELIA (reads)
‘Using a man-made perfect machine,
tuned by men mechanics, trained by
men flyers, on a course laid out by
a man. By a lucky break she just
managed to make the hop.’

She stares at the paper. His voice comes gently...

GEORGE
Why would you even read that
garbage?

AMELIA
Well, it reminds me how much I owe
to the men of this world. Keeps me
humble.

GEORGE
Good. And remembering how little
you owe me keeps me humble.

And softly...

GEORGE (CONT’D)
He’s a crackpot. Let it go.

He points to the packed hall...

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Cheer up. They’re crazy about you.

AMELIA (quiet)
Well, they’re crazy about
something.

She looks down. Self-doubt flickers.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
What have we really done?
GEORGE
You've made them feel like this.

AMELIA
That's not enough.

GEORGE
Most of them are women. And for them, it's very much enough.

She shakes her head.

AMELIA
The World Telegram said, 'a magnificent display of useless courage.'

GEORGE
The question is. Can any magnificent display of courage be useless?

AMELIA
The point is. Men do it every day. And no one throws a parade.

Ah. Well...

GEORGE
One day closer, then. To the day when they won't think to throw one for you.

She doesn't turn. She doesn't smile.

AMELIA
Reasoning with me. A magnificent display of useless courage.

He nods to himself.

GEORGE
And. It's fun.

From the stage...

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

HAIL TO THE CHIEF strikes up. We hear the deep applause. George begins to straighten Amelia's outfit, touching her hair, as he did long ago on the Copley Hotel roof.
PRESIDENT HOOVER (O.S.)
THE GOLD MEDAL OF THE NATIONAL GEO-
GRAPHIC SOCIETY WAS LAST AWARDED
FIVE YEARS AGO TO COL. CHARLES
LINDBERGH.

George murmurs close to her ear...

GEORGE
If a bomb goes off tonight, the
whole government of the United
States is out there...

PRESIDENT HOOVER (O.S.)
IT HAS NEVER BEEN AWARDED TO A
WOMAN...

GEORGE
Some dog catcher will have to
become President.

She smiles. Just for him.

PRESIDENT HOOVER (O.S.)
UNTIL TONIGHT.

GEORGE (a whisper)
Boy. Imagine if you'd actually
done something.

AMELIA (a whisper)
Imagine.

PRESIDENT HOOVER (O.S.)
IT IS MY HONOR TO WELCOME TO CONSTI-
TUTION HALL, A ROLE MODEL FOR
LADIES EVERYWHERE...

AMELIA
Ladies.

PRESIDENT HOOVER (O.S.)
MISS AMELIA EARHART.

GEORGE
Miss.

She's through the curtain, and the crowd CRACKLES with
APPLAUSE as...

...George stands in the wings. Proud. And concerned.
INT. TRAIN - DAY

A train rumbles through countryside. A private compartment finds Amelia staring out the window. George studying her.

GEORGE (V.O.)
The irony is, I'd finally put that wedding day letter out of my mind. Stopped watching every beautiful accomplished man who crossed her path.

REVERSE ANGLE. Through the glass of our compartment door, a crowd stands jouncing against each other. Gazing at their Queen of the Skies.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
I had a call from the Byrds. They've asked us to dinner Thursday.

AMELIA
Thursday, I'll be in Boston. Meeting Gene Vidal and Paul Collins.

Said lightly. Not even looking at him. While through the glass, it's become quite a tussle.

GEORGE
Don't tell me Gene wants to resurrect Transcontinental?

AMELIA
No, he's starting a shuttle service. Washington, New York, Boston...

One woman goes flying from view, as a younger one gets her place.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Could be a money maker for us. Get me off the lecture grind.

He stares in her eyes. Almost as if looking for something.

GEORGE
Gene's a dashing guy. He could talk anyone into anything.

Their look holds.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
Sounds like a great idea.

DISSOLVE TO...

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INT. RESTAURANT, BOSTON - NIGHT

PAN the dark, elegant restaurant. In a corner by the fireplace, Amelia and her dinner companions are being served lobsters. GENE VIDAL leans to Amelia as he speaks, and she hangs on every word.

GENE
Transcontinental was too ambitious. Too many hops, too tough on the ladies. But the shuttle...

A lean athlete’s body, easy grace in every movement. Strikingly handsome features that convey not only intellect, but kindness and decency.

GENE (CONT’D)
Washington, New York, Boston. I think it’s the future. Will you go there with us?

She's trying to crack her lobster, but can't take her eyes off her host.

AMELIA
What on earth would you need me for?

She's making a real mess of the lobster. Gene notices. PAUL COLLINS doesn't...

PAUL
Hasn't George taught you anything? Lady Lindy, the queen of the air, the best known woman in the entire U.S. of A?

Gene reaches over, as if it were his own plate, and begins cracking her lobster for her. She looks in his eyes and tries to concentrate.

PAUL (CONT’D)
Gene on the poster with you. Legendary athlete at West Point, two events in the Olympics, a top pilot who should be running the skies for Roosevelt when he wins...
Gene looks up at Paul, as if to say: Enough. Now he smiles at Amelia. She blinks, what? Don't you want your lobster? Oh. She starts eating...

GENE (looking only at Amelia)
Thanks, Paul. I think you've even talked me out of it.

DISSOLVE TO...

LATER. Paul has gone. Gene and Amelia are at the bar, huddled over his beer and her Coke.

AMELIA (V.O.)
Gene had a terrible marriage and was separated from his alcoholic adulterous wife. But he was too kind to humiliate her with a divorce...

Gene drains the last of his beer.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
As a result, he was basically a single parent to their young son, Gore.

He glances at his watch. Wow.

GENE
I'm rattling on here, and you've got a morning train.

But she's just staring in his eyes. This could be her last chance to ask...

AMELIA
How's Nina doing?

GENE
Oh, fine.

Really? He smiles, gently.

GENE (CONT’D)
Actually, she hasn't been feeling her best. She'll probably summer in Newport. So my kid's stuck with Dad again.

AMELIA
If you two get bored, I could tag along sometimes.
GENE
You suggesting you're less boring
than I am?

AMELIA
Well, yeh.

He smiles first. Hers is slower, but here it comes.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Any given meal, I can eat a lobster
and have you boys in stitches.

A full beat. He's deciding.

GENE
Gore would love that. He has a
little crush, I'm afraid.

AMELIA
At seven?

GENE
He's eight.

Well, then. He breaks the look. Fishes out some cash for
the bar tab.

GENE (CONT’D)
Listen, Paul and I would be
thrilled to rope you into our
shuttle.

AMELIA
Are you kidding, it's a godsend.
No matter how hard George and I
work, how many lectures we cram in,
there's never enough money for the
next adventure.

He looks at her. Lets the silence sit there. His eyes seem
to convey a depth of understanding.

GENE
The next adventure. What is it?

She shrugs. No idea.

GENE (CONT’D)
Because we're running out of
oceans.

AMELIA
Wish you'd do something about that.
GENE
I'm serious, Amelia.

Her soft smile.

AMELIA
I know. Always.

GENE
The only way you can stay where you are. And be who you are...

Serious indeed.

GENE (CONT’D)
Is to keep feeding the beast.

She can't smile anymore. Because this is the very fear she lives with.

GENE (CONT’D)
And the beast always needs something larger, greater, more daring...

AMELIA (quiet)
He costs money, too.

GENE
The price of fame, literally. Do you and George talk about this?

Silence.

AMELIA
We don't have to.

GENE
With all respect. Yes, you do.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR - LATER

Walking together down the hallway of her hotel. No one speaks. Their thoughts are their own. She reaches her room, finds her key. Opens the door, and...

...turns to him. A brief, direct look. She reaches one hand gently behind his head. Leans up.

Kisses his mouth.

AMELIA (a whisper)
Thank you.

His eyes question.
AMELIA
For understanding.

There is no smile. Without a word, she goes into her room. CLOSES the door behind her.

He stands alone. Do I knock on that door? Then, smiles to himself, and simply...

Walks away.

DISSOLVE TO...

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INT. BANQUET HALL, WASHINGTON - NIGHT

Crowded hall, each table ringed by diners in formal dress. At a table of honor, George sits next to Elinor Smith, chatting comfortably. PAN to the head table...

GEORGE (V.O.)
After Roosevelt won, his wife Eleanor brought the advancement of women to national attention with stunning success.

CLOSE on ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, eating heartily, chatting, laughing with a companion we don't see until...

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
A gutsy gal who rode a bobsled in the Winter Olympics, spent hours each morning on horseback, and carried a pistol on car trips. She possessed boundless energy, a towering intellect...

...we reveal Amelia in a formal satin dress at her side, dishing with the First Lady like the closest of girlfriends.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
...and was Amelia's idol. As it happened, she was obsessed with flying, making Amelia her absolute heroine.

AMELIA
So he hasn't actually forbidden you.

