

REPO MY JET

Written by
Joe Murkijanian

FADE IN:

EXT. VAN NUYS AIRPORT - EXECUTIVE RAMP - DAY

Heat shimmer off white concrete. A Gulfstream G700 sits angled for the cameras like jewelry on velvet, its polish throwing back the San Fernando sun hard enough to hurt. Above it, a forty-foot banner: LYRIQ 2 - THE FUTURE ARRIVES EARLY.

Press risers. A champagne station sweating in the heat. A DJ under a white canopy playing music nobody asked for.

BRETT KOVAN, 34 - a billionaire built by keynote lighting: \$900 hoodie, day-old stubble maintained daily, the tan of a man with a boat he's never steered - holds a phone-sized device over his head.

BRETT
Everyone said the supply chain was
impossible. You know what I told
them?

Behind the crowd, a fuel truck rolls to a stop, and MACK MERCER, 55, steps down from the cab.

Silver hair cut short. A face like weathered cowlings - creased, sun-cured, built around pale gray eyes that are always doing inventory. Hi-vis vest over a work shirt. Laminated badge. Clipboard. He moves across the ramp with the unhurried economy of a man who has walked ten thousand ramps - nothing about him asks to be looked at, which is the whole trick. He looks like he's worked here thirty years. He's been here ninety seconds.

BRETT (CONT'D)
I told them the same thing I told
my board. Ownership is a mindset.

Mack passes the risers. Checks the Gulfstream's nose gear pin the way a man paid to check it would - two fingers, a tug - and climbs the airstair without breaking stride.

At the ramp gate: ELLIOT PRICE, 38. Narrow shoulders in a suit that fits like a rental, tie knotted small and hard as a knuckle. Rimless glasses. A face that arranged itself for honesty at age nine and never renegotiated. He holds a document flat against the chest of a SECURITY GUARD twice his width.

ELLIOT
This is a writ of possession issued
by the Central District of
California. You're required to read
it.

GUARD
I'm required to keep you behind the
cone.

ELLIOT
The cone has no legal standing.

The guard looks at the cone. The cone holds its ground.

INT. GULFSTREAM G700 - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Cool. Quiet. New-leather smell. Mack settles into the left
seat like water finding level. Drops the clipboard - under
it, a court order and a key card. He runs one hand across the
dark glass panel. Appraising, not admiring.

MACK
(to the airplane)
He doesn't deserve you.

He starts the APU. The panel blooms awake, screen by screen,
and the cockpit light comes up on his face like a curtain
rising.

EXT. VAN NUYS AIRPORT - EXECUTIVE RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Heads turn at the turbine whine. Brett stops mid-sentence,
device still raised.

BRETT
Who's in my plane?

ELLIOT
(calling out, helpful)
Technically it's the bank's plane.
As of nine-fourteen this morning.

Brett stares at Elliot. At the guard. At the Gulfstream,
whose beacon begins to flash - red sweeping across the
champagne, the risers, his face.

BRETT
No. No no no -

He vaults off the riser, sprints for a matte-black HYPERCAR parked as set dressing, low and evil-looking as a spilled ink stain.

INT. GULFSTREAM G700 - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Mack keys the radio, unhurried.

MACK
(into headset)
Van Nuys Ground, Gulfstream Seven-
Papa-Kilo, repositioning off the
east ramp with information Bravo.

Through the windscreen: the hypercar SLIDES to a stop across the taxiway exit, nose-out – half a million dollars of roadblock. Brett climbs onto the hood, phone up, livestreaming himself.

BRETT
(shouting at the jet)
You're on camera! Eight million
people are watching you steal my –

The Gulfstream's engines spool. His hoodie inflates.

Mack studies the blocked taxiway. Then the strip of GRASS between ramp and parallel – a green runner of lawn between two rivers of concrete. Wide enough. Probably.

MACK
(to himself)
Soft field procedure.

He releases brakes.

EXT. VAN NUYS AIRPORT - EXECUTIVE RAMP - CONTINUOUS

The Gulfstream turns OFF the pavement. Onto the grass. Ninety million dollars of Savannah engineering rolling past a champagne station, wingtip shadow gliding over upturned phones.

The crowd parts. The DJ does not stop playing.

Elliot, at the gate, watches the jet leave without him. One beat of pure disbelief – then he grabs his rolling legal case and RUNS, suit jacket flapping like a flag of a small orderly nation.

ELLIOT
(running)
I'm the certifying officer! I have
to be ON it to certify it!

The jet's wingtip clips the banner scaffold. THE FUTURE
ARRIVES EARLY drapes across Brett's hypercar like a shroud.
The crowd films everything.

The forward door is still open, stairs down, skimming the
grass. Elliot hurls the case through the doorway and takes
the stairs on hands and knees as they fold up under him.

INT. GULFSTREAM G700 - COCKPIT - MOVING

Elliot staggers in, wild-eyed, and straps into the jump seat
with the focus of a man reading a life-raft diagram.

ELLIOT
That was a taxiway incursion. An
incursion, a ground collision with
a temporary structure, and
operation on an unimproved surface
—

MACK
Movement area. It's only an
incursion if it's a movement area.

ELLIOT
(flipping open a binder)
Part 91.13. Careless or reckless
operation —

MACK
Ninety-one thirteen.

ELLIOT
That's what I said.

MACK
You said "point." There's no point.
You'll embarrass us both.

The Gulfstream swings onto the runway. Tower chatter. Mack's
hands move through the checklist from memory — flows like
water finding its old bed.

ELLIOT
You're not cleared. Are we cleared?
Did they clear us?

MACK
(pushing the throttles up)
They will.

The jet leaps. Elliot's binder slides into his lap. Off his face - a man doing math on the rest of his life -

CUT TO:

INT. BURBANK - FBO CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Fluorescent hum. A speakerphone squats in the middle of a fake-wood table like a toad. Mack sprawled in a chair, boots crossed. Elliot upright, a typed incident report squared in front of him. Four pages. Already stapled.

BANK REP (V.O.)
(filtered)
Legal is calling it a liability event. We're releasing sixty percent of the fee pending review.

MACK
The aircraft is outside with zero new squawks. Not a scratch, not a placard. Sixty percent of clean is still clean.

BANK REP (V.O.)
Your recovery is trending on three platforms, Mr. Mercer.

MACK
That's marketing.

ELLIOT
(to the phone)
For the record, the operational irregularities are itemized in my report. Sections two through five.

Mack's head turns slowly, like a gun turret.

MACK
Sections.

ELLIOT
With timestamps.

BANK REP (V.O.)
We've read Mr. Price's report. It's why you're getting the sixty.

Click. Dial tone. Mack looks at Elliot the way you look at a nail in a tire.

MACK

You cost me two hundred grand with a stapler.

ELLIOT

You almost taxied over the bank's client.

MACK

The client moved. Everybody moves. That's the whole business — knowing who moves.

ELLIOT

And when someone doesn't?

Mack stands. Collects his jacket.

MACK

Then they wanted to be hit. That's a different invoice.

He's gone. Elliot sits alone with the hum. He unstaples his report, adds a page, re-staples it.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - DAY

Creosote flats running to brown mountains. Heat standing on the earth like a second atmosphere. A lone road, and at the end of it, a cluster of corrugated buildings and dead airplanes — a boneyard with a mailbox.

A faded sign, hand-lettered decades ago: MERCER ASSET RECOVERY.

INT. MERCER ASSET RECOVERY - HANGAR - DAY

A cathedral of dead aviation. Light falls in dusty shafts through gaps in the roof panels, striping engine cores under tarps, a wing on sawhorses, drums of fluid. One wall carries thirty years of photographs — Mack, younger to older, beside every kind of aircraft, always the same pose: hand flat on the fuselage, like a man gentling a horse.

On the workbench: a fan of envelopes with windows. Red stamps. On top, an INSURANCE NOTICE: FINAL — COVERAGE LAPSES IN 10 DAYS.

And at the back of the hangar, on swept concrete under a string of work lights, alone:

A 1946 BEECHCRAFT. Polished to a mirror – the work lights float on its cowlings like moons on dark water. Tires chocked. Windshield spotless. It does not belong to the junkyard around it. It is the reason the junkyard exists.

Beside it, one framed photograph: a freight ramp, 1980s, shot through chain-link. A row of propeller freighters chained to their tie-downs. A padlocked gate. On the outside of the fence, a line of PILOTS holding flight bags – laid off between one shift and the next. One of them – square jaw, Mack's jaw, thirty years younger – stares through the wire at his own airplane.

A CASH BUYER, 60s, boots and a belt buckle like a hood ornament, circles the Beechcraft with his thumbs in his pockets.

CASH BUYER

Ferry it to Scottsdale, I'll wire two hundred today. Two-ten if you throw in the logs.

MACK

Logs stay with the airplane.

CASH BUYER

So that's a yes at two-ten.

MACK

The airplane stays with the logs.

The buyer looks around the hangar. The envelopes. The tarps. He's done his homework.

CASH BUYER

Word is your insurance is a week from gone. No coverage, no bank work. You're gonna sit here broke next to a museum piece?

Mack picks a shop rag off the wing root. Folds it in thirds. Sets it on the bench.

CASH BUYER (CONT'D)

It's just a plane.

Mack opens the man-door and holds it. Desert light cuts a white rectangle on the floor between them.

The buyer shrugs, walks out through it. Mack shuts the door.

He stands a moment with the Beechcraft. Doesn't touch it. Then he reaches up and kills the work lights over it – gently, one string at a time, like closing a casket.

CUT TO:

EXT. MERCER ASSET RECOVERY – RAMP – DAY

A black SUV noses onto the gravel, too clean for the county it's in. Out steps CELIA BRANDT, 45 – a slate-gray suit that never wrinkles, hair lacquered against the desert wind, the unhurried calm that costs a retainer. She carries one slim folder and no dust dares land on her.

CELIA
Mr. Mercer. Celia Brandt. Atlantic
Aviation Leasing.

MACK
Atlantic uses Renner and Cole for
recoveries.

CELIA
Renner and Cole can't do this one
by midnight.

That buys her ten more seconds. She uses them.

CELIA (CONT'D)
A 747-400 freighter. Lease default,
four months. It's sitting at Isla
Verdad – small free-trade port,
Caribbean. At midnight tonight the
operator's attorneys get their
injunction and the aircraft is
pinned there for two years of
litigation.

MACK
And Atlantic would rather it
wasn't.

CELIA
Atlantic will pay five hundred
thousand dollars for wheels-up
before midnight.

Mack doesn't blink. Blinking is negotiating.

MACK
Crew?

CELIA

You, plus a type-rated first officer we provide. And one more thing.

She opens the folder on the SUV's hood. Slides a page across.

CELIA (CONT'D)

The bank requires independent certification. Identity, condition, chain of custody. Their auditor accompanies the flight.

MACK

Their auditor gets airsick on an escalator.

CELIA

Then he can certify with the bag in his hand. It's not negotiable.

Mack reads. Stops at a clause. Taps it twice.

MACK

"Sealed humanitarian cargo aboard to remain undisturbed."

CELIA

Medical relief shipment, prepaid, bonded, sealed by the consignor. It flies where the airplane flies. You're recovering an aircraft, not inspecting a charity.

Behind his eyes, the gray inventory runs – the clause, the deadline, the fee. And behind hers: nothing at all. A woman with the blinds drawn.

INT. MERCER ASSET RECOVERY - HANGAR - LATER

Elliot at the workbench under the desk lamp, the contract dissected, sticky flags multiplying along its edge like a rash.

ELLIOT

A lender who can't wait one week for the scheduled firm. A departure deadline that prevents inspection. Cargo we're forbidden to look at. I've flagged eleven items.

MACK
Flag twelve. She parked on my ramp
without a prior permission
required.

ELLIOT
I'm writing a memo of objection.

MACK
Write it on the plane.

Outside the open hangar door, in the long gold light, Mack signs the contract against the hood of the SUV – one stroke – and holds the pen out to Elliot.

A beat. Elliot looks at the pen. Past it, on the bench, the insurance notice sits in plain view. Everybody's broke in this shot.

Elliot takes the pen. Signs. Neat, small, legible.

ELLIOT
For the record, this is against my
professional judgment.

MACK
Everything good is.

CUT TO:

INT. CHARTER KING AIR – OVER THE CARIBBEAN – DUSK

A rattling twin over water going molten with sunset. Mack up front beside the CHARTER PILOT. Behind him: DALE RUSK, 45 – sun-bleached ballcap, forearms like dock rope, boots crossed at the ankle. A big friendly face built for bars and layovers, doing a crossword. In pen.

