

# Northern Lights

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Based on a screenplay by  
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PROPERTY OF:

Skydance Productions  
PO Box 984  
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Malibu, CA 90265

FADE IN:

INT. OLD HANGAR - METZ FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

SUPER: Metz Field - 1990

The Hangar is immaculate. There is not an oil stain in sight, and the freshly painted BLUE walls are glistening in the evening sun.

Inside, ZACH EVERSMAANN, early 20's, is wiping down his PITTS S1C aerobatic biplane.

We HEAR an UNKNOWN VOICE from off screen.

UNKNOWN VOICE

Zach. Zach, are you there? Zach  
pick up. Zach...

Zach picks up a small HANDHELD RADIO off a nearby tool bench.

ZACH

Yeah. What's going on, Dad?

EXT/INT. PIPER CUB - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

MIKE EVERSMAANN, early 50's, is behind the controls of a piper cub. He SPEAKS over the RADIO.

MIKE

Have you dusted the Barrets' field  
yet?

INTERCUT:

ZACH

No.

MIKE

Don't you think you better get to  
it? You can wipe down the Pitts  
after dark.

ZACH

Alright.

Zach throws down his rag and walks out of the hanger to reveal Metz Field -- a small dirt crop-dusting strip. Sitting on the ramp is a yellow Grummann Ag-Cat -- a common crop dusting airplane. Zach moves towards the aircraft.

EXT/INT. GRUMMAN AG-CAT - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Zach makes several crop dusting passes down a remote field. The field is surrounded by mountains on three sides, and power lines on all four. In order to apply the chemicals properly, Zach must fly under the power lines and then pull up, to avoid the nearby mountains. He executes this task flawlessly. This is business as usual for him.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

A TEENAGE BOY rides his DIRT-BIKE through the SURROUNDING fields.

EXT/INT. GRUMMAN AG-CAT - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Zach turns around and heads back towards the field. We stay with him as he passes under the first set of power lines.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The TEENAGE BOY barrels through the fields towards Zach. Neither one have seen each other yet.

EXT/INT. GRUMMAN AG-CAT - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Zach nears the end of the field. Right before he passes under the far set of power lines the TEENAGE BOY POPS INTO VIEW DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF HIM. Zach pulls BACK on the STICK and MISSES the BOY by inches. He breathes a sigh of relief, but only for a second...Zach CATCHES his TAIL on the FAR SET OF POWER LINES, CAUSING IT TO SHEER OFF. The airplane HITS the GROUND, and EXPLODES before Zach can even process what's happened.

INT. HENDERSON HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUPER: Henderson Family Estate - 1990

JENNIFER HENDERSON, late 30's, blonde, beautiful, and athletically built, is standing by the phone tapping her nails against her front teeth. She is clearly stressed, and near tears.

Jennifer HEARS the SOUND of the kitchen door open, and RICK HENDERSON, age 8, enters. He is holding a small remote control airplane.

Jennifer quickly puts on her motherly happy face.

JENNIFER

Hey. What do you got there?

Rick runs around the kitchen table pretending to fly his model airplane.

RICK

Is daddy home yet? He promised me  
we were going flying today.

Rick flies over to his mother. She kneels down to his level.

JENNIFER

You know what? Daddy had an  
important thing come up at work, so  
he's not going to be able to fly  
today.

RICK

But he promised.

JENNIFER

I know he did. But don't you  
worry, I'm sure he'll take you  
flying tomorrow.

Rick gives his mother a disappointed look.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

I tell you what. Why don't you put  
your airplane in your room, and  
we'll go out to Roundtable. We can  
even call Taylor's mom, and see if  
they want to join us. How's that  
sound?

RICK

Okay.

Rick runs upstairs.

Jennifer picks up the phone and DIALS.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - SAME TIME

CLOSE ON a cell phone ringing. The caller i.d. reads:  
"HOME."