ELEANOR
Franklin doesn't forbid. He just feels it's a waste of my valuable time to learn. Since I can't afford to buy a plane.
They share a look of such mutual understanding, neither has to smile.

AMELIA
The wrong Roosevelt got elected.

ELEANOR
And it will take at least four years to correct the mistake.

Keeps eating.

ELEANOR (CONT’D)
I did ask about aviation, but he hasn't decided on the structure yet. It might be under the Bureau of Commerce.

AMELIA
I think the structure may be less important than the man chosen to run it.

Said casually, looking at her plate.

ELEANOR
My hearing is failing. I missed the words ‘or woman,’ which you undoubtedly added after, or perhaps before, the word ‘man.’

AMELIA
This could be one of those rare instances. When the most accomplished candidate. Turns out to be male.

Glances up for the reaction.

ELEANOR
How exciting. I love finding the exception that proves the rule. Is it a name I know?

Amelia's straight gaze. Her small smile.

AMELIA
How do you feel about flying at night?

Eleanor's eyes register the change of topic. Rolling with it...

ELEANOR
I've never done it. Franklin finds it dangerous.
AMELIA
Outstanding.

INT. CONDOR AIRLINER - LATER
Raucous party in the small cabin, hosted by George and fueled by champagne. PAN slowly to...

...the cockpit. Amelia at the controls in her evening dress and formal gloves. Eleanor in the co-pilot's seat, awestruck by the brilliant starry night. Amelia glances over, moved by her friend's almost childlike wonder.

AMELIA (softly)
Put your hands on the wheel.

Eleanor looks over. Are you serious?

AMELIA
It's dual controls. No one will ever know.

Hesitation.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Don't you trust me?

And slowly, Eleanor's fingers close on her wheel. Amelia's hands come away from hers.

ELEANOR
Dear God.

The Condor purrs along through the night air. The moon bobs slightly off to one side. Eleanor's eyes are swimming with the thrill of this.

AMELIA
I feel like a Coke. Can I get you something?

And stands up. Only the trace of her smile as the pilot's eyes WIDEN in absolute shock.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Do try not to hit the ground.

DISSOLVE TO...

INT. WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY
A sea of press, quiet, poised, attentive. REVERSE ANGLE to...
...CLOSE on a seated Roosevelt before a bank of microphones.

ROOSEVELT
Today, we proudly announce an appointment critical to America's commerce, and to its role as technology's leader in the Twentieth Century.


ROOSEVELT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Gene Vidal is an obvious and perfect choice as our first Director of Commerce's Aeronautics Branch. His extraordinary credentials include...

DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. PUTNAM HOME, RYE - EVENING
A taxi slowly pulls up to the home we know. Warmly lit, music playing from within. Gene climbs from the cab, as yard lights go ON.

As Gene starts up the path, the front door opens and Amelia BURSTS into the night, RUNNING to Gene, JUMPING INTO his arms, HUGGING him in her delight. We PULL BACK to...

George watching it all from the doorway. His easy smile seems comfortably in place, as...

...Amelia walks Gene up the path, her arm around his waist, talking excitedly, flushed as a schoolgirl. As they reach the door...

George is the picture of calm and dignity. He beams and CLASPS Gene's hand. Throws an arm around his shoulder as Amelia leads them inside.

The door closes. We hear laughter.

EXT. GARDEN, RYE - DAY
Amelia on her knees, tending to her garden. She seems happy and filled with energy. George comes and kneels beside her. Starts weeding.

AMELIA
Have I told you what a perfect job you did on the peonies? They're miraculous.
GEORGE (working)
You have, actually. Twice.

AMELIA
Sorry.

GEORGE
It's all right. You've been distracted lately.

No spin on that. If anything, the tone is kind.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Listen, I've put together a month in Europe. Close some foreign licensing deals, open new markets...

She doesn't look up.

AMELIA
When are you leaving?

GEORGE
Thing is. I'd like you to come.

She stiffens only slightly. Can he sense it?

AMELIA
I don't really see how I can.

GEORGE
I've talked to the promoters, they'll switch some lecture dates for us.

Now he's looking at her profile. Saddened, if not surprised, by what he sees.

AMELIA
Well, it's not just that. There's my work on the shuttle, we're at a critical stage, and...I've just started as Gene's consultant at the Aeronautics Branch...

She knows he's watching. Shakes her head. Keeps on working.

GEORGE
Normally, I'd be worried about leaving you here alone. But I suppose that won't be a problem, will it?

She stops now. Looks up at him. If he wants a direct conversation, he can have it.
AMELIA
What are you trying to say?

GEORGE
I think I've just said it.

A long held look. Neither backing away. Sadness on both sides.

GEORGE (softly)
Is there anything you want to say?

She sighs. Her fingers reach out, rub his hand with affection.

AMELIA
I can't think of anything helpful.

He nods. Well, then. Rises slowly...

Walks back toward the house, his garden tools forgotten. She stares after him.

He disappears into the house. She's still staring.

DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. LOS ANGELES COLISEUM - DAY

MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL FOOTAGE introduced by its theme. A stadium in brilliant sunlight, filled with more than 100,000 people.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
Los Angeles, California. The Tenth Olympics of the modern era kick off, as movie stars mingle with ordinary Joes.

On the track, WOMEN RUN the 100 meter high hurdles as every throat CHEERS.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Here's the gold medal run of the world's best woman athlete, Babe Didrickson. Cheered on by the most celebrated woman of today...

TIGHT INSERT of Amelia with Gene and 8-year-old GORE, all applauding excitedly.
ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
...that's right, Amelia Earhart.
Hollywood glamour, American winners,
and wait til our boys warm up for
their action.

The camera lingers as Amelia says something to Gore. They
look like a family.

INT. GEORGE’S OFFICE, NEW YORK – DUSK

CLOSE on George alone in his office. He goes to the door,
LOCKS it. His face is drawn, grim.

GEORGE (V.O.)
By this time, I had a side job as
chairman of the editorial board of
Paramount Pictures. So Amelia and
I bought a little place in Los
Angeles.

He goes slowly back to his desk. On it, sits a large
cardboard CARTON.

GEORGE (V.O.)
She was out there, preparing for a
flight, when our home in Rye burned
to the ground.

We SEE that the contents of the box, papers, small objects,
have been SINGED or CHARRED. He stares into it.

GEORGE (V.O.)
We both cried when I called to tell
her. She asked to come be with me.
But I insisted she stay there, to
keep on schedule for her flight.

He reaches into the box...

GEORGE (V.O.)
So many treasures lost. Letters
and poems she’d written. I poured
through the rubble...

INT. LOS ANGELES HOME – DAY

Amelia curled up on the sofa of a cozy, pleasant little home.
The doors are open to the patio and yard. Winter is
different here. Tropical flowers, fruit trees in bloom. The
phone RINGS and she picks it up quickly, knowing it's George.
AMELIA (softly)

Hi.  
(beat)
Yeh.  What's today been like?  You still okay?

INTERCUT George at his office.  He's standing at the window, phone in one hand, single sheet of paper in the other.  Like the other objects in the box, it is partially singed.

GEORGE
I found something you'd written.

Draws a breath.  Reads...

GEORGE (reading)
'To touch your hand or see your face today is joy.  Your casual presence in a room recalls the stars that watched us as we lay.

BACK to Amelia.  Tears fill her eyes.

GEORGE (reading)
I mark you in the moving crowd
And see again those stars a warm night lent us long ago.  We loved so then.  We love so now.

INTERCUT George.  His eyes are dry.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Thank you for writing that.

A beat.  His voice still softer...

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Even though I'd never seen it.

HOLD on him.  The pain of what that must mean.  And...

BACK TO LOS ANGELES

Her lips are parted.  She's searching for words.

AMELIA
I suppose I thought.  It was too revealing.

WIDEN ANGLE.  Gene enters the room with a drink in his hand and sits down next to her, concerned by her obvious distress.

AMELIA (into the phone)
I'm so glad you have it now.  
(listens)
(MORE)
AMELIA (cont'd)

Of course. Me, too. I'll call you later.

She hangs up slowly. The tears begin to fall. She looks at Gene helplessly. Then stands without a word.

Walks out into the yard.

DISSOLVE TO...

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EXT. NEWARK AIRPORT - NEWSREEL FOOTAGE - NIGHT

Spectators at Newark Airport. A plane CIRCLES the field as FLOOD LIGHTS FLASH ON, and the crowd begins to CHEER. Arcing in now for a landing. Smooth trajectory.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The odyssey began in Honolulu when she became the first person, man or woman, to fly solo over half the Pacific to California.

Touching down, the cheering CROWD held back by police. As Amelia taxies to a stop, the crowd BREAKS THROUGH police lines and SURGES toward the plane.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Then, the first human to solo from California to Mexico City. Followed by her daring solo across the Gulf. As she passed over Washington, D.C., she eclipsed the time of a certain previous flight, from 27 hours to 13 hours.