Elliot occupies the rearmost seat with two legal binders, the metal document case, and a PORTABLE PRINTER strapped in beside him like a service animal.

DALE
(not looking up)
Seven letters. "Takes what's owed."

MACK
Bailiff.

DALE
Six.

MACK
Then it's you and me, and we don't
fit.

Dale grins – a good grin, easy, the kind that gets drinks
bought – and writes something anyway.

MACK (CONT'D)
Not many guys still current on the
classic four-hundred.

DALE
Freighters out of Anchorage, nine
years. Fish guts and flowers.

MACK
You've flown this particular
airframe?

A half-second. Less.

DALE
Flown her sisters. They're all
sisters.

Mack watches him a moment in the window reflection – nothing
to see but a man doing a crossword – and lets it go.

ELLIOT
(from the back, green)
Does anyone else smell fuel?

DALE
That's the good news. Means we
still have some.

EXT. ISLA VERDAD CARGO AIRPORT – NIGHT

A strip of sodium light carved out of black jungle. The air
is wet wool. Rust-streaked warehouses, a guard shack with a
satellite dish, moths the size of playing cards orbiting
every lamp. Men with slung rifles watch the King Air taxi in
the way owls watch mice.

The trio walks the flight line, and there – at the far end,
nose into the dark:

The 747-400 FREIGHTER. A cliff with wings. Four engines
hanging like cathedral bells. Faded livery of a defunct
operator ghosting along two hundred thirty feet of fuselage.
It rises out of the ramp lights into darkness – you cannot
see all of it at once, and it feels deliberate, like the
airplane is withholding.

Elliot slows involuntarily.

ELLIOT
That's - larger than the
specifications suggested.

DALE
Specifications said 747.

ELLIOT
Numbers on a page have a different
quality.

Mack walks the gear, flashlight beam moving like a surgeon's hands. He crouches at the main bogies - sixteen tires taller than he is.

MACK
Tires are new. All sixteen.

Down the fuselage. He lays his palm flat against an engine cowl, holds it there.

MACK (CONT'D)
Fresh borescope plugs. Somebody's
been inside these motors this
month.

He raps a knuckle under the wing near the fuel panel. The sound comes back dead. Full.

MACK (CONT'D)
She's topped off.

At the cargo door his light finds a lead-wire SEAL, bright and new, stamped with a crest.

MACK (CONT'D)
Diplomatic seals. This week's.

ELLIOT
The default notice says the
aircraft has been derelict for four
months.

MACK
Somebody expects this derelict to
fly tonight.

He clicks the flashlight off. In the dark, the airplane seems to lean over them, patient as weather.

DALE
(easy)
Gift horse, boys. Let's get the
horse in the air.

INT. ISLA VERDAD - AIRPORT MANAGER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A ceiling fan pushing wet heat in circles. Cigarette smoke lying in strata. The AIRPORT MANAGER, 50s, sweat-through guayabera, sits behind a desk of stamped papers and does not rise. Two ARMED GUARDS flank the door, rifles held the casual way that means they've been fired before.

Elliot lays out documents in a precise grid, aligning corners.

ELLIOT
Notice of default. Writ of
possession. Certificate of
repossession authority. Chain-of-
custody log, which you'll initial -

MANAGER
The debt was paid.

He says it like the weather.

ELLIOT
The - no. The default is four
months, the cure period lapsed -

MANAGER
This morning. Wired and cleared.
The aircraft is not in default. So.

He gestures at the grid of paper: worthless.

ELLIOT
Then you can show me the
confirmation.

MANAGER
Can you show me yours?

Elliot opens his laptop. Logs into the lender portal. A spinning wheel. SERVICE UNAVAILABLE.

He tries again. Again. The manager watches with the patience of a man who already knows.

ELLIOT
The portal is - momentarily -

MANAGER
(standing, done)
No paper, no plane. My guards will
walk you to your charter.

EXT. ISLA VERDAD - FLIGHT LINE - NIGHT

The guards escort Elliot toward the King Air, one hand each on his shoulders like bored uncles. He argues citation numbers to men who don't speak bureaucrat.

ELLIOT
Under the Cape Town Convention your
government is a signatory -

By the 747's nose gear, in the shadow between ramp lights, Mack stands with Dale, hands in pockets, watching the office door.

MACK
(quiet)
How fast can you preflight the top
deck?

DALE
Say when.

Mack walks under the belly and unlatches the APU access panel.

MACK
When.

Deep in the tail, a whine builds - a small jet engine waking inside the big dead airplane. On the crown of the fuselage a beacon begins to turn, and red light sweeps the warehouses, the guards, Elliot's upturned face.

Everyone on the field looks up at the same time.

INT./EXT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT / ISLA VERDAD FLIGHT LINE - NIGHT

Mack drops into the left seat - home. Around him the flight deck wakes: round dials and green rasters, a machine from the era when cockpits looked like submarines. Dale slides into the right seat, hands already dancing through the flow.

MACK
(into radio, bored)
Isla Verdad Tower, Cargo Seven-Four
heavy - repositioning to the
maintenance stand, north apron.

TOWER (V.O.)
(filtered, uncertain)
Ah - maintenance was not scheduled
-

MACK
It never is. That's why it's
maintenance.

A pause. The tower is one guy and a thermos.

TOWER (V.O.)
...Proceed north apron.

Brakes off. Two hundred tons begin to roll. Slowly. Then less slowly.

ON THE FLIGHT LINE: Elliot turns and sees the 747 moving.
Sees the King Air behind him. The math lands on his face like
a piano.

ELLIOT
No. No, I'm the certifying - YOU
CANNOT CERTIFY YOURSELVES!

He RUNS, dragging the rolling case across the apron, printer
bouncing on its strap. Behind him the guards shout, then
chase - boots, slings slapping.

The 747's forward entry stands open high above, a MOBILE
STAIRWAY still nudged against it, beginning to separate as
the jet rolls.

Elliot hits the stairway at a sprint, takes the steps three
at a time as the gap widens to moving black air, HURLS the
case across -

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - FORWARD ENTRY - CONTINUOUS

- and jumps. DALE fills the doorway, catches his forearm, and
hauls him inboard like a sack of mail.

Below, the stairway wobbles away into the dark. Headlights
converge on the taxiway behind them.

DALE
(swinging the door shut)
Welcome aboard Air Repossession.
There is no beverage service.

ELLIOT
(on all fours, gasping)
There are procedures — for boarding
—

DALE
You just did most of 'em.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER — COCKPIT — CONTINUOUS

Elliot arrives behind the pilots, strapping into the observer seat with shaking hands. Through the windscreen: the tower is ON to them. A follow-me truck, lights strobing. A voice going up an octave in two languages.

TOWER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Cargo Seven-Four, HOLD POSITION.
You are NOT authorized —

MACK
(off radio)
Now everybody's authorized. Nobody
was authorized ten minutes ago,
suddenly it's a growth industry.

Ahead: TRUCKS roll onto the runway threshold. Blocking it. Men climbing out with rifles, silhouettes against their own headlights.

DALE
Runway's closed.

MACK
Runway two-seven is closed.

Mack cranks the tiller. The 747 swings off the parallel onto a MAINTENANCE TAXIWAY — a strip of cracked asphalt built for tugs and fuel trucks, weeds in the seams. Narrow. Very narrow.

ELLIOT
That is not a taxiway, that is a
driveway —

MACK
Gear track is thirty-six feet.
Pavement's forty. That's four feet
of margin.

ELLIOT
Two! Two on each side!

MACK
Look at that. He can certify.

The 747 threads the gap, engines pods skimming weed-tops. The left wing sails OVER the guard shack – inside, the guard flattens on his desk as two hundred tons of shadow crosses his ceiling. The right wing HARVESTS a row of portable floodlights – pop, pop, pop – sparks fountaining off the flaps.

Muzzle flashes from the tree line, little orange stabs. ROUNDS spark off the gear struts. Something under the wing takes a hit – a fine mist begins to trail, silver in the taxi light.

DALE
(checking a gauge, mild)
Might've caught a hydraulic line.

MACK
She has four.

ELLIOT
Had!

The maintenance strip spits them out at the WRONG END of the runway – facing the trucks a mile away, headlights massed like a wall.

Mack lines up on the centerline. Toward the trucks.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
They're ON the runway –

MACK
It's their runway. They can leave
whenever they want.

Throttles to the stops. Four engines rise from howl to earthquake – jungle birds exploding off the treeline for half a mile. The 747 accelerates at the headlights. 80 knots – 100
–

A BANG from the right wing – the number four engine gauges wind up hard, amber flickering – a compressor STALL, flame licking back out of the inlet –

ELLIOT
FIRE — is that fire —

Dale's hand is already there — smooth, no wasted motion — easing number four back, pausing, feeding it forward again. The surge clears. The needle settles. Power restored. He never stops scanning.

DALE
(calm as Sunday)
She ate a floodlight. She's fine.
Keep rolling.

MACK
(a glance — genuine)
Nice hands.

DALE
Nine winters in Anchorage. You
learn to be gentle with cold
engines and angry ones.

120 knots. The wall of headlights holds — holds — nerve
against physics —

— and BREAKS, trucks scattering into the grass both sides —

DALE (CONT'D)
V-one... rotate.

Mack eases back. The freighter unsticks, staggers, climbs — the perimeter fence flashes beneath the gear close enough to read the warning signs —

— and the black jungle swallows the lights behind them. Gear thumps up into the wells. The cockpit is suddenly, absurdly quiet: three men, green instrument glow, stars.

Mack exhales through his nose. Rolls one shoulder.

MACK
Clean recovery.

Elliot leans forward. Points out the left window, where moonlight shows a neat line of BULLET HOLES stitched across the wing surface.

ELLIOT
Clean.

MACK
Cosmetic.

Elliot opens the fresh chain-of-custody log. Under CONDITION AT RECOVERY he writes, in small careful letters: "DISPUTED."

The 747 climbs into a wall of stars. Huge. Alone.

Nobody aboard knows the airplane went exactly where it was designed to go.

CUT TO:

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Cruise. Four fuel flows in green. Below, the Caribbean is a black table scattered with ship lights; above, more stars than instrument bulbs, and it's close.

Elliot, in the observer seat, fills out the chain-of-custody log with a penlight in his teeth. The SATCOM chimes.

CELIA (V.O.)
(filtered)
Confirm you're off the island.

MACK
With the asset. Miami by sunrise,
like the contract says.

CELIA (V.O.)
There's been a change. You'll
deliver to Bayard Field. Private
freight strip, Louisiana.
Coordinates uploading now.

Green numbers populate the nav screen. Mack looks at them.
Doesn't touch them.

MACK
The contract says Miami. Customs,
bonded warehouse, a man with a
clipboard who isn't me.

CELIA (V.O.)
The client prefers Louisiana.

MACK
Then the client can prefer a
revised contract. Amended
destination, amended fee. Double.

Elliot's head comes up: "double" is not a word you open with.

A silence on the line. Not long enough.

CELIA (V.O.)
Done. The amendment is in your
inbox before you finish this
sentence.

Click. Mack stares at the speaker. That was too easy, and his
face knows it.

ELLIOT
(quietly)
She didn't negotiate.

MACK
Some clients don't.

ELLIOT
You asked for double and she said
done. Nobody says done. Done means
the money was never the point.

Mack reaches up and recenters a heading bug that didn't need
it.

DALE
(stretching, easy)
Louisiana's closer anyway.
Everybody wins.

Nobody answers him.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - LATER

Mack's eyes move across the engine instruments in their slow
professional orbit. Stop. Go back.

MACK
What did they say she weighed?

DALE
Six-ten, empty-ish. Light load of
relief cargo.

MACK
She climbed like six-thirty. And
we're burning...

He works the flight computer, fingers deliberate on the keys.
Runs it twice.

MACK (CONT'D)
...like six-thirty-five. We're
twenty thousand pounds heavier than
the paperwork.

DALE
Island scales. They calibrate 'em
with rum.

MACK
Scales weigh cargo. Fuel burn
weighs airplanes. The airplane
doesn't drink.

He looks back at Elliot.

MACK (CONT'D)
What does twenty thousand pounds of
"humanitarian relief" look like to
a bank?

ELLIOT
(already flipping to the
manifest)
Like a manifest line that says
"medical equipment, sealed, 4,100
pounds."

The three men sit with the arithmetic. It does not improve.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - LATER

A CHIME. Amber light: CARGO SMOKE - MAIN DECK.

DALE
(reaching for the
checklist)
Probably a faulty loop. These old
girls cry wolf.

MACK
(to Elliot)
Go look.

ELLIOT
Me?