We pan over from the cell phone to reveal WILLIAM HENDERSON, mid 40's, but doesn't look a day over 30, having SEX with a YOUNG BRUNETTE. We hold on them until the PHONE STOPS RINGING.

INT. HENDERSON HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer hangs up the phone. Her eyes begin to well up when Rick runs back into the room. She quickly covers.

JENNIFER

You ready to go?

Rick bounces his head up and down.

JENNIFER

Okay.

We hold on Jennifer, as she follows Rick outside.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. OSHKOSH AIRSHOW - DAWN

SUPER: Present day.

INTERCUT WITH TITLES

Long Stationary shots of the Oshkosh Airshow.

We see the thousands of warbirds, experimental, and classic airplanes on static display.

The sixty-thousand person community, consisting of RV's, tents, and campers. Not a soul is moving.

After a moment, a MAN in his mid 40's steps out of his RV, and dumps out a bucket of water.

INT. OSHKOSH AIRPORT - PERFORMERS' HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON a figure's hands as two large hangar doors slide open, and light POURS in to reveal a variety of AEROBATIC AIRPLANES, and their PILOTS inside. We move with the various pilots as they begin their pre-flight preparations.

INTERCUT:

As the various pilots inspect the rudders, elevators, tires, propellers, oil capacity, etc.

EXT. OSHKOSH - MAIN GATE - MORNING

Thousands of FANS flood the gates at the Oshkosh Airshow.

RAPID CUTS AS:

Thousands of CAMPERS pour out of their tents, and RV's.

Fans walk around the MILITARY airplanes on static display.

A TEENAGE BOY buys his GIRLFRIEND a pretzel from the concession stands.

A MOTHER buy's a T-shirt for her SIX YEAR-OLD SON.

An OLDER COUPLE walks through a mock-up cockpit of a GLOBAL EXPRESS -- the world's nicest corporate jet.

EXT. OSHKOSH - JUDGES' LINE - MORNING

SCORING JUDGES take their respective seats at center box along the judges' line. The five judges sit under their own individual white tents, which are located 500 feet back from the center of the runway.

EXT. OSHKOSH - BOUNDARY AREA - MORNING

BOUNDARY JUDGES are dropped off at the edge of the aerobatic BOX. The box is drawn out in WHITE CHALK that is visible from the air.

EXT. OSHKOSH - RAMP - CENTER BOX - MORNING

All of the airplanes that were in the performers hangar are now lined up on the STARTING LINE -- the equivalent of a NASCAR pit area.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And we're about to get underway here at the Oshkosh US National aerobatic championships, 2006 -- the mecca of aviation events. Attendance for the day is just under two hundred thousand -- that is three times last year's Super Bowl.

(MORE)

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (cont'd)  
The first pilot flying today will  
be last year's defending champion,  
Rob Johnstone.

At the front of the starting line is ROB JOHNSTONE, 50. Rob flies a yellow and orange Edge 540, with "Breitling" painted across the side. Rob waves to the crowd, which erupts into CHEERS.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Rob has completely dominated the sport recently, winning an amazing 5 out of his last 5 National Championships.

CLOSE ON Rob's parachute CLIPS as they are attached.

His CANOPY is slid open.

SEAT BELTS are latched.

CANOPY is closed.

The IGNITION KEY is turned.

CLOSE ON THE PROP as the EDGE 540's 350 HP engine ignites and ROARS to life.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
The last man to claim that many titles was the legendary Mike Eversmann, over twenty years ago.

EXT. ROB JOHNSTONE'S - EDGE 540 - RUNWAY - MOMENTS LATER

At the opposite end of the runway, Rob brings his throttle forward with SMOKE ON, and begins moving towards us. The tail wheel comes up first, shortly followed by the mains. As soon as Rob is airborne he begins a series of point rolls down the runway. With his airspeed now over 180 mph, he pulls to the vertical directly over our heads, covering everything in SMOKE.