Amelia hops down from the plane, grinning and waving. She is surrounded by adoring fans.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
The pilot of that previous flight? Some guy named Lindbergh.

The JOSTLING of the crowd gets out of control, the police can’t protect her as she is SWEPT ALONG by the mob, beaming, laughing, enjoying it all.

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INT. MAYFLOWER HOTEL BAR, WASHINGTON, D.C. - NIGHT

Dark little piano bar. They sit in a quiet corner, comfortable in silence. Gene with his martini, Amelia with her Coke. She's shelling peanuts from a bowl, popping some in her mouth, passing a few over to him.
GENE
If you don't drink, why do you come to bars?

AMELIA
Must be the ambience. And the nuts.

GENE
What worries me is, in some of these bars the nuts are the ambience. Specially when they make a pass at you.

She chews, staring at him.

AMELIA
Any guy would have to be nuts to do that. I'm considerable trouble, if you haven't noticed.

GENE
You keep advertising that, but I'm still waiting to see it.

She looks down at her fingers as they shell. Barely audible...

AMELIA
You'll see it.

GENE
Well, here's your chance. I'm taking Gore to the conference in Bermuda. He wants you to come.

AMELIA
Gore, huh?

GENE
Sure. I'm completely indifferent.

AMELIA
I wish.

Do you?

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Would make life simpler.

She throws a peanut which BOINKS off his face. He smiles a suddenly goofy, very non-elegant smile.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Actually, I'll be in Indiana. Edward Elliot of Purdue wants (MORE)
AMELIA (cont'd)
me to build a women's careers department there.

Really? He likes that.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
I'll be back and forth. When I'm there, I've asked to stay in the dorm with the girls.

GENE
That's a wonderful idea. Especially now.

Something in the way he said that.

AMELIA
What's special about now?

GENE
A good time for some positive press about you as a role model.

Her eyes harden. Whatever do you mean?

GENE (CONT'D)
You don't read the papers?

AMELIA
Not unless someone makes me.

GENE
Well, someone should. Because they're all saying you took recklessly dangerous solo flights for no earthly purpose except publicity. Meaning, money.

Dead. Silence.

GENE (CONT'D)
They also harp on a growing list of products that you commercially endorse.

AMELIA
How thoughtless of me to be doing all this in a society where no one else is interested in making money. Present company included.

He's not afraid of her.
GENE
Look, George had you taking money from the sugar cartel for the Hawaii flight, the Mexican Government for theirs, he's selling commemorative stamps which you carried on the flights...

AMELIA
If this is about George, just say so. Because we made those calls, and we includes me.

GENE
I'm sorry I said it that way. This is actually about you, because I'm picking a fight, apparently a useless one, for the benefit of someone I care about.

AMELIA
And what's your point? Women are held to some higher standard? Bankers and industrialists are admired for succeeding, but women are just considered selfish and grasping?

GENE (quietly)
Of course they are.

AMELIA
Well, let's change that, shall we? Or would you just prefer to adopt it, since groveling would be easier.

Staring at each other.

GENE
If you want to make money, my guess is that people viewing you as Lady Lindy, America's Sweetheart of the Skies, the wife/mother/daughter they all wished they had. Would be helpful.

AMELIA
Thanks for the tip.

GENE
Thanks for not being defensive.

Full beat.
AMELIA
Well, I'm an open-minded girl. And to prove it, I'm hereby resigning as your consultant at the Aeronautics Branch.

She throws some money on the table for the drinks.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
The public linking of our names does more harm to that image of mine than everything else put together.

She stands up.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Next time you read the papers. Try reading between the lines.

Walks out. Gene makes no move to follow. He's said his piece.

DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. ROSE GARDEN, WHITE HOUSE - DAY

MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL FOOTAGE introduced by its theme. Against a backdrop of flowerbeds, Amelia is flanked by four WOMEN with conservative hats and middle-aged gravitas. The photographers edge closer.

AMELIA
I came to Washington today with the National Women's Party, to ask the President for his aid in passing the Lucretia Mott Amendment for equal rights.

She waits for the press to quiet.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
And that's because I haven't needed it.

The winsome smile.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I'm the lucky one. Our Department of Commerce shows no prejudice in issuing licenses to fly. A pilot is a pilot.

And now it fades.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
How about giving the rest of our
women. The ones who can be
productive for their families and
for our nation an equal break?

She is not defiant. Gentle and strong.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
They are your sisters and your
daughters. They are your wives.
And fellas...

The smallest shake of her head.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
You've no excuse. And you know it.

INT. WOMEN'S DORMITORY, PURDUE UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

Co-Eds gathered in the common room in robes and nightgowns. They fill the old couches, the mismatched easy chairs, curl up in blankets on the floor. PAN TO...

...Amelia in flannel pajamas, sitting on the grand piano, pointing to the next question among the many raised hands.

CO-ED
Okay, it's all well and good to
tell us to study whatever we want,
and work at whatever we want, and
not give a darn about what the
world of men think...

AMELIA
...including them wanting us to say
darn instead of damn.

Laughter. The girl flushes a little, her point is a crucial one...

CO-ED
But what about those of us who are
getting married when we graduate?
What advice do you have for us?

AMELIA
Don't.

She meant that. And no one is laughing now.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
Build your career first. And, surprisingly, that's the best thing you can do for your eventual marriage.

So many eager faces, so many disturbed ones.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Look. It starts with a strong sexual attraction, that the woman assumes must be love.

Some heads are nodding. Some eyes suspicious.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Everything works until the first financial crisis jars the man's confidence and threatens the woman's security. Why...?

She looks from one to the next.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Because she can't help. All she can be is dependent. Because that is what she's been trained to be.

A phone RINGS. One of the girls snatches it up to cut off the interruption.

CO-ED #2 (hushed)
Common room. Oh. Sure.
(hand over phone, to Amelia)
He says he's the man in your life.

Amelia hops off the piano. There are plenty of curious faces.

AMELIA
Trust me. Only a husband talks like that.

In their laughter, she goes to the phone. EVERYBODY hangs on every word of...

AMELIA (into the phone)
Yes? Yes. Yes... (hand over phone, to the girls)
They love when we say 'yes.'

Laughter.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
I'm flying in Tuesday. Yes, of course, I'll make time.
(beat)
Me, too.
(beat)
Me, too. Thanks for the roses.

She hangs up. Turns to her adoring pupils, and drops a curtsy. Ta-da! They APPLAUD. She stares at them. As if deciding whether to say...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Can you women keep a secret?

They can. And boy, do they want to hear one.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Well, it’s no secret that I’m a bit driven, some might say obsessive, about my little flying adventures...

They are nodding, wide-eyed, go on.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I’ve decided to embark on easily the most exciting, possibly craziest, ever...

They hold their breath.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I’m going to fly. Around the world.

A frozen beat for them to even absorb this. They BURST into WILD APPLAUSE, Amelia beaming, as we DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. PARK AVENUE, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Amelia and George, bundled against the cold, walking Park Avenue hand in hand. Christmas decorations, bright lights. A good mood prevails.

AMELIA
Are you going to tell me your surprise, or do I have to get physical?

GEORGE
Boy, that is the last thing I'd want.

Well, then?
GEORGE (CONT’D)
I only thought that if you're serious about this around-the-world nonsense. It might be handy to have a plane to fly in.

AMELIA
Except it would have to be an Electra, and they cost...

GEORGE
...$36,000. After a generous discount from Lockheed.

AMELIA
May as well be a billion.

GEORGE
...not to mention at least another 36 to get it modified and ready.

She glances at him. He looks awfully smug.

AMELIA
And your surprise is, you robbed a bank.

GEORGE
Actually. A university.

They stop. What on earth...?

GEORGE (CONT’D)
I’ve sort of persuaded Ed Elliot to create an Amelia Earhart Fund for Aeronautical Research at Purdue. And suggested a budget item of...

He shrugs.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
...oh, eighty grand. For a suitable ‘flying laboratory.’

Her eyes just bug out. No! He nods, slowly. Uh-huh. And she...

...THROWS her arms around his neck, KISSING him hard enough to startle passersby. It only makes him chuckle.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
As I said, I’ve sort of persuaded Ed. There are a bunch of trustees and donors, tho. We have to get them on board.
AMELIA
Think I could help?

He looks in her eyes.

GEORGE
Nah.

She grins.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
By the way. That's not the surprise.

It's not? Uh-uh. And he glances to...

...the window of the GALLERY they've stopped at. She sees a magnificently carved CHEST. On a crest in the front: AE. We PAN the surface, to see planes, oceans, a shamrock for the Londonderry landing, dozens more symbols of her triumphs, and in a bottom corner, looking up at all of this in wonder...

...a small cat. In a long frock coat.

GEORGE (a whisper)
Merry Christmas.