MACK
He's the only other pilot. Pilots
stay where the wings are.

ELLIOT
The cargo is sealed. Diplomatic
seals. Breaking them is -

MACK
Smoke beats seals. It's in the
Bible.

Elliot unstraps. Takes his penlight. Takes, after a beat, the fire extinguisher from its bracket – and checks the gauge first.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – MAIN CARGO DECK – CONTINUOUS

Down a ladder into another world.

A quarter-mile of fuselage, ribbed like the belly of a whale, lit by widely spaced dome lights that leave lakes of dark between them. Netted pallets in two long rows, lashed and humped under plastic, shifting and CREAKING as the deck breathes with the airframe. The air smells of kerosene and cold metal.

Elliot moves down the center aisle, penlight sweeping tall white containers stenciled: MEDICAL RELIEF – DO NOT OPEN – SELLO DIPLOMÁTICO.

His footsteps ring on the roller floor. Somewhere aft, unseen, a strap ticks against aluminum like a slow clock.

No smoke. No smell of it. He finds a detector panel: the loop light flickers, uncertain, lying about something.

Then – BANG.

Elliot freezes. The penlight beam trembles once, steadies.

BANG. BANG. From INSIDE a container. Rhythmic. Deliberate. Human.

He tracks it to a refrigerator-sized MEDICAL TRANSPORT POD, white and coffin-sleek, a climate readout glowing green on its face like a vital sign. The pounding comes again. Weaker.

His hand hovers at the lead-wire seal. The stamped crest glints.

ELLIOT
(to himself, a vow and an
apology)
Section 12. Preservation of life
supersedes... everything.

He snaps the seal.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – MAIN CARGO DECK – MOMENTS LATER

Elliot works the latches – and the deck LURCHES in light chop. Across the aisle, a takeoff-damaged RESTRAINT lets go with a gunshot CRACK.

A pallet tips in slow motion – nets sliding, plastic shrieking – and TEARS OPEN across the deck.

Bricks. Kilo bricks, tightly wrapped in white plastic and tan tape, tumbling and skittering across the rollers like spilled masonry. Behind the torn shrink-wrap: THOUSANDS more, stacked to the ceiling in perfect courses, pallet after pallet receding into the dark – a warehouse wall of it, white as bone in the penlight.

Elliot stands in the avalanche's delta. His light travels up the face of it, the way a flashlight travels up a glacier.

And then – because he is Elliot – he begins to COUNT.

MACK (O.S.)

Anything?

Mack comes down the aisle, stops at the edge of the light, and takes in the wall of white. His face does the full accounting in three seconds flat.

A long beat.

MACK (CONT'D)

Are you counting it?

ELLIOT

Someone will ask. Someone always asks.

MACK

If any's missing, are you gonna return it?

The POUNDING comes again. Both men turn to the pod.

Mack steps past Elliot, reads the latches, and opens it.

Cold vapor spills out around a gurney. Strapped to it at the wrists, IV port taped to one arm, dark hair matted to her forehead: ELENA CRUZ, 36 – sharp-boned, expensive haircut gone feral, eyes fighting up through sedation. Even drugged and dry-lipped there is something exact about her, like a blade in a drawer of spoons.

She sees two men silhouetted against the cargo lights.

She comes up off the gurney like a spring.

The oxygen bottle comes off its bracket and CRACKS across Mack's cheekbone – he staggers into the pallet – she's out of the pod, wrists still lashed together, swinging the bottle two-handed at Elliot, who does the only thing he knows: raises the fire extinguisher like a shield. CLANG.

She drops the bottle, scans the sidewall – and LUNGES for a yellow guarded handle: CARGO FIRE SUPPRESS –

Mack tackles her off it. They go down between pallets in a slide of bricks. She fights like the outcome is settled and she's just running up the score.

MACK (CONT'D)
(pinning her arms, winded)
Lady – LADY. We are not with them.

ELENA
(accented, ragged)
Then Victor sent idiots. Worse for you.

ELLIOT
Who's Victor?

That stops her. She looks from Elliot – extinguisher, lanyard, laminated ID actually clipped to his belt – to Mack, bleeding from the cheek, hi-vis vest under his jacket.

ELENA
(slow, horrified)
You don't know whose airplane this is.

MACK
It's the bank's airplane. I have paperwork.

She starts to LAUGH – low, exhausted, genuinely entertained – and in the steel dark of the cargo deck it is the most frightening sound either man has heard all night.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – UPPER DECK – NIGHT

The crew-rest area behind the cockpit: two bunks, a galley alcove, a table barely bigger than a chessboard. Elena – wrists zip-tied in front of her now; Elliot photographed the restraints and logged the time – drinks water like it's a job.

Mack leans on the bulkhead, ice pack on his cheek. Elliot sits opposite her with a legal pad.

From below, Dale's voice drifts up, running a routine position report. Cheerful. Normal.

ELENA

The airplane belongs to a leasing company. The debt is real. The default is real. Victor made it real – he stopped paying on purpose, four months ago.

ELLIOT

Why would anyone engineer their own repossession?

ELENA

Because a stolen airplane full of cocaine needs a thief.

She lets that sit. Looks at Mack.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Your recovery order came through a portal. Very official. Documents, wire confirmations, a woman with a nice folder. Victor's people built all of it. The real lender scheduled a real recovery firm – next week. You were inserted into a true default with false authority.

ELLIOT

That's – no. I verified the portal. It had encryption certificates –

ELENA

He owns the people who sell encryption certificates.

MACK

(flat)

So if customs opens the airplane in Miami –

ELENA

Two independent smugglers who stole a 747 on camera, with ten tons aboard and a kidnapped woman in a box. Victor loses product. Victor stays invisible. Product is a cost of business. Invisible is the business.

Elliot has stopped writing. His pen hovers over the pad like it can't find anything true enough to touch down on.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elliot hunched over the SATCOM handset in the observer seat, on hold. Hold music: soft jazz, at altitude, over the Gulf.

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
(filtered)
Atlantic Aviation Leasing.

ELLIOT
Elliot Price, Meridian Trust
compliance, verifying recovery
assignment 4-4-7 Quebec, aircraft
November-7-4-2 -

RECEPTIONIST (V.O.)
One moment.

Clicks. Then a new voice, careful:

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)
(filtered)
This is counsel. Who is this again?

ELLIOT
The certifying auditor on your
recovery. Your agent Celia Brandt
engaged us -

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)
We have no agent by that name. Our
recovery of that aircraft is
scheduled for the eleventh, through
Renner and Cole. Sir - do you
currently have possession of our
airplane?

Elliot looks out the windscreen at four engines dragging two hundred tons of felony through the night.

ELLIOT
I'll have to call you back.

He hangs up with great care, as if the handset might detonate. Takes out his pad. Writes numbers in a column: the aircraft. The cargo, at wholesale. The federal sentencing ranges, stacked, consecutive.

He underlines the total. Then boxes it. As though the box will hold it.

MACK
(watching him)
Well?

ELLIOT
We are currently the largest single
line item of crime in the Western
Hemisphere.

MACK
You boxed it.

ELLIOT
It felt containable in a box.

The SATCOM RINGS. All three men look at it. It rings again,
patient.

Mack answers on speaker.

VICTOR (V.O.)
(filtered, warm,
unhurried)
Captain Mercer. Congratulations.
The difficult portion is finished,
and you performed it beautifully.
Better than the firm I nearly used.

MACK
Who is this?

VICTOR (V.O.)
The owner of everything aboard
except the airplane and the
auditor. My name is Victor. Ms.
Cruz will have said unkind things.
She's under stress.

Elena, arriving at the cockpit door, goes very still at the
voice – the stillness of an animal that has heard the
specific engine of the specific truck.

VICTOR (V.O.)
Here is the remainder of the job.
Bayard Field, Louisiana – you
already have the coordinates. Land,
walk away, and two million dollars
follows you home. A signing bonus
for a change of scope. Very
standard.

MACK
And the non-standard version?

VICTOR (V.O.)

There is a file. Flight plans in your name, wire transfers into an account you didn't know you had, warehouse leases, photographs. Eighteen months of evidence that you built this route. It's very good work – it should be, it cost more than the cocaine. If you don't land, the file goes to the American authorities, and the video of you stealing the airplane becomes its cover page.

MACK

The video where I steal your drug plane.

VICTOR (V.O.)

The video where a bankrupt repossession pilot, uninsured, days from losing his business, steals a 747 that lands full of narcotics. Tell me which story a jury buys before lunch.

Silence in the cockpit. Victor lets it work. Then, gently:

VICTOR (V.O.)

Louisiana, Captain. It's a beautiful field. I'll leave a car for you beside the runway.

Click.

DALE

(first to speak,
reasonable)

Two million dollars and everybody walks. I've flown for worse outfits.

MACK

(not answering him; to
Elena)

Talk about the file.

ELENA

It exists. I built the accounts it references.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - UPPER DECK - NIGHT

Elena, seated, the little table between her and the two men. Below them all, faintly, the cargo deck creaks - ten tons shifting in the chop like something turning over in its sleep.

ELENA

I'm the reason Victor's money moves. Fourteen banks, six countries, three shell layers. I froze it. Three hundred ninety million dollars, and the release codes are here.

She taps her temple.

ELENA (CONT'D)

That's why I'm in a refrigerator instead of a grave. He needs me breathing until the money moves.

ELLIOT

And after it moves?

ELENA

There's a reason the refrigerator was going to Louisiana too.

MACK

Why freeze it at all? That's not stealing. That's standing next to the money holding a match.

Elena studies him. Decides how much to sell.

ELENA

Insurance. I copied the network's books before I froze a dollar. Every compromised customs officer. Two federal agents. Bankers with nice families. If I die, the copies surface.

ELLIOT

Then you're safe.

ELENA

(dry)

Yes. Look how safe I am.

She holds up her zip-tied wrists. But something passed behind her eyes just then - a page she didn't mention.

Mack catches the omission the way he catches a fuel imbalance: nothing he can prove. One needle slightly off.

MACK

(even)

What's on the page you're not selling?

ELENA

(beat; a small smile)

Everything has a price, Captain. That page is not for sale yet.

MACK

Yet.

ELENA

Words cost nothing. That one you can have.

Mack files it. He's building quite a file tonight.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

Elliot straps back in, jaw set, and reaches for the radio like a man reaching for daylight.

ELLIOT

This ends now. We declare an emergency, we divert to the nearest military or federal field, we surrender the aircraft to legitimate authority, and the system - the system will sort it.

MACK

(gesturing: be my guest)

Sort away.

ELLIOT

(keying up)

Mayday, mayday, mayday -

ELENA

(from the door, sharp)

Wait -

Too late. The frequency answers - official, crisp:

AGENT KEEBLER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Aircraft calling mayday, this is
Homeland Security Investigations,
Special Agent Keebler. We're aware
of your situation. Squawk 7-5-2-2
and proceed direct Whitfield Field
- that's a secure government
facility. No press, no public.
We'll take you in quietly.

Elena crosses the cockpit and STABS a finger down on the
mute.

ELENA
Keebler.

ELLIOT
You know him?

ELENA
Page forty-one. Eleven thousand a
month, paid through his mother-in-
law's flower business.

Silence. The frequency hisses.

AGENT KEEBLER (V.O.)
(filtered)
Say intentions. Whitfield is plowed
and waiting. Nice and quiet.

ELENA
Land at Nice and Quiet, and the
airplane catches fire on the ground
tomorrow. Cargo destroyed before
inventory. Two smugglers dead
resisting. And a woman who was
never on board.

Elliot slowly lets go of the transmit switch, as if releasing
the hand of someone he trusted.

ELLIOT
(hollow)
He answered in ninety seconds.
Nobody answers in ninety seconds.

MACK
They were holding our call.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - LATER

Three screens. Three demands.

The SATCOM: BAYARD FIELD - CAR WILL BE WAITING. - V.

The radio, Keebler's voice on loop, warmer each time:
Whitfield Field. Quietly.

Elliot's laptop, an email from Atlantic's counsel, subject
line all caps: RETURN OUR AIRCRAFT IMMEDIATELY - with a
paragraph below denying Mack ever had authority to possess
it.

ELLIOT
(reading it twice)
They want it returned immediately
by a man they say has no right to
be flying it. If I return it, I
confirm I took it. That's - that's
a paradox with a sentencing
guideline.

MACK
So pick a law, counselor. Any law.
Point at one legitimate authority
on any of these screens and I'll
fly there.

Elliot looks from screen to screen to screen. His whole
operating system, hung.

ELLIOT
(quiet, honest)
I can't.

