

HAWAII CALLS

by

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Based On A True Story

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OPEN ON: BLACK

SUPERIMPOSE OVER BLACK: "Based Upon A True Story"

FADE IN:

EXT. LAKE ERIE - DAY

American Navy COMMODORE (28) sits stoically in a longboat as ten NAVY OARSMEN row him across open water during heavy gunfire.

A folded battle flag sits on his lap.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Battle of Lake Erie - September 1813"

A large warship flying American colors lists in b.g.

Twelve warships under full-sail are engaged in a full-blown, close quarters naval gun battle.

The longboat arrives at the base of a large gunship. The Commodore climbs a rope ladder and boards the relief flagship "NIAGARA", as witnessed by the gold flourished lettering across the ship's transom.

Commodore views battle progress through a spyglass. We WATCH his BATTLE FLAG* hoisted up Niagara's main stern halyard.

*[White letters on blue background: "Don't Give Up The Ship"]

A calm and unflappable Commodore shouts orders MOS.

Multiple broadsides of cannon fire EXPLODE from "Niagara". Thick black smoke fills the air.

American ships sail closer to the British. Combat escalates.

Heavy battle damage is inflicted upon several ships flying the British Union Jack.

A white SURRENDER FLAG runs up the mast of a British ship.

INT. COMMODORE'S CABIN - NIAGARA - LATER

Commodore sits at a desk. Quill in hand, he dips his pen into an inkwell and scribes a letter.

INSERT: LETTER - "We have met the enemy, and they are ours."

As he straightens, we're drawn toward the officer's eyes. They're cold, penetrating, and unemotional and...

...perfectly captured by an artist on a large portrait.

INT. LARGE NINETEENTH CENTURY PARLOR - DAY

The portrait is that of the commodore seen within the vignette. He appears to be staring down at a young child.

The child stares back.

INSERT: A brass nameplate below the portrait - "Commodore Oliver Hazzard Perry".

The child is YOUNG JOHN RODGERS, (8). He sits on an elegant sofa. His feet do not yet reach the floor. With his white Victorian sailor suit and 'Dutch Boy haircut, one could easily mistake him for a girl.

The parlor appears more a military museum than a home. Additional portraits of excessively decorated naval officers in full-dress uniforms adorn the walls.

SUPER: "SION HILL" - Havre de Grace, Maryland - January 1889

The boy and the man in the portrait continue their stare-down until the man unexpectedly winks at the child. Young John Rodgers nearly jumps out of his skin.

The boy quickly turns his head away only to be confronted by a similar portrait displayed on a different wall.

Although equally well-decorated in appearance, the figure in this second portrait is clearly a different naval officer.

He appears to be watching Young John from across the room.

A sword is mounted directly beneath the officer's portrait.

EXT. TOKYO BAY 1854 - DAY

BLACK SMOKE bellows from the stacks of four black warships anchored in Tokyo Bay. AMERICAN FLAGS wave atop their masts.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "Convention of Kanagawa - Tokyo 1854"

Palace-sized pagodas populate the city's visible coastline.

INT. JAPANESE TEA ROOM - CONVENTION OF KANAGAWA - DAY

A delegation of American naval officers sit on floor mats along one side of a low table. COMMODORE #2, (60), seen in the second portrait, is our focus of attention.

Across from the Americans sit a contingent of SHOGUN WARRIORS dressed in ceremonial battle gear. The contingent is led by Shogun TOKUGAWA LEYOSHI, (71), the de-facto ruler of Japan.

Between these two groups lay a ceremonial samurai sword.

Leyoshi offers the sword to Commodore #2. The two men bow respectfully as Commodore #2 graciously accepts it.

Commodore #2 remains stoic, his eyes alone telegraph the serious purpose of this ceremonial gathering.

Commodore #2 looks down, his head tilted to one side.

INT. LARGE NINETEENTH CENTURY PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Young Rodgers has moved much closer to the officer's portrait. Just below the painting is a mounted samurai sword.

The child reads the brass plate mounted below the sword. It READS: "Commodore Matthew C. Perry - 1854".

Young Rodgers looks up at the portrait. The Commodore's pose has changed slightly. His head tilts downward. His eyes focused squarely on the child.

Young Rodgers appears to be intimidated by this second painting. The child looks away. Increasingly evasive.

Young Rodgers spies a third portrait in the room, this time it's an Admiral who gazes at the child.

The child slaps his forehead, shakes his head in disbelief.

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR - NIGHT

A flotilla of WARSHIPS are engaged in combat. The various ships's fly a mix of American and Confederate ensigns.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "Battle of Wassaw Sound - June 1863"

CONFEDERATE FORT is under siege by American WARSHIPS in b.g.

The American ironclad "WEEHAWKEN" sits low in the water as it sneaks up on the Confederate Ram Boat "ATLANTA".

EXT./INT. ABOARD THE IRONCLAD "WEEHAWKEN" - CONTINUOUS

The ship's captain, CAPTAIN JOHN RODGERS, (52), glares through the narrow observation portal on the Ironclad, shouting orders MOS.

CANNON FIRE from Confederate Forces bounce-off WEEHAWKEN'S iron plating.

The Ironclad maneuvers ever closer to her southern prey, like an alligator moving stealthy across an everglade.

The WEEHAWKEN opens FIRE. A direct hit on the Atlanta's powder magazines causes the that ship to EXPLODE.

From an exterior view of the Weehawken, we focus on a narrow observation slit on the turret. Looking out through this slit are a pair of devilish red eyes. Their hue created from flames reflected off the burning ship.

INT. LARGE NINETEENTH CENTURY PARLOR - DAY

These same glaring eyes of The Captain stare down at the boy from a third portrait hanging on the parlor's wall.

Our POV is that of Young John Rodgers. It is partially obscured due by the child's tiny fingers loosely covering his eyes.

A well-dressed woman enters the parlor. She carries a silver tea service. She's ELIZABETH CHAMBERS RODGERS, (35), the boy's mother.

The child seems greatly relieved to have her in his presence.

She lays the tray on a table in front of the child.

YOUNG RODGERS

Do we have to drink it here,
mother? Everyone's staring at me.

ELIZABETH

Shame on you, 'Little John'. These
men are your ancestors. You should
be very proud of your heritage.

(beat)

They're not staring at you...
they're watching over you.

The boy is distracted by a bird that lands on the parlor's open window sill.

The bird CHIRPS.

Young Rodgers beams a huge smile.

ELIZABETH

Pay attention, dear. Our family has proudly served in this country's Navy since 1798. It has not only been our privilege... it has been our duty. Our "Noblesse Oblige", my dear.

Young Rodgers appears confused.

ELIZABETH

You see, sweetheart, there are certain, well... special families who are called upon to provide this nation's leadership. We are the reason America is the greatest country on earth. That's the way it has always been... and that's the way it will always be.

Elizabeth moves to a grand piano. On top of the piano is a framed cabinet photo.

She grabs it, hands it to the child.

INSERT: Recent cabinet photo of Young John Rodgers.

ELIZABETH

Tell me, young man. Who do you see in this picture?

YOUNG RODGERS

That's an easy one, Mother. That's me, of course.

The boy stands. He salutes his mother. Crisp. Clean.

YOUNG RODGERS

Full Admiral John Rodgers, United States Navy. "No Bull-Essing". "No Bull-Eeezing".

Elizabeth smiles broadly. Pats her son on his head.

ELIZABETH

And a fine admiral you shall be, my dear. We need to work a little on your French... but for now, I guess we could take our tea al fresco. Come along, child.

Elizabeth picks up the service tray and exits.

Young Rodgers glances back at the bird, still perched on the open sill.

The boy breaks away from his mother and walks hypnotically toward the window, as if being reeled-in by the bird.

The child and bird appear totally in sync with the other.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)
Little John!

The boy rolls his eyes, clearly annoyed by his mother.

We HEAR the sputtering start of a propeller driven AIRPLANE ENGINE.

The child snaps to attention. Salutes his feathered friend. The AIRPLANE ENGINE becomes increasingly LOUDER.

As he brings his arm back to his side, the sudden movement scares the bird into slow-motion flight.

The child is awe struck as he watches the bird fly off.

The sound of the AIRPLANE ENGINE is now LOUDER. The child flaps his arms like a bird, circles the parlor and exits.

We focus on the boys EYES as he 'flies' out of the room.

The child's face transforms into the Adult Commander John Rodgers, (44). He is ruggedly handsome. His eyes display the same intensity as his ancestors.

EXT. OPEN COCKPIT BIPLANE - DAY

The engine noise has become deafening. Rodgers sits in the pilot's seat of a navy scout plane.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "Spring 1925"

We barely discern the silhouette of this small, open-cockpit biplane as it flies through a thick layer of clouds. MARKINGS on the side of the plane: "U.S. NAVY".

In the plane's front cockpit sits a young U.S. Navy MECHANIC, (19). The mechanic examines a chart folded on his lap. The two men speak into 'communication cups' connecting the two separate cockpits with flexible hollow tubing.

Their voices are somewhat muffled.

MECHANIC
Target inside thirty seconds, sir!

RODGERS
Are you sure?

MECHANIC
I think so, sir!

RODGERS
"Think so"?! What kind of answer is that?

MECHANIC
I'm not a navigator, sir. I've only been to mechanics school!

Rodgers shakes his head and leans out of the cockpit. He searches through openings in the clouds. He grins.

Rodgers pushes the control stick forward. The plane banks to the right and descends rapidly through the clouds.

MECHANIC
(under his breath)
Oh, crap!

The mechanic squeezes his eyes shut. Folds his hands in prayer as the plane ACCELERATES its nosedive.

Rodgers flips a magneto dead-switch toggle on his bulkhead. This kills the engine. SILENCE. We only hear the WIND.

The airmen can easily communicate without any device.

RODGERS
It's simple mathematics! A mistake made on the ground get's multiplied tenfold in the air! You got that, sailor? Ten to one! Don't ever forget it!

The mechanic makes a rapid sign-of-the-cross. His lips move quickly in silent prayer.

The plane breaks free of the clouds. We are in full view of a large family estate overlooking Chesapeake Bay.

EXT. ENGLISH GARDEN SETTING - CONTINUOUS

FOUR ELDERLY WOMEN sit around a well-appointed table in a beautiful flower garden in full bloom. A BUTLER carries a silver tea service to the table.

EXT. OPEN COCKPIT BIPLANE - CONTINUOUS

RODGERS
Bull's-Eye!

Rodgers reaches under his seat and withdraws a small cheerleader-style megaphone.

The plane stealthily sneaks ever closer to the estate. The plane finally pounces on its prey - It ZOOMS quietly, just above the ladies having tea at the table. Low. Very low!

RODGERS
(using megaphone)
Good Morning, Mother!

EXT. ENGLISH GARDEN SETTING - CONTINUOUS

Only a single, gray-haired woman remains seated. She calmly pours tea into her guest's cups. Elizabeth Rodgers, now age (60), appears nonchalant and blasé about the matter-at-hand.

Two women SCREAM as they run toward the HOUSE, their hands shaking wildly over their heads.

A third woman kneels TREMBLING under the TABLE. Next to her, the butler lifts the draping tablecloth and peeks out.

ELIZABETH
(calmly)
Seriously, dears. I wish you
wouldn't encourage him. He'll only
do it again... and again.

EXT. OPEN COCKPIT BIPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Rodgers laughs heartily as he FLIPS ON the magneto toggle.

He advances the engine throttle and the engine ROARS to life.

The plane wags it's wings as it SOARS upward and away.

EXT. A UNIVERSITY COURTYARD - DAY

Graduate, Byron J. CONNELL, (22), squeezes through a crowd of fellow graduating students, each decked out in blue and white cap and gowns.

Banner in b.g. READS: "Congratulations Class of 1918".

Connell breaks into a broad smile. He looks skyward as he raises his diploma high over his head.

A middle-aged man with a receding hairline and bad teeth, rushes up to him. He gives Connell a big bear hug and a kiss. The man is Connell's FATHER, James Connell (46).

FATHER

(proudly)

Well, you did it, son. What'd I tell you, huh? I told ya' you could do it... but hell, son... you actually went out there and did it!

Father squeezes Connell again, then playfully scrubs the top of his son's head, as if his son were still a child.

FATHER

Come on, let me take a good look at it.

Connell beams bashfully. He hands his diploma to his father who opens it with gentle reverence.

INSERT: DIPLOMA - "PENNSYLVANIA STATE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING"

Father wipes a tear from the corner of his eye.

FATHER

If your mother could only be here today... she would be so proud of you.

CONNELL

Ah, come on, Pop. You gave me that same speech when you dropped me off at kindergarten... and about a thousand times since then.

Connell squares his Father around and looks at him intently.

CONNELL

This is as much your day as it is mine... or, hers.

Father returns the diploma to Connell, but it's declined.

FATHER

What are you doing?

CONNELL

I don't want you to forget... it was you who brought me home from the hospital.

You've not only been my father...
 you've been the mother I never
 knew. I wouldn't be standing here
 today if it weren't for you.

A fellow grad runs up to the group and interrupts their
 conversation. He slaps Connell on his back.

FELLOW STUDENT
 So... did you tell him?

Connell gives his friend a look that could kill.

FATHER
 Tell me what? --

CONNELL
 -- I was just about to...

FATHER
 -- tell me what?

CONNELL
 It's time I start paying you back,
 Pop. Jobs are pretty hard to find
 right now, so... a few of us
 decided, well, why not join the
 Navy?

His father looks surprised.

FATHER
 The Navy?

CONNELL
 Just hear me out. You've sat in
 that same boring tower on the
 Monongahela for twenty years.
 Everyday, you've watched ship after
 ship pass through your lock. Don't
 tell me you've never dreamed about
 leaping on board one of 'em... let
 it take you anywhere it was going.

FELLOW STUDENT
 It's not just about the travel, Mr.
 Connell. This time, school will be
 on their dime. We'll get to be
 officers!

CONNELL
 Imagine, Pop, me, an officer. I can
 start sending money home. All I
 want is... to jump onboard!

While I'm still young. Maybe see a
 little piece of this world... not
 just watch it sail past my window.
 (beat)
 Please, let me do this, Pop. Let
 me do this for both of us.

Father doesn't seem convinced.

CONNELL
 Come on, Pop, they promised they'd
 take real good care of me.

INT./EXT. OPEN COCKPIT BIPLANE - DAY

A Navy plane similar to the one flown earlier by Rodgers
 appears to be flying over what appears to be the skyline of
 Washington D.C.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "Washington D.C. 1925"

The plane circles the metropolitan area of our nation's
 capitol before it settles down on a grassy air field.

EXT./INT THE WAR DEPARTMENT BUILDING - WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Navy personnel enter and exit a large office building. A
 sign on the building READS: "War Department"

HALLWAY

Lieutenant Connell jogs down a hallway like he's late for an
 appointment. Weaves around slower pedestrians in his way.

RODGERS (O.S.)
 What's your hurry, Connell?

Connell looks behind him. He sees Commander John Rodgers was
 one of the pedestrians he had just blown past.

CONNELL
 Commander Rodgers?

Rodgers sticks out his hand and the two men shake.

RODGERS
 We finally meet.

CONNELL
 Thank you for your recommendation,
 sir.

I'm not sure why you chose me for this assignment, but I assure you, you made a great choice.

Rodgers chuckles. Connell beams with self-confidence.

They arrive at a door which READS: "Rear Admiral William Moffett - Chief of Naval Aeronautics".

ADMIRAL'S OFFICE

Small replicas and photographs of various military aircraft displayed about a well-appointed military office.

A dense cloud of cigar and cigarette SMOKE hangs in the air.

Six Naval Officers stand at attention. Patient. Among them are Commander Rodgers and Lieutenant Connell.

Admiral WILLIAM MOFFETT, 55, a squat, heavysset gentleman is engaged in an animated phone conversation. He speaks angrily.

MOFFETT

I don't give a crap what Boeing tells you. You let 'em know we need that plane... and, we expect it delivered on time.

(beat)

Make sure you see to it!

Moffett hangs up and redirects his attention to the six officers standing at attention before him. Standing next to Moffett are two captains, MOSES and YARNELL.

His mood swings to a more pleasant personality.

MOFFETT

At ease, gentlemen. At least you're on time. Please, take a seat. I believe most of you already know Captain Moses... Captain Yarnell.

The officers nod in recognition as they assume their seats at two tables.

Three-ring binders are open in front of each man.

At the front table sit: Lieutenant Allen SNODY, Commander James STRONG, and Commander John Rodgers.