Her tears just come. She's standing on Park Avenue and she can't do anything about it. He reaches a tender hand...

...and strokes her hair. He is her hero. See it in her eyes.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Can't wait to see what you got me.

She sniffs.

AMELIA
Cat food. A whole case.

INT. HOME, RYE - DAY

Amelia at her writing desk. Determined, focused. She begins to write...

AMELIA (O.S.)
Dear Mr. President: Some time ago I told you and Mrs. Roosevelt about my confidential plans for a world flight. The chief problem is the jump westward from Honolulu...

As she writes, DISSOLVE TO...
INT. DINING ROOM, PURDUE UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

A glittering table surrounded by high rollers. George and President Elliot sit on either side of Amelia, who has risen to speak.

AMELIA
As President Elliot has said, it would be a shining adventure, beckoning with new experiences. Making me more useful to the program here at Purdue.

She looks into the eyes of each in turn...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
It is much more. I believe that women should do for themselves what men have done - and occasionally what men have not.

Yes?

AMELIA (CONT’D)
This might encourage other women toward greater independence of thought and action. And I know how deeply you gentlemen desire that.

There is gentle laughter. Amelia reacts in mock surprise.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I know, of course, from my chats earlier in the evening. With each of your wives.

More laughter. Applause from a wife, then the others, then all.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
In that spirit, I want each of you to reach for your checkbooks...

She regards their amusement. And losing none of the warmth of her own smile...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I mean that quite literally. This is an opportunity for me to exhibit the quality my husband admires most.

George and Amelia gaze at each other.
INT. HANGAR - DAY

The LOCKHEED ELECTRA, a sleek state-of-the-art aircraft with its gleaming metallic surface, nose up in the center of a huge space. Its engines are on hoists, being worked on by a team of MECHANICS.

Eight-year-old Gore gazes up, as if he has never seen anything quite so wondrous. Amelia and Gene watch, with barely suppressed smiles. He's in a suit. She's in grease-stained overalls from working with the mechanics.

GORE
So you'd be the first one, right? You always like that.

First one?

GORE (CONT’D)
To fly around the world.

AMELIA
Well, there's Magellan, 400 years ago. Actually, he didn't make it. And he died. And he used a boat.

GORE
So it's almost the same, except it's completely different.

AMELIA
Pretty much.

He glowers at her. She glowers back.

GENE
There are men who say they flew around the world, but they didn't fly around all of it.

GORE
Because at higher latitudes, it's a short trip. At the North Pole, you just spin in a circle and you've gone around the world.

AMELIA
So why are you asking? Just to show how smart you are?

GORE
Pretty much.
Now he's grinning. She just glowers harder.

GORE (CONT’D)
The only way to really fly around the world is to fly the entire circumference of 27,000 miles. Like at the equator.

AMELIA
No one's tried it. You think I should?

No answer.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Dare me.

GORE
Okay.

AMELIA
Okay.

Is she serious? She seems to be.

GENE
Ask her about the Pacific. The maximum range of the Electra is 4000 miles. And the closest land west of Honolulu is farther than that.

Gore looks to her. Well?

AMELIA
I'll have to refuel.

GORE
Where?

AMELIA
In the air. One plane to another.

The boy is staring at her now. Staring.

GORE
You're really going to do all this, aren't you?

AMELIA
Well, don't you think I can?

A beat.

GORE
I guess we'll find out.
Another.

AMELIA
Pretty much.

HOLD on Gene. He smiles at his kid...

GENE
Go out to the car and get Sara. Ask if she'll take you for an ice cream. Okay?

The boy knows he's being dismissed. Looks from his dad to Amelia, who steps forward to give him a hug and a kiss.

AMELIA
We'll play some cards before you leave.

Okay, then. He waves. One more glance at dad, and Gore goes. Gene gestures for Amelia to come with him, away from the mechanics. What's up? But he's already walking to...

...a little folding table, off in a corner. She follows. Sits. Well...?

GENE
You can't refuel in the air.

Just like that.

AMELIA
Is that an opinion or an order?

His rueful smile.

GENE
The only good thing about losing our former relationship is I feel a little freer to tell you when you're being completely crazy.

AMELIA
Oh, I bet there are more advantages than just that.

No one's backing down on this.

GENE
You're not a good enough pilot to do mid-air refueling. You will not be able to control the Electra for that docking maneuver for that amount of time.
AMELIA
I've taken bigger risks.

GENE
I've noticed. Don't be so proud of it.

He reaches into a pocket. Pulls out a folded sheet of paper. It opens to reveal a MAP of the Pacific. A dot is CIRCLED in red.

GENE (CONT’D)
This is Howland Island. It's halfway between Honolulu and New Guinea. It has no elevation, no trees, it's a mile wide and a mile and a half long. Hardly anyone knows or cares that it exists.

AMELIA
It's your vacation home.

GENE
We're colonizing it, because when the Japanese make their move, we're going to need a refueling strip there.

She blinks. The Japanese.

GENE (CONT’D)
Try reading the newspapers between the lines. We haven't started building the runways yet. Maybe if someone I knew could get the President's attention...

She stares at the map. The dot.

GENE (CONT’D)
It's really tiny, a grain of sand in the middle of a thousand miles of nowhere.

Her eyes are clicking through a calculus of their own.

GENE (CONT’D)
You'd need a first-class navigator for that leg. Which means the trip can't be entirely solo.

And softly...

GENE (CONT’D)
Can you handle that?
No answer. He waits without saying a word.

AMELIA (softly back)
Don't rush me. I'm thinking.

EXT. COAST GUARD STATION, LOS ANGELES - MORNING

A Coast Guard station overlooking the Pacific. A lone woman leans on a railing. From the station, a MAN emerges, he has...

...a thermos and two large mugs. He pours steaming coffee into each, and brings them to the woman at the rail. She has turned to study him as he approaches.

AMELIA
Hullo, Fred. It's good to meet you.

She holds out her hand. He juggles the mugs, so he can shake it. Strong look in each other's eyes. Hands her a mug...

FRED
I hear you like your coffee black.

AMELIA
This time of day, I like it with bacon and eggs.

His slight grin. A handsome guy.

FRED
Be right back.

AMELIA
Over easy on the eggs. Your job could depend on it.

Silence between them. Comfortable smiles.

FRED
Are we sizing me up?

And, of course, this is exactly what she's doing.

AMELIA
I'm told that mid-air refueling would be beyond my abilities.

FRED
Maybe, maybe not. 20% it works. 20% you crash. 60% you don't get the fuel, so you're cooked anyway.
AMELIA
Better odds of hitting that island?

FRED
How do you feel about 100%?

Watching his eyes as he says that. Evaluating.

AMELIA
Even with cloud cover?

FRED
I've crossed the Pacific by air 18 times. Pan Am told you I'm the best celestial navigator they've ever seen.

AMELIA
They did.

FRED
Someone else told you I have a drinking problem. Which is a big part of why we're here, yes?

No answer.

FRED (CONT’D)
Pan Am will tell you. Everyone I ever worked for will tell you. Nothing's interfered with my performance. Not once.

AMELIA
My dad drank. He lied all the time. Rest his soul.

FRED
You trusted Bill Stultz. That worked out. Rest his soul.

AMELIA
Bill just had to find Europe. We're looking for something less than two miles long, with nothing higher on it than 18 feet.

He shakes his head.

FRED
That's what you're looking for. I'm looking for coordinates on a map. And if it doesn't work...

He spreads his large hands...
FRED (CONT’D)
Money-back guarantee.

She holds the look.

AMELIA (softly)
Hey. How can I lose?

INT. BARCLAY HOTEL, NEW YORK - DAY

Amelia at a bank of microphones, smiling, modest, comfortable. George and Fred stand back to one side. FLASHBULBS go crazy, NEWSREEL cameras churn.

AMELIA
Did I pressure the navy to build a landing strip at Howland Island? How exactly would I do that? Threaten not to enlist?

Laughter in the room. More flashes.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
The airstrip has been planned for a long time. I was thrilled to learn it will be ready in time for my flight. The navy has been wonderful, as always.

REPORTER #1
Amelia, what do you say to the charges that your husband is pulling the strings, pressuring you into this around-the-world flight to make a financial killing?

George BOLTS forward to the microphones, looks at his wife with astonishment...

GEORGE
Wait a minute, you're flying around the world? Don't you know a woman's place is in the home??

The press ROARS with laughter.

REPORTER #2
George, why don't you go along this time? Watch over the little woman.

GEORGE
I begged to go. But it seems that between 185 pounds of husband and 185 pounds of fuel, I lost out.
Gazes at his wife.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
At least, I think that's what all
the laughter meant.

He gives her a kiss. Thirty FLASHES record it. As he steps
back...

REPORTER #3
Experts are saying that this
‘flying laboratory’ is a sham.
There's nothing to be learned for
aviation, and you're just in this
for the money.