EXT. OSHKOSH AIRSHOW - SKY OVERHEAD

GOD'S POV: of the Oshkosh aerobatic competition. From this perspective we can see Rob's edge rocketing skyward, and the mile long crowd line of spectators, who have shown up to this event.

SUPER: NORTHERN LIGHTS

INT. OLD HANGAR - METS FIELD - CONTINUOUS

This is the same hangar we saw at the beginning of the film, only fifteen years older. It is almost unrecognizable. The floor is speckled with countless oil stains, and the once freshly painted walls are now peeling in several areas.

Over the RADIO:

ANNOUNCER

This will be Rob's last year with Team Breitling. This morning he announced his signing with Team Genesis, a start-up team funded by billionaire William Henderson, which is already shaping up to be...

MIKE EVERSMANN, early 50s, is wiping down his one-of-a-kind aerobatic airplane, called the RAVEN, when the phone RINGS.

Mike lazily turns off the radio, and answers the phone.

MIKE

Hello...Speaking. I don't think that's going to be possible. It's just that I'm pretty backed up here at the moment.

Mike looks outside the hanger at the motionless runway.

MIKE

Maybe at the end of the month.

(a long beat)

Alright. I understand.

(wrestling)

Tell him I'll see him tomorrow.

You too.

Mike hangs up the phone.

INT. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF AIRSHOWS - NEXT DAY

Mike sits in a waiting room reading the latest issue of sport aerobatics. The ASSISTANT's phone rings. She picks up.

ASSISTANT

I'll send him in.

(to Mike)

He's ready for you.

Mike puts down the magazine, and walks into..

INT. JOHN TALBOTT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

JOHN TALBOTT, 45, dressed in a knock-off suit and emanating the stench of a door-to-door salesman, greets Mike.

JOHN

Mike. Just the man I wanted to see.

They shake hands.

JOHN

Its good to see you. Please have a seat. You know, I really appreciate you coming all the way out here on such short notice. You fly the Raven up?

MIKE

Southwest.

JOHN

Oh. More comfortable, I guess.

A moment passes.

MIKE

Your assistant told me you had some sort of emergency.

JOHN

I do. I have a big problem, Mike.

John moves over to a series of covered easels, on the far side of his office. John begins to pull the covers off one at a time.

JOHN

Tom Brady. David Wright. Kobe Bryant. Reggie Bush. David Beckham.  
(negative)  
And Rob Johnstone.

Mike looks at the images of the star athletes.

JOHN

Do you see the problem here?

John gestures to the image of Rob Johnstone. He is dressed in his flight suit, and holding his helmet under his arm. Mike looks at John, confused.

JOHN

Let me make it simpler for you. If you were a 13 year-old girl, would you want this guy to be your first kiss?

Again, gesturing to the image of Rob Johnstone.

JOHN

If you were an 18 year old boy, would you want to be him? No. He's fifty years old, and he goes home to his wife every night. You couldn't pay me to be him. But what about him?

(gesturing to David Wright)

Or him.

(Reggie Bush)

Or him.

(Tom Brady)

Or him.

(Kobe Bryant)

Well, maybe not him. But do you see my point? We need a new generation of athletes that is going to launch this sport into the 21st century. I'm talking about the kind of faces that can bring in corporate sponsors, network coverage, ESPN. Stuff this sport has never had, or even dreamed of. It will be like NASCAR 10 years ago. And what better time to do it than the 100th year anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight.

MIKE

I'm not sure I follow...

JOHN

I know what your thinking, we're the second largest spectator sport in the country. We drew in over half a million people at this year's Nationals alone, but who knew about it? We didn't have a single television crew out....

MIKE

No. No. No. I mean, what does this have to do with me?

JOHN

Well, I want you to coach the team, Mike. We're even going to use the same name, we're calling them the Northern Lights.

This strikes a chord in Mike.

MIKE

No thanks.