Subordinate officers sit at the second table, directly behind their commanding officers: Lieutenant Arthur GAVIN, Lieutenant Rico BOTTA, and Lieutenant Byron J. Connell

MOSES

It should be no secret why you've been summoned to Washington.

Yarnell nods to a young ENSIGN who pulls down several roll-down maps hanging from a wall. They're filled with charts and airplane schematics.

YARNELL

As I'm sure you are all well aware, the Navy's flight programs have come under heavy attack.

MOSES

Colonel Mitchell's getting the ear of a few key congressmen. If he has his way, he'd consolidate everything that could mechanically hop, skip, or jump into a single military branch of service.

Uncomfortable quiet laughter all around.

YARNELL

Air Navy needs something really big, fellas. We're counting on you boys to pilot the first non-stop flight from San Francisco to Hawaii.

MOFFETT

These oceans belong to the U.S. Navy, god-damn it! The sooner everyone understands that includes the air above those waters... the better off we're all going to be.

Yarnell moves to the charts and maps.

YARNELL

We'll be using three planes, fly twenty-one hundred nautical miles, use fourteen hundred gallons of fuel with fifty gallons of oil... that's for each plane.

(beat)

Your estimated flight time is at twenty-eight hours and thirty-five minutes.

Some seated officers expel soft whistles of disbelief.

LT. SNODY

Have we got aircraft that can do that, sir?

More uncomfortable suppressed laughter.

MOSES

We have some new, state-of-the-art, planes in the works. We'll be using two PN9's from our own factory up in Philadelphia... "The Number One" and "The Number Three".
(glances at Moffett)
Plus one of Boeing's new "PB1's".

MOFFETT

This flight will be one for the history books. It will test your limits. I hope you all understand, this will not be for the faint of heart.

An additional chart is pulled down.

INSERT CHART: A direct line from San Francisco to Hawaii references specific details regarding The Pacific Fleet.

YARNELL (O.S.)

You'll have a Naval escort consisting of nine ships, stationed every two hundred miles across the Pacific. They'll be your eyes and ears below you.

The officers take notes.

Rodgers retrieves a slide rule from inside his coat pocket, makes some calculations.

MOSES

Should a conflict arise regarding your position, you will split the difference between your own calculations and the ship's radio bearings as you pass over them. Is that clear?

YARNELL

Should any of you fail to complete your mission as outlined, standard protocol prevails for refueling at sea.

MOFFETT

But, you won't need to refuel, will you boys? This flight is going to dramatically change all of that.

YARNELL

You're to report to each of your aircraft's factories. Get to know your planes. Inside and out. You'll have until August to get everything up to peak performance. Any questions?

The officers silently exchange glances.

MOSES

Nothing? Very well, gentlemen. The next time we meet again will be in San Francisco. Have a productive summer.

The men close their mission binders. Everyone stands at attention as the most senior officers exit the room.

INT./EXT. OLYMPIC CLUB - SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

BEDROOM

Rodgers sleeps in an elegant bed in a semi-darkened room.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "Olympic Club - Monday August 31, 1925"

The young John Rodgers seen earlier, sits at a table near the window in b.g. He still wears the same frilly sailor suit.

The child hand-flies an antique model biplane. He reaches upward until the plane appears to stall.

He redirects the toy into a mock spiral dive. Just as it crashes against the table, we HEAR loud KNOCKING.

Rodgers jolts up in bed, sweating profusely.

He looks over at the table, but there's no sign of the child.

There's more KNOCKING. A key RATTLES inside a door lock.

A young BELLBOY pokes his head inside the bedroom.

BELLBOY

I'm sorry, sir, but I was ordered to have you down to the dining salon by seven A - M.

Rodgers acknowledges the bellboy with a simple nod and a wave of his hand.

BELLBOY
You're welcome, sir.

The bellboy exits.

Rodgers stands and shuffles toward the window.

As he reaches the table, he slides his fingers across the table where his younger self just played. He smiles.
Pauses.

He begins to roll up the window shade, but the cord slips from his hand. The shade quickly rolls upward making a SLAPPING noise. It startles him.

A brilliant blast of SUNRISE over the East Bay Foothills.

There are few tall buildings and The Bay lacks the familiar bridges for which it is now well-known.

Dozens of fishing boats and smoke-belching passenger ferries move about.

Rodgers places the same hand on the window pane and whispers in a child's voice.

RODGERS
Good Morning, Mister Sun! I trust
you slept well last night.
(chuckles)
Today is our day and I will make
the most of it. Please shine your
light brightly and keep each of us
safe along our journey.

DINING ROOM

Rodgers descends a staircase and moves to a table where Lieutenants CONNELL, SNODY and GAVIN eat breakfast.

All officers are dressed in regulation flight uniforms.

RODGERS
Pretty fancy digs, huh? Don't tell
me I beat 'Jimbo' to the chow hall?
That would be a first.

Admiral Moffett and his senior staff approach the table. He's accompanied by Lieutenant Commander Strong and Lieutenant Botta assigned to the Boeing PB-1.

GAVIN
 (hushed)
 Shhhh, 'Admiral in the House'.

The seated officers put down their utensils and stiffen to attention where they sit. Rodgers, still standing, stiffens in place.

MOFFETT
 At ease, gentlemen. Lieutenant Commander Strong and I have been talking and we're in agreement. It will take at least another week for the PB-1 to be flight worthy. But, that's a week we don't have.

Strong hangs his head.

MOFFETT
 There'll be other opportunities to hold Boeing's feet to the fire. Eat well while you still can, boys. I'm afraid you'll only get sandwiches and coffee from the Navy today.

Laughter all around.

MOFFETT
 I want departures no later than fifteen hundred hours. God speed, fellas.

EXT. STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Five open car sedans drive along San Francisco city streets escorted by motorcycle policemen.

The streets are lined with crowds of cheering well-wishers. Every vantage point in San Francisco is occupied.

INT. OPEN CAR SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

Rodgers and Connell appear overwhelmed by the enormous attention given to them. They smile and wave back at the crowds.

As they slow for an approaching corner, a PRETTY GIRL throws a kiss toward their car. The two men look at each other. Both men reach out to grab the imaginary kiss.

RODGERS

(laughing)

Maybe we ought to stay right where we are. We could get Jimbo's crew to fill in for us. What do ya' say?

The two men laugh together.

EXT. DOCK SIDE - SAN FRANCISCO BAY - DAY

We hear loud CHEERING and continuous stanzas of "Anchors Away" being played by a BRASS BAND. The crowds are very large.

Rodgers walks down a gang plank to an awaiting ship's tender. Their fellow crewmen are already gathered within the boat.

Rodgers carries a small brown package tied with twine.

CONNELL

Going away present? What's in the package?

RODGERS

It's the Admiral's special delivery for the boys back at Pearl.

The boat pulls away from the dock.

EXT. THE EASTERN BANKS OF SAN FRANCISCO BAY - DAY

TWO PN9's are tethered to barges on the bay. The planes lie very low in the water. They're extremely large, twin engine, double-winged flying boats. Their hulls are made of lightweight duralumin.

Each plane receives last-minute supplies through the ship's starboard cargo door.

The skiff drops Snody and Gavin at the PN9-3, boldly marked as such on the side of the plane. Connell and Rodgers remain on board the skiff.

The skiff approaches Rodger's PN9-1.

RODGERS

Once around the plane, please. Slowly.

Rodgers inspects his craft as they circumnavigate. It is 'State of the Art'. An awesome piece of advanced machinery.

RODGERS
 Gotta say this about her...
 (beat)
 She sure is 'purty'.

The skiff drops off Connell and Rodgers. The two men squeeze past various seamen working on the loading barge.

Rodgers and Connell enter their own plane through a similar starboard cargo hatch.

EXT/INT. ON THE BAY - PN9-1 - CONTINUOUS

MID-FUSELAGE

Fuel barrels and oil drums fill the interior of the plane.

Three additional crew members greet the two officers as they enter. It's very crowded inside the fuselage.

Rodgers' three additional crewmen consist of Chief Radioman, OTIS STANTZ, (26), from New Hampshire. Stantz speaks unusually fast, probably in an attempt to hide his lisping speech impediment.

Mechanic WILLIAM BOWLIN, (26), from Indiana. Bowlin is quite handsome. Easily the most physically fit member of the crew.

And SKILES POPE, (23), a Chief Machinist Mate also rates as a Backup Pilot. We easily detect Pope's slow, southern drawl.

RODGERS
 At ease, gentlemen. Drinks will be on me tomorrow night, fellas. But first... the Navy expects this to happen! Let's not disappoint 'em, all right?

Rodgers pats Connell on his back. Instinctively, his junior officer squeezes forward in the tight confines of the plane.

CONNELL
 I'm gonna start our pre-check.
 Let's go Bowlin...

RODGERS
 How's the loading coming along, chief?

POPE
 We're almost done, sir.
 (beat)
 Fuel levels are at capacity...

the remainder of our oil reserves just came aboard. We should be ready to shove off as scheduled.

RODGERS

Excellent. Stantz... I want you to make sure that radio's working in tip-top shape. We don't take off until you can assure me it's working perfectly.

STANTZ

Aye, aye, sir.

Bowlin stands on the wing inspecting the starboard engine. Rodgers sticks his head out of the door and yells at him.

RODGERS

Bowlin... are you done kicking her tires?

BOWLIN

Yes, sir. She's looking pretty good today.

RODGERS

Are we ready to light her fires?

BOWLIN

Aye, sir.

Rodgers sticks his head back inside.

RODGERS

Let me know when everything is stowed and double-checked. I'll be up front with Lt. Connell.

POPE

Aye, aye sir.

Rodgers shuffles forward to the cockpit.

COCKPIT

Connell sits in the cockpit's left seat. Checks his gauges as Rodgers settles himself in the adjoining seat.

Rodgers is a bit winded. He pulls out a pocket watch and flips the face open.

Rodgers stares at his watch for a brief moment before closing the face plate.

RODGERS

You'd think a plane this size would have a little extra wiggle room.

CONNELL

We needed it for all those extra fuel tanks, sir.

RODGERS

This plane won't be going anywhere if they forgot to pack my sextant.

Rodgers crouches low, crawls under the pilot's cockpit before poking his head up in the forward navigator's station.

RODGERS

It's here! I've even got charts! I'm all out of excuses. You got any fresh ones I can borrow?

Rodgers and Connell chuckle among themselves.

The barge transfers the planes's mooring lines to two small powered craft. The small motor boats tow the two planes to their designated "Runway on the Bay".

Connell hand signals to the PN9-3 he's ready to fire up the engines.

Bowlin takes the adjoining pilot's seat to the right of Connell.

RODGERS

Let's do this.

The cargo door slams shut. Connell flips toggle switches, pulls throttle knobs, and pushes a starter motor button.

The port side engine sputters and belches thick, black smoke before reluctantly roaring to life. The sequence is repeated for the starboard engine.

The PN9-3 also fires their two engines in sequence. Their combined roar is deafening.

Hundreds of private boats form a "Runway" extending westerly across several miles of The San Francisco Bay.

Rodgers leans over the bow and unties their tow ropes.

RODGERS

Let's do this... *Hawaii Calls!*

Connell pushes the throttles forward and the PN9-1 begins to accelerate.

The engines ROAR ever louder. Salt spray flies helter-skelter. The plane shakes and bounces with violent intensity. It seems like a bone-rattling eternity yet the plane refuses to lift free from the water.

Connell yells forward to Rodgers.

CONNELL

Are we even up on "the step" yet?

Rodgers looks overboard and back towards the tail. He shakes his head. Rodgers slips under his bow pit and moves aft. Bowlin calls out distance readings to Connell.

BOWLIN

Three miles, sir!

Rodgers moves underneath his two pilots as he moves aft.

RODGERS

Still too much friction. We've got to get her up on the step. I'm pulling everyone else aft.

MID-FUSELAGE

Rodgers moves to the rear of the plane where Pope and Stantz sit strapped in.

RODGERS

Everyone into the tail and take something heavy with you as you go.

The three crewmen unstrap five gallon oil drums and shuttle them as far back in the plane as they possibly can.

COCKPIT

Bowlin turns in his seat and watches their sister plane struggle in a similar manner.

Neither plane can break free of The Bay's grip. The two planes dissect Angel Island from The City as they labor to lift off.

The planes speed like power boats across The Bay. The narrow opening to the Pacific Ocean is nearly upon them.

Four Navy biplanes act as escorts just above them.

BOWLIN

Six miles, sir! It's only gonna get worse when we hit open water, sir.

CONNELL

It's a good thing they never put a bridge across here. I'm sure we'd be crashing into it about now.

Connell looks over at the Marin Headlands on his right. A solid line of cheering onlookers wave white handkerchiefs.

Connell jabs Bowlin and points toward the crowd. Bowlin is amazed and shakes his head in disbelief.

BOWLIN

You know... this could be very embarrassing if we can't get off the water.

EXT. PN9-3 SAN FRANCISCO BAY - CONTINUOUS

The companion PN9-3 follows in the wake of the lead plane. She, too, struggles to lift free from the Bay's grip.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 SAN FRANCISCO BAY- CONTINUOUS

The oil drums are all stowed as far aft as possible.

RODGERS

Everybody dog pile!

The crew crawl on top of each other, wedging themselves into the narrowest remaining crevice of the tail section.

Stantz places his hand over his shirt pocket as he joins the pile, as if protecting something fragile.

The plane slowly rises part way out of the water. We now SEE "the step", a flattened-out section of hull which aids in the plane's floatation. The plane's shaking is markedly reduced.

POPE

She's on the step!

The plane now increases in speed and momentarily separates herself from the Bay.

Rising about five feet above the water's surface, the plane drops her nose and SLAMS back against the water.

She RICOCHETS, returns to the air where she'll remain. The crewmen spontaneously HOWL with approval.

EXT. CLIFF SIDE MARIN COUNTY - CONTINUOUS

A large crowd of spectators cheer and wave handkerchiefs.

A small boy, (5), stands within the crowd of onlookers. He wears a more contemporary child's sailor suit. Looking down from the Highlands, the boy's face is one of pure wonder and awe.

As the plane rises, the boy CLAPS and CHEERS wildly. He points to the plane and looks up at his MOTHER. He grabs her hand and tugs on it.

Mother kneels down to the child's POV. Together, they watch the plane fly out through The Golden Gate.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 PASSING THROUGH THE GOLDEN GATE - CONTINUOUS

Connell realizes there is an approaching incoming freighter dead ahead. He slowly banks the plane to the right to avoid a collision.

They're a few feet off the water as the plane passes the ship.

The ship's captain waves as the PN9-1 passes by. Bowlin beams a broad smile and returns the wave with one of his own.

MID-FUSELAGE

The three men unpile.

RODGERS

Stantz. Get on your key and tell
the Number Three to do the same.

Pope slides open a hatch located on the roof of the fuselage. He pulls down his goggles and sticks his head out of the hatch. Pope watches the PN9-3 with binoculars.

EXT. PN9-3 SAN FRANCISCO BAY - CONTINUOUS

The PN9-3 has still not lifted off the water. The eyes of every bystander in The City are held fast upon the plane.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - CONTINUOUS

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope has his head out of the mid-hatch. He gives out a cheer.

BOWLIN

She's up, sir! She's up!

The two over-loaded planes leave the coastline behind them, each barely fifty feet above the water's surface.

RODGERS

Stantz... drop your antenna as far as it'll go. Let's take our first bearing. Time to see just how close we can come to 'The Jones'.

STANTZ

Aye, commander.

Stantz cranks what resembles a garden hose reel. A long radio antenna wire extends out from beneath the plane, like the stinger on a bee.

RODGERS

Pope, let's put all this crap back where it belongs. It's gonna be our home for the next twenty-eight hours.

STANTZ

Yes, sir.

Rodgers moves forward and tugs on Bowlin's pant leg. Bowlin jumps down and Rodgers replaces him in the copilot's seat.

COCKPIT

Rodgers pats Connell on the back.

RODGERS

Good job, lieutenant. How's she flying?

CONNELL

Port side's smooth as silk but we may have a little trouble on our starboard. It's taking a little more throttle to maintain her RPM's.

RODGERS

Then let's get Bowlin out there and run an engine check.

Connell looks below and spies several rocky islands swarming with birds.

CONNELL

We're passing directly over the Farallon Islands, sir. That already puts us twenty-three miles off the coast... altitude - three hundred feet.

Bowlin stands on the lower starboard wing, screwdriver clinched firmly in his teeth. He clings to a wing brace using one hand. A flashlight in his other hand.