It costs him more than the plane is worth to say it.

DALE
(shrugging at the
windshield)
Then it's Louisiana by default.
Only door with a doorknob.

Mack watches Dale a moment in the glass. Dale looks like a
man thinking about lunch.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - NIGHT

A soft CAUTION chime. Mack's eyes flick to the hydraulic
synoptic: SYSTEM 4 pressure sagging, quantity bleeding slowly
down. The bullet's souvenir.

MACK
System four's going home early.
That's the gear's favorite system.

DALE
Alternate extension exists.

MACK
So does the ocean. I like when
things stay theoretical.

Then his scan crosses the FUEL page. Stops. He runs the
totalizer against the flight plan. Runs it again.

MACK (CONT'D)
Elliot. On the ground you watched
them top the tanks?

ELLIOT
I watched the truck. I logged the
meter - it's in section three -

MACK
The meter lied. Or the gauges did
until we leveled off.

(taps the screen)

We have fuel to Bayard Field plus about forty minutes of
opinions. Miami's an hour past empty. Victor didn't just pick
our destination. He fueled it.

ELLIOT
That's - you can do that?

MACK
He tanked us like a rental car.
Enough to get where he wants us.
Not enough to get ideas.

Elena, in the doorway, arms crossed over the zip tie.

ELENA
Now you understand him. Victor
doesn't threaten. He removes
options and lets you call it a
decision.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - UPPER DECK - NIGHT

Elena and Mack alone at the little table. Coffee in paper
cups. Below, the deck creaks its long slow creak.

She watches him check his watch against a fuel calculation on a kneeboard.

ELENA

Ask you something, Captain. If Victor offered the right number – clean paper, your name washed, immunity in writing – and all it cost was walking me down the airstair to him. What's the number?

MACK

There's no –

He stops. Because he was about to lie, and she'd know. And worse – he was about to calculate.

The pause is only a second and a half long. It is much too long.

Elena nods, unsurprised, like a teller confirming a balance.

ELENA

That's what I thought the number was.

She takes her cup and goes back to the crew seats. Doesn't look at him again.

Elliot, in the galley alcove, has watched all of it over a cup of terrible coffee.

ELLIOT

(quietly)

You know what your problem is.

MACK

I have a list. It's alphabetized. Somebody stapled it.

ELLIOT

You're not dishonest. I've audited dishonest – you'd be easier. Your problem is you believe everything has a price. Every person, every rule, every airplane. Because if everything has a price, then nothing is ever hard. You never have to choose. You just have to count.

Mack looks at him. And doesn't argue.

That – the not-arguing – is the loudest thing in the scene. Elliot sees it land, takes no pleasure in it, and goes back to his coffee.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – COCKPIT – NIGHT

Mack alone in the left seat, the instrument glow carving his face out of the dark. He looks at the SATCOM a long moment. Then dials.

VICTOR (V.O.)
(filtered)
Captain.

MACK
Four million. Not two.

Behind him, unseen, Elliot stops in the doorway. Elena behind Elliot.

MACK (CONT'D)
A written release of liability,
your file destroyed on camera, and
the car beside the runway – full
tank, keys in it, nobody standing
near it. I land, I walk, I never
saw any of you.

VICTOR (V.O.)
(a smile in it)
You negotiate like a man selling an
airplane.

MACK
I'm always selling an airplane.

VICTOR (V.O.)
Four million. The release. The car.
Agreed. You see how easy the world
becomes when everyone knows what
things cost?

MACK
Cheapest lesson I ever got free.

He hangs up. Turns. Sees Elliot and Elena in the doorway.

MACK (CONT'D)
(to the cabin, even)
We're landing at Bayard. Wheels
down in forty minutes.

No wink. No signal. He turns back to the panel and flies the airplane.

Elliot goes to his seat, opens the laptop, and begins typing with terrible calm: AFFIDAVIT OF ELLIOT PRICE. "I, Elliot Price, being of sound mind, make this record in the event I am unable to testify..."

His version of a last will.

Elena settles into a crew seat by the window. Stops talking entirely. Under her jacket, out of sight, she begins working the zip tie against the seat-frame rail. Steady. Patient. A woman who has decided she will not be walked off an airplane.

Dale runs the descent checklist, humming.

EXT. BAYARD FIELD - LOUISIANA - PRE-DAWN

Flat delta country under a bruise-colored sky, ground fog lying in the treelines like spilled milk. A single long runway, private, lit low - a strip of order cut into swamp. Beside it: metal buildings, vehicles, small figures. Waiting.

The 747 comes over the trees with its landing lights boring tunnels through the mist, huge and quiet, gear down - and touches. A puff of blue smoke. Rollout. Reversers roar across the wetlands, and stow.

INT./EXT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT / BAYARD FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The freighter slows to taxi speed. Holds short of the parking apron.

Through the windscreen, dawn-gray and precise, Mack reads the ground the way he reads a lien:

A FUEL TRUCK parked at the apron edge - no hose connected, no bonding wire out. A prop.

A FIREFIGHTING TRAILER - parked facing away from the aircraft.

A PORTABLE INCINERATOR - big industrial unit, stack already ticking with heat - sited off the apron, downwind.

The cargo ramp area: no loaders. No forklifts. No pallet jacks. Not one human being dressed to move ten tons of anything.

Two CARS beside the runway. A black SUV, men beside it, jackets in the wet heat.

And a gray sedan, engine running – through its rear window, folded PLASTIC SHEETING lines the back seat, neat as hospital linen.

Mack's eyes travel the ground once. Twice. The arithmetic assembles itself item by item, and his face goes very quiet.

MACK
(quietly, to no one)
Nobody's here to unload.

ELLIOT
(leaning forward)
What?

MACK
Fuel truck's a prop. Fire trailer's facing the wrong way – you face the airplane you're protecting. You face away from the one you're going to light. Incinerator's downwind so ten tons burning doesn't blow across the highway.

ELLIOT
Then what are they delivering?

MACK
Nothing. They're deleting. The cargo burns in the airframe. Everything nobody needs stays aboard for the fire.

(beat)

The car with the plastic in the back – that one's ours.

Elena, at the door, sees the gray sedan. Her face confirms everything, and gives away nothing.

On the frequency, a friendly local voice:

BAYARD GROUND (V.O.)
(filtered)
Heavy on the roll, welcome to Bayard. Come on up to the apron, park it nose-out, shut 'em down. We'll take it from here.

Dale reaches for the parking checklist.

Mack keys the mic. His voice is sunshine.

MACK
(into radio)
Copy nose-out, Bayard. Beautiful
field you got here. Rolling.

He puts his heels on the floor, toes off the brakes –
– and FIREWALLS all four throttles.

EXT. BAYARD FIELD – RUNWAY – CONTINUOUS

The 747 BELLOWS. Two hundred tons lunge down the remaining
runway – away from the apron – jet blast flattening the fog
behind them into rolling white doughnuts.

Beside the runway, men scramble. The SUV spits gravel.
Pickups swing onto the parallel taxiway, pacing the jet
through the mist, arms out windows –

MUZZLE FLASHES. Rounds walk up the aft fuselage – ping, ping,
PUNK – sparks off the gear doors.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – COCKPIT – CONTINUOUS

Everything shaking. Airspeed alive: 60 – 80 –

ELLIOT
(strapping in, three
attempts on the buckle)
The runway behind us was – we
landed LONG – is there enough –

MACK
We'll bill them for the trees.

DALE
(oddly flat)
Mack. Put it back down.

MACK
Busy.

100 knots. The end-of-runway lights coming up fast out of the
fog. A pickup draws level, a gunman kneeling in the bed –

DALE
(louder)
Put it DOWN, Mack.

MACK
Write it in the crossword –

The metallic click-CLACK beside him is not a checklist.

Dale has a PISTOL out, low, braced against his thigh, muzzle at Mack's ribs. The big friendly face hasn't changed at all - that's the horror of it. Only the voice is finally, completely awake.

DALE

It was going to be quick. That was the deal I made for you - quick. Now put the airplane back on the ground.

MACK

(eyes never leaving the runway)
V-one.

DALE

I will shoot you.

MACK

Then rotate's gonna be all yours.

Rotate. Mack hauls back. The nose lifts - the deck tilts - Dale, half-unstrapped to press the gun, staggers against the tilt -

The 747 leaves the ground with the perimeter trees filling the windscreen, claws over them, gear slapping leaves -

And the cockpit becomes a knife fight in a phone booth at three hundred feet:

Dale recovers, gun swinging up - behind him ELENA fills the doorway, and her wrists come apart - the zip tie, sawed through on the seat rail, snapping away - one freed hand SLAPS the CARGO FIRE TEST switch. The ALARM BELL detonates through the flight deck. Dale's head jerks toward it a quarter-second -

Elliot is out of his straps with the FIRE EXTINGUISHER, swings it like a man who has never swung anything, misses Dale entirely, hits the seatback - the extinguisher DISCHARGES - white powder EVERYWHERE, the cockpit a snow globe, Elliot blinded by his own weapon -

The airplane DIVES - stall warning stuttering - Mack flying with his left hand, right hand locked on Dale's gun wrist, the two men grinding against the center pedestal - the gun goes off ONCE into the overhead - panel glass, sparks -

MACK (CONT'D)
(through his teeth)
Not - the - airplane -

Treetops rush the windscreen through the white haze - Mack drops Dale's wrist, takes the yoke two-handed, pulls - the airframe SHUDDERS, holds -

- and Dale rises out of the powder behind him, gun coming level with the back of Mack's head -

CLANG.

Dale drops like a marionette with the strings cut.

Behind him: ELLIOT, coated head to toe in white powder like a terrified baker, holding his METAL DOCUMENT CASE in both hands like a headsman's axe. Breathing in whoops.

ELLIOT
(wheezing)
You mocked the case.

MACK
(leveling the wings)
I take it back.

ELLIOT
At the hangar. You called it
"luggage for cowards."

MACK
It's a war case. It's always been a
war case.

The 747 staggers out over the delta at treetop height, trailing a thin silver vapor from the wing root - hydraulic mist catching the dawn.

On the panel, amber lights are having a meeting. Mack scans them, then the fuel, then nothing at all for a moment.

MACK (CONT'D)
(genuinely offended)
He was going to burn the airplane.

ELLIOT
He was going to burn US.

MACK
Also that.

EXT. BAYARD FIELD - APRON - DAWN

Below and behind: VICTOR SANZ, 50s, stands beside the black SUV watching the 747 shrink over the treeline.

First real look at him: a compact man in a suit the color of wet slate, cut close, no tie. Silver at the temples, rimless glasses, hands folded at his belt buckle like a funeral director. Around him, armed men wait for rage, shifting their weight.

There is none. Victor watches the airplane go the way a shipping executive watches a delayed container: a line item, moving columns.

He takes out a phone. Dials from memory.

VICTOR
(into phone, pleasant)
Good morning. The alternative
version. Yes - all three desks, and
the Bureau, simultaneously. Send
the file.

He hangs up. Straightens his cuff.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
(to the airfield, mildly)
He chose the passengers.

CUT TO:

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

Sunrise through a powder-hazed windscreen, the light coming up gold and undeserved. Dale is gone from the right seat - drag marks in the extinguisher powder lead aft. Elena sits sidesaddle in the observer seat, rubbing raw wrists, watching Mack fly.

Elliot climbs the stairs two at a time, laptop open, face gray.

ELLIOT
It's out.

He turns the screen. A cable news stream, muted. BREAKING banner. And there - grainy, unmistakable - security footage of MACK crossing the Isla Verdad apron, climbing into the 747.

CHYRON: "VETERAN REPO PILOT NAMED AS ARCHITECT OF TRAFFICKING RING."

Second angle: the Van Nuys livestream. Mack taxiing the Gulfstream across the grass, freeze-framed to look like a getaway.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Three networks. Two wire services.
They have flight plans with your
signature, wire transfers,
warehouse leases. Eighteen months
deep. It's... it's beautifully
assembled. I would have approved
it.

Mack looks at his own face on the screen. FILE PHOTO: younger Mack beside a freighter, hand flat on the fuselage. From his own hangar wall. They even sourced the photograph.

ELENA
(not unkind)
He told you. He doesn't threaten.

Mack turns back to the windscreen. Flies. His hands are perfectly steady on the yoke, which is how Elliot knows.

ELLIOT
(carefully)
Mack. We'll refute it. The
affidavit, the recordings – there's
a procedure for –

MACK
Thirty years.

(beat)

Every bank, every lessor, every tower I ever talked onto its back foot – the methods were ugly and the name was good. That was the deal. That was the whole balance sheet.