He gets up to leave.

JOHN

I didn't expect this from you.

MIKE

Yeah, well..

JOHN

Jesus, Mike, wake up. How many years do you think Bob Hoover and Chuck Yeager will be around? Five. Ten at the max. Who's going to take their place once they're gone? The sport is dying, Mike. It has been for years, you know that better than most. There used to be a time when you wanted to do something about it.

Mike looks at him, considers.

EXT/INT. - CAP 232- PASO ROBLES - FLYING - DAY

A CAP 232 -- the highest performing French-made aerobatic airplane in the world, is circling three thousand feet overhead the PASO ROBLES aerobatic competition.

RICK HENDERSON, now 22, pilots. He has sandy blonde hair and an athletic build. Sweat is dripping down his face as he nervously awaits his call into the aerobatic box -- a three thousand feet cubed chunk of airspace in which aerobatic competitions take place.

OVER THE RADIO

TAYLOR (O.S.)

Rick, how you doing?

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Also circling overhead in position two is TAYLOR GRIFFITH, 22. He's leaner-built, and has a smile that makes you like him immediately. He pilots a German-made EXTRA 300S. Taylor's Extra is not as refined or as polished as the Cap, but still impressive. Unlike Rick, Taylor appears calm and relaxed.

RICK (O.S.)

Hanging in? How about yourself?

TAYLOR

I'm all good, man.

EXT. JUDGES' LINE - PASO ROBLES - CONTINUOUS

The judging line at Paso Robles is the complete opposite of what we saw at Oshkosh. The line is simple, 5 sets of three lawn chairs, with no tents or umbrellas to protect the judges from the desert sun.

Located behind the row of judges is HAL, late 60's with sun-dried skin. He is the man who will be running this entire competition. He has a small handheld RADIO in his hand.

Behind the judges, we see several aerobatic coaches holding clipboards. One is KIRBY CHAPEL, late 50s, he has the distinguished look of a champion, and is the head coach of TEAM GENESIS. Next to him is Mike Eversmann. Both pilots are wearing polo shirts, which bear their respective team logos.

Hal gives a thumbs up to the judges.

OVER THE RADIO:

HAL

Rick Henderson, this is the air boss, how do you read?

INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick's body tenses up.

RICK

Loud and clear.

HAL (O.S.)

The box is open and you are cleared in. Have a good flight.

RICK

Roger, the box is mine.

TAYLOR (O.S.)

Show 'em how it's done, baby.

Rick turns his propeller and fuel mixture to full forward, and turns in. We HEAR the RPMs increase.

FROM THE GROUND

Rick's airplane dives into the box, wagging his wings three times to signal the beginning of his flight.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick POPS the stick back, setting the airplane on a perfect vertical up-line. On the way up, he completes 3 half-rolls. The competition begins.

INT. "60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW - MORNING

CLOSE ON the "60 MINUTES" logo counting down. World renown reporter, LARA LOGAN, is introducing her segment.

LARA

CEO of a multi-billion dollar corporation, NASCAR racing,...

Video footage of the discussed events play on a VIDEO SCREEN at the back of the stage.

LARA (CONT'D)

...patron of the arts, medical research, and now an aerobatic team.

WIDEN TO reveal WILLIAM HENDERSON, now mid 50's, but doesn't look a day older, sitting on stage next to Lara.

MR. HENDERSON

Team Genesis is an aerobatic team I'm assembling with Kirby Chapel..who's probably the greatest living aerobatic pilot.

LARA

Aerobatics is sort of an unusual sport. Could you explain a little bit about the dynamics of the sport..How it is run?

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

As Rick reaches the top of his vertical line, he pushes the stick forward and enters an inverted flat spin with smoke on. The airplane begins spinning rapidly toward the ground, leaving a large corkscrew trail of smoke behind it.

MR. HENDERSON (O.S.)