Bowlin inspects the plane's engine as the plane flies off into a sun sinking lower in the western sky.

MID-FUSELAGE

As they stow the plane's gear, Pope notices something moving inside Stantz's shirt pocket.

Pope attempts to place his hand on Stantz's pocket but Stantz slaps it away.

POPE

What the hell was that?

STANTZ

Nothing.

POPE

Don't tell me "*nothing*" 'cause I saw somethin' movin' in there.

STANTZ

(hushed tones)

Shut-up, would ya!

As Pope tries to grab Stantz's shirt pocket again, a small brown field mouse pokes his head out. Pope quickly jerks his hand away.

POPE

Shit! What the hell was that? Looked like a rat, or somthin'!

STANTZ

Jeez... Would you keep it down?

Stantz retrieves the mouse from his pocket and nestles it gently in his palm. He pets it gently.

STANTZ

This is Stanley. He's my son's.
He insisted I bring him along for
good luck.

Stantz get's sentimental.

STANTZ

Actually, he told me I'd be lonely
without him. So, he wanted Stanley
to keep me company. Kinda' cute,
huh?

Pope laughs. He mocks Stantz's lisp.

POPE

Ahhh. Da big 'ol wadioman is gonna
be wonely without his wittle
shtanley... you'd better not let
the commander know he's onboard.

STANTZ

He's never going to know... is he?

Pope smiles and arrogantly shrugs his shoulders.

POPE

We'll just have to wait and see
about that, won't we?

EXT. THE LANGLEY - OPEN SEA - DAY

We see "LANGLEY" on the stern of a Navy ship. It's America's first aircraft carrier converted from an old collier. The silhouette's unique and the conversion is easily discernible.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "TUESDAY - DAY TWO"

A few small scout planes line its deck. Several seamen scan the skies with binoculars.

Searchlights reflect against overcast skies. The sound of airplane engines can be heard overhead.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

MID-FUSELAGE

Rodgers stretches as he awakens from a catnap in the corner.

STANTZ

It's "The Number Three", sir. The Langley just radioed in to let us know she was forced down due to a bad oil leak. The crew's all right, but she's being towed back to Frisco, sir.

RODGERS

How's our own situation?

STANTZ

I estimate we're thirty minutes behind schedule. Maybe a little more.

Rodgers sits at a small fold-down table covered with papers. He manipulates a slide rule and confers with his charts.

Pope stands over his shoulder and waits.

Rodgers slams the slide rule on the table.

RODGERS

Damn it! We're still fourteen hundred miles out. Winds were only two or three knots all night. We're drifting northerly. Where the hell are these westerlies they promised us?

Rodgers shuffles forward. The two men wait for The Commander to get out of earshot.

BOWLIN

So, how short are we gonna be?

POPE

Depends on which ship he selects for the refuel.

BOWLIN

Refuel?

POPE

Definitely not gonna be a non-stop. That's for damn sure!

COCKPIT

Rodgers takes a seat to the right of Connell in the cockpit. Pulls out his pocket watch and flips the cover open.

CONNELL
So, is Hawaii totally off the
table?

Rodgers 'bites the head off' his junior officer.

RODGERS
It is for a "Non-stop". We're all
ready short of fuel to do that.

Rodgers grabs his nav charts and starts to move further
forward and into his bow station.

RODGERS
Adjust southward for a ten degree
drift. We ought to hit 'The
Aroostook' dead on around fifteen
hundred hours.

CONNELL
Do you want to take her in, sir?

Rodgers' anger has tempered. He responds with resigned
disappointment.

RODGERS
No... I want you in the cockpit for
landing. Truth is, no one has a
finer touch on open water --

CONNELL
-- Thank you, sir. You're sure you
don't --

RODGERS
-- Yeah, yeah I'm sure.

MID FUSELAGE - LATER

Stantz monitors the radio. He writes furiously to the faint
sound of MORSE CODE. Stantz rips the paper from his pad and
hands it to Pope who carries it to the bow.

BOW

Pope passes the message up to Rodgers who reads it before
turning around to Connell in the cockpit.

RODGERS
About ten, maybe fifteen minutes of
fuel left!

Rodgers ducks his head back into the plane and shouts so Pope
may hear him.

RODGERS

Tell Stantz to contact 'The Aroostook' again. Ask them to confirm their own bearings. Make sure they're directly on station. I still show us north of the flight path, not south. Get another reconfirmation before we lose radio contact.

Sextant firmly in hand, Rodgers pokes his head back outside the plane. He raises the instrument to his eye and takes another reading.

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope mumbles to himself as he crawls aft.

POPE

Lose radio contact? What the hell does that mean, "*lose radio contact*"?

Pope arrives at mid-fuselage.

Stantz feeds a small piece of bread to the mouse. The mouse sees Pope and dives back into Stantz's pocket.

POPE

What does The Commander mean when he says "*we'll be losing radio contact*"?

STANTZ

It means we swapped-out our dry cell batteries for extra fuel. Batteries weighed too much.

Pope responds to Stantz's lisp with suppressed giggles whenever he hears Stantz speak.

POPE

What?

STANTZ

We swapped 'em out for more fuel. We're running our transmissions off the wind generators. Once we're out of fuel, we'll lose power. No wind power, no transmissions. It's that simple.

Pope appears panicked and wide-eyed.

STANTZ

Don't get your knickers in a twist.
I don't need power to receive
messages, I only need it for
sending out messages to the ships
below.

The lone plane flies above thick cloud cover.

RADIO TABLE - LATER

Rodgers shuffles in from the bow. He leans in close to
Stantz, eavesdropping on the faint sound of MORSE CODE.

Stantz scribbles out the message. Before Stantz is done...

RODGERS

South... again? Are they out of
their mind?

STANTZ

Three times in a row, sir.

Rodgers carefully examines every minute part of his sextant.

RODGERS

(to Pope)

You heard Stantz. Go tell Connell
to take her one degree true north.
Got that? Repeat to him what 'The
Aroostook' reported.

Pope shuffles forward. Rodgers sits at the nearby nav table.
He stares at his charts. Confused and mumbling to himself.

RODGERS

None of this makes any sense.

STANTZ

Sir, the Farragut reports she's
standing by... speeding on course
at twenty-seven knots.

The plane shifts abruptly and the two men steady themselves.

RODGERS

You know the drill. Get the
message out.

As Rodgers shuffles to the bow, he meets Pope mid-way under
the cockpit.

RODGERS
Get back there and help Stantz get
everything stowed away, then get
ready for landing.

Rodgers moves under the cockpit and slides into the bow station. He pokes his head out and gauges the sea.

As Stantz taps out his last message on the wireless key:

SUPERIMPOSITION: *"LANDING - LANDING - LANDING"*

SILENCE breaks out as both engines quit within seconds of each other.

RODGERS
(directed back at Connell)
That's not good. My guess is 'The
Aroostook' never received our last
transmission.

Rodgers looks over the side and surveys the water below.

RODGERS
Water looks a little choppy...
slight squall to the west...
squeeze as much distance out of her
as you can.

Connell acknowledges his Commander with an abbreviated salute.

The plane descends. Connell banks starboard and levels off. With nose up, he settles the tail toward the water.

The crewmen brace themselves. At the moment of contact with the Pacific, the PN9-1 skips like a rock across the water.

The plane shudders violently with every wave it strikes.

Stantz and Pope do their best to keep from being tossed about inside mid-fuselage.

Tools explode from a locker and ricochet like shrapnel around the hull.

An empty fuel barrel breaks loose. It slams against Pope, knocking him off his jump-seat and wedging him between another empty barrel at the rear of the plane.

Small metal rivets pop loose from the floor of the aluminum hull. Little gushers of seawater geyser upward from each leak.

Stantz unbuckles. Springs from his jump-seat and pulls the wayward barrel off Pope. Pope's in obvious pain. Very angry.

POPE

For chrissakes! Where'd you learn
to tie a knot, ya frickin' dumb
shit?!

Stantz responds to Pope's remarks with a glare of contempt.

The plane continues to skip across the water, popping additional rivets with every bounce.

Stantz opens a storage locker. Taped to the inside of the door is a family photo of a beautiful young woman holding the hand of a waving five year old boy -- the same two we saw on top of the Marin Headlands.

Stantz pauses momentarily to glance at the photo before snatching a cigar box from the locker. Slams the door shut.

The plane finally comes to a complete rest. It begins to pitch and roll on the open ocean.

Pope realizes the bilge is slowly filling with water caused by the open rivet holes.

Stantz opens the cigar box. It's filled with yellow number two pencils. He grabs two fist-fulls and hands one bunch to Pope. Pope decidedly favors one of his hands which appears injured.

STANTZ

Here. In case you didn't notice,
we got a leak in our basement.

Pope places the pencils in his mouth, like a yellow dog bone.

In unison, the two men fall to their knees. They proceed to jam pencils into the perfectly same-sized holes made for the rivets. Working feverishly, the two plug dozens of leaks.

BOW

Rodgers looks back toward his pilots as he writes in his log.

RODGERS

Mark time, sixteen twenty hours -
September One. Duration... twenty-
five hours twenty-three minutes.
Distance... eighteen hundred and
forty nautical miles from 'Frisco'.

CONNELL

Well, we almost made it. But we still got two hundred and fifty miles to go for that ice cold beer.

BOWLIN

Personally, sir... I was hoping to meet up with some hula-hula dancer that'll, well... you know... but, a cold beer sounds pretty good, too.

The officers chuckle as Bowlin climbs out of the cockpit and onto the hull. He looks around.

CONNELL

(to Rodgers)

If it's any consolation, we just set a new Pacific Endurance Record.

RODGERS

Sorry, Connell, but a record setting "almost made it" doesn't count.

Rodgers slides down under the bow station.

BOWLIN

(directed to Connell)

Excuse me, sir, but do you know how long it's gonna be before we can stop bobbing around out here?

CONNELL

We've still got our ears on. Let's see what 'Sparky' can tell us.

Connell climbs out of the cockpit. Connell and Bowlin walk back to the top-hatch and drop inside.

RADIO STATION

Stantz scoops water out of the bilge using a tin cup.

Rodgers searches through various storage areas. He appears surprised to come across life jackets.

RODGERS

Surprise. Surprise. I thought I swapped these out for more fuel.

Rodgers tosses one over to Connell. He looks down at the floorboards and sees about two dozen pencils protruding like porcupine quills from the bottom of the hull.

CONNELL

Looks like we popped a few.

STANTZ

Yes, sir. But, not that bad.

RODGERS

Listen for chatter, Stantz. Let me know when they're on top of us. In the meantime, rotate watches and get some shuteye when you can. Once we're refueled, we've still got a few more hours of flying ahead of us today.

Rodgers lies down in the far reaches of the plane's tail. Places a life jacket under his head and closes his eyes.

INT. OPERATIONS DECK OF THE USS AROOSTOOK - DAY

Naval OFFICERS peer over a table laden with charts. The senior officer is CAPTAIN VAN AUKEN, (50), distinguished looking, a touch of gray in his hair.

VAN AUKEN

Our radioman's last contact with the Number One was at sixteen hundred hours.

INSERT: - CLOSE UPS OF CHARTS - Reveals estimated locations for search pattern in relationship to original planned path.

A straight line boldly marks the intended flight path from San Francisco to Hawaii.

The Captain marks the spot where he believes the PN9-1 transmitted their last message.

It's clearly marked well south of the scheduled flight path.

The Captain uses his compass to create a circular search pattern around their target.

VAN AUKEN (O.S.)

We make their last known position to be here, south of the flight path. Maintain our heading at one-three-seven.

SEAMAN

Aye aye, sir.

VAN AUKEN

Radio the Farragut to approach on a course of two-nine degrees west-by-south-west. Let them know we'll meet them at the Number One.

SEAMAN

Aye, aye, sir.

VAN AUKEN

Damned airplanes! Nothing but a useless military toy... certainly a lot more trouble for the Navy than they're worth.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

MID-FUSELAGE

Rodgers sits at his nav table. His flight crew around him.

INSERT - A smaller version of the same flight plan seen on the Aroostook. There is a major discrepancy.

Instead, of being south of the flight path as previously shown, we SEE a big **X** above it, north of the flight path.

RODGERS (O.S.)

We're here... Stantz tells me they've started their search pattern for us way down here.

Rodgers snaps his pencil in half and throws it into the tail section. The crewmen take note and realize something's gone wrong.

RODGERS

What a bunch of nitwits.

Bowlin rummages through the lockers carrying a clipboard. He opens a large sack and withdraws something wrapped in butcher paper. He reads from his clipboard.

BOWLIN

Twelve ham sandwiches, ten quarts water, two quarts coffee. That's cold coffee. Two quarts soup, also cold... and a handful of oranges.

Bowlin unwraps a ham sandwich.

BOWLIN

Make that eleven sandwiches.

He takes a bite. One or two chews later, he spits it into the ocean through the starboard cargo door. He inspects the sandwich and extracts from it a thin slice of ham.

He uses the edge of the nav table to scrape mold off the ham before taking another bite. He tolerates it momentarily before spitting it out again.

He shows it to Commander Rodgers who takes a sniff of it.

RODGERS
Sweet Fanny Adams!

Bowlin throws the sandwich overboard.

BOWLIN
This crap's strong enough to knock you over. Tastes like mustard flavored bunker fuel.

RODGERS
I want each man to grab a canteen and write your name on it. Connell, I want you to divide up the water into equal portions. Who knows how many hours it'll be before they get here.

The plane rolls and pitches on the open ocean.

Pope and Connell climb out onto the upper wing. They stare in awe at a breathtaking, glorious, unobstructed sunset.

One by one, the rest of the crew join them along the wing, staring silently at the beauty of the setting sun until...

POPE
(softly)
Wow!

INT. PACIFIC NAVAL COMMAND SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Admiral Moffett stares out a window overlooking San Francisco Bay. His back to Yarnell and Moses who are standing nervously in front of his desk. There's a quiet pause...

Moffett turns and faces his subordinates, somber and without his typical pompous bluster.

MOFFETT
How many ships are in the hunt?

YARNELL

Including the Langley, we have twelve ships moving on station... six more coming on-line after refueling at Pearl Harbor, sir.

MOSES

We also have two squadrons of scout planes aboard the Langley. They've also joined in.

MOFFETT

I don't understand how we could just lose a plane that large. Do they think she went under?

MOSES AND YARNELL

We don't know just yet, sir.

Moffett moves to a framed PHOTOGRAPH of a large lighter-than-air ship hanging on the wall. He seems to be pondering.

MOFFETT

The newspapers are having a field day with this one. Everywhere you look... there it is... on page one!

YARNELL

It would make a good distraction, sir.

MOFFETT

Okay, you've convinced me. Get the 'Shenandoah' ready. Let's have a few County Fairs get a good close look at her... a little slight of hand distraction... make 'em forget about our missing plane.

MOSES AND YARNELL

Yes, sir.

As the two officers back their way out of the office, Moffett shakes his finger accusingly at them.

MOFFETT

But, you tell 'em I still want them to find that god-damn airplane!

EXT./INT. PN9-1 ON THE OPEN SEA - DAY

Bowlin stands his watch atop the fuselage.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "WEDNESDAY - DAY THREE"

Using his binoculars, Bowlin sees smoke on the horizon. He watches it intensely. Leans down, sticks his head into the cockpit and bangs on the hull.

BOWLIN

Pope, come up here and tell me what this looks like to you.

The shout wakes everyone. Pope sticks his head out of the top hatch.

BOWLIN

I see smoke ahead. Two points off the port bow. This could be them!

The entire crew scrambles atop the hull in order to see what Bowlin has spotted.

The jubilant men take turns looking at the horizon using the binoculars.

POPE

It's a merchant ship! Where the hell's the navy?

BOWLIN

Who cares what she is? I'll bet she's got a radio on board... a real one... one that works.

Pope grabs his life vest he'd been using for his pillow and waves it over his head. As he waves it, the vest slips from his hand and is inadvertently flung into the ocean.

All except Stantz strip off their shirts and wave them excitedly over their heads.

POPE

It kinda looks like she's heading this way... it's hard to tell.

Rodgers looks backward, toward the rising sun, then turns his head back toward the unknown ship again.

Rodgers stops waving his shirt and quietly takes a set on the hull. Disappointment. He silently watches while his men continue to wave their shirts.

RODGERS

(softly)

It's no use. They can't see us. All they can see is the sun.

Rodgers sits quietly and watches his crew become fatigued.

BOWLIN

I don't think they saw us, sir.

Rodgers shakes his head in agreement. One by one, each man surrenders to exhaustion.