ELLIOT
We'll –

MACK
Do you know what I never put a
price on? One thing. One.

Nobody answers. The engines answer.

Ahead, the Gulf coast slides beneath the nose – the whole enormous morning, and nowhere in it to land.

CUT TO:

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - CREW REST COMPARTMENT - DAY

A windowless closet of bunks behind the cockpit, lit by one dome light. DALE, conscious now, a knot rising over his ear like a plum, sits lashed to the bunk frame - wrists, ankles, a cargo strap across the chest.

Elliot photographs the restraints from three angles. Checks circulation at Dale's fingertips. Writes.

ELLIOT
Restraint applied 06:41 Central.
Subject alert, oriented,
extremities perfused. Two-hour
checks.

DALE
(amiable)
You're documenting my kidnapping.

ELLIOT
Citizen's arrest. Attempted
hijacking, attempted murder - I
have a list, it's chronological.

Mack appears with a roll of DUCT TAPE. Adds three deliberate wraps over the cargo strap buckle. Steps back. Considers. Adds one more.

DALE
(to Mack)
No hard feelings, Captain. It was a
work order.

MACK
That's the first true thing you've
said on this airplane.

DALE
Second.

(off Mack's look)

I told you she's a big honest airplane. That was true too.

Dale settles back against the bunk. Comfortable. Too comfortable - a man holding a ticket nobody else knows about.

Mack reads the comfort. Can't source it. Files it and goes.

What none of them checks: the aft bulkhead behind the bunks, where a MAINTENANCE ACCESS PANEL sits closed. Its safety wire is fresh. And threaded backwards.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

Elliot in the observer seat, laptop open, phone patched through the SATCOM. On screen: the counterfeit portal beside the real Atlantic site. He toggles between them like a jeweler comparing stones.

ELLIOT

(to Mack)

Pixel for pixel. Fonts, certificate art, the hold music. They didn't fake a lender - they photocopied one. Which means -

MACK

The default was real.

ELLIOT

The default was real. The airplane genuinely needs repossessing. Victor inserted you into a true recovery with false authority.

(beat; the idea arriving)

So the recovery itself... might be salvageable.

He dials. Straightens his tie. There is no one to see the tie. He straightens it anyway.

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)

(filtered, weary)

You again.

ELLIOT

Elliot Price, certifying auditor. I'm calling to offer Atlantic Aviation a onetime opportunity to have legally repossessed this aircraft yesterday.

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)

To have - retroactively? Absolutely not. We're not ratifying a theft.

The airplane drops through CHOP. Elliot's stomach lurches - he pulls a SICK BAG from the seat pocket, grips it like a stress ball, and keeps his voice level.

ELLIOT

Then let's inventory what you're declining.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

One: your aircraft flew four months in default while your asset-monitoring department monitored nothing. Two: it flew with ten tons of narcotics, exposing Atlantic to forfeiture proceedings - I'll spell "forfeiture" for your board. Three: your recovery vendor was impersonated using your own document templates, which your insurers will read as a controls failure -

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)

Mr. Price -

ELLIOT

Four: the aircraft is currently being flown competently, for free, by the only pilot in the hemisphere motivated to return it in one piece. Five -

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)

Mr. Price.

ELLIOT

I have eleven. I am prepared to read all eleven.

Turbulence SLAMS the airframe. Elliot breathes into the bag once, folds it, continues.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Six: this call is being recorded by me, timestamped, for the regulators of both our institutions -

ATLANTIC COUNSEL (V.O.)

(long exhale)

...Send me the ratification language.

ELLIOT

It's already in your inbox. Initial all three pages.

He hangs up. Sits very still. Then - small, contained, entirely private - a single FIST PUMP.

He immediately opens the log and writes: "07:19 - Recovery authority ratified. (Gesture of celebration: one. Logged for completeness.)"

MACK
(watching, deadpan)
Did you just log your own fist
pump?

ELLIOT
An incomplete record is worse than
no record.

MACK
(to Elena, jerking a
thumb)
We legally own the airplane now.

ELLIOT
We're legally AUTHORIZED to POSSESS
the airplane now. Ownership remains
with -

MACK
I heard own.

ELLIOT
You heard wrong at a felony level.

ELENA
Congratulations either way. You are
the lawful pilot of an unlawful
cargo, wanted by the government,
the cartel, and the television.

MACK
One out of four. In this business
that's a trend.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - UPPER DECK - DAY

Elliot has commandeered the crew table. Laptop, phone, the
portable printer actually PRINTING - pages feeding into a
neat tray. Elena and Mack across from him. A war room the
size of a closet, at 34,000 feet.

ELLIOT
Here's Victor's entire method. He
never fights evidence. He fights
the number of people holding it.
One witness disappears. One hard
drive burns in one warehouse. One
agency - his agency - takes custody
of one aircraft.

(beat)

So we don't give him one of anything.

MACK

Meaning?

ELLIOT

We make it undisappearable. Every record we have – Elena's testimony, my affidavit, the portal forensics – copied and transmitted NOW, in flight, to so many separate institutions that no single actor, corrupt or honest, can ever contain it. Banks. Insurers. Foreign regulators. Journalists. Competing law-enforcement agencies who hate each other – the hatred is load-bearing.

ELENA

(appraising him, new respect)

You want to launder the truth. Through volume.

ELLIOT

I want to make it a matter of record. Volume is how record becomes permanent.

Silence. Then Mack does something he has not done in thirty years of cockpits and courtrooms.

MACK

Okay.

(off their looks)

Your plan. Run it. Tell me where to point the airplane and when.

Elliot blinks. Checks Mack's face for the catch. There is no catch.

He turns to the laptop and starts assigning tasks like a man who has waited his whole life to be believed.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – UPPER DECK – LATER

Elena at the laptop's camera, wrists free, spine straight, morning light hard on her face – a deposition she is running herself.

ELENA
(to camera)
My name is Elena Cruz. I was the
financial architect of a
trafficking network operated by
Victor Sanz. The following
institutions moved his money
knowingly...

She names banks. Routing corridors. A customs supervisor in
Houston. Precise, fluent, damning – a professional presenting
her life's work in the past tense.

AT THE TABLE – Elliot builds the distribution: an email with
a bristling stack of attachments, the TO: field filling with
dozens of addresses. Wire services. Treasury. Interpol. A
Dutch banking regulator. The Miami Herald.

ELLIOT
Transmitting.

He sends. A progress bar crawls: 4%... 7%...

The SATCOM status flickers. The bar stalls at 11%. Retries.
11%.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
The link's degrading. That's not
weather –

ELENA
It's not weather. Victor leases
satellite capacity – legitimate
freight companies need
communications. He's jamming his
own transponders.

The bar dies at 14%. PARTIAL SEND – 6 OF 41 RECIPIENTS.

Elliot stares at the number. Six. He prints the delivery
report and files it, because filing is what his hands do
while his mind works.

ELLIOT
Six copies escaped. Six is not
volume. Six is six accidents
waiting to be arranged.

MACK
So the upload isn't the play
anymore.

ELLIOT
No. The upload was the warning
shot. Now the evidence has to land
somewhere it can't be confiscated.

(beat)

Which means WE have to land somewhere it can't be
confiscated. With her. With the cargo. Visible.

The word hangs there: visible. Nobody has a map to visible.

EXT. REGIONAL AIRPORT - GULF COAST - DAY

A sun-hammered private ramp. Victor's GULFSTREAM waits, door
open, engines ticking over.

From an SUV, his men transfer gear aboard in fast relay: hard
cases, long bags - and a garment box that spills its contents
as it passes: navy WINDBREAKERS, folded flat. Yellow block
letters visible on the topmost: FEDERAL AGENT.

Victor stands at the foot of the airstair, phone to his ear,
watching the horizon to the southeast as if he can already
see the 747 on it.

VICTOR
(into phone)
Keebler. Miami. Both of us.

(listens; then, mild)

Because six copies escaped, Agent. Six is a number I can
still make into zero. It requires attendance.

He climbs the stairs without hurrying. The door swings shut
behind him like a checkbook closing.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - UPPER DECK - DAY

Elena and Mack. Coffee in paper cups. The printer idles.
Below, the deck creaks its long slow creak.

MACK
Deposition's done. You can stop
performing.

ELENA
Who's performing?

MACK

You built a cartel's bank and froze it. People do that for one of two reasons, and conscience isn't either.

A long moment. Elena turns the cup in her hands, watching the coffee find its level against the airplane's slow rolls.

ELENA

I had a brother. Tomás. He drove for the network – just drove. Two years ago Victor decided a shipment was light and needed a thief to blame. He picked the driver. It was quicker than an audit.

(beat)

I moved money for the man for three more years. Smiling. Learning the accounts. Waiting for the week his structure was too leveraged to survive a freeze.

(beat)

So no. Not a whistleblower. I'm an accountant settling a balance. When this is over I go to prison – I've seen my own file, I helped write it. I froze his money anyway.

Mack studies her. And his regard visibly goes UP, not down – one professional recognizing another's clean work.

MACK

Victor know it's about Tomás?

ELENA

Victor doesn't remember Tomás. That's the point of Victor.

Mack nods slowly. Then, quiet, straight:

MACK

The page you're not selling. I'm asking again.

Elena looks at him a long beat. At the zip-tie welts on her wrists. Out the window.

ELENA

Ask me again when you've turned down the right offer.

MACK
And if the right offer comes before
then?

ELENA
Then the page wouldn't have helped
you anyway.

She gets up, rinses her cup, seats it in the rack upside
down. Precise. Closed. Mack watches her go — a negotiation he
has, for the first time in the film, entirely failed to open.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER — COCKPIT — DAY

Descent planning. Mack runs numbers on the kneeboard. His
scan crosses the hydraulic synoptic —

— and stops. SYSTEM 1: quantity trickling down. Not the
battle-damaged System 4. The GOOD one.

MACK
No.

He taps the gauge like it might apologize. The needle
continues its slow, polite bleed.

MACK (CONT'D)
System one's losing quantity. Slow.
Steady.

(dark)

Too steady. Battle damage sputters. This is a metered leak.

ELLIOT
Metered. As in designed?

Mack is already out of his seat.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER — CREW REST COMPARTMENT — CONTINUOUS

Mack and Elliot. Dale watches them from the bunk with mild
interest, like a man watching neighbors search for a cat he
buried.

Elliot's eyes travel the compartment walls — the same
inventory reflex that counted cocaine bricks — cataloging
every fastener, every placard. He stops.

ELLIOT
That one.

The aft MAINTENANCE PANEL. Elliot points at the safety wire.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Every safety wire on this airplane
twists clockwise into the fastener.
I noticed on the walkaround - it's
in section two. That one's threaded
backwards. Someone re-safetied it
left-handed. Or in a hurry. Or
both.

Mack spins the fasteners, drops the panel. Inside: a
hydraulic return line, and clamped to it, a small BLEED VALVE
that does not belong to Boeing - cracked open a precise
quarter turn, weeping amber fluid into a drain path. Patient
as an IV.

Mack stares at it. Then at the wall toward the bunks.

MACK
(calling, conversational)
Dale.

DALE (O.S.)
Captain.

MACK
When?

DALE (O.S.)
Isla Verdad. While you were
charming the tower.

(beat)

It's insurance, Mack. Nothing personal. Whatever happened up
front - a deal, a fight, me in a strap - the airplane comes
down low and short. No version where you fly away rich.

MACK
He booby-trapped my airplane.

ELLIOT
Atlantic's airplane.

MACK
Not the point.

Mack reaches for the bleed valve. Stops - reads the corroded
fitting, the fluid weep, the way it's seated.

MACK (CONT'D)
It's frozen open. Close it wrong
and the line lets go all at once.

(grim math)

He didn't rig a bomb. He rigged a clock.

DALE (O.S.)
(pleasant, through the
wall)
Told you I plan ahead.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

Mack straps back in, pulls the hydraulic page, starts load-shedding - killing systems one by one like a man triaging a battlefield.

ELLIOT
How long?

MACK
The valve says ninety minutes. The
gauge says less.

(beat)

Wherever we're landing, we're landing soon, and we're landing broken.

CUT TO:

INT. PLAIN OFFICE - DAY

Nowhere. A rented executive suite: white walls, one table, one chair, one window with the blinds drawn, the slats printing gray bars across the carpet. VICTOR sits before a SPEAKERPHONE, suit immaculate, hands folded.

The phone is already live. Silence hisses out of it like gas.

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
(filtered; flat,
unhurried, no accent
worth naming)
Three questions.

VICTOR
Of course.

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
Where is the delivery?