Each pilot will create his or her own 4 minute sequence. During that sequence, each pilot has to complete a series of required elements -- maneuvers every pilot has to do in their sequence. The rest of the time is usually filled with one-of-a-kind tumbling, maneuvers.

INT. "60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW - CONTINUOUS

LARA

Could you give an example?

Mr. Henderson grabs a toy model of an airplane that is sitting on the table next to him.

MR. HENDERSON

A double outside snap on the up-line is one of the most difficult required elements. Essentially what happens is, the airplane will pull to the vertical...

Mr. Henderson demonstrates everything he is explaining by maneuvering the toy model.

EXT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Mirroring the maneuver his father explains, Rick's airplane pulls to the vertical up-line.

INT. "60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW - CONTINUOUS

MR. HENDERSON

...Then what's going to happen is, at the center of the up-line, the pilot is going to pop the stick forward and kick full left rudder, which will initiate the snap.

Mr. Henderson begins to roll the model airplane. As the rotation begins, we CUT TO...

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick POPS the stick FORWARD and then KICKS FULL LEFT RUDDER, initiating the double outside snap.

INT. "60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW - CONTINUOUS

MR. HENDERSON

As the second rotation completes, the pilot is going to kick the opposite rudder -- hopefully ending on the same line from which he began the figure. If the pilot is as little as one degree off on any axis, he will be docked points.

The model is positioned in the perfect ending position. Both wings are level with the horizon, and the airplane is still heading straight up.

MR. HENDERSON (O.S.)

To put this in perspective the difference between first and second place at last year's Nationals was .5 percent.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Toward the end of his second rotation, Rick KICKS the opposite rudder to stop the snap, but he is LATE with his recovery. As a result, the roll over rotates by about 15 degrees.

EXT. JUDGES' LINE - PASO ROBLES - CONTINUOUS

MR. HENDERSON (O.S.)  
So, the slightest mistake can  
completely take you out of the  
competition.

The CENTER JUDGE motions to his RECORDER, who writes down  
negative two on Rick's scorecard.

Mike notices this, and then reverts his gaze back towards the  
sky. We can't tell what he is thinking.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

We see the disappointment register across Rick's face.

INT. "60 MINUTES" INTERVIEW - MOMENTS LATER

LARA  
So even the best pilots can make  
these mistakes.

MR. HENDERSON  
Unfortunately, yes.

LARA  
Sounds a lot like gymnastics.

MR. HENDERSON  
It is, yes. Without the tights, of  
course.

LARA  
(laughs)  
Can you explain how that works  
exactly?

They share a laugh.

MR. HENDERSON  
There are several variations, but  
Rob Johnstone's Eventail is by far  
the most spectacular. And I'm  
afraid I can't explain how it  
works, because he won't tell anyone  
how he does it.

LARA  
Could you describe it?

Mr. Henderson PICK UP THE TOY MODEL again.

MR. HENDERSON

Basically what happens is, the airplane will pull up onto a 45 degree up-line. Then there's a left, right snap roll sequence..After that, Rob works his magic, and the airplane somehow flattens out and cartwheels across the sky.

The TOY MODEL CARTWHEELS HORIZONTALLY across the sky.

LARA

Wow.

MR. HENDERSON

In my mind, it's really those one-of-a-kind maneuvers that makes a pilot stand out. Anyone can learn to do a snap roll-- you, me, anybody. But to be a pioneer, and come up with something truly original, that's what makes a champion.

Completely blown away by Mr. Henderson, Lara begins to wrap up her interview.

LARA

WHY would anybody want to do this?

Pleased with himself, Mr. Henderson playfully responds...

MR. HENDERSON

Why not?

INT. EXTRA 300S- FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Taylor, now in holding position 1, waits his turn to be called into the box. He looks loose and relaxed as always.

AIR BOSS

Okay, Taylor Griffith, the box is clear, it's all yours. Have a good flight.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Rick, now