The place gets really quiet.

AMELIA
Who am I to argue with ‘experts?’
I'll just give you my plain old
common-sense thinking on this...

Pens come up, cameras jockey for position. This is what
they're waiting for. She holds up one finger. First...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
We may not learn much about the
plane, but we will about the pilot.
Endurance over a month's journey,
 flying nearly every day. Response
to stress, crises. I think that
will make a contribution.

Holds up a second finger. Two...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I'm a working stiff like all of
you. I don't apologize for the
fact that I need money to live.
And to keep financing my flying,
which is what I love. I think
that's a positive example for
women.

Third finger. Three...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I'm not doing this as a scientist.
I'm a flyer, boys, pursuing my
passion. For the fun of it. The
fun of it. Something I recommend
as a healthy motive for women.

A wink. A shrug...
AMELIA (CONT’D)
...and maybe even some men.

EXT. LUKE FIELD, HONOLULU - SUNRISE

The Electra ready to go in first light, engines humming. Amelia walking alone toward the plane.

SUPERIMPOSE: LUKE FIELD, HONOLULU. MARCH 20, 1937.

She waves goodbye to crew and press. Climbs the steps to be welcomed by Fred's hand gently pulling her aboard. The door CLOSES. We see Amelia and Fred in the cockpit. He checks a gauge.

FRED
Lovely. We've got so much fuel we can't possibly get off the ground. Much safer than flying.

AMELIA
Well, we need enough for a third pass at Howland. After you miss it the first couple times around.

Ah.

FRED
Good thinking.

The runway lights go ON, and...

GEORGE (V.O.)
We were, all of us, fearful about that landing. No one guessed...

Amelia ROARS OFF, gathering SPEED.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
...it would be the take-off.

The Electra SUDDENLY VEERS TO THE RIGHT, and we SMASH CUT TO...

INT. ELECTRA

Amelia THROTTLING DOWN the left engine. The plane SWINGING WILDLY to the left, as...
EXT./INT. ELECTRA

...the RIGHT WHEEL COLLAPSES, the plane SPINS TO THE LEFT and we INTERCUT between the cockpit and the runway as the Electra...

...CAREENS MADLY for a thousand feet, Amelia CUTTING THE SWITCHES to the engines, fighting for control, PROPELLERS SMASHED by the concrete runway, SPARKS FLYING IN EVERY DIRECTION...

INTERCUT. Oakland Airport. George and his retinue waiting. A phone RINGING. Someone takes the call, his face freezes, he looks wildly around to...

...George, who's there, SNATCHING the receiver.

VOICE (O.S.)
Have you heard? They crashed, the ship's in flames.

SMASH CUT to the cockpit, the Electra SPINNING crazily on its belly, SPARKS EVERYWHERE, the plane suddenly comes...

...to a BONE-JARRING STOP. The right MOTOR is pushed up INTO its wing, which itself has BUCKLED, the stabilizer BENT, the left wing extends UPWARD from scraping the runway, the landing gear no longer exists.

SIRENS SCREAM as fire trucks and ambulances race toward them. Amelia is ashen, disbelieving. Next to her, a gentle...

FRED
Good reaction, cutting the switch. You saved our ass.

She doesn't even hear, THROWING open the cockpit, WAVING to signal they're all right, we SMASH CUT TO...

EXT. OAKLAND AIRPORT - DAY

George wandering numbly on the airfield, as someone RUNS LIKE CRAZY from the office, shouting...

MAN
NO FIRE! NO FIRE, FALSE REPORT! NO ONE HURT!

George alone on the tarmac. Stops in his tracks. Now he can cry.
EXT. GARDEN, LOS ANGELES HOME - ALMOST SUNRISE

Two figures in a garden, walking in light so spare they are silhouettes. Her head is down. His hands are in his pockets. We CLOSE on them as she fingers a blossom, we now see she is miserable, fighting absolute despair.

GEORGE
Three weeks, she'll be good as new.
It's a remarkable crew. The best that...

He stops. Realizing where he was going. She never looks up.

AMELIA
...the best that money can buy. I just can't believe I've done this to us. All the money wasted that's never coming back.

GEORGE
You cut the engines. It would have cost a bundle more to replace a burned-up plane. Not to mention pilot.

She shakes her head. No.

AMELIA
I overreacted. The plane was too heavy, I should have used the rudder pedal instead of the throttle.

Tears stand in her eyes. She is so ashamed and remorseful. He lets it stay silent as they walk. Then...

GEORGE
It's only money, we'll figure it out. We always do.

AMELIA
I'll make it back and more, I promise. The book sales, the lectures, this flight will keep us going another three years.

GEORGE
Maybe. Or...

AMELIA
No, it will. Our prices, our sales, are going to double.
(MORE)
AMELIA (cont'd)
This showed them how dangerous it all is, they were taking it for granted...
(sniffles)
They thought I was competent.

GEORGE (softly)
I meant. Or maybe we can quit.

She looks over. Not sure if...

AMELIA
You mean after.

GEORGE
Or. Even now.

A strong smile. He nods. We could.

AMELIA
So my exit would be a stupid crash.
And withdrawing from a world-publicized attempt to finally do something no man had done before.

GEORGE
Yeh. That. And it would be fine with me.

Her eyes overwhelmed by his offer. Her voice soft with...

AMELIA
But that's because you're an idiot.

GEORGE
Lucky for you.

A held beat.

AMELIA
And what if it’s not something I have to show the world?

Hmmn?

AMELIA
What if it’s something I have to show me.

He has no answer for that. Takes her hand. They head toward the house.

87 INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

Massive enclosed space. The rebuilt Electra in pieces at various work stations, being perfected by teams of mechanics.
The whirr and clang of tools. Amelia and George confer with one foreman, as George sees something. He touches her arm, points in our direction. REVERSE ANGLE as she sees...

...Gene has entered the hangar. Stands by the folding table we've seen before.

GEORGE
Have fun.

AMELIA
Who let you off the hook on this?

She takes his hand firmly and together they cross the hangar toward Gene. He smiles, unfolds a third chair. As they arrive, Amelia steps forward...

...kisses Gene on the cheek. George shakes his hand.

GENE
Thanks for letting me come.

As they sit, Gene looks from one to the other.

GENE (CONT’D)
I guess I'm already outvoted.

GEORGE
She'd outvote you all by herself. She does it to me every day.

Gene's smile can't mask the concern in his eyes.

AMELIA
I don't have a choice. I have to reverse my route and fly east. If I go west now, I'm risking hurricanes in the Caribbean and monsoons in Africa...

GENE
But you're flying Howland last, when you're exhausted.

She knows this. In the silence...

GEORGE
Gene, this way our first leg is Oakland to Miami. It's a shakedown to make sure the plane is right. That's crucial.

Gene nods, slowly. His eyes still locked on her.
GENE
Maybe I'm obsessing on Howland because it was my bright idea, and I'd feel responsible if...

AMELIA
Well, if I do pop off, I'll try to make it somewhere that's not your fault.

GENE
I'd appreciate that.

Draws a breath.

GENE (CONT'D)
You miss that island. You'll be out of fuel, with 2000 miles to go.

AMELIA
But I'll have Fred so I won't miss. In fact, I'm taking Fred along for this whole trip.

Surprisingly, he doesn't seem to like this. She smiles.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Giving up my little arrogance about solo. Safety first, yes?

But he's still unhappy. She waits for him to say.

GENE
You and Fred alone for a month...

AMELIA
If you're worried about his drinking, I'll deal with it.

Straight look.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I can handle Fred.

And now we get a sense of exactly what does worry him. He glances to George...

GENE
How do you feel?

GEORGE
Tip-top. Every little girl needs a man around. Even strong girls like ours, hmmn?

A very direct gaze. Words neither said nor needed.
GEORGE (CONT’D)
She can handle us. She can handle Fred.

A full beat. The look holds between the men.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
And thanks for being here. You've always had Amelia's best interests at heart.

The look still unbroken.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
And, for that. I'm grateful.

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EXT. MIAMI AIRPORT - DAY - NEWSREEL FOOTAGE
Amelia and George crossing the tarmac from the Electra, waving to the crowd.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
The legendary Amelia Earhart lands in Miami, completing the first and easiest leg of her around-the-world equatorial flight. A feat no man has ever attempted. That’s hubby George with her, he gets off here.

Behind them, coat slung casually across his shoulder, is Fred. Waving like he belongs.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
That handsome guy behind them isn’t a movie star. Nope, it’s navigator Fred Noonan, who will be Amelia’s sole companion on the exotic odyssey...

CLOSE on the rugged smile.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Hey, where does a guy go to apply for a job like that?

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EXT. BEACH, MIAMI - DUSK
The pastel sky has darkened along the row of legendary hotels. At first, we can barely find them at the water's edge. CLOSE to see her sitting where the surf can't quite reach her toes. He's lying back, hands cradling his head. Watching the stars come out. Nothing said. Then...
AMELIA
I’ll be flying sky no one’s ever been in. You made that happen.