Rodgers stares at the wind-driven generators sitting idle atop the fuselage. You can tell he's thinking to himself.

RODGERS

Bowlin, you're my jack-of-all-trades. Start thinking about how we can jury rig those wind generators. There's got to be a way we can deliver juice to our transmitter.

EXT. NAVY SCOUT PLANES OVER WATER - DAY

Two navy scout planes fly side by side over open ocean. The mechanics sitting in the front seats of each biplane lean out as far as safely possible. They search the waters below with binoculars.

The two pilots signal each other. They shake their heads, shrug their shoulders, convey puzzled dumbfounded looks.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 ON THE OPEN SEA - DAY

Rodgers 'shoots the sun' with his sextant from the bow nav station.

Connell and Bowlin study the starboard engine. Connell carries a clipboard and pencil. They talk quietly.

CONNELL

There's only half the amount of oil in our port engine than in our starboard. What about reserves?

BOWLIN

Two gallons, sir.

CONNELL

My biggest concern is the starboard radiator. It's totally empty. I think we've got a rupture in one of her seams. The Commander's not gonna like what he hears.

The two look over at the bow of the plane. Rodgers climbs out of his station and walks atop the fuselage toward the rear hatch.

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope appears bored. He repeatedly bounces an orange off the bulkhead like a tennis ball.

Although Stantz wears his radio headset, he appears to be sleeping at his station. We discover he's actually eye level with the mouse who is walking around on his table.

Rodgers drops in through the top hatch and throws his charts onto the nav table.

Rodgers's presence startles Stantz. Stantz quickly snatches his mouse and covertly places him back inside his pocket.

The faint sound of Morse code emanates from the radioman's headset. Stantz grabs a pencil and begins to write.

POPE

They sure are taking their sweet time to get here. What's the chatter, Stantz? Anything new?

STANTZ

Nope. Same-o Same-o. The Farragut keeps asking The Aroostook if they've got us yet. The Aroostook tells them they should be right on top of us. Watchin' the same vaudeville comedy act night after night tain't so funny no more.

Rodgers works with a compass at his nav table.

STANTZ

Excuse me, sir, but, what gives? Their reception's coming in pretty strong. They've got to be right on top of us. How come they...

RODGERS

It's going to be dark soon. I want rotating watch duties. Pull out the flare gun, Pope. Make sure each of us is one hundred percent ready. I want you taking first watch.

Bowlin and Connell drop into the fuselage through mid hatch.

CONNELL
Sun's almost ready to set, sir.

RODGERS
Any brainstorm hit you on how we could juice the transmitter?

BOWLIN
Well, sir. It'd be worth a try if we took the starter motor and flywheel from the starboard engine. She's already got serious radiator problems and she ain't flyin' nowhere soon.

RODGERS
Get on it. But, wait until daylight to get out on that wing. I don't want anybody swimming around out there after sunset.

BOWLIN
Aye aye, sir.

Connell places his clipboard on the table in front of Rodgers. He looks at Pope polishing off an orange.

CONNELL
How about you toss me one of those.

POPE
They're all gone, sir.

CONNELL
Gone? Then, how about some joe?

POPE
That's gone, too.

CONNELL
Soup?

POPE
Yep, that, too.

The two crewmen grumble their annoyance at Pope then look over at Rodgers who has now spun around at his work station.

Rodgers appears quietly concerned about the depleted food supply.

RODGERS
You're not saying we're out of everything. Already?

POPE

No, sir. We've still got five very ripe ham sandwiches, if anyone's that hungry... or brave enough.

Rodgers looks at his two crewmen, raises his eyebrows as if to solicit their continuing interest.

Pope extends both hands, each hand offering a wrapped sandwich.

RODGERS

Well? Which is it?

Connell and Bowlin each reluctantly snap a package from Pope. They unwrap them. Two soggy sandwiches are revealed.

A bit of mold on the ham. Connell takes the slice of ham and scrapes it across the edge of the radio table. Bowlin repeats the same maneuver. The two sniff at their meat slices.

BOWLIN

They still smell like bunker fuel.

CONNELL

Ah, but don't underestimate the subtle hint of Pittsburgh mustard.

RODGERS

When you gourmands are finished dining, I want you to spool out the wax cord along the wing. I want all three hundred feet of it hooked up to the radio. Let's see if we can make one really large antenna for Stantz.

Bowlin shuffles to the corner and grabs a spool of wire. He and Pope move toward the bow.

As they reach the open starboard door, Bowlin rolls the slice of ham, places it in his lips like a cigar. He flings the bread slices into the far reaches of the plane.

BOWLIN

I'm hungry. But I'm not stupid.

The two men move toward the cockpit, then up and out onto the wing, all the while unreeling wire from their spool.

Rodgers whispers to Stantz who appears miserably sick.

RODGERS

Are you okay, Stantz?

STANTZ

Sort of, sir. I don't know if it was the sight of their sandwiches, or the one I ate earlier.

Rodgers chuckles but stops short when he realizes Stantz may indeed be very sick. Rodgers places his hand on Stantz's forehead.

RODGERS

I need you to keep your ears on the Fleet. I have to know everything about their search patterns. Listen for exact locations. It's very important. Can I count on you?

STANTZ

Yes, sir.

Connell moves in and joins the conversation. Rodgers grabs his nav charts in order to show the two men.

INSERT: RODGERS NAV CHARTS - The two different estimates of locations along the prepared flight path. Clearly a big discrepancy in search locations.

RODGERS (O.S.)

(to Connell)

I've reconfirmed our position three times... with one hour spreads. I show us to be right here, north of the flight path. They're searching for us over here, clearly south of it. Currents are westerly at five to six knots.

Rodgers throws the charts over onto his small nav table.

RODGERS

Our drift will only scoot us further away from their search pattern.

Rodgers stares out at the plane's wing tip. Wave action has increased and it's slapping hard against the pontoons.

Rodgers grabs a blanket and finds a cozy spot in a corner. He places the rolled blanket under his head.

RODGERS

Set up your watches, Connell. Four hours each.

Make sure that flare gun's ready
when we need it. Wake me if... when
they get here.

The PN9-1 drifts on a dark sea.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

Dawn arrives and the PN9-1 bobs calmly on smoother seas.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "THURSDAY - DAY FOUR"

Stantz sits at his radio station, coughing incessantly.

STANTZ

If only I could get my hands on
those radio boys on the
Aroostook... I'd... I'd make them
rubes eat my fists.

Stantz demonstrates his feeble boxing technique.

Pope mocks him behind his back with half-hearted imitations
of Stantz's boxing prowess.

POPE

Sure you would, Stantz.

STANTZ

I would, I tell you. I'd make 'em
eat both fists.

POPE

Would ya quit talking about food?

CONNELL

Look, fellas, we've got a boatload
of "if onlys" to go around here.
"If only" we had a little more
tailwind... "if only" Pope weren't
so damn ugly...

Stantz and Connell share a laugh at Pope's expense.

POPE

Very funny, sir. I'll have you
know I'm quite the ladies' man...

CONNELL

I'm sure you are.

Stantz is distracted by a new MORSE CODE message TAPPED-OUT
in his headset. He writes it down in his note pad.

STANTZ

Good news, sir. The Farragut says the Number Three was successfully towed back to Frisco. Everyone's safe and sound.

A genuine cheer goes up among the men. Bowlin wakens to the men's noisy cheers. He looks out the portal window.

STANTZ

Wait. There's more. They're also informing the fleet about The Shenandoah. It was ordered to leave Lakehurst for Chicago. Some sort of Goodwill Tour of mid-western state fairs.

CONNELL

Sound more like a distraction. Probably because of us.

POPE

What are the weather reports like over the mid-west?

BOWLIN

(waking up)

What's going on? Are they here?

The cheering stops abruptly as the men are reminded of their own dilemma.

POPE

It's the Number Three. She's safely back in Frisco.

BOWLIN

For chrissakes... you woke me up just to tell me that?

Bowlin rolls over, adjusting the rolled life vest under his head.

BOWLIN

Come on, fellas. I was in one of my 'a-number-one' dreams... Next time you wake me up you'd better be telling me we're on our way home.

The crew razzes Bowlin in unison as Pope throws another life preserver at him.

POPE

Hey, Bowlin... Didn't the skipper say something about you having a date with a certain starboard engine this morning?

Bowlin bolts up.

BOWLIN

Crap! I forgot. Where is he?

POPE

He's in his bow station. You know, up there at the pointy end of the plane.

BOWLIN

You do know you're turnin' into a real wise ass, Pope.

ATOP THE FUSELAGE - LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS: - A day in the life of a lost plane.

- A) Pope, Connell and Rodgers sit atop the plane. They watch Bowlin, busy at work on the starboard engine.
- B) Starboard engine partly dismantled. Removed parts visible.
- C) Pope has a line dangling in the water. Appears to be fishing. Pulls the line in just to throw it out again.
- D) The bare-chested men sweat profusely in the hot sun. Perhaps a 'time lapse' as they re-position themselves throughout the day.
- E) Clouds cover drops lower. Skies darker. Seas are considerably rougher.
- F) Rodgers and Connell sit atop the fuselage near mid-hatch. Back to watching Bowlin as he works on the starboard engine.
- G) Pope quietly joins everyone else, except Stantz, atop the upper wing. Rodgers breaks the silence --

RODGERS

-- You are aware... people who have money, I mean "a lot of money", the ones who buy those enormous sailboats and go 'yachting'...

I hope you realize they do it in conditions far worse than this... and they pay a whole lot of moolah for the privilege.

The crew glare at their smiling commander, but no one overtly responds. Pope overcomes their collective reluctance.

POPE

Is that what you do, sir? Have you got one of them mammoth sailboats?

RODGERS

(chuckling)

Me? Oh, hell no. You're not getting me out here in weather like this.

The men don't see the humor. Rodgers slides a little closer to Connell so he may speak confidentially.

RODGERS

Have you been watching that starboard pontoon? I really don't like the looks of it.

CONNELL

Think we could lose it? These swells are getting a bit rougher.

RODGERS

I think, if that wing folds she'll do a complete roll over --

CONNELL

-- like a dog, begging to have her belly scratched?

RODGERS

Yeah, I guess something like that. Don't lose sight of our original plan. We were supposed to be tendered by now. Topped-off with more fuel and on our merry way. It's never taken this long before.

Rodgers stands and surveys each wing.

CONNELL

So much for 'best made plans'.

RODGERS

We've got to take some stress off her wing tips.

I hate to do it, but if we've got to strip her fabric, maybe we can tie it between the wing braces... you know, fashion some sort of sails.

CONNELL
You want sails? On an airplane?

RODGERS
The Navy still signs my paycheck. If we can't fly her to Hawaii, maybe we can sail her there.

For the first time, Connell smiles at Rodgers with a look of hope and genuine respect.

CONNELL
Tell me what you want me to do.

RODGERS
Move inward... but, don't go past the pontoon. Got it?

Connell stands and the two men carefully walk along each wing toward separate wing tips. Rodgers takes starboard, Connell the port.

Each withdraws a small pocket knife from their trousers and select a blade.

With knives clinched in their teeth, the two men advance cautiously toward each wing tip. Once there, they proceed to cut away the top and bottom fabric covering the lower wing.

COCKPIT - LATER

Rodgers sleeps in the front nav station. His face is badly sunburned, his lips cracked. Connell's in the cockpit.

Wing fabric has been partially ripped away from the top side of the lower wings. It has been drawn upward and tied to the top wings in such a fashion as to create small sails.

CONNELL
Are you watching any of this?

Rodgers opens his eyes and shifts in his seat. He looks around.

CONNELL
I'll be damned. Your idea actually seems to be working.

I can control her straight line drift by about ten... maybe twelve degrees. What made you think of this?

Rodgers smiles with satisfaction before shifting his position in his seat. He tries to go back to sleep.

RODGERS
It's in my blood.

EXT./INT. DECK OF THE AROOSTOOK - NIGHT

A half dozen seamen search the horizon with binoculars. The ship's searchlights pan back and forth.

The officer-of-the-watch points to a faint light reflecting off the clouds. He grabs for an intercom.

WATCH OFFICER
We may have something on the horizon, sir. Twenty points off the starboard bow.

Captain's Bridge

The ship's captain stands calmly.

CAPTAIN
Come about to one-six-zero.
(beat)
Mister Kuhr.

A young ensign snaps to attention.

KUHR
Sir?

CAPTAIN
Instruct the radioman to put out a message to the PN9. Tell them to shoot another star shell.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 RADIO COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS

Stantz looks sicker than a dog. His head lies flat on the small table where he sits, his headset resting on his head slightly askew. He perks up excitedly.

We HEAR the faint sound of MORSE CODE. He scribbles out the message.

STANTZ

Sir, The Aroostock is trying to raise us. We've been instructed to *'show lights once more'*.

The crew sits up and take notice with renewed vigor. They let out a suppressed CHEER. Rodgers sits up from what must have been a deep sleep in the tail section.

RODGERS

Pipe down, fellas. You'll wake the neighbors.

(to Stantz)

Are you sure they said *"once more"*?

STANTZ

Aye, sir. They've repeated it several times. *"PN9 - Show Lights Once More."*

Rodgers moves to a small locker, grabs a leather pouch, and withdraws a flare gun. He slides open the starboard cargo door, cocks the flare gun and fires upward.

After reaching it's apex, the bright light descends slowly before dropping into the sea.

RODGERS

Anything?

There is a long silent wait. Stantz shakes his head no.

CONNELL

What do you think, sir? One more?

Rodgers grabs another star shell from the pouch and reloads the flare gun.

RODGERS

All hands on deck, everybody but Stantz. Keep an eye out for a response.

Bowlin, Connell and Pope scramble atop the fuselage.

Rodgers leans out and fires another round. The crewmen watch as the glow of the bright light slowly drops into the sea.

Rodgers turns his attention to Stantz. Nothing. They wait silently.

Rodgers fires a third and final time with similar results. One by one, the crew climb back inside the plane. Mumbling.

They're clearly demoralized.

INT. CAPTAIN'S BRIDGE ON THE AROOSTOOK - NIGHT

A junior officer enters the bridge and salutes the captain.

JUNIOR OFFICER

It's a negative, sir. The watch commander believes it may have been our own searchlights reflecting off the cloud cover, sir.

CAPTAIN

Very well. Carry on... she's got to be around here somewhere.

EXT./INT. AIRSHIP SHENANDOAH - NIGHT

At six hundred and eighty feet long, the huge cigar-shaped dirigible USS SHENANDOAH is America's largest lighter-than-air ship.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "FRIDAY - DAY FIVE"

Emblazoned boldly on the side of this rigid craft are the markings: "U.S. NAVY ZR-1".

She is buffeted by strong winds. We see her exterior in great detail as the airship moves past our POV. Her nose rises and falls as if she were a small boat plowing through rough seas.

Beneath her long balloon are two separate GONDOLAS, mounted fore and aft. Six propeller driven engines are attached equally in between the gondolas.

Her LOUD ENGINES slice their way through a rainstorm.

Through the windows of the front gondola, nine navy personnel can be seen busy at work.

HELM

A seaman STEERMAN, (22), stands in front of a large steering wheel. Next to him stands the airship's skipper, Lieutenant Commander Zachary LANSLOWNE, (37). The atmosphere inside the gondola is electric.

[All dialogue spoken with great urgency except where noted]

LANSLOWNE

All Hands, Emergency Posts! All Hands, Emergency Posts!

An ALARM goes off. The Skipper looks at his Second Officer.

STEERMAN

Winds increasing, Sir! Gusts are approaching seventy knots... airspeed sixty-five knots. We're not making any headway, Sir

LANSDOWNE

Altitude?

INSERT: THE ALTIMETER - The needle is rising rapidly.

STEERMAN (O.S.)

Three thousand feet, sir!

LANSDOWNE

Starboard engines, hold standard! Valve cells four and five! What's our location, Mister Sheppard?

A young ensign, Lieutenant Edgar W. SHEPPARD, (24), sits at a navigation table. Using one hand, he works quickly with compass and ruler. He must firmly hold onto his desk with his other hand.

SHEPPARD

About the best I can tell you, Sir, is Ohio! I believe we're somewhere over Noble County.

LANSDOWNE

(softly to himself)

What a bugger! The Admiralty just couldn't wait for better weather, could they?

A seaman RUNNER climbs down a staircase into the control car. It's difficult for him to maintain his balance.

He approaches Lansdowne.

RUNNER

Her frame's twisting pretty good back there, sir. She's already snapped a few control cables. They're also wrestling with some fuel drums that broke loose over engine six.