VICTOR
Airborne. Temporarily. The pilot
exceeded his brief – it's being
corrected within the day, at my
expense, no exposure to the
portfolio –

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
Where is the auditor's
transmission?

A beat. Victor was not aware they knew about the
transmission.

VICTOR
Contained. Six recipients. We're
identifying –

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
Where is the accountant?

Longest beat of all.

VICTOR
With the delivery. Also being
corrected.

Silence. Not thinking-silence. Weighing-silence.

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
The accountant kept books.

VICTOR
Her materials will be recovered
intact and destroyed unread. You
have my –

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
Unread.

The word just sits there. It is not a question. It is not
quite a threat. Victor's hand moves toward his cuff and stops
itself.

And there – for the first time in the film – a fine shine of
SWEAT at Victor's hairline, silver in the blind-striped
light.

VICTOR
I will handle Miami personally.

SHAREHOLDER (V.O.)
Yes.

Click. Dial tone.

Victor sits alone with the drawn blinds. He unfolds his hands. Refolds them. The great logistics executive, recalculating a route where every path now runs through himself.

CUT TO:

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - DAY

Charts on every flat surface. Elliot cross-references airport directories; Elena monitors frequencies with one headset cup; Mack flies and vetoes.

ELLIOT

Eglin refuses. Pensacola refuses.
Mobile - refused before I finished
the tail number.

ELENA

(headset half off)
Because of this.

She flips the audio to speaker. A crisp advisory voice:

ADVISORY (V.O.)

(filtered)
...all facilities: subject aircraft
may be carrying an explosive
device. Do not accept. Isolate on
arrival. Interdiction authorized...

MACK

A bomb. He's telling them we're a
bomb.

ELENA

It's elegant. A drug plane gets
impounded and inventoried. A bomb
gets isolated at a remote site - or
shot down over water. Either way,
no witnesses near the cargo.

MACK

(jaw working; then)
Fine. We stop asking permission.
There's a mothballed emergency
strip east of Apalachicola -
hurricane evac field, nine thousand
feet, nobody home. I put her down
there, we walk out with the drives,
the cargo sits -

ELLIOT

No.

The flat certainty of it turns Mack's head.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Deserted means controllable. That's been Victor's whole design since Isla Verdad — every option he builds for us is quiet. The quiet strip. The quiet government field. Quiet is where evidence dies.

(beat; arriving at it)

We don't need a runway, Mack. We need witnesses. The runway is incidental.

Mack stares at him. The auditor has just reframed the entire problem, and they both know it.

MACK

Say the ugly version.

ELLIOT

The ugly version is an airport too public to disappear.

He spins the laptop. A diagram: MIAMI INTERNATIONAL — a spider of runways in a web of city.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hundreds of passengers with phones at every window. Live traffic cameras. News helicopters on permanent station. And jurisdiction soup — Miami-Dade, FDLE, FBI, CBP, DEA, airport authority — six agencies who all hate each other. Nobody can quietly own that scene.

MACK

You want me to fly a suspected BOMB — a plane the government has been told is a bomb — into the busiest airspace in the Southeast. With one hydraulic system bleeding out and a gear that may not come down. Over a CITY.

ELLIOT

Yes.

MACK

People live under that approach. If she quits on final, I'm putting two hundred tons into a neighborhood. That's not a risk, that's a -- no. It's reckless. It's actually reckless.

A beat. Elliot tilts his head, genuinely fascinated.

ELLIOT

That's the first plan you've ever rejected for being irresponsible.

MACK

(thrown)
I reject plans.

ELLIOT

You reject plans that don't pay. This one you rejected on MERITS. I'm going to log it.

MACK

Don't log it.

ELLIOT

(already writing)
"09:52 - Subject exhibits judgment."

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - LATER

The SATCOM rings. Everyone looks at it. Mack answers on speaker.

VICTOR (V.O.)

(filtered; different now --
no salesmanship, just
weather)
Captain. Last call, and it's not the offer you're expecting, so listen to all of it.

MACK

Line's yours.

VICTOR (V.O.)

Not money. I withdraw the file. All of it -- flight plans, wires, the leases, gone by tonight. Better: I give the authorities the operation's true architect.

(MORE)

VICTOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Dale Rusk, career smuggler's pilot,
who deceived a legitimate recovery
crew. He's aboard, he's restrained
— you're halfway to hero already.
The networks that burned you will
run the correction with your
photograph in a captain's uniform.

(beat)

Your record restored. Your business insured. The four million
as agreed. By Friday you are the pilot who FOUGHT the cartel.

(beat)

I'm offering you your name, Captain. The one thing you never
learned to price. In exchange: a quiet strip of my choosing,
the woman, and the drives. That's all. That was always all.

Silence in the cockpit. Total.

Because it is the right offer. Everyone hears that it is the
right offer.

Elliot looks at the fuel totalizer: amber. EMERGENCY MINIMUM
in white letters that seem louder than the engines. The
SATCOM signal bars flicker — comms dying by inches. On the
datalink: a NOTAM. Fighter aircraft advisory, their squawk in
it.

VICTOR (V.O.)
You don't need to answer. Just
descend.

Click.

Mack sits with his hands on the yoke. He looks at nothing.
Then —

He reaches up. Winds the heading bug SOUTHWEST — toward
Victor's coordinates. Pulls the throttles back. The nose
drops into a long, obedient descent.

Nobody attacks him.

Nobody argues.

Elena turns to her window and watches the Gulf come up to
meet them, her face composing itself into something rehearsed
— a woman updating her arithmetic to a shorter timeline.

Elliot closes the laptop. Squares it on the table. Quietly,
without irony:

ELLIOT

(to Elena)

Is there anything you want to do
with the time? People we could call
while the radio still works.
I'll... take dictation. If it would
help.

ELENA

(still at the window)

Write to my sister. Tell her where
Tomás is buried. Victor never told
us. Maybe he'll trade that for the
drives too.

Elliot opens the laptop back up and begins to type it. His
hands are steady. That is the worst part – they have both
accepted it.

They believe Mack.

The cabin believes Mack.

HOLD on the cockpit: the descending sun crawling across the
instrument panel, across Mack's hands. There is nothing on
this flight deck that belongs to him except thirty years of
habit and a name that no longer exists.

The altimeter unwinds. The silence goes on one beat past
bearable.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – COCKPIT – MINUTES LATER

Low now. Haze layer. The radar altimeter alive. On the nav
display, Victor's strip creeps toward the top of the screen.

Elliot doesn't watch the screen. He watches Mack's hands.

The left hand leaves the throttles. Finds the fuel page.
Brings up the totalizer – the number, the awful number – and
Mack looks at it the way he looked at the Beechcraft under
the work lights.

Then, below radar coverage, without a word –

– he rolls the airplane into a BANK. EAST.

The compass card swings. Southwest falls off the nose. The
morning sun wheels across the windscreen and steadies dead
ahead, flooding the cockpit gold.

Elena's head comes up. Elliot stops typing mid-word.

ELLIOT
(carefully)
That's not the heading to the
strip.

MACK
No.

ELLIOT
(looking at the fuel; the
math is instant and
terrible)
Mack. The turn – at this altitude,
this weight – we just spent the
reserve. There's no fuel to change
your mind back. It's Miami or it's
a field short of Miami. There is no
third –

MACK
I know what I spent.

And he does. It's in his voice: the name is not coming back
on its own. Not Friday. Maybe not ever. He priced it – the
one thing – and paid it, and the account does not reopen.

Elena unbuckles, comes forward, stands between the seats.
Looks at the heading. At him.

ELENA
Why?

Mack flies. For a moment it seems he won't answer. Then, eyes
on the horizon:

MACK
Victor's paperwork was fake.

(beat)

Mine isn't.

He reaches down and re-clips the chain-of-custody log –
Elliot's log, DISPUTED and all – to the center pedestal,
where a captain keeps the documents that matter.

Elliot looks at it. At him. Then opens the Miami approach
plates and begins, wordlessly, to fold them in order of use.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - MINUTES LATER

The airplane drives east into the sun, low over green water. Mack trims, sets power, the small constant work of keeping a wounded thing alive.

Elena has not moved from between the seats. She watches the compass hold east. Holds her own long silence.

Then she reaches into her jacket and produces a folded square of paper - worn soft at the creases, carried against the body for a long time. She unfolds it flat on the center pedestal, next to the chain-of-custody log.

Columns. A shell company. A skim - small percentages, years deep, patiently compounded.

ELENA

The page.

Mack looks down at it. Up at her.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Victor's own account. He has been stealing from the men above him for eleven years. Carefully. Beautifully, actually. The shareholders have never seen these numbers.

(beat)

You think he's chasing the money. He's chasing the page with his name on it. If they ever read it, Victor dies before I do.

ELLIOT

(leaning in, absorbing it)
That's why Miami can't be delegated. He's not protecting an empire -

MACK

He's covering a till.

Elena straightens. Looks at the compass - east, still east - then at Mack.

ELENA

You asked what was on it. I said ask again when you'd turned down the right offer.

(beat)

You didn't ask. You turned.

MACK
(a beat; even)
What's it cost me?

ELENA
Nothing. That's the point of it,
Captain. You finally bought
something with the other currency.

She goes back to her seat. Mack looks at the worn page on the pedestal – the deadliest document on an airplane full of documents – then at Elliot.

MACK
File it.

ELLIOT
(taking it, reverent)
Under what?

MACK
Ammunition.

CUT TO:

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – COCKPIT – DAY

The right seat is empty. Dale's seat.

Elliot stands beside it, looking at it the way a man looks at a horse he's been asked to ride into battle.

MACK
Sit down.

ELLIOT
I'm not a pilot.

MACK
I don't need a pilot. I've got a
pilot. I need the other thing – the
thing where you read instructions
out loud and refuse to skip.

ELLIOT
That's not a crew position.

MACK
It's the only one left. Sit.

Elliot sits. Adjusts the harness with two clicks, precisely. His hands find the armrests and hold on.

Mack drops two thick laminated checklists into his lap: HYD SYS 1+4 LOSS. LANDING GEAR - ALTERNATE EXTENSION.

MACK (CONT'D)
Top to bottom. Every line, every response. I say a number back wrong, you say it again until I don't.

ELLIOT
(finding the header;
steady)
"Hydraulic systems one and four inoperative. Condition: loss of pressure or quantity -"

MACK
Confirmed, thrilling, next.

ELLIOT
It says read the condition statement.

MACK
I LIVED the condition statement.

ELLIOT
(continuing, immovable)
"...Note. Do not disconnect demand pump four before alternate flap arming. Disconnecting early will -"

MACK
Skip the note. Notes are for simulators -

ELLIOT
No.

The flat auditor NO. Mack's hand - already reaching for the demand pump switch - stops in the air.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(reading, deliberate)
"- disconnecting early will depower the alternate flap motor and fail the last operating pump."

Silence. Mack looks at his own hand. At the switch it was about to kill. The one pump still holding the airplane together.

He brings the hand back to the yoke.

MACK
...Continue the note.

ELLIOT
(a beat; he heard it)
"Flap arming. Verify -"

They work down the list. Call and response. Somewhere in it, without ceremony, Mack stops saying "skip." Elliot notices. Neither of them mentions it. The two voices settle into a rhythm - for the first time all movie, they sound like a crew.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - LATER

Elliot, half under the side panel with a flashlight in his teeth, follows a wiring diagram with one finger.

ELLIOT
(muffled)
Emergency bus... breaker row
three... "COMM ONE ALT FEED."

He pushes a breaker home. On the pedestal, one radio head FLICKERS alive. Static, then the sea of aviation chatter - a hundred distant voices going about the ordinary sky.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(emerging, triumphant)
One radio. VHF. Line-of-sight -
every airline crew within two
hundred miles is on it. He can jam
a satellite he leases. He can't jam
a hundred cockpits.

(then, almost embarrassed)

Also, apparently, hobbyists. People record these frequencies and stream them on the internet. Live. For fun.

ELENA
(from the door)
Say that last part again.

Elena is already moving to the pedestal. She picks up the hand mic. Weighs it in her palm - a woman who has waited three years to be on the record.

ELENA (CONT'D)
(to Mack)
May I?

MACK
(a beat; then, ceding the
frequency like a throne)
Station's yours.

She keys the mic. Her voice goes out flat and clear and unhurried – dictation pace. A professional presenting.

ELENA
(into mic)
To all stations receiving. My name
is Elena Cruz. I am broadcasting
from Boeing 747 registration
November-7-4-2-Alpha-Whiskey,
inbound to Miami. I was held
captive aboard this aircraft, which
carries approximately ten tons of
cocaine belonging to Victor Sanz –
S-A-N-Z – whose network I financed.
I froze three hundred ninety
million dollars of his money. What
follows are the names in his
ledger.