She looks down to his easy smile.

GEORGE
Hate to think where you’d be without me.

She smiles back. Tenderness we don’t always see.

AMELIA
I’ll try to make you proud.

GEORGE
You did that long, long ago. Only one person left to prove yourself to. Just make sure you do it.

A beat. The doubt comes.

AMELIA
And then what?

GEORGE
Then the best part. The future.

She stares in his eyes. Leans to him.

AMELIA (a whisper)
Oh yeh. That.

She brings her hands to his face. Her mouth to his. Deep. Longing. Her body sinks into him.

LONG ANGLE. Two alone. Only each other.

EXT. MIAMI AIRPORT - DAY

LONG ANGLE. From the open door of a hangar we see Amelia and George facing reporters in front of the idling Electra. She sits on the wing, he’s just beneath her.

GEORGE (V.O.)
The radio problems crept up on us over time.

SUPERIMPOSE: MIAMI AIRPORT. JUNE 1.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
The marine 500 kilocycle radio was left in Oakland. Amelia said she (MORE)
and Fred were both amateurs at Morse Code, so the radio wasn't worth what it weighed.

Amelia has made the boys laugh. George laughs with them.

The 250 foot trailing auxiliary antenna, she would leave behind in Miami. Too heavy, not important.

FLASHES now. And plenty of them. She reaches down to take George's hand and HOPS down from the wing. More FLASHES...

Then, suddenly our remaining radio couldn't reach its designated frequencies. Pan Am hurriedly replaced the main antennae. And we thought all was well.

Amelia and George coming toward us now, hand in hand, leaving the press behind. Into...

The hangar. In shadow here. The world far away, she takes his hands. A silence.

Race you to California. I'll go west. Five bucks?

If you'll fly the plane. Make it twenty.

And then...

Simpkin keeps many mice at one time. Each under a different teacup.

Wow. He's finally going to hear this.

We're saying he's cruel?

No.

Controlling?

Insecure.
Ah. The light begins to dawn.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
He needs the illusion of activity
to feel comfortable. That he's
preparing for all contingencies.

George has to grin.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
That he has more irons in the
fire than anyone knows.

GEORGE
Especially the mice.

AMELIA
Exactly. Each poor mouse thinks
it's all about her.

Staring at each other.

GEORGE
And one of them. Is right.

AMELIA (a murmur)
She knows.

And then...

GEORGE
I want you to give me something.

He’s never sounded quite like this before.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Tell me this is your last flight.

Her eyes flicker. Look down. A whispered...

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Promise.

And when the eyes come up.

AMELIA
Don’t you know I couldn’t? Even if
part of me wanted to. Very, very
much.

The look holds.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
How can we be anything. But what
we are?
There is no answer. She leans up into a slow kiss.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I do love you.

Something in her serious face makes him smile.

GEORGE
Well, I love you back.

AMELIA
Thanks.

Takes a step back toward the hangar door. One hand slightly up, stay here. Then, the smile he's waited for.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
See ya.

He smiles back. She turns and heads out toward the idling plane. She seems small, even fragile, alone on the tarmac.

STAY with George. Watching her go.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO...

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EXT./INT. MONTAGE
SERIES OF ANGLES, CROSSFADES, DISSOLVES, INCLUDING...
IMAGES FROM THE ELECTRA:
- VIEW down onto an endless sea of triple-canopy RAINFOREST.
- VIEW of Brazilian CITY from ABOVE.
- VIEW onto the ocean and African coast.
- VIEW of ANIMALS running beneath us.
- VIEW of the SAHARA’S sands
SUPERIMPOSE: IMAGES FROM STOPS:
- Children surrounding Amelia at an African airfield
- Amelia sleeping in the open desert
- being welcomed by turbaned dignitaries
- Amelia on a camel, suddenly kicks it into a gallop
SUPERIMPOSE: IMAGES FROM TRAVEL MAP
- its RED LINE tracing our journey from Miami to San Juan to Venezuela, to Brazil
- The RED LINE moving across the Atlantic, to French West Africa and North to the Sudan
- The RED LINE moves from The Nile River across the tip of Arabian Peninsula, through Persia, Afghanistan and finally to Calcutta.

SUPERIMPOSE: IMAGES FROM AMELIA’S ARTICLES
- HEADLINES from various installments of her daily ARTICLE in the Herald Tribune, with her BYLINE.

DISSOLVE FROM MONTAGE TO...

EXT. AIRPORT, CALCUTTA - EVENING

Driving RAINSTORM as Amelia carries her gear toward the Electra. Fred waits. The umbrellas aren’t keeping them dry.

SUPERIMPOSE: DUMDUM AIRDROME, CALCUTTA

The buildings have thatched roofs. There are oxcarts by the runway, abandoned to the downpour. Fred has to shout over the storm...

FRED
YOU’RE NOT REALLY TAKING OFF!

AMELIA
IT’S GOING TO GET HEAVIER AND WE COULD BE STUCK HERE FOR DAYS. EVEN WEEKS.

He just glares at her. Rain POUNDING all around them.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
ONLY 700 MILES TO BANGKOK, IT’S LIGHTER THERE.

He doesn’t move.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
Stay if you like.

And she climbs into the plane. He just stands in the rain and glowers.
EXT. AIRSTRIP - MOMENTS LATER

The Electra ROARING down the runway. It’s all alone, no one else crazy enough to be out there. At last the plane...

...LIFTS INTO the rain. Wobbles just a beat. And begins to CLIMB.

EXT. ELECTRA - LATER

A wrenching battle, plane versus monsoon. The storm is heavier, deafening, actually STRIPPING PAINT from the Electra’s wings.

INT. ELECTRA - SAME MOMENT

Amelia beyond exhaustion, but focused, fighting it. We think she’s flying alone. Until...

...Fred drops into the seat beside her. No words as he watches her struggle. Our plane is all over the sky. The DIN is ungodly.

AMELIA
YOU THINK WE SHOULD TURN BACK, HUH?

FRED
NOPE. I THINK WE SHOULDN’T HAVE COME.

An AIR POCKET DROPS them 200 feet.

AMELIA
HARD TO IMAGINE LANDING IN THIS.

FRED
I’VE GOT AN IDEA. LET’S NEVER COME DOWN.

She glances over. For once, she’s scared.

AMELIA
HOW COULD YOU FIND OUR WAY BACK?

FRED
SINCE I FORGOT TO DROP BREAD CRUMBS, WE’LL HAVE TO USE DEAD RECKONING.

Beat.

AMELIA
THAT’S IT? JUST A GUESS?
FRED
US NAVIGATORS PREFER THE TERM ‘WILD-ASS GUESS.’

Held look.

AMELIA
That’s more like it.

She starts to TURN the plane around.

INT. ELECTRA - DAY

Amelia flying down through heavy turbulence, though it is no longer raining. Her features tense. We see the accumulated strain of the adventure.

Fred appears from the catwalk, slips into the seat beside her. He’s worried. Points, and we see...

...CALCUTTA below, sprawling and endless. Between us and the ground, a huge gathering of FLYING SHAPES.

FRED
Black eagles. If one of those clips a propeller. Or flies into the engine...

Her tired features form a smile.

AMELIA

He takes her point. She turns back to work...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I’ll wake you when the coffee’s ready.

And with cold-blooded nerve, she SWOOPS down, down, THROUGH the flock of eagles, scattering them as we arc in for a perfect landing. She never turns to...

...Fred, who is still white-knuckling, trying to get his heart started. He can’t believe what she’s just done. Rolling, rolling...

FRED
Cream, no sugar.
EXT. GOVERNOR'S HOUSE, CALCUTTA - TWILIGHT

Establishing shot of a graceful pillar of the Raj. Night falling.

EXT. COURTYARD, GOVERNOR'S HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

A fountain in an ornate courtyard. There is a RECEPTION, as every evening for Amelia, attended by local DIGNITARIES. Fred, already a little drunk, leads Amelia to a massive teak-wood table. He breaks off the corner of a cracker, sets it down in the center of the table.

FRED
Howland Island.

He strikes a match. SNUFFS the flame. Puts the burned-out match head just by the scrap of cracker.

FRED (CONT'D)
Black smoke from the Navy ship that could help us get a fix.

Points way across the marble courtyard.

FRED (CONT'D)
Now stand over there. That's what it's going to look like, if the weather's good.

SERVANT (O.S.)
Mrs. Earhart?

She glances up. He beckons respectfully.

ANGLE. Alcove still with a VIEW of Fred and the courtyard. She lifts a telephone...

INTERCUT: INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE on a WALL MAP. We realize that George has been following her odyssey on a map of his own. We PULL BACK to reveal...

GEORGE
Mrs. Earhart? Mr. Earhart, here.