LANSDOWNE

Port engines... Up flank speed!

EXT./INT. OHIO FARMHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**BEDROOM**

A FARMER and his WIFE, (both mid-40's), sit up in bed. Above the SOUND of WIND and RAIN splattering against their roof and windows is the familiar DRONE of airplane ENGINES.

FARMER
I can still hear 'em.

WIFE
It's been nearly half an hour,
Andy.

FARMER
How many planes would come out in
weather like this?

The two climb out of bed. They grab storm trousers and jackets from off a wall hook.

OUTSIDE

The farmer and his wife peer upward, sheltering their eyes from the falling rain.

WIFE
I can't see a damn thing! Can you?

The SOUND of ENGINES continue to drone above them.

EXT./INT. AIRSHIP SHENANDOAH - CONTINUOUS

The airship's nose rises skyward again. The bow raises her blunt nose to a forty-five degree angle and accelerates upward like an express elevator.

The crew grab whatever they can at their posts. The angle of rise cause their feet to lose contact with the ship's deck.

HELM

STEERMAN
Warm air rising!

INSERT: THE ALTIMETER. The needle moves rapidly from twenty-seven hundred feet to forty-six hundred feet.

LANSDOWNE
Good God!

Lansdowne grips the 'Speaking Tube' to remain upright.

LANSDOWNE
Trim Ship! Trim Ship! Anderson,
valve six and eight cells fast!
Rosendahl, release ballast aft!
Get her nose down... QUICKLY!

The ship's nose continues to rise skyward until it looks as though the airship might soon stand on its tail.

LANSDOWNE
Engines three and five... More
Power! Flank power!

Across the cabin, young Lieutenant J. Bruce ANDERSON, (25), works frantically with the gas escape valves. His feet are leveraged against a bulkhead in order to remain in his seat. A blast of gas HISSES loudly as it is released.

The skipper eyes the inclination meter in front of him. The dirigible appears to be responding more favorably. The ship starts to level out.

A gray light of early dawn gives the bank of dark clouds an eerie, somber appearance. Occasional flashes of lightning bounce off rain clouds. THUNDER follows.

LANSDOWNE
All Engines Maintain Full Speed!

The airship is repeatedly buffeted by sporadic, strong rising updrafts.

STEERMAN
Warm Air Rising!

The ship's bow points skyward again and the crewmen brace themselves.

INSERT: THE ALTIMETER - The needle continues to rise rapidly. It now approaches seven thousand two hundred feet.

LANSDOWNE
If we don't get her nose down fast,
we'll break up for sure!

We HEAR the creaking sounds of TWISTING METAL.

LANSDOWNE
(to second officer)
Go Aft! Jettison as much fuel and
water as you can. We've got to
lighten our tail!

Second Officer Jerry ROSENDAHL half salutes. He struggles to climb his way up the companionway ladder that leads into the dirigible's internal framework.

INSIDE FRAMEWORK

The ship's cavity is crammed with very large, helium-filled bladders. Rosendahl clings desperately to the catwalk that runs the length atop Shenandoah's keel.

Reverberations of sharp, snapping noises echo ever louder inside the ship's frame. The sound resembles the STRAINING SQUEALS of protest produced by full-rigged windjammers riding out gale force winds.

THE HELM

LANSDOWNE

Anderson! Spring Topside!
Manually blow all cells! Start
with the forward ones!

ANDERSON

Aye Aye, Sir!

Anderson leaves his station at the valve control center and must also struggle his way up the companionway.

INSIDE FRAMEWORK

Anderson pulls his way on top of the catwalk inside the airship. Ahead of him, Rosendahl struggles to remain upright.

There is a sudden TEARING, SNAPPING NOISE, like fabric RIPPING.

Anderson looks backward in horror. The control car from where he had just exited is now gone. Nothing remains but a great, wide open void below them.

Far beneath, we SEE the streamlined shape of the control cabin as it plunges toward the ground. Anderson turns back to Rosendahl in horror. Rosendahl is equally dumb-struck.

ANDERSON

The Control Cabin!

Having lost much of their ballast with the missing gondola, the ship is now dangerously out of balance. It SHUDDERS violently.

Anderson and Rosendahl cling tenaciously to girders. They're visibly shaken. Five other sailors also cling to girders in b.g.

EXT. OHIO FARM FIELD - CONTINUOUS

WIFE

Look, Andy! Over there!

A large, dark object free-falls out of the black rain clouds. It's the control car plunging to the ground.

Silhouetted against a dark cloud, lit intermittently by flashes of lightning, the dirigible is briefly visible before it is swallowed by darkness once again.

The dirigible's silhouette lists at a forty-five degree angle.

The control car strikes the earth with the SOUND of an EXPLODING BOMB.

The terrified farmer and his wife look skyward, faces agape in frozen disbelief at what they're witnessing.

The entire front third of the ship has sheared away from the main body of the airship. This bow section momentarily gains altitude while the larger tail section falls quickly.

Five seamen free-fall to the ground out of the ship's huge gaping hole.

The larger tail portion proceeds to cascade downward in a slow death spiral.

INT. FRONT BOW SECTION - CONTINUOUS

Eight men still straddle various twisted parts inside the skeletal remains of the ship's front third. Among them are Lieutenants Anderson and Rosendahl.

One panicked seaman clings tenaciously to a section of girder. Part of his body dangles precariously outside. He loses his grip - a TERRIFYING SCREAM (O.S.) as he falls.

Sounds of SNAPPING CABLES continue to reverberate as aluminum girders buckle all around them. Through the huge gaping hole in the fabric, we SEE rolling hills and groves of trees far below.

The two officers bark out orders.

ROSENDAHL

Keep valving by hand! We've got to lose altitude!

ANDERSON

Rig some trailing lines! Use anything you can find!

Rosendahl cautiously looks overboard out of the gaping hole. He watches as the larger section descends toward the ground.

Another loud RIPPING SOUND is heard. Anderson looks up to see a large helium filled bladder rip away from the anchor brace that once held it in place.

The huge bladder flies skyward out of the bow's gaping hole.

The men brace themselves as the bow stops her ascent. There is momentary weightlessness.

The bow portion begins to descend, just like the larger tail section.

ROSENDAHL

Stop The Valving!

EXT. OHIO FARM FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The major chunk of the Shenandoah glides two hundred feet above the ground but descending rapidly.

The farmer and his wife abruptly stop running toward the ship. It's apparent they're already too close for comfort.

Now, the two run back from where they came. The farmer and his wife hit the ground, cover their heads.

The major chunk of airship strafing the two farmers directly overhead, crashing a hundred yards in front of them. Dirt and debris fly off in all directions.

Two seamen are flung out of the wreckage like rag dolls.

As it comes to a crashing halt, one by one, the surviving crewmen jump from what remains of the Shenandoah and run.

EXT. BOW SECTION - CONTINUOUS

The remaining small bow section has dropped even further in altitude.

Jury-rigged grappling hooks attached to long ropes hang like tentacles from the floating wreckage while it glides ever closer to earth.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Two MINERS exit from a Model-T truck stopped on a dirt country road. They look-up. About seventy-five feet above them gyrates the floating wreckage from what remains of the ship's bow. Trailing lines drag twisted girders willy-nilly across the field.

A VOICE calls out from above.

VOICE (OS)
Snub The Lines!

The two men stare dumbfounded at each other.

VOICE (OS)
Grab the god-damn ropes! Wrap them
around something! Anything!

Through the pelting rain, we barely view the silhouette of a seaman sliding down one of the dangling ropes.

The miners grab the ropes and are drug about a hundred yards before they let go.

The wreckage continues on its way above a large grove of trees.

The seaman seen earlier on the trailing rope is brutally smashed against a tall tree.

The outline of another farmyard looms ahead. We SEE three FARMERS on the ground there, each looking skyward.

As the bow section glides overhead, it takes the roof off of a barn causing the bow to stall momentarily.

One of the farmers grabs a trailing line and wraps it around a tree. With each run around the tree, the more securely the line holds firm.

EXT./INT. BOW SECTION - CONTINUOUS

The nose section smashes onto the ground. The force is strong enough to loosen the grip each crewman has with the girder he'd been hugging.

It comes to rest.

ROSENDAHL
SECURE ALL LINES!

SOUND of muffled MORSE CODE (O.S. PRE-LAP)

EXT./INT. PN9-1 ON THE OPEN SEA - DAY

Rodgers sits at the radio console, his headset only half-on his head. Writes in a note pad. His eyes tear-filled.

Connell stands very close to him. Eavesdropping with the other half of the headset.

Pope and Bowlin sit wide-eyed around their skipper. Wait for him to speak. Stantz is asleep in the corner. Everyone whispers

CONNELL

Did they say how many were killed, Sir?

RODGERS

Fourteen... several more were severely injured.

CONNELL

Christ. I've got good friends stationed aboard her.

RODGERS

We all do, Connell... We all do.

The men hang their heads. There is a long moment of complete silence. Rodgers is unable to suppress his tears. His chin quivering as he speaks.

RODGERS

Why don't you men go outside. Keep watch... go do something. We'll let you know if anything changes.

Pope and Bowlin exit through the mid hatch.

Connell and Rodgers look at each other and shake their heads.

INT. LARGE GOVERNMENT OFFICE - DAY

An Army Colonel sits comfortably behind a desk, smoking pipe in hand.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "FORT SAM HOUSTON, TEXAS"

The Army Colonel is William "Billy" MITCHELL, 45, as evidenced by the name plate on his desk.

A half dozen reporters with note pads sit casually around the room, sporadic camera flashes.

MITCHELL

If truth be told... this so-called "Hawaiian Flight" was strictly a publicity stunt. The navy should have doubled or tripled the number of patrol vessels, especially if they're going to fly machines like that one.

Mitchell strikes a match. Relights his pipe.

REPORTER #1

But, you didn't answer my question, sir.

The folksy, well-liked officer leans closer to the reporter.

MITCHELL

You boys are civilians. You can call me "Billy".

REPORTER #1

Then let's stop dancing, Billy. Will you speculate on the fate of those five navy fliers?

Mitchell is still reluctant to answer. He couches his answer carefully.

He grabs a model plane from his desk and uses it to demonstrate his response.

MITCHELL

Well, the probability is... they held her up as long as they could. As they neared the water, caught by a sudden gust, she might have been thrown into a stall and gone straight under the waves.

REPORTER #2

So, you believe they're all dead?

Again, Mitchell is reluctant to respond.

MITCHELL

I believe their fate parallels that of the Shenandoah. Far too many of this country's finest are being sent to their deaths by... incompetence.

Mitchell puffs angrily on his pipe. The reporters wait patiently.

REPORTER #2

Come on, Billy, don't hold back on us now. Let it out.

MITCHELL

At risk of appearing insubordinate, or providing further fodder for my own personal court-martial...

The Colonel gets serious. He's dying to spill his guts.

MITCHELL

I must stand firm and without hesitation. All of this nation's air activities should be consolidated into a single, cohesive unit. Without any control by the army... or the navy.

The reporters had been hoping to hear something new. They collectively urge the colonel to say more.

REPORTER #3

You've been advocating that position for years, Billy. What's so different now? Come on... why'd you ask us here? You want to tell us --

Mitchell turns very angry, but he is passionate and sincere while he speaks.

MITCHELL

-- The loss... the apparent loss of the PN9 and the recent crash of the Shenandoah are frightful, aeronautical accidents. They represent the unnecessary loss of life, equipment and precious national treasury.

Mitchell stands and moves to a large framed photograph of President Calvin Coolidge hanging on his office wall.

MITCHELL

These accidents are the direct result of criminal negligence and the treasonable administration of our national defense by those who hold this nation's highest positions of leadership.

The reporters are excited by Mitchell's bold comments.

Cameras' light bulbs repeatedly flash while Mitchell remains standing next to The President's large photograph.

MITCHELL

Remember boys, this isn't just about the Shenandoah, or about one lost plane in the Pacific. It's about this country's future in aviation... that's what's at stake here. Unless we make the necessary changes... today... this country's air service will remain lost in a sea of bureaucratic incompetence!

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

MID-FUSELAGE

Stantz snores in his sleep at his station.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "SATURDAY - DAY SIX"

Bowlin's curled up in a corner. A bored Pope lays against a fuel tank.

Pope spies a piece of discarded orange rind floating in the bilge water below the floorboard slats.

He delicately picks it out and wipes it against his shirt.

As Pope nibbles tiny bites from it, he conveys an expression that implies 'not bad.'

Stantz snores ever louder which clearly annoys Pope.

Pope gives Stantz a hard kick. Stantz awakens but is so weak he can barely lift his head off the table.

Pope quickly turns his back and pretends he's asleep. A sly smile of satisfaction comes over Pope's face.

BOW

Rodgers is sleeps in the bow. He's startled awake when a small fish jumps onto his lap.

He laughs as the fish wiggles wildly. He cups it between his hands and shuffles aft.

MID-FUSELAGE

RODGERS

We have a stow away!

Rodgers's shouting arouses the crew from their lethargy.

RODGERS
The damndest thing just happened.
It jumped right into my lap... and
started flopping all around.

Rodgers opens his cupped hands and shows off his prize. The men laugh at how small it is. He hands the fish to Bowlin.

BOWLIN
Somewhere out there a mama's
searching for her baby.

Despite the playful chiding, Rodgers is proud of his catch. He pulls out a pocket knife and moves to the radio table.

RODGERS
Let's take a good look at her.

Stantz covers his shirt pocket with his hand.

STANTZ
You're not going to hurt it, are
you, sir?

RODGERS
Raw fish is a delicacy in some
cultures. It's actually not that
bad. Come on, give it a try.

Rodgers cuts the fish into five pieces, drops one of the sections into his mouth and chews.

Stantz stares in shock.

RODGERS
Come on, try it. It's delicious.

The crew's initial reluctance is overcome. One by one, they pick up a piece and chow down. All except Stantz.

BOWLIN
Not bad. Still... (chews) it would
have tasted better if it had been
cooked.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

Rodgers and Connell stand atop the hull.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "SUNDAY - DAY SEVEN"

Rodgers is focused intently on a bird gliding just above the port side engine.

It's a white-tailed tropical bird. It hovers motionlessly and without effort against the wind. It paces them perfectly.

Rogers is mesmerized by it. He turns toward Connell and reveals a gleeful smile only a child can deliver.

RODGERS
The Hawaiians call her Koa'e kea.

CONNELL
What's that mean?

Rodgers shrugs his shoulders.

RODGERS
Beats me. I know they nest in trees. So, I guess it means we're getting pretty close to land.

Bowlin and Pope stand atop the lower starboard wing.

Pope scans the horizon with binoculars. Bowlin has a cigarette hanging from his lips while he works on the engine.

POPE
Hey, Bowlin. How 'bout you butt me one?

Bowlin turns to Pope and looks at him askew.

POPE
Ah, come on, butt me. I'm desperate. It's been two whole days and I haven't had any.

Bowlin reaches into his jacket and withdraws a package of Camel cigarettes. He lights one and hands it to Pope.

POPE
Thanks, pal, I owe you one.

Pope takes a deep drag from the cigarette, then coughs.

POPE
(to Bowlin)
Let me ask you somethin'. Don't he just drive you completely bonkers?

BOWLIN
Who?

POPE

Who?! Stantz, of course. My mama once had a boyfriend like him. He'd talk like there's no tomorrow. He'd come across all nice when mama was around, but when she weren't...

BOWLIN

He's a radioman. They're all like that. Anyone who can tap out words as fast as he can gotta think a whole lot quicker than he taps.

Rodgers yells from the cockpit.

RODGERS

Pope, I want you down on the radio.

POPE

I tell you, there's something about him I don't like.

RODGERS

While we're still young, Chief.

POPE

Aye, aye, sir.

Pope hands the binoculars to Bowlin, walks quickly across the wing and drops into the hull.

MID-FUSELAGE

Stantz deliriously searches every nook and cranny of the ship's tail section.

He's startled by Pope's entrance. He's reassured after realizing it was only Pope.

STANTZ

Have you seen Stanley?

POPE

Who?

STANTZ

My mouse. I can't find Stanley.

Pope gives Stantz a sly smile.

POPE

You mean that fuzzy, yet delicious, hors d'oeuvre you brought onboard?

Stantz turns angry and moves aggressively toward Pope standing next to the cargo door.

STANTZ
Where's Stanley? I swear, if you
hurt one hair...

POPE
Relax.

Pope kneels down and casually withdraws the mouse from a tool box. He dangles the mouse by the tail. He hangs it outside the ship's door, dangling it over the water.