Beat. The frequency – the entire crowded frequency – has gone church-quiet.

ELENA (CONT'D)
(into mic)
Customs supervisor, Port of
Houston: Raymond Aceval, A-C-E-V-A-
L. Homeland Security
Investigations, Special Agent
Daniel Keebler, K-E-E-B-L-E-R,
eleven thousand a month through
Bluestem Floral LLC. Federal agent,
second: –

INT. AIRLINE COCKPIT – DAY (INTERCUT)

Two AIRLINE PILOTS at cruise, frozen mid-coffee, staring at their audio panel like it has begun to speak in tongues.

AIRLINE CAPTAIN
Are you writing this down?

AIRLINE FIRST OFFICER
(scribbling on a nav log)
Spell Aceval again –

INT. SUBURBAN GARAGE - DAY (INTERCUT)

A SCANNER HOBBYIST, 60s, cargo shorts, headphones, sits bolt upright before a rack of receivers glowing like an altar. On his monitor, a stream chat is detonating – the viewer count spinning up like an altimeter: 900... 4,000... 11,000...

SCANNER HOBBYIST
(whispering, reverent)
Best day of my life.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Elena, mic in hand, reading names from the laptop. Steady as a metronome. Beside her, Elliot holds the ledger folder open to the next page like an altar boy. Last in the stack: the worn, folded skim page.

ELENA
(into mic)
– First Coastal Bank of Aruba,
correspondent accounts 4-4-0-9
through 4-4-1-7. Señor Sanz, if
you're listening: the shareholders
now have my context. You should
have told them about your account
first.

She releases the mic. Exhales, long – three years of exhale.

MACK
(eyes forward, flying)
Remind me never to default on
anything you're auditing.

ELENA
You couldn't afford my rates.

ELLIOT
(genuine, to Elena)
Your enunciation was excellent.

ELENA
Thank you, Elliot.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - LATER

Descent. Miami on the nav display, close now. Mack levels the checklist at Elliot.

MACK
Gear.

ELLIOT
(reading)
"Alternate gear extension. Landing
gear lever - OFF. Alternate
extension switches - all four, hold
two seconds."

Mack flips the guarded switches. A grinding WHIR runs under the floor - the sound of machinery doing something it hates.

CLUNK. Green light: NOSE GEAR.

CLUNK. Green light: LEFT MAIN.

The right main indicator glows red, and there is no third clunk. Just a strained mechanical whine, like something leaning on a stuck door.

MACK
Right main's jammed in the well.
The uplock took a round back at the
strip, or the bleed finally starved
it.

ELLIOT
The checklist has a next step.

MACK
So do I.

Mack tightens his harness one notch. Which Elliot has learned to read as a terrible omen.

MACK (CONT'D)
(over shoulder)
Elena. Strap in and hold the
ledger. Everybody keep your teeth
apart.

ELLIOT
Why would our teeth -

Mack ROLLS the airplane into a hard climbing turn - then reverses, unloading to zero-G - the horizon slews, loose charts float weightless, sunlight tumbling around the cockpit -

- then he LOADS it, two G, the airframe groaning like a ship in ice, everyone crushed down into their seats -

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - MAIN CARGO DECK - CONTINUOUS

The broken pallet AVALANCHES. Hundreds of cocaine bricks lift weightless off the deck - hang for one impossible museum-exhibit moment, white masonry floating in the dome lights -

- and CRASH down and aft in a landslide, bricks skittering into the tail like hail on a tin roof.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

CLUNK - the whole airframe feels it - the right main drops out of the well.

The indicator flickers red - then settles on a slow, sick AMBER PULSE. Down. Not locked.

MACK

It's down. It's not locked. It's
leaning on the door and lying about
it.

Elliot, gray-green from the G, grabs the nearest receptacle - the METAL DOCUMENT CASE, open on the floor - and is neatly, comprehensively sick into it.

A beat. He wipes his mouth. Looks down at the case. The case that saved his life.

ELLIOT

(to the case, sincerely)
I'm so sorry.

MACK

It's a war case. That's a war
wound.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIAMI - PRIVATE AVIATION TERMINAL - DAY

Palms whipping in a sea wind. Victor's Gulfstream taxis in fast and brakes hard, nose bobbing. Victor comes down the airstair before the engines finish winding down - and walks into a waiting formation: black SUVs, a TACTICAL TEAM in fitted gear, windbreakers stenciled FEDERAL. It is all correct. It is all wrong.

AGENT KEEBLER, 40s - a gym build going soft, a face made for procedure now shining with sweat - meets him, phone pressed to his chest like a bandage.

KEEBLER

(low, cracking)

She said my NAME. On an open frequency. My mother-in-law's - there are people streaming it, there's a COUNTER -

VICTOR

(not slowing)

Then you have nothing left to protect and everything to earn. Route the aircraft to the remote cargo apron the moment it stops. Federal quarantine, bomb protocol, no press inside the perimeter. One hour and every recording is a hoax with a suspect in custody.

KEEBLER

And if it isn't -

Victor stops. Looks at him. It is the first time in the film Victor's eyes are visibly doing arithmetic and losing.

VICTOR

Agent. The people listening to that broadcast include my employers. If the woman and her pages are not in my hands before the aircraft is in anyone else's, then you and I are the same man: already dead, still filling out forms.

(resuming, brisk)

The apron. Go.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS (INTERCUT)

Elena, at her window, binoculars from the flight kit. On the private ramp far below: the Gulfstream, sleek and white as a dropped tooth. The SUVs. The windbreakers.

ELENA

He's here. Himself. Federal costumes - Keebler's people. They'll take us the moment we stop rolling.

MACK

Then we pick where we stop rolling.

EXT./INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT / 747 FREIGHTER -
COCKPIT - DAY

The airport spreads out ahead like a delta of concrete pouring into the sea-glare. Heavies in the pattern being vectored away, contrails bending. Rotating beacons everywhere. Two NEWS HELICOPTERS already keeping station offshore, cameras up, lenses like held breath.

Emergency vehicles stream onto the parallels - a red river.

TOWER (V.O.)
(filtered; a controller
earning his pension)
Heavy November-7-4-2-Alpha-Whiskey,
winds one-one-zero at eight, runway
niner cleared to land. Equipment is
standing by. And - be advised,
your, ah, passenger's broadcast -
everyone's aware. The FREQUENCY is
aware. Good luck.

MACK
(into radio)
Cleared to land, niner. Keep the
equipment clear of the right side,
we may shed parts.

He clicks off. Rolls his shoulders once.

MACK (CONT'D)
Callouts.

ELLIOT
(eyes on the tapes;
finding a rhythm)
One thousand. Speed plus five.

MACK
Flaps as briefed.

ELLIOT
Five hundred. Speed plus three.
Sink seven - sink SIX. Good.

The runway floats up. Buildings slide beneath - homes, a school, a mall parking lot, all the small Saturday lives under the approach -

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Two hundred. Plus two.

MACK
(half a smile, dead calm)
You sound like a pilot.

ELLIOT
You sound like a defendant.

MACK
One count at a time.

ELLIOT
One hundred. Fifty. Thirty -

EXT./INT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL - RUNWAY 9 / 747 FREIGHTER -
CONTINUOUS

The 747 crosses the threshold, vast over the piano keys, its shadow rushing ahead of it up the runway to meet it.

Left main touches - chirp. Nose stays high, holding, holding -

Right main touches -

- and BUCKLES. The amber lie comes due. The strut shudders, folding by degrees, the right wing dipping toward the concrete -

ELLIOT
Right gear - RIGHT GEAR -

And Mack does what thirty years and one dead father built him to do: full opposite yoke, a breath of power on the right side - he LIFTS the dying wing and HOLDS it off the ground.

The airplane saved. The asset preserved.

And two hundred tons, balanced on half its legs, begins to DRIFT right - off centerline - toward the parallel taxiway where the red river of fire trucks stands parked, crews scattering from their vehicles -

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
Mack - the trucks - there are
PEOPLE -

Mack's arms are iron on the yoke. The wing stays up. The drift continues. His whole body is doing the only thing it knows: never damage the asset. The rule, flying the airplane instead of the man.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
(not shouting; naming it)
Damage the asset.

A HELD BEAT -

- the framed photograph: pilots at the fence, his father's jaw -
- the Beechcraft alone under the work lights, polished, never flown -
- everything the rule was ever FOR: nothing destroyed but pride -
- and the fire crews running, real, alive, now.

Mack drops the wing.

The right engine nacelles meet the runway in a WALL of sparks - a comet's tail a quarter-mile long, orange fire against white concrete. Mack shoves in asymmetric reverse, the left side screaming, dragging the slide straight - the nose swings off the trucks, back toward centerline -

Grinding. Deceleration like a held breath. The spark-storm dying by lengths -

- and the 747 groans to a stop, right wing low, nacelles smoking, EXACTLY between the runway and the world it did not hit.

Silence. Foam trucks creep in like white elephants.

Mack sits with his hands still on the yoke. Through his window: the right wing, crumpled nacelles, skin torn back in bright aluminum curls. His life's one commandment, in wreckage form.

A long moment. Then, assessing, almost scholarly:

MACK
(quiet)
...That might be structural.

ELLIOT
(hoarse; unclipping his pen)
I'll note it in the condition report.

EXT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL - RUNWAY 9 - CONTINUOUS

The wounded giant sits in a horseshoe of emergency lights, steam rising off the dead nacelles. And FIRST to arrive, cutting off the airport's own units: black SUVs. Windbreakers. FEDERAL QUARANTINE placards going up on cones.

Keebler's voice barks over official channels: bomb protocol, perimeter, no approach.

The real responders - Miami-Dade, airport authority - stack up behind the cordon, furious, outranked by costume.

A boarding ladder rises to the forward door.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - UPPER DECK - DAY

The door opens on sea-light. VICTOR steps aboard, alone.

Alone - his one genius move: no guns visible, no threat performed. Slate suit immaculate in the wrecked, powder-hazed cabin. He looks around like a landlord assessing tenants, and finds Mack standing at the head of the stairs. Elena and Elliot behind him.

VICTOR

Captain. That landing will be studied.

MACK

Send the tuition to the bank.

VICTOR

I intend to.

He sets a slim briefcase on the crew table. Opens it. Doesn't push it forward - lets it sit there, being what it is.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Outside are federal credentials that say this aircraft is a bomb. For one hour, that story holds. Here is what fits inside the hour.

(counting, unhurried)

The file, withdrawn - you were never the architect. Rusk, indicted for it. Your record, corrected on the same networks that burned it. The four million. And this -

(from the briefcase, a document)

— a purchase agreement. Mercer Asset Recovery, acquired and insured by a Delaware holding company at eleven times its value. Your father spent fifteen years buying back one airplane, Captain. I'm offering you all fifteen back at once.

The cabin is still. It is, again, the right offer — and this time it's touching the Beechcraft.

Mack looks at the paper. Reaches out. Turns it around. READS it — actually reads, line by line, taking his time, the pages ticking over.

Elena's weight shifts toward the emergency exit. Every second, the perimeter outside hardens.

Elliot doesn't move at all. He watches Mack read. Watches the eyes — and sees what an auditor sees: the eyes aren't reading. They're TIMING.

ELLIOT
(to Elena, barely audible)
He's stalling.

ELENA
(low)
For what?

Elliot glances at the OPEN LOADING PANEL by the crew station — the powered-roller controls Elena walked them past an hour ago.

ELLIOT
For me.

He drifts, mildly, toward the panel. A man stretching his legs.

MACK
(still "reading"; to Victor)
Clause nine's ambitious. "Seller warrants no ongoing liabilities."

VICTOR
Standard language.

MACK
Nothing about tonight is standard, Victor. You're on my airplane.

VICTOR
Atlantic's airplane.

MACK
(looking up; pleasant)
Not the point.

And Elena – reading the room she built – steps to the sidewall and rests her hand on the MAIN CARGO DOOR control like it's a light switch.

ELENA
(to Victor, kindly)
You should have flown commercial.

INT./EXT. 747 FREIGHTER – MAIN DECK / MIAMI INTERNATIONAL – CONTINUOUS

Elena turns the switch. Hydraulics moan – the enormous SIDE CARGO DOOR swings up and open, and hard Florida daylight floods the deck in a widening blade.

Elliot hits the powered rollers.

The floor comes alive. The broken restraints – Dale's takeoff souvenir, the high-G landslide – hold back exactly nothing.

The first pallet rolls majestically to the sill, tips –
– and TEN TONS begin to AVALANCHE out of the airplane.