He looks elegant in crisp suit and tie.

INTERCUT: Amelia's eyes WIDE. She seems truly thrilled. INTERCUT BETWEEN THEM now throughout...
AMELIA
Oh, my goodness. Simpkin, is it really you?

George makes a PURRING sound. A sharp MEOW.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
This is insane. It's so extravagant.

GEORGE
It gets worse, I bought a brand-new suit and tie. Got a date with my wife.

AMELIA
We can't possibly afford this.

GEORGE
Sure, we can. It's Tuesday's call to Lae that we can't afford.

AMELIA (delighted)
You hang up the phone this minute. You'll bankrupt us and I'll have to walk home.

GEORGE
Reasoning with me. A magnificent display of useless courage.

Her eyes remember. A soft...

AMELIA
...and it's fun.

HOLD on her face. And MATCH DISSOLVE TO...

100 EXT. BAR, LAE - NIGHT

...Amelia's FACE, as we left it in the first scene. The STORM PELTING all around the open-sided bar. Fred studying her across the table.

FRED
A touching love story, really.

He’s been drinking, we can hear it in his voice. SEE the bottle now. Nearly gone.

AMELIA
An honest one. It's what you wanted.

He nods. That's right.
FRED
I wonder if it's honest enough for George. If it's what he wanted. You know.

AMELIA
If you mean Gene, we're not together anymore. In that way. Not for a long time.

FRED
Whose choice was that?

She doesn't like his tone. Shifts in her seat.

AMELIA
It was mine.

FRED
Well, isn't it always? You choose in, you choose out. Makes things easy.

AMELIA
Anything but easy. Are you disapproving of the way I live?

FRED
Hell, no. It’s just like me. In fact, it’s like most guys I know.

His smile.

FRED (CONT’D)
Actually, I’d like a piece of it myself. Right about now.

Her eyes harden.

AMELIA
If you have a point, Fred. Make it.

FRED
Oh, I believe I have.

She rises slowly. Zips her flight jacket. Takes her slicker from the back of her chair.

AMELIA
Allow me to cut you a deal, my friend.

Steel in the spine of that.
AMELIA (CONT’D)
You show up tomorrow morning.
You show up sober and you get me to Howland Island.

Okay?

AMELIA (CONT’D)
And I'll forget you ever said that.

She WHEELS around and holding her slicker over her head, goes OFF into the POUNDING RAIN.

Fred's smile is gone. He stares after her.

DISSOLVE TO...

101 EXT. RADIO HUT, LAE - LATER
Amelia down the path in her slicker toward a small hut. She knocks. Opens the door to reveal...

102 INT. RADIO HUT - NIGHT
...the radio receiver and transmitter. The operator BALFOUR is a wiry Scot. He nods respectfully.

BALFOUR
Ready, Mum.

He stands and she takes his seat. He shows her the key to press, then steps back toward the window. But she makes no move to the radio. Just stares at him. He doesn't understand.

AMELIA (gently)
Feel like stepping out for a smoke...?

BALFOUR
I don't smoke.

AMELIA
...or something?

Oh. The monsoon beats down.

BALFOUR
If you need help, I'll be right outside. In the rain.

AMELIA
Thank you. I'll only be a moment.
He puts on his slicker. OPENS an umbrella. Leaves.

She looks back to the radio. FLIPS the switch.

AMELIA (soft)
Earhart here.

INTERCUT: COAST GUARD STATION, LOS ANGELES - DAY

George at a window, looking west. Over the Pacific. She's there somewhere.

GEORGE
You should be sleeping.

He smiles to keep his voice up. The eyes aren't smiling. We INTERCUT their conversation throughout...

AMELIA
You should be working.

GEORGE
I'm running a big adventure here,
I'm a very important fellow.

AMELIA
You told me I was the star. And
you were no one at all.

GEORGE (soft)
I thought I was lying. Guess the joke's on me.

Silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
How's Fred?

AMELIA
I'm mad at him. I'll be in
Honolulu on the 3rd, and with you
in Oakland for Fourth of July.
Okay?

GEORGE
Don't keep me waiting.

AMELIA
I won't dare. You're a very
important feline. Uh, fellow.

GEORGE
Talk to me about Fred.
AMELIA
Fred is fine. He's calculating head-wind speed versus fuel as we speak.

CLOSE on his face.

GEORGE
You wouldn't sell a salesman would you?

AMELIA
He's fine.

GEORGE
So what's that I hear in your voice?

A beat.

GEORGE
Is he drinking?

AMELIA (soft)
I can handle it.

GEORGE
Call it off. Right now. I mean it.

AMELIA
I can handle it.

And then...

AMELIA
I love you.

Silence.

GEORGE
After the Fourth. We're going home.

AMELIA
Where's that?

GEORGE
For me? Anywhere you are.

She begins to cry. Both hands fly to her mouth and she looks away. She swallows hard.

AMELIA
I'm going to like it there.
And then...

AMELIA (CONT’D)
I’d better. Since this is my last flight.

A long silence.

GEORGE
Well. If you insist.

She nods. She does.

AMELIA
It's late here. Guess I'll go curl up under a teacup.

GEORGE
I'll go tell the world you're on your way.

Neither wants to let go. We feel it so strong.

GEORGE (a whisper)
Sweet dreams.

A beat.

AMELIA (whispers back)
See ya.

And he's gone. She stares at the radio.

INT. AMELIA’S HUT - LATER
FLICKER of a kerosene lamp. Amelia writing at a tiny desk. Thinks now. Thinks.
Lost in it.

EXT. AIRFIELD, LAE - DAWN
A sober, contrite Fred comes down the runway in early light. As he reaches the Electra, he sees a pile of discarded OBJECTS on the tarmac...

...metal containers, carton of oranges, parachutes. Bedrolls, cold weather gear. Souvenirs from their stops: flags, a metal plaque, native crafts, a Welcome Miss Amelia Earhart banner. As he studies the pile...

...a COFFEE POT comes FLYING out of the plane to roll at his feet. Suddenly, a 10 pound coffee tin SAILS PAST, as he DUCKS. Amelia appears at the hatch, sees him.
FRED
You're finding the range. But it might be easier to just shoot me.

She stares at him for a moment. A subdued voice...

AMELIA
Traveling light, that's all.

She sits on the lip of the hatch. Her legs dangling. Her eyes down.

FRED
Got room for 190 pounds of asshole?

No answer. She's still looking down. He's never seen her like this.

FRED (CONT'D)
Ma'am, I am so sor...

AMELIA
It's fine.

Her eyes come up.

AMELIA (CONT'D)
Everything is.

He doesn't understand, but he’s glad to be forgiven. She takes a LETTER from her pocket. Runs her finger over the envelope.

FRED
I can run into town before we go. Get that in the post for you.

She shakes her head slowly.

AMELIA
It’s for my husband. I'm going to hand it to him. So I can watch his face as he reads it.

She sniffs slightly.

AMELIA (CONT’D)
It’s our tradition.

106
EXT. RUNWAY, LAE AIRFIELD - MORNING

A RUNWAY that ends in a drop-off at the waters of Huon Gulf. The Electra, engines REVVING. Ready to go for it. Our ANGLE CLOSES on the belly of the plane. The ANTENNA MAST supporting a trailing WIRE ANTENNA.
GEORGE (V.O.)
Ten A.M., Friday July 2. They
lined up on the thousand-yard
runway. One thousand gallons of
fuel, enough for 20 to 21 hours of
flying.

LONG ANGLE. Crew and onlookers watch as the plane STARTS its
run, gathering speed, BOUNCING over uneven ground...

CLOSE now on the jouncing undercarriage, a momentary PUFF of
DUST, and as the plane moves PAST, we may notice that the
belly antenna mast seems to be GONE.

DOWN the runway it RUMBLES, still earthbound, only 200 yards
to go. Then 100. Then FIFTY, then at the water's edge, the
Electra RISES and...

...DROPS out of sight below the land, as we SMASH CUT to...

ANGLE. The Electra has FALLEN to SIX FEET above the surface
of the Gulf. The engines THROB at max, the propellers
THROWING SPRAY. The overloaded plane...

...RISING. Slowly, then faster, then...

...SOARING free.

PULL BACK to a VIEW from down the runway. The Electra in
distance. RACK FOCUS to see something long and slender
GLINTING on the ground. Could it be a length of WIRE?

107 INT. COAST GUARD STATION, LOS ANGELES - SUNSET

Through the glass, the sun is disappearing toward Amelia.
PULL BACK to George, staring at a CABLE in his hands. We
HEAR...

BALFOUR (O.S.)
Mr. Putnam. Their headwinds are
stronger than they knew when they
took off.

Then...

BALFOUR (O.S.) (CONT’D)
I recalculated their fuel. It will
cost them 9%.

George staring off. Assessing the consequences. PULL BACK
to see an ENSIGN standing, waiting for instruction.