Mocking Stantz's speech:

POPE
Is this "yo poh wittle Shtanley"?

Stantz lunges feebly at Pope as he tries to retrieve his pet. Pope pushes him away. Stantz staggers from fatigue.

Stantz tries to attack Pope again, but again he's so weak he loses his balance and starts to fall out of the cargo door.

Pope drops the mouse in order to snatch Stantz from falling overboard.

Pope pulls him safely back inside while Stanley simultaneously watches his mouse strike the water

STANTZ
Stanley!

Underwater shot of the struggling mouse as it slowly sinks in the ocean.

Pope and Stantz both stare into the waters below them. The two men appear to be equally shocked.

ATOP THE HULL

Rodgers and Connell stand on the fuselage evaluating some of their recent handy work near the wing.

RODGERS
What's all the commotion in there?

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope places his hand over Stantz's mouth.

POPE
Nothing, Sir! Everything's good
here.

Stantz pushes Pope away. Gives him a hateful look. Feebly staggers his way toward the bow.

ATOP THE HULL

The officers have cannibalized a large section of the ship's floorboard and attached it to the starboard side of the hull. It acts as a make-shift steer-board.

RODGERS
Sorry to do this to you, old girl.

CONNELL
Do you really think this might help
us?

RODGERS
It beats drifting aimlessly. That
certainly isn't doing us any good.

The sun sits low in the western sky.

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope sits at the radio writing out a transmission. Rodgers and Connell drop in through the mid-hatch.

POPE
It's The Aroostook, Sir.

Pope continues to read his message with much difficulty.

POPE
"Cheer up, John - We'll get you."

There's a long silence as the three men contemplate the message. Rodgers takes the slip of paper from Pope. He reads it to himself. Pope is visibly upset.

RODGERS
You heard them, Pope. They said to
cheer up. Be patient. They'll be
here.

Connell ruffles Pope's hair.

CONNELL
Where's Stantz?

Pope shrugs his shoulders. Tries his best to look innocent but the best he can muster is a 'scared-shitless' expression.

Rodgers abruptly moves quickly to the bow .

BOW

Stantz shivers sitting in the forward navigation seat.

RODGERS
Stantz. What are you doing up here?
Are you all right?

Stantz doesn't answer.

RODGERS
Come on, let's get you down below.

Rodgers pulls Stantz down from the bow. He shouts aft for assistance.

RODGERS
Pope... get your butt up here.

Pope meets them just below the cockpit. He helps Rodgers move Stantz to the rear.

Profuse amounts of sweat roll down Stantz forehead.

STANTZ
I'll be okay, Sir. I just feel a
little cold.

MID-FUSELAGE

Rodgers creates an area padded with life vests. Before they can help Stantz lie down, Stantz grabs the sides of the cargo door and vomits into the water until he's reduced to dry heaves.

Pope turns away in disgust.

Stantz lies down. Connell places a blanket over him. Rodgers grabs a canteen clearly marked "Rodgers".

RODGERS
Take a sip. Get me some of those
biscuits.

Pope reaches into the tin of biscuits. We SEE only three biscuits remain. He takes one out and hands it to Rodgers.

Rodgers drops the biscuit into a metal coffee cup and adds the last of his own water.

Unfolding a blade from his pocketknife, Rodgers cuts the biscuit into little pieces. He reaches into the cup and tries to feed Stantz.

RODGERS
Come on. You've got to eat something.

STANTZ
I'm okay, honestly.

CONNELL
Listen to your C - O, Chief.

Rodgers places a small piece of wet biscuit on Stantz' lips. Stantz sucks on it. Rodgers hands the cup to Pope. As Rodgers rises and moves to the bow, he turns and wags his finger at Pope.

RODGERS
Keep a close eye on him!
Understand?

POPE
Aye, aye, sir.

EXT. SANDY BEACH - DAY

It's another new day. Just as the sun breaks the horizon, a local Hawaiian teenager casts his fishing line into the surf.

SUPERIMPOSITION: HILO, HAWAII - MONDAY - DAY EIGHT

The teen sees something float up onto the beach, about fifty yards away.

He jams his pole into the sand and wades out into the water.

He snatches a life-jacket from the rolling surf. He examines it.

INSERT: The life vest reveals the stenciled markings: "PN9-1"

EXT./INT. PN9-1 FLOATING ON OPEN OCEAN - DAY

The seas are rougher than ever. The higher waves cause the plane to pitch and roll substantially.

Rodgers lays on the wing, inspecting the pontoon underneath it. He's not happy about what he sees. Bowlin mans the helm.

MID-FUSELAGE

Stantz sleeps face down at his radio console. Pope sleeps coiled up in the corner. Connell leans against the hull using a life vest for a pillow but can't get comfortable.

Rodgers drops in through the top hatch. His presence startles Connell.

RODGERS

Bowlin got the hang of it pretty quick up there. He's a natural.

Rodgers blows into his cupped hands.

RODGERS

I'm surprised it hasn't rained yet. Winds are up. Swells increasing. We've got to take her sails in. We're getting way too much wave action. I'm worried about the starboard pontoon.

Connell moves to where Pope sleeps. He shakes him awake.

CONNELL

Let's go, Pope... you're on duty.

The two men exit through the mid-hatch. Stantz awakens during the commotion. Rodgers sits down at the nav table.

RODGERS

How are you doing, Stantz?

STANTZ

Better, sir. They sent the Whippoorwill and Farragut to plug the Molokai Channel. They're standing by at latitude two-two degrees eight minutes, longitude one-five-eight degrees twelve minutes, sir.

Rodgers shakes his head and draws cross-hairs on his chart.

RODGERS

Repeat that longitude again?

STANTZ

One - five - eight and twelve, sir.

He overlays his compass on the charts.

RODGERS

For chrissakes! They've estimated our drift at over eight knots... and we're doing half that at best.

STANTZ

Didn't those, "sail things" you made speed us up any?

RODGERS

A little. But Spreckels runs a fleet of three-masted sugar schooners through these waters and they can't do more than ten knots under full sail. What the hell is the Navy thinking?

Rodgers stares at his charts. Dejected.

RODGERS

We're still days away from where they're searching.

WING - NIGHT

The sun drops below the horizon.

Connell and Pope complete their removal of the plane's make-shift sails made from wing fabric. They carefully fold the sails before shoving them through the top hatch.

MID-FUSELAGE

Rodgers receives "the sails" and stows them in a corner of the plane.

Connell and Pope drop in from above.

CONNELL

You're right, sir. You can smell rain in the air. Let's hope we get something out of this.

Stantz perks up at the radio console and starts scribbling.

STANTZ

Sir? I've got in-coming chatter.

Rodgers returns to the radio station and hovers over Stantz. Stantz transcribes the message in his note pad. He starts laughing, weakly.

RODGERS

What's so funny?

STANTZ

It's good news, sir. We've been found... safe and sound, too.

The men gather closer. They're perplexed. Stantz reads from his pad. He's tired. His voice is weak and raspy.

STANTZ

There was this amateur radio guy in Florida who told the papers we'd been found four hundred miles south of Samoa... by the USS Lynchburg.

POPE

(to Connell)

Thamoa, eh? How the hell did we get all the way to Thamoa?

Connell lightly smacks Pope on the back of his head.

CONNELL

The Navy hasn't got a ship called the Lynchburg.

STANTZ

Wire services nipped it in the bud before it got into print.

Pope rubs the back of his head.

POPE

Hawaii... Samoa... it's all the same, right? I just don't see what's so funny 'bout being lost.

The men shake their heads at Pope.

We HEAR a loud BANGING on the ship's hull.

Bowlin leans down from his pilot's seat and yells to the rear of the plane.

BOWLIN

Incoming! We've got rain!

The men cheer.

RODGERS

(to Pope)

Finally! Grab the thermos bottles. Whatever you do, don't drop any of them.

Rodgers grabs one of the stowed make-shift sails and exits through the top-hatch.

ATOP THE HULL

Crew moves carefully onto the open strutted starboard wing.

The plane rocks as each incoming wave strikes the bow. The outline of the rain cloud is visible.

Connell helps Rodgers unfold the wing fabric. It flaps wildly in the wind.

RODGERS
Grab an end, Pope!

Pope hands the empty thermos bottles to Rodgers.

Pope grabs the opposite end of the ripped wing cloth. Everyone steps carefully across open wing spars.

CONNELL
Hold it up, like this, right under
the trailing edge of the top wing.
Catch as much runoff as possible.

We FOLLOW rain drops as they splash onto the top wing, roll slowly across the surface, and down into the out-stretched fabric held by the men.

A small puddle forms as water continues to collect.

Rodgers places one of the thermos bottles at the edge of the "sails".

RODGERS
Tilt it downward, slowly. Be
careful with it.

The pool of water moves across the cloth like liquid mercury. It dribbles into the thermos held by Rodgers. The first thermos is slowly filled.

It's handed over to Bowlin sitting in the cockpit.

The crewmen CHEER.

Bowlin sticks out his tongue. He looks skyward hoping to catch rain directly into his mouth.

A second thermos is nearly filled.

The squall passes as abruptly as it started. Pope looks up and shakes his fist skyward.

POPE
 What? That's it? You stingy little
 son-of-a-bitch.

Rodgers screws the lid on the second thermos and hands it gingerly to Bowlin.

RODGERS
 I don't know about you fellas, but
 mother taught me never to waste a
 thing on my plate.

Rodgers shuffles back to the hull. He falls to his knees and proceeds to lick the moisture from the top of the fuselage.

The crew initially watch in amazement. They exchange quick glances among themselves.

Pope and Connell skip atop the wing struts to join their commander in an all-out licking frenzy.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

The plane drifts across a calm Pacific. Pope sits in the pilot's seat. Rodgers sticks his head out of the bow nav station.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "TUESDAY - DAY NINE"

By now, each of the crewmen looks like crap. The rumped skipper searches the horizon with binoculars.

He waves back to Pope. Rodgers tries to point out several large Tiger Sharks swimming alongside.

RODGERS
 (directed to the sharks)
 Good morning, neighbor.

POPE
 Did you say something, Sir?

Rodgers points down at the sharks.

RODGERS
 A couple of playmates for you,
 Pope. Tiger Sharks.

Connell climbs out of the mid-hatch and looks around.

Pope points out the shark pack to Connell.

CONNELL

(to sharks)

You're wasting your time hanging around here. We're nothing but skin and bones.

RODGERS

They're one of the reasons I went into aviation. I can't swim... I used to have these reoccurring nightmares about falling overboard.

Connell looks at Rodgers with a blank look of disbelief.

Rodgers stares quietly at the sharks a moment longer before dropping back into the hull.

An aerial POV. The plane remains an isolated speck on the ocean... a lone seaman standing watch as a pack of sharks circle the plane... like Indians attacking a wagon train.

MID-FUSELAGE

Connell rests against the hull. He clandestinely watches Rodgers as he crawls on hands and knees under the cockpit.

Rodgers digs out a small piece of discarded sandwich bread from under one of the remaining floorboards.

Rodgers pops the thumbnail piece of moldy bread in his mouth.

Rodgers senses he's been watched. Rodgers shuffles through the hull. As he passes Connell, he slows momentarily and sucks each fingertip, like a true gourmand.

RODGERS

Please inform the chef he used too much salt.

Bowlin works on a 'mechanical contraption'. As he works, he uses a heavy engine part to perform athletic arm curls.

Rodgers shuffles over to him. Bowlin stops his weight training. Without his shirt, Bowlin appears quite buffed.

RODGERS

You still working on that?

BOWLIN

I've almost got it. I took the loading coils, condensers, and a few other parts off the transmitter.

I cannibalized the ignition and distributor from the starboard engine and ripped out her twelve volt ignition battery.

RODGERS

Rube Goldberg would be proud of you.

BOWLIN

Who's he?

RODGERS

Never mind. Just tell me if you think it'll work.

Bowlin removes a screwdriver from his hip pocket. He uses it as a pointer.

BOWLIN

We've strung antenna wire from the radio cockpit over the upper wing and down to the bow. I figure we might be able to transmit by rotating the distributor head, here, with the flywheel, over here.

Connell, Stantz and Bowlin all stare at Rodgers with great expectation.

Rodgers quietly examines the amalgamation of parts cannibalized from his plane.

RODGERS

But, will it work?

BOWLIN

Oh, it'll work all right. The real question is: *"How far will it transmit"?*

RODGERS

I guess there's only one way to find out. Let's fire this girl up.

Bowlin twists the ends of some bare wires around battery terminals. He licks his finger and touches a terminal. It gives off a small blue SPARK.

He is surprised. He looks hopefully at Stantz.

BOWLIN

She's all yours, Chief.

Rodgers scribbles on a note pad and slides it over to Stantz.

RODGERS

Here's our location. Just keep transmitting this message over and over.

Bowlin spins the distributor shaft as Stantz keys out a S.O.S. position report.

The duo rhythmically work together. We HEAR the faint rhythm of MORSE CODE being tapped out.

INT. ABOARD THE USS AROOSTOOK - DAY

RADIO ROOM

We HEAR the sound of incoming MORSE CODE. A radioman listens with his headset. He writes in a pad. He flips various toggles before speaking into a large tube on his table.

AROOSTOOK RADIOMAN

I have an incoming for you, sir.
It's been relayed to us from Pearl.

OPERATIONS DECK - CONTINUOUS

Captain Van Auken takes a deep puff from his pipe. He flips a switch on a console.

VAN AUKEN

What's the message?

AROOSTOOK RADIOMAN (O.S.)

"SUBS NOW IN POSITION OFF MAUI
COAST" --

VAN AUKEN

-- Roger that.

The Captain moves to his chart table.

VAN AUKEN

What a waste of time. I tell you they're already dead. We've searched fourteen hundred nautical miles. Two officers and twelve men manning twenty-four hour watches... and found nothing.

The Captain puffs nervously on his pipe.

VAN AUKEN

You'd think it would be obvious to everyone by now. What more can we do?

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DUSK

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope stares longingly out the open side door.

Stantz still weakly TAPS out his S.O.S. He finally quits.
Bowlin stops CRANKING

Rodgers sits against a bulkhead lost in thought. He stares at a hammer on the floor and picks it up.

He examines the hammer in his hand. Another idea is germinating in his head.

RODGERS

Grab another hammer, Pope.

Rodgers starts banging his hammer against the bottom of the hull. It is very loud and startles both Bowlin and Stantz from their sleep.

RODGERS

Bowlin... go tell Connell not to panic, then get your butt back here.

Pope has found a large wrench and begins banging.

RODGERS

Come on, bang on the hull. Make some noise. Make a lot of noise.

Armed with hammers and wrenches, the crew bang on the hull with a vengeance.

POPE

Excuse me, Sir. But why are we doing this?

RODGERS

Our subs have new oscillators on board. Maybe if they hear our noise they can zero in on us.

Stantz appears very fatigued. He can only watch listlessly from his radio table.

Pope, Bowlin and Rodgers hammer away with gusto.

STANTZ

Watch it, Bowlin. You're going to
put a hole in the fuselage.

The men tire easily in their weakened state. As time elapses,
one by one they slow their pounding.

Pope quits. Bowlin quits. Each man focuses on their skipper.
Rodgers finally stops, but only after he realizes he's the
only one still hammering.

RODGERS

(winking at Pope)

Good idea, Let's take a break.

The captain withdraws from the circle and shuffles forward in
the plane.

COCKPIT - NIGHT

Rodgers climbs into the right seat. Connell pilots the rudder
and ailerons. Rodgers' winded from the short crawl.

RODGERS

I didn't realize it was dark
already.

CONNELL

Do you think anyone heard us?

RODGERS

I spent ten years of my life in
submarines and I couldn't tell you
one way or the other.

CONNELL

Submarines? You were in subs? I
figured you'd always been a fly-boy
true and blue.

RODGERS

Blame that on my cousin, Cal. I was
transferred out of flying less than
a week after he crashed his plane
in Santa Monica.

CONNELL

Why'd you ask to be transferred?

RODGERS

I didn't. In my family, things just mysteriously happen and you do what you're told.

CONNELL

Ah, someone just making sure you're all right. Good intentions.

RODGERS

I worked my butt off. I hoped someone, anyone, would want me back. I'd take any squadron assignment. I'd go anywhere.

CONNELL

Its apparently paid off.

RODGERS

I'm not sure how it happened. I think I have Captain Yarnell to thank.

CONNELL

It's nice to know people in high places.

Rodgers caresses the sextant in his hand.

RODGERS

Then one day Yarnell tells me he gets to select the crews for the Pacific flight.