EXT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL – RUNWAY 9 – CONTINUOUS

Cocaine bricks cascade onto the apron in a spreading white delta – bouncing, skidding, fanning out across the concrete, past the cones, past the QUARANTINE placards, to the boots of the real cops at the cordon.

Above, both news helicopters get the shot of the decade: a 747 pouring narcotics onto America's busiest runway in golden morning light.

On phones. On terminal glass – passengers ten deep at the windows. On every live feed in the country.

Victor's invisible enterprise, arranged on public concrete like evidence on a table. Because it is.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – UPPER DECK – CONTINUOUS

Victor stands at the window, watching his life fan out across the apron in white. He closes the briefcase. Small, precise. A man closing a ledger.

VICTOR
(almost admiring)
You understand this buys you
nothing. Only me.

MACK
That's the whole invoice.

Victor goes down the stairs without hurrying. Hurrying is for
men with options.

EXT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL - RUNWAY 9 - CONTINUOUS

Chaos inverting: the REAL agencies breach the costume cordon
- Miami-Dade pushing through, FDLE badges out, two
windbreaker "agents" already face-down on the concrete among
the bricks. Keebler backs away from all of it, then simply
RUNS - which, on eleven cameras, is a confession with legs.

Victor walks - brisk, composed - to a waiting cart, and is
driven toward the private ramp. Toward the GULFSTREAM,
engines already turning.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER - COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Mack drops into the left seat. Through the windscreen, far
across the field: the Gulfstream, white and quick, beginning
to taxi.

MACK
He's rolling. Tower can't hold him
- his paperwork says federal.

ELENA
(arriving; watching it)
It would. He leases everything
through shells. Ownership leaves a
trail -

She stops. Her own sentence catches up with her. Her eyes go
wide with the purest joy an accountant has ever felt.

ELENA (CONT'D)
Ownership leaves a TRAIL. The
Gulfstream - page sixty. Marfil
Holdings, Curaçao. It's a LEASE,
Elliot. And when I froze the
accounts -

ELLIOT
(already there, already
reaching for the handset)
- the lease stopped paying.

(beat; the whole machine
assembling behind his eyes)

Four months ago. The same week as ours.

He dials. Puts it on speaker. Outside, the Gulfstream swings
onto the taxiway, sun flaring off its tail.

LESSOR REP (V.O.)
(filtered)
Meridian Capital Aviation.

ELLIOT
Good morning. Elliot Price,
certifying repossession auditor.
I'm calling about your Gulfstream
Six-Fifty, registration November-8-
8-Mike-Hotel, leased through Marfil
Holdings, Curaçao - currently four
months delinquent.

LESSOR REP (V.O.)
Sir, lessee information is
confiden-

ELLIOT
It's on television. Turn on any
channel. Your aircraft is taxiing
away from the largest narcotics
seizure in American history with
the cartel's logistics chief
aboard. Here is your next hour:
forfeiture proceedings. Seizure
liens. Your insurers reading the
words "known trafficking asset" in
a federal complaint -

LESSOR REP (V.O.)
Oh my God, that's OUR -

ELLIOT
- UNLESS the aircraft is
repossessed before it becomes a
fugitive conveyance. You have a
defaulted lease and grounds. I have
a licensed recovery firm on site.

(beat; the title, earned)

Authorize us to repo your jet. Verbal ratification now,
papered tonight. I've done it before – recently, in fact.

A half-second of hold-music terror. Then:

LESSOR REP (V.O.)
...Authorized. AUTHORIZED. Stop
that airplane.

MACK
(already keying the radio;
sunshine voice)
Miami Ground, Mercer Asset
Recovery. Be advised: Gulfstream
November-8-8-Mike-Hotel on taxiway
Papa is a repossessed asset,
recovery in progress, lessor's
authority. Request you hold it
short – and send the fuel truck.

EXT. MIAMI INTERNATIONAL – TAXIWAY PAPA – CONTINUOUS

The Gulfstream accelerates toward the runway –

– and an airport FUEL TRUCK rolls out of the FBO ramp and
parks across the taxiway. Behind it, a catering truck. Behind
that, a tug, its driver climbing out with his arms folded –
the whole blue-collar navy of the airfield, sliding into
place like paperwork.

The Gulfstream brakes hard. Feints toward the grass – and
stops. There is nowhere. There was never going to be
anywhere.

The engines wind down. Which, at an airport, is the sound of
surrender.

INT. 747 FREIGHTER – COCKPIT – CONTINUOUS

Through the windscreen, distant and perfect: Miami-Dade units
flooding the taxiway. Victor stepping down his own airstair
into a corona of bodycams and drawn weapons, straightening
his jacket first – cuffed on camera, in the custody of people
no one owns.

Mack watches. Beside him, Elliot logs the time. Elena leans
on the doorframe between them.

ELENA
(watching Victor shrink)
Eleven years of skim, and he's
arrested next to an airplane he
forgot to pay for.

MACK
Everybody forgets one payment.

ELLIOT
(writing)
"10:04. Second recovery of the day.
No damage to the asset."

He looks up. Realizes what he said. So does Mack.

Neither of them touches it. Mack just looks out at the
wrecked 747 under him and the pristine Gulfstream out there,
held hostage by a fuel truck.

MACK
(finally)
We're billing them full rate.

CUT TO:

INT. FEDERAL BUILDING - MIAMI - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY (WEEKS
LATER)

A long table of agencies who hate each other, forced to
share: mismatched windbreakers hung on chair backs like rival
flags. Elena, in custody scrubs that fit her like a decision,
a US ATTORNEY beside her, initials page after page of a
cooperation agreement. Composed. Almost content.

US ATTORNEY
(reading)
"...full testimony against the Sanz
network, its financial
institutions, and compromised
federal personnel, in exchange for
protective custody and a
recommended reduced sentence."

ELENA
(signing)
And the other item.

The attorney slides a thin folder across: a map printed from
a case file. A rural road. A marked coordinate. TOMÁS CRUZ -
RECOVERY SITE.

Elena opens it. Looks a long time – her face doing nothing at all, which is everything. Closes it. Signs the next page without being asked.

CUT TO:

INT. NEWSROOM FEEDS – VARIOUS – DAY (MONTAGE)

– CHYRON: "CARTEL 'SHAREHOLDERS' TURN ON OWN NETWORK – ARRESTS IN 4 COUNTRIES." Grainy photos of gray men in gray suits, faces finally attached to names from a broadcast ledger.

– CHYRON: "CHARGES DISMISSED – AUDITOR'S IN-FLIGHT AFFIDAVIT 'DEVASTATING,' SAYS PROSECUTOR." Beneath it, a scanned page: AFFIDAVIT OF ELLIOT PRICE, exhibit-stamped.

– CHYRON: "'CELIA BRANDT' DETAINED AT HOUSTON INTERCONTINENTAL – RECRUITER TRAVELED ON FOUR PASSPORTS." The airport photo: the slate suit finally wrinkled.

– A smaller box, page-six sized: "CORRECTION." Three sentences. It runs beneath a car ad.

INT. LAW OFFICE – MIAMI – DAY

Venetian-blind light across a tired LAWYER and a settlement letter between him and Mack.

LAWYER

Atlantic's final position: no fee.
The landing destroyed their
aircraft, and their gratitude has a
comptroller. Be glad they're not
suing – the optics saved you, not
the contract.

MACK

The optics were the contract.

LAWYER

(shuffling papers; then,
not unkindly)
One more thing. The retractions
ran. The record's clean – legally.
But you should know how it works
now. Anyone who searches your name,
first thing they see, forever: the
drug plane. Page one doesn't
retract.

Mack absorbs it. The scar, in writing.

MACK
(standing, taking his
coat)
First thing they see is a 747 full
of cocaine with my hands on the
yoke.

(beat)

Second thing better be the landing.

EXT. MERCER ASSET RECOVERY - MOJAVE - DAY

The hangar, unchanged: heat shimmer, tarps, dead engines, the wall of photographs. Through the man-door, Mack sorts mail at the workbench - bills, a FINAL NOTICE, a check that is not large.

A vehicle crunches onto the gravel. Then a second sound: a HAND TRUCK.

Mack looks up. Through the door, backwards, dragging a DESK - an actual government-surplus desk - comes ELLIOT. Behind him on the gravel: two file boxes, the portable printer, and the metal document case - dented, cleaned, decorated with one small American-flag sticker.

MACK
No.

ELLIOT
(maneuvering the desk)
The bank terminated me.
Unauthorized legal threats to a
counterparty. Unauthorized
distribution of confidential
material. "Participation in an
international aircraft theft" - I
asked them to put that one in
writing.

MACK
Did they?

ELLIOT
(patting a file box)
Notarized. It's the best thing I've
ever filed.

He sets the desk down - adjusts it two inches square to the hangar wall - and produces, from a tube, a SIGN. He hangs it beneath the faded MERCER ASSET RECOVERY:

COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT.

MACK

There's no money. You've seen the books – you ARE the reason people have seen the books.

ELLIOT

(opening a file box;
producing a bound packet)
Which is why I brought these. One:
a binder from Halvorsen
Underwriters. Coverage reinstated,
effective on signature – it turns
out insurers will write a recovery
firm with a full-time compliance
officer. We are, and I quote the
actuary, "suddenly a delightful
risk."

MACK

And two?

Elliot opens the document case. Removes a bound agreement.
Opens it to the signature page.

Where MACK'S SIGNATURE already sits. Dated.

MACK (CONT'D)

(staring at it)
When.

ELLIOT

Miami. You signed everything the
paramedics handed you and
everything I handed you. I've told
you for months, Mack: read before
you sign.

MACK

You AUDITED me.

ELLIOT

Someone had to.

Mack looks at the signature. At the desk. At the sign. At the
insurance binder – the ten-day clock from the first act,
finally unwound.

He does not tear up the agreement. He puts it down on
Elliot's desk. Squares it. Two inches from the edge.

MACK
(gruff; the entire
friendship in one word)
...Coffee's terrible here.

ELLIOT
I brought a machine.

INT. MERCER ASSET RECOVERY - HANGAR - DAY

The desk phone RINGS – a landline, ancient, the bell an honest mechanical thing. Elliot answers with a pen already up.

ELLIOT
Mercer Asset Recovery, Compliance.

SOCIETY WOMAN (V.O.)
(filtered; Gulf-money
drawl, zero distress)
Am I speaking with the gentlemen
from Miami? The avalanche
gentlemen?

ELLIOT
...Among other credentials.

SOCIETY WOMAN (V.O.)
Wonderful. My former husband has
relocated our – MY – Global Express
to a hangar in Dubai. His attorneys
say no one on earth can take it
from him. He had a plaque made
saying so. He shows people the
plaque.

Elliot covers the receiver.

ELLIOT
(to Mack)
Dubai. Hostile spouse. Attorneys. A
plaque.

Mack, at the workbench, doesn't look up from a repossession order he is – visibly, actually – READING first.

SOCIETY WOMAN (V.O.)
So tell me, gentlemen. Can you repo
my jet?

A beat. Mack and Elliot look at each other across the hangar.

ELLIOT
(into phone)
We'll require documentation.
Substantial documentation.

MACK
(already up, grabbing his
jacket)
Tell her we'll require a deposit.

ELLIOT
(into phone)
And a deposit. And — madam —
nothing you tell us justifies
improvisation. We are a PROCEDURAL
firm.

Mack crosses the hangar — past the wall of photographs, past the emptied invoice pile — to the back, where he pulls the string and the WORK LIGHTS bloom over the BEECHCRAFT, the little airplane surfacing out of the dark like something raised whole from a lake.

He pulls the chocks. Rolls open the hangar doors — desert light pouring in, the runway shimmering beyond like standing water.

Elliot arrives beside him with a fresh legal binder and the war case. Looks at the polished two-seater, then at Mack.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
It's a two-seater.

MACK
It always was.

Mack lays his hand flat on the cowlings — his father's jaw in his own reflection on the polish — and swings the door open.

MACK (CONT'D)
(climbing in)
Read me the checklist. Every line.

ELLIOT
(strapping in, opening it)
"Before start. Preflight inspection
— complete..."

The Beechcraft's engine catches, coughs, and runs SWEET — seventy years of patience firing on the first try, the prop disc going silver in the sun.

The little airplane taxis out of the junkyard of dead giants, into the light, onto the runway his father never reached —

— and takes off.

Hold on the open hangar doors. The empty swept concrete under the work lights. The sign: COMPLIANCE DEPARTMENT.

The engine sound climbs, and fades, and does not come back down.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END