BALFOUR (O.S.) (CONT’D)
I can’t raise them, sir. I tried
voice, and Morse Code...
George looks up. Calmly.

GEORGE
Wire back. Tell him to forget the Morse Code. They didn’t bring the receiver.

The young man looks concerned.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
Just tell him to stay with voice. He’ll get them.

EXT. HOWLAND ISLAND - DAY

AERIAL ANGLE. A tiny, flat, nearly invisible speck adrift in the endless Pacific. Howland Island. PAN to see just offshore...

GEORGE (V.O.)
The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Itasca had been anchored off Howland just for us.

CLOSE on the ITASCA now...

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Its radio would be her lifeline. Its black plume of smoke would reach for miles. More visible than the island itself.

DISSOLVE TO NIGHT. The island visible only by its slender LIGHTHOUSE. The ship illuminated in the darkness.

CLOSE now on a path by the sea. A lone figure with a FLASHLIGHT approaches a SHACK. Enters...

INT. RADIO HUT - NIGHT

...a room filled with radio equipment. He is FRANK CIPRIANI, in crisp naval uniform, relieving a SEAMAN who has been on duty. As Cipriani sits at his station, he notices...

CIPRIANI
The direction finder. How long has this been on?

The seaman turns back at the door. What?

EXT. ITASCA

CLOSE on the ship, illuminated. PUSH IN...
INT. RADIO ROOM, ITASCA - NIGHT

The room is 9 x 20 with bare walls. At the transmitter, LEO BELLARTS the chief radio man. Short and square, an unflappable air of quiet expertise. With him, his assistant WILLIAM DAL TEN, lean and young with dark serious eyes. At a typewriter sits THOMAS O'HARE, barely twenty, headphones across his shock of rust-colored hair, telegraph at the ready.

SUPERIMPOSE: 2:45 A.M.

Dalten adjusting the receiver which is suddenly spitting STATIC. Threading through the noise, what could be a human voice. Bellarts calls to O'Hare...

BELLARTS
That's her on 3105. She said 'cloudy and overcast.'

O'Hare looks at him. Are you serious? Bellarts mimes typing with his fingers. O'Hare starts typing into the log. DISSOLVE TO...

SUPERIMPOSE: 3:45 A.M.

Radio CRACKLES. All eyes turn.

AMELIA (O.S.)
Itasca from Earhart. Overcast.

Static. Dalten leans to the mic...

DAL TEN (into mic)
We are receiving your signal. Please acknowledge ours. What is your position? When do you expect to arrive Howland?

No answer. Light static.

BELLARTS
Commander estimated 7:00. If she's having trouble on voice transmission, stay with Morse.

And begins to carefully pack his pipe. Dalten begins to transmit Morse Code. DISSOLVE TO...

SUPERIMPOSE: 6:45 A.M.

The radio. The static. The sudden voice...
AMELIA (O.S.)
Please take bearing on us and
report in half hour. I will make
noise in microphone. We are about
100 miles out.

The transmission cuts out. Dalten answers in Morse Code. No response.

DALTEN
She's got to stay on longer.

Bellarts dictating as O'Hare types...

BELLARTS
Earhart signal strength 4, but on
air so briefly bearings impossible.

DISSOLVE TO...

SUPERIMPOSE: 7:18 A.M.

DALTEN (to Bellarts)
Maybe her Morse receiver is out.
(into mic)
Can't take bearing on 3105. Please
send on 500 or do you want to take
bearing on us? Go ahead, please.

Silence. O'Hare typing: NO ANSWER.

SUPERIMPOSE: 7:30 A.M.

DALTEN (into mic)
Please acknowledge our signals on
key. Please acknowledge.

CRACKLE. O'Hare typing: UNANSWERED.

BELLARTS
Tommy, intercom top deck, double
check the smoke stack...

INTERCUT: AERIAL ANGLE high above the ship. BLACK SMOKE
PLUMES into clear sky...

BELLARTS (O.S.) (CONT’D)
They should be able to see it for
twenty miles, at least.

TILT ANGLE. In far distance, thirty to forty miles, a gray
STORM.
A few others enter now. Civilians, sailors, they hang back silently, watching as...

SUPERIMPOSE: 7:42 A.M.

AMELIA (O.S.)
KHAQQ calling Itasca. We must be on you but cannot see you...

Glances are traded. It is the first moment of visible concern. STATIC interrupts. Then...

AMELIA (O.S.) (CONT’D)
Gas is running low. Been unable to reach you by radio. We are flying at altitude 1000 feet.

DALten (into mic)
You are reaching us. We are sending on 3105 and 500 constantly. Please acknowledge.

Massive BURST of static. Dalten frantically CLICKING a message in Morse Code. DISSOLVE TO...

SUPERIMPOSE: 7:58 A.M.

The room has nearly filled. COMMANDER THOMPSON stands at Bellart's shoulder. All eyes fixed on the radio...

EARHART (O.S.)
We are circling but cannot hear you. Go ahead on 7500.

BELLARTS (into mic)
Itasca to KHAQQ. Your signal is strong. Are you receiving this?

A breathless moment. A sharp CRACKLE.

EARHART (O.S.)
KHAQQ calling Itasca. We received your signal, but unable to get a minimum. Please take bearing on us and answer 3105 with voice.

BELLARTS (into mic)
Your signal received okay. It is impractical to take a bearing on 3105 on your voice. Give us a longer signal, please. Go ahead.

Silence. Feet are shifting. No one speaks.
BELLARTS (softly to Dalten)
Keep us at 7500, that's her only acknowledgment.

THOMPSON
You've got her signal, dammit. What about the direction finder?

BELLARTS
Cipriani reports the battery's dead, sir. It was left on all night.

Full beat.

THOMPSON (low)
I don't believe this is happening.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPERIMPOSE: 8:12 A.M.

BELLARTS (into mic)
Itasca to Earhart. Did you get transmission on 7500? Go ahead on 500 so that we can take a bearing on you, it's impossible on 3105. Please acknowledge.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPERIMPOSE: 8:33 A.M.

No breath in this room. No one moves.

BELLARTS (into mic)
Will you please come in and answer on 500? We are transmitting constantly on 7500 and we do not hear you on 500. Please answer on 500. Go ahead.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPERIMPOSE: 8:44 A.M.

Suddenly, a thin and anxious VOICE cuts through a burst of static...

AMELIA (O.S.)
We are on the line of position 157-337, will repeat this message on 6210 kilocycles. Wait, listening on 6210 kilocycles. We are running north and south.
BELARTS (into mic)
We hear you. We hear you. Can you receive this...?


COMMANDER (softly)
Mr. Bellarts. When did she say she was low on fuel?

All eyes shift to Tommy. He scans the log. Stares.

O'HARE
Um. An hour. And two minutes, sir.

HOLD on this room. DISSOLVE TO...

AERIAL ANGLE. The ship in clear daylight. The BLACK PLUME of smoke stretching to heaven.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO...

113 INT. COAST GUARD STATION, LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The tiny room we’ve come to know. It is filled with people who stand motionless, staring somberly at one man. In turn, he stares at a telephone...

Which RINGS. Mary reaches, but his hand goes UP and she pulls back. He lets it ring three times, four, gathering himself. Lifting it...

GEORGE (into phone)
Yes.

There are no other words. His eyes tear up. He nods numbly at the phone.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Looking back, the questions were obvious. Why would anyone try to find such a tiny target in a vast ocean, with barely an hour's lee-way in fuel?

He draws a breath.

GEORGE (into phone)
Well, we're most grateful. With such an effort, of course they'll be found.
CLOSE on him now. As he listens, as he responds graciously, MOS...

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
So I tortured myself. Why hadn't I killed this plan on day one?
And then I realized...

DISSOLVE SLOWLY TO...

114 EXT. GARDEN, LOS ANGELES – LATER
Alone. In a moonlit garden.

GEORGE (V.O.)
If I tried to count the insane and reckless chances she took from the first moment I met her. I wouldn't know where to begin.

Slowly to his knees. By the plants they had tended together.

GEORGE (V.O.) (CONT’D)
It was the most tragic of endings.
The most cruel and senseless and wasteful. And yet...

And yet.

GEORGE (CONT’D)
It's hard to imagine another.

SMASH CUT TO...

115 EXT. BRILLIANT SKY, THE PACIFIC – DAY
Sun and cloud. The sea below.

AMELIA (V.O.)
My Simpkin.

We POINT toward the water.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I want to be married to you. The way you’ve been married to me.

It begins to draw CLOSER.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
As you read this. I am watching your face.
And CLOSER.

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
I am hoping to see. That you know how much I mean each word.

Gaining SPEED now...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
All the things I never said, for so very long...

HURTLING TOWARD the surface...

AMELIA (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Look up. They're in my eyes.

SMASH CUT TO BLACK.
Hold.

ROLL END CREDITS.