The two men perk-up momentarily. They hear residual banging on the hull, but it subsides.

RODGERS

He said he'd guarantee I'd make captain if I pulled this off.

CONNELL

And just like that... you went from a desk job to bobbin' like a bar of Ivory soap... God knows where we are in the Pacific?

Rodgers feels embarrassed. Strokes his sextant.

RODGERS

We're not lost, Connell. I know exactly where we are. It's the Navy who can't keep track of her toys.

Connell is distracted. He points to the horizon, just off the port side. The skies are overcast.

CONNELL

Did you see that, sir? A flash of light... it came from over there.

Rodgers raises his binoculars. He views the horizon. He looks down at his chart book.

RODGERS

That's windward Oahu over there. Wheeler Field's on the other side, so I'm not sure about those lights.

Connell becomes very enthusiastic.

CONNELL

We did it? Does this mean we really did this? What do you think? Maybe an early morning landing?

Rodgers doesn't share his excitement. He remains somber.

RODGERS

I wish it were that simple. I'm afraid there's still a whole lot of room to get worse before it gets worse.

EXT. USS. LANGLEY - DAY

THE FLIGHT DECK

Two small scout biplanes land on the deck of the Langley.

SUPERIMPOSITION: "WEDNESDAY - DAY TEN"

The deck crew run alongside each of the planes, grabbing the slow moving planes and wrestling them to a stop.

A pilot jumps down onto the flight deck. As he removes his flying helmet, an officer runs up to get a report.

A pilot solemnly shakes his head, indicating his reconnaissance rescue mission was unsuccessful.

FLIGHT READY ROOM - LATER

A DUTY OFFICER stands in front of a room filled with pilots in flight suits.

DUTY OFFICER
 You've all worked tirelessly.
 You've done everything possible out
 there to find your missing
 comrades. Pacific Command has asked
 me to personally thank each and
 every one of you for --

There is GRUMBLING among the assembled pilots.

DUTY OFFICER
 -- I know, I know. If it were up to
 me, we would continue the search.

The pilots realize where the speech is going and there are more mumbled PROTESTS.

DUTY OFFICER
 Ten days without any signs of life
 would suggest the plane probably
 suffered significant damage upon
 impact... and her crew met a
 similar fate.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAY

MID-FUSELAGE

Rodgers, Pope and Bowlin sleep in various corners of the plane.

Stantz sleeps at his radio console. He opens his eyes and removes his headset. He holds it out for his comrades to hear the faint sound of MORSE CODE.

STANTZ
 Hawaii... I've got Hawaii if
 anyone's interested. Mostly
 weather reports coming out of
 Pearl.

Pope grabs the headset, listens briefly, then hands it back to Stantz.

POPE
 So, what do you think, Commander?
 Are we going to waltz her up on a
 beach someplace? What's the plan?

Stantz scribbles to the sound of an incoming message. Stantz is visibly shook. Rodgers looks at him with concern.

RODGERS

What is it, Stantz?

STANTZ

It's the Langley, sir. She just received word from Fleet Command to call off the search. It's over. They've stopped looking for us.

Stantz looks up at Rodgers. Stantz wipes away a tear from the corner of his eye.

STANTZ

They gave up on us, Sir.

There's a long pause. All eyes are on Rodgers.

RODGERS

Screw 'em, Stantz. Just because someone gives up on you doesn't mean you've got to do the same.

POPE

We should be there pretty soon... all on our own. Right, Sir?

BOWLIN

Who's kidding who? We can't do this by ourselves, can we, Sir?

RODGERS

Take a look outside, fellas. Tell me what you see.

Pope sticks his head out of the mid-hatch.

We SEE the silhouette of Oahu on the distant horizon. Pope HOLLERS with excitement before ducking back inside.

POPE

We're here! I see land! We did it!

RODGERS

Let's not jump the gun.

Rodgers nervously pulls out his pocket watch, opens the face plate and stares at it a few seconds.

He slowly inhales and exhales a few deep breaths as Bowlin admires his Commander's pocket watch.

BOWLIN

May I?

Rodgers hands his watch to Bowlin.

Inside the cover is a family photo of the Rodgers Family. Mother and father wearing his Admiral's uniform. Between them sits the Commander at age ten.

BOWLIN

Very nice.

RODGERS

It hasn't worked in years. I keep it around for the photo. I think I was born with a clock in my head. I always know what time it is, give or take a few minutes either side.

Bowlin smiles at his Commanding Officer.

BOWLIN

Actually, I was referring to the photo of your family. Admiral?

Bowlin closes the cover and returns the watch to Rodgers.

RODGERS

(smiling at Bowlin)

Rear Admiral to be precise...

(beat)

Is everyone here?

(beat)

Okay... Let's talk. It's been twenty-four hours without water... a little longer without food. Frankly, men, I'm very proud of each of you. I know it's not been easy under these conditions.

The men are totally fixated on their commander's every word.

RODGERS

What you boys see out there is the Island of Oahu.

The assembled crew give out a quiet CHEER.

RODGERS

Now, I know she looks real tempting to you out there, especially being out here ten days and all.

POPE

I don't need no hula girls. That hunk of rock out there looks good enough to me.

Bowlin throws a life vest at Pope.

BOWLIN

Would ya shut-up for once and let the Commander speak?

RODGERS

Her north shore's about fifty miles to the west of us. Her outer reefs are extremely treacherous. If we're lucky enough to slip past them, we'd likely face some of the largest waves known to man.

POPE

Excuse me, Sir, but, what do we have to lose if we don't try?

RODGERS

Oh, we're going to do more than try. But we've got our sights set on a different lady altogether. We're changing course while we still can.

(beat)

No, our best hope is a little lady on our starboard that you can't see yet. Kauai... that's where we're going.

Pope is dumbfounded.

POPE

What do you mean? What's a Cow Eye?

Bowlin is frustrated with Pope.

BOWLIN

What'd I tell you about shutting your yap? That's the name of another island you dumb shit!

POPE

What's wrong with that one over there? We saw her first.

RODGERS
Sometimes the first lady who
catches your fancy isn't always the
right one for you.

The men exchange glances.

Rodgers searches their faces for some sort of comprehension,
but doesn't see it.

Rodgers wipes sweat from his face. Grabs a chart book off the
radio table.

POPE
(with panic)
We're changing course? Again?

RODGERS
I won't mince words with you boys.
If we fail, we'll be sucked right
through those straits. What's left
of us will get spit-up on a
Japanese beach long after we're
gone.

There's a period of silence.

BOWLIN
So we're heading for Kauai, Sir?

RODGERS
That's right. Connell's already
changed course. But we're going to
need everyone's help

Stantz moves weakly to the side hatch. He tries to vomit but
only produce dry-heaves. He gestures he'll be okay and
shuffles back to his radio table.

Rodgers moves to a storage locker and opens it.

We SEE a close-up of a photo stuck to the inside of the door.
It's of Stantz's wife and child. They are the same woman and
child seen earlier on the Marin Headlands.

Rodgers removes the photo and moves over to Stantz. He gently
places the photo into his radioman's hand. Feels his
radioman's forehead. Stantz looks up and gives Rodgers a weak
smile of appreciation.

Pope watches his Commander intently.

RODGERS
 (to Stantz)
 I think it's time you formally
 introduced us.

Stantz rallies to speak in a weak, raspy voice.

STANTZ
 That's my wife, her name's Mary.
 And that's my boy. He's five.

RODGERS
 What's your son's name?

STANTZ
 Otis.

RODGERS
 Otis? What kind of name is that for
 a kid?

STANTZ
 We named him after me, sir.

RODGERS
 Your name's Otis? Son-of-a-gun.
 Let me see that picture again.

Rodgers takes the photo out of Stantz's hand. Examines it
 closer.

Pope hangs his head. Glances over at Stantz with a new set of
 eyes. Quite possibly, a different heart.

RODGERS
 Now that I've had a better look, I
 think Otis is a great name for this
 kid. I hope he's got big feet...
 'cause he's gonna have some pretty
 big shoes to fill if he's going to
 grow up like his old man.

He hands the photo back to Stantz and winks. Stantz smiles.

RODGERS
 We should be off the coast of Kauai
 sometime around 'oh six hundred'
 tomorrow. Do you think you can you
 hang in there for me?

STANTZ
 You bet, Sir.

RODGERS

Good man.

Rodgers looks at the built-in fuel tank he's been leaning against. He knocks on it and then examines the plane's roof.

RODGERS

We'll need an anchor to slow us down till morning. Bowlin, Let's get this big boy outta here no later than midnight. Tie a line, punch some holes, and let her sink.

BOWLIN

Aye, aye, Sir!

Rodgers tosses his charts onto the radio table. He kisses his hand, then pats the empty fuel tank with it.

RODGERS

(directed to the tank)
Don't let me down.

BOWLIN

I won't , Sir.

RODGERS

(broad smile)
I know you won't, Bowlin. I was talking to the fuel tank.

Pope appears visibly shaken. Doubt and disappointment are written all over his face.

He pokes his head through the top hatch and stares over at Oahu.

Bowlin tugs on Pope's arm.

BOWLIN

Come on, we've got a lot of work to do.

COCKPIT

Rodgers takes the seat next to Connell.

CONNELL

How'd they take the news?

RODGERS

Better than I thought. Let's hope our timing's right 'cause we're quickly running out of Plan B's.

CONNELL

If this works, you're going to become a national hero.

RODGERS

Hero? Boy, I hope they let you speak at my court-marital hearing. You were there, Connell. Captain Moses told us to "split the difference" if we had any discrepancies. If I'd only done that... things might've turned out for the better... who knows?

EXT./INT. THE RODGERS FAMILY ESTATE - NIGHT

A black sedan drives up a long driveway. The two front fenders sport small flags having two stars each.

Yarnell and Moses exit the vehicle. They size up the large home and appear to be impressed.

The front door is opened by WILFORD, an elderly black butler.

PARLOR

Elizabeth Rodgers sits stoically on a sofa. A MAN stands directly behind her, his hand on her shoulder. We cannot see his face.

Yarnell and Moses sit opposite her, their officers' hats tucked under their arms.

YARNELL

Before The Navy makes their telegrams public, the admiral has asked us to personally convey his deep and sincere condolences to the two of you.

Elizabeth remains cold, emotionless. She speaks curtly.

ELIZABETH

That's it? No further efforts to find my son?

MOSES

Not officially, ma'am, however, the fleet will remain on alert as they go about their new assignments.

ELIZABETH

That's it? I give you my son... you strain every ounce of goodwill possible from our family's reputation... You ask him to perform an enormous, if not impossible, task which --

She puts her hand on top of her husband's hand resting on her shoulder.

ELIZABETH

-- we were personally assured involved very little risk. Yet, somehow, you manage to lose my son.

MOSES

But, ma'am --

ELIZABETH

-- You then perform a cursory search at best and conclude my son is dead. I can assure you, this is not The United States Navy that I know.

MOSES

I promise you, ma'am, it's not like that. A ten day search --

ELIZABETH

-- It's exactly just like that, Captain. I can assure you, my son is not dead. In the bible, Moses was lost in the desert for forty years. Perhaps, *Captain Moses*, the Navy has the wrong person in charge to conduct this search. My son is a Rodgers and you will find him... I believe your condolences are premature. I refuse to accept them at this time.

YARNELL

Refuse? But, ma'am, you can't--

ELIZABETH

-- I believe our business is complete. Good evening, gentlemen.

Elizabeth rings a small bell on the coffee table before her.

ELIZABETH
Wilford!

Elizabeth stares coldly at the two officers. They squirm uncomfortably in disbelief.

The butler arrives.

WILFORD
Yes, madam?

ELIZABETH
Wilford. Will you kindly show these gentlemen to the door? Our business is done here.

The men rise awkwardly from their chairs. The butler gestures the path toward the front door.

Before leaving, the men turn to Elizabeth. She turns away and refuses to acknowledge their presence any longer.

They look to the man who'd been standing behind Elizabeth. They gesture a silent appeal in his direction. We do not see the man's response, but it is apparent the officers' appeal fell on deaf ears.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 ON OPEN OCEAN - NIGHT

The fuselage sports a huge gaping hole in the roof.

Rodgers walks from the cockpit back to where his men are working. The fins from two large sharks slink past the plane. He dismisses them with a sweeping gesture.

RODGERS
Shoo! This restaurant's closed.

Rodgers picks up a loose bolt from dismantling the fuel tank. He throws it at the sharks.

RODGERS
That's right, you'd better take off 'cause there's more where that came from.

Pope looks up through the hole in the roof. He grins at his commander and tosses up a few more extra bolts.

POPE
Here ya go, sir. Show 'em who's
boss.

ATOP THE FUSELAGE - LATER

The silhouette of Oahu is much smaller now. The outline of another island appears on the horizon.

Dark cloud formations form above the turbulent strait separating these two islands.

The crew's removed one of the plane's larger built-in fuel tanks. The tank rests atop an opening created in the fuselage.

RODGERS
Everybody set?

The men nod.

RODGERS
Whenever you're ready.

Pope and Bowlin simultaneously gesture to each other to indicate you-can-have-the-honors.

BOWLIN
Shall we do it together?

The two men drop to their knees and push the large metal tank overboard. It lands with a large splash. Water fills the tank, sinking quickly till the ropes become taut.

Bowlin rests his arm on Pope's shoulder. The two shipmates stare down into the darkness.

POPE
I guess all we can do now is wait
for morning.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - NIGHT

The plane heaves heavily on the dark ocean. Rodgers sits in the cockpit. Pope and Bowlin on the upper starboard wing, just above each engine.

Rodgers intently watches the wave action upon the starboard pontoon. It appears loose and wobbly. He's clearly worried.

The makeshift sails strewn across the plane's wing flap sporadically.

Connell balances himself on the lower wing's bare struts.

A flash of light reflects off a cloud.

Connell rubs his eyes. He waits patiently. He sees the flashing light again. He raises binoculars to his eyes.

BOWLIN

What is it, Sir? Did you see something?

CONNELL

I saw a light! Right over there!

Connell stands and moves across the wing. He climbs off the upper wing and reaches into the cockpit for a small pouch.

He retrieves a flare pistol from the pouch. He raises the pistol over his head and fires.

A burst of light explodes in the night's sky. It reflects brightly off the low cloud cover. The flare drifts lower until it disappears into the ocean.

Connell reloads and fires another flare. Everyone is mesmerized by the falling bright light.

Connell suddenly realizes all eyes are solely upon himself.

CONNELL

(angrily)

I saw it. I did. It was reflecting off the clouds. Over there. Really. I saw something.

Rodgers responds from his pilot's seat in the cockpit.

RODGERS

No one's saying you didn't. It's just... how many shells are left?

Connell looks inside the pouch.

CONNELL

One, Sir. Just one.

RODGERS

Only one? Let's save it, okay? Let's wait till we're closer to the coast.

As Connell shuffles back to the cockpit, his boot slips on the wet surface.

Connell loses the grip he had on a wing support. Starts to fall.

As he desperately grabs the wing's leading edge, he inadvertently lets go of the flare pistol pouch. It lands in the water, quickly sinking out of sight.

Connell's feet drag in the water. He can barely maintain his grip on the wing.

Rodgers stands on his chair in the cockpit, stretching as far as he can to grab hold of Connell's wrist.

RODGERS

Grab on to me!

Connell repeatedly tries to reach Rodgers's outstretched arm.

A large incoming wave slaps forcefully against the vulnerable Connell. The wave loosens Connell's grip on the wing.

Connell drops helplessly into the ocean.

He strikes his head against the plane's "step", the area below the waterline where the hull flattens out.

Pope and Bowlin drop down off the upper wing and now lay prone along the lower wing. They are unable to reach him. Connell slides under the starboard wing.

Under the wing and out of reach, Connell lashes about. He tries to grab the supporting wing strut that attaches the lower wing to the hull.

Large swells slam against Connell. He cannot maintain his hold. He repeatedly flails his arms in search of a better grip.

Pope and Bowlin lay prone along the trailing edge of the lower wing. They wait for Connell.

When Connell bobs to the surface gasping for air, he's already slipped too far past the two men's reach.

A pair of shark fins swim off the starboard side, about twenty yards out. They have not yet been seen by crew members.

Connell drifts ever further away.

Rodgers climbs out of the cockpit, stands atop the fuselage. He sees the sharks. His face tells you he's about to do something he really doesn't want to do.

RODGERS

(mumbling to himself)

Ah crap!

He runs along the fuselage and jumps as far out into the water as possible. He grabs one of Connell's flailing arms.

Shark fins change course, move toward the two splashing officers.

Rodgers grabs Connell by the collar and tries to swim. It quickly becomes obvious neither man knows how to swim.

A life preserver lands in the water right next to them. The two men grab it. A rope is attached to the life preserver.

Bowlin and Pope stand in the plane's side door. Together they reel in their two officers.

The fins swim closer. Pope throws a hammer at the sharks. Then a wrench. The sharks swim off.

The men are pulled into the plane. The two officers collapse backward, gasping for air.

CONNELL

Do I look stupid, or what?

Rodgers sits against the hull.

BOWLIN

Heebie-jeebies, sir!

RODGERS

I agree... whatever that means.

CONNELL

Shit, the pistol. I dropped the damn pistol, Sir! I'm so sorry, Sir. I really screwed things up.

Rodgers reaches into his pocket where he keeps his watch. The pocket has been ripped wide open. His watch has also been surrendered to the sea.

A strange smile comes over Rodgers.

RODGERS

Yes, sir. It's definitely been a heebie-jeebie night.

COCKPIT - LATER

Pope sits at the helm. A wet Commander Rodgers walks along the fuselage and drops down along side Pope.

SUPERIMPOSITION: THURSDAY - DAY ELEVEN

RODGERS
I think this is the darkest it's
been out here. No moon. No stars.
What do you think?

POPE
Yes, Sir.

There's a long moment of awkward silence.

RODGERS
We should be right off her coast at
sunrise. Meanwhile, just hold her
steady... just ever so slightly
starboard to the swells. Got it?

POPE
How am I doin', Sir?

RODGERS
You're doing great. Just hold her
steady on that same course.

Connell approaches the two men from atop the fuselage. He
also looks like crap.

RODGERS
How's your head feeling?

CONNELL
Things could be worse... let's hope
we don't need to go there.

We HEAR the sound of WAVES CRASHING nearby. It's too dark to
determine the source.

CONNELL
That can't be Kauai already. Can
it?

Rodgers looks at his maps.

RODGERS
I hope not. Charts don't show any
reefs out here. Let's pray we're
not drifting through the channel
too fast.

POPE
Is there any way to find out?

RODGERS

Skies are too overcast for a sextant. There's nothing anybody can do now, but wait.

CONNELL

What time is it?

The commander shrugs. The two officers look at Pope and wait. Pope checks his watch.

POPE

Oh - five - hundred, Sir.

RODGERS

We've got another hour before sunrise. Now, if we can only get these clouds to lift. How's Stantz doing back there?

CONNELL

He's awake, sir, but he's pretty weak. We could all use a little water. But, I think he's hurtin' a lot more than the rest of us.

POPE

Now that Lt. Connell's here, would you mind if I go back and keep an eye on Stantz, Sir?

RODGERS

Go ahead.

Pope exits under the cockpit.

CONNELL

It's going to be a long morning.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - DAWN

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope leans out of the open side hatch, wringing out a wet rag. He crawls to Stantz and places the rag on his forehead.

Pope lifts Stantz's head and places it gently on his lap. The two men sit quietly on the floor under the radio table.

Stantz clutches the photo of his wife and child to his chest.

STANTZ

We're not going to make it, are we?
We're going to die. I know we are.

POPE

Shut-up. Don't talk like that. You
give me the willies when you talk
like that.

Stantz stares at Pope. Each man with tears in their eyes.

COCKPIT - LATER

Connell and Bowlin sit in the cockpit.

Rodgers sits in the bow navigation station.

We continue to HEAR the sound of WAVES crashing somewhere in
the darkness. No one speaks.

The night sky fades and the dark clouds start to disperse.

The three men focus their gaze starboard as the clouds burn
off and the sun breaks through the horizon.

The trio can now see the silhouette of their island target.

Connell and Rodgers look at each other.

The two officers shake their heads in obvious frustration.

BOWLIN

Well, I'll be damned, Sir.

RODGERS

The trouble is --

BOWLIN

-- trouble? What trouble? There she
is, sir. Just like you said she'd
be. And she's closer than I
thought.

Rodgers explains with his hands.

RODGERS

She's over here (gestures right).
She's supposed to be right there
(gestures straight ahead). These
currents were just too fast for us.

BOWLIN

Sir?

RODGERS
What's your guess, Connell? Six,
maybe eight, miles away?

BOWLIN
Yeah, I'd say that, maybe a little
less, but not by much.

Rodgers consults the navigational chart on his lap.

RODGERS
We missed our best opportunity...
probably about two hours ago. The
current didn't pull us far enough
north before we got sucked through
the channel.

BOWLIN
But, sir. She's so close. You could
reach out and touch her.

RODGERS
You're right. Unfortunately, we're
already drifting away from it.

MID-FUSELAGE

Through the wide open cargo door we SEE Kauai is aglow from the sunrise reflecting off the quickly dispersing clouds.

Pope holds Stantz's head on his lap as the two men gaze out. Peaceful. Quiet. Just the slapping of water against the hull.

COCKPIT

Rodgers, Bowlin and Connell stare longingly at Kauai.

Rodgers struggles to climb atop the upper wing. We SEE a metal bucket strapped to the wing with controller cable.

RODGERS
Break off a small section but try
keeping it all in one piece.

Connell moves to what remains of the lower starboard wing. He works to pry off a section of wood. He kicks at it.

Rodgers shuffles over to the bucket. Withdraws a tin matchbox from his pant's pocket.

Rodgers is unable to light his first two matches. His third attempt is successful.

He drops the match into the bucket setting it's contents afire. As it burns, a thick, black smoke rises upward.

Rodgers crawls back toward the center of the plane.

RODGERS
Have you got it?

Connell hands up a section of wood resembling an eight foot section of two by two. He hands it up to Rodgers.

RODGERS
Give me your shoe laces.

Connell complies. Rodgers removes his shirt and wraps his shirt around one end of the wooden plank. Ties everything together with the shoe laces.

Rodgers dips the shirt-wrapped end of his creation into the flaming bucket. The oily shirt catches fire. It also gives off a thick black plume of smoke.

Rodgers waves the smoking torch over his head.

Bowlin abandons the cockpit, joining Connell and Rodgers on the upper wing.

BOWLIN
Let me do that for you, Sir.

RODGERS
Not much left to burn without setting the whole damn plane on fire.

BOWLIN
What's the purpose if there ain't nobody looking for us.

RODGERS
Yet, look at yourself. In your heart you know anything's possible when you choose hope over fear.

The plane pitches and rolls upon the water. Connell waves the torch of thick black smoke. Rodgers scans the horizon

It's becoming obvious the Island of Kauai is diminishing in size as the plane drifts further away from it.

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope looks at Stantz's family photo. Cradles his radioman.

POPE
The Commander wasn't kidding.
She's a real beauty... And that kid
of yours... he looks just like ya.

Stantz smiles and speaks softly.

STANTZ
You think so?

POPE
Oh yeah. He's got your same smile,
you know. I hope he don't talk like
you though.

Stantz smiles. There's a long silence.

Tears well up in Pope's eyes as he watches Stantz stare at
his photo.

STANTZ
I'm afraid. I know we're all going
to die. I just know it.

Pope can't bear to watch his friend cry. He stares off at
Kauai through the open cargo door.

He mumbles to Stantz:

POPE
Sorry about Stanley.

The two men continue to gaze through the open cargo door.

POPE
(panicked)
We're drifting right past it... Oh
my god... something's gone wrong.

Pope turns his head away from Kauai. A defeated man. He
cannot bear to watch as Kauai drifts further away.

He turns his head aside. Looks through the port side window.

The brilliant sunrise now shines through the port window
momentarily blinding Pope.

POPE
Have you ever been to Japan, Otis?
(beat)
Yeah... me neither.

Pope cringes.

Pope wipes his eyes and once again stares out through the port side window. Places his hand up over his eyes to see better.

Through the glare of the sun, we SEE the silhouette of an unknown object. It is intermittent. Pope appears fascinated about the mysterious light show.

He places a life vest under his comrade's head and shuffles on his knees to the window.

Pope uses his sleeve to clean the salt encrusted window glass. He places one hand on the window frame while shading his eyes with his other.

He continues to stare intently out the portal window. He bursts into a huge grin.

POPE
Yowza! Yowza! Yowza!

Pope spontaneously bangs both fists upon the sides of the hull. He looks over at his comrade. He shouts with what little voice remains.

POPE
It's a submarine, Stantz. It's a
big ol' beautiful submarine.

Stantz's closes his eyes. He does not respond.

POPE
Did you hear me, Stantz? There's a
big 'ol frickin' submarine out
there. I think they found us!

Pope crawls over to Stantz.

POPE
A submarine... did you hear me?

His voice is too weak to be heard by his fellow crewmen standing on the upper wing.

Stantz opens his eyes, gives Pope a weak smile.

Pope mumbles inaudibly to himself as he slowly claws his way through the fuselage.

As he reaches the cockpit, he lifts himself up into the pilot's seat.

Rodgers looks back and sees Pope waving his arms. Rodgers moves closer to the hull. Leans down to hear what Pope has to say.

RODGERS
What is it, Pope?

Pope responds with as much excitement and volume his voice can still muster. He points behind him.

POPE
It's a submarine, sir! She's approaching off the port quarter.

WING

The three men on the wing turn around and look toward the sunrise. Connell places the binoculars to his eyes.

At first, they are all blinded by the glare of the sun.

RODGERS
We don't see anything. Are you positive it was a sub?

POPE
Yes, sir... and she's the best looking boat I've ever set eyes on... I mean, for a submarine, Sir.

Through the binoculars, we SEE the increasingly larger SILHOUETTE of a SUBMARINE CONNING TOWER on the PN9-1's port side.

There is a spontaneous CHEER among the men.

What their voices lack in volume, they make up for with genuine enthusiasm.

The trio on the wing congratulate each other with pats on the back and hugs.

Pope bangs on the side of the hull and weak whistles.

CONNELL
Well, I'll be damned. They found us.

RODGERS
On the contrary, Connell. We found them.

Rodgers falls to his knees to talk to Pope in the cockpit.

RODGERS
How's Stantz doing? Does he know
the good news?

Pope beams back.

POPE
Yes, sir. He's weak but I think
he's going to be fine --

Rodgers smiles a big grin.

POPE
-- and, thank you very much, Sir.
You know... for everything.

Rodgers smiles back.

RODGERS
Go on. Get back there and keep your
friend company.

Pope manages a full salute and an even broader smile.

POPE
Aye aye, sir.

An American submarine pulls alongside the PN9-1.

EXT. SUBMARINE - LATER

Two men stand atop the ship's conning tower, boldly painted with the insignia R-4. One man is the submarine's commander, LIEUTENANT DONALD OSBORN, (48).

A group of SEAMEN exit from a hatch on the submarine. They wave and CHEER wildly at the PN9-1.

As greetings are exchanged, Osborn places a large megaphone to his mouth and SHOUTS.

OSBORN
(shouting)
Commander Rodgers, I presume?
Would you and your crew like to
come aboard? We'll send someone
over to help tow her in for you.

ATOP THE HULL

Rodgers looks over at his two mates. Both Connell and Bowlin shake their heads. Rodgers climbs down off the upper wing.

He carefully walks atop the fuselage back to the enlarged top hatch at the rear of the plane. He kneels down and sticks his head inside.

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope is tending to Stantz. He looks up at Rodgers.

RODGERS

There's a fella out there who'd like to give you boys a ride into town. What do you say?

ATOP THE HULL

Rodgers stands and walks back along the top of the fuselage. He reaches inside the cockpit and retrieves his own small megaphone.

RODGERS

The boys appreciate your offer, Captain, but they're all in agreement... We brought this lady to the dance and a gentleman always escorts the lady home.

Bowlin and Connell CHEER and CLAP their hands.

RODGERS

However, we would greatly appreciate any food and water you could send over.

BOWLIN

And some cigarettes, too, sir?

RODGERS

Oh, and some cigarettes for the boys.

The submarine commander waves back in acknowledgement.

Rodgers stows his megaphone and sits on the hull, feet dangling into the cockpit. He appears smug and content.

Connell and Bowlin climb down from the wing. They stand on the hull behind Rodgers.

Rodgers quickly rubs his palms together with gleeful anticipation.

RODGERS

It just might be steak and potatoes tonight.

BOWLIN
 And a little hootch, sir? You
 promised... 'cause I could really
 use a good stiff drink.

Connell and Rodgers chuckle.

RODGERS
 You'll get that drink... maybe a
 few more after that. I promise.

Connell and Bowlin clap their hands and whistle.

EXT. FANTAIL OF THE AMERICAN SUB R-4 - LATER

Tow ropes lead from the bow of the PN9-1 to the fantail of the submarine. A seaman waves their readiness and the submarine moves forward.

The ropes take up their slack. The plane is under tow.

EXT./INT. PN9-1 - CONTINUOUS

MID-FUSELAGE

Pope helps the weakened Stantz drink from a thermos.

Stantz touches Pope's shoulder. They smile at each other.

COCKPIT

Bowlin sits in the bow station. He momentarily ducks his head out of the wind and lights up a cigarette.

He takes a deep drag from his smoke with one hand and swallows large gulps from a thermos held in his other hand.

He sprawls back in his seat like he owns the world.

In the cockpit sit Connell and Rodgers. They eat directly out of their individual one gallon cans.

We SEE: "DEL MONTE PEACH" labels on the sides of each can.

Each man sticks a fork into their respective cans and stab peach halves dripping in thick syrup.

They clink their cans together as if making a toast to each other before devouring the slippery fruit.

Syrup drools sloppily down the sides of their cheeks. The two officers laugh and giggle like little school boys.

CONNELL

You know... the government's not going to like what you did to their property.

RODGERS

Don't worry, Connell, they'll just make another one. Maybe next time they'll get it right.

CONNELL

You actually think this can be done?

RODGERS

Oh, I know so. Maybe Mitchell's got it right. We've got to build better machines.

Connell smiles back. The two clink their cans of peaches together before shoving more pieces of syrupy fruit into their mouths.

As the submarine tows the disabled plane, we view the green coastline of Kauai become closer to us.

Several outrigger canoes, small boats greet them. The PN9-1 has finally arrived in Hawaii.

SPLIT SCREEN SERIES OF SHOTS: - As each crewman devours his meal, we SEE a corresponding depiction of their loved ones being informed of their rescue.

A) A log of salami protrudes from Bowlin's shirt pocket as he smokes a cigarette in the bow nav station.

SUPERIMPOSITION: William Bowlin will one day serve as Admiral Byrd's navigator and pilot during Byrd's Second Antarctic Expedition (1933-35) earning him the Distinguished Flying Cross. He'll retire from the Navy in 1949 as a Lieutenant Commander.

B) Pope helps Stantz drink from a large thermos. Stantz's wife tearfully covers her face as their five year old joyfully jumps up and down.

SUPERIMPOSITION: Skiles Pope and Otis Stantz remained in the Navy. Pope will accompany Connell on several record-setting flights.

C) Connell slurps peaches as he sits in the cockpit. Connell's father excitedly shares a folded newspaper with his co-worker in his lock tower. Beams with pride.

SUPERIMPOSITION: Byron J. Connell remains active in naval aviation until 1947. He will establish several world records in seaplanes for distance, speed and altitude.

D) Rodgers also slurps peaches out of a can. Admiral Moffett and Captain Moses shake hands and light up cigars.

SUPERIMPOSITION: John Rodgers is promoted to Assistant Chief of the Navy's Aeronautical Bureau.

E) An admiral's staff car, flags waving on each front fender, pulls up the long driveway leading to the familiar Rodgers's family estate.

F) Commander Rodger's mother stands at her door as she is approached by two Naval Officers in front of her. Mrs. Rodgers emotionally and physically crumbles where she stands.

SUPERIMPOSITION: Less than one year later, John Rodgers will die in an airplane crash when the plane he's piloting mysteriously spins out of control and crashes into the Delaware River.

The PN9 fades from view on the blue ocean water.

Nothing but blue sky until the SIGHT and SOUND of a large jumbo passenger JET AIRLINER flying directly overhead. LOW.

It lands gently on a runway directly in front of us.

INT. PASSENGER AIRLINE TERMINAL - DAY

Passengers wheel luggage through a busy concourse in a tropical air terminal till we arrive at a garden memorial.

A large bronze placque dedicated to COMMANDER JOHN RODGERS stands forefront among the plants.

SCROLL: Honolulu's International Air Terminal has been dedicated to the heroic measures taken by Commander John Rodgers.

FADE OUT.

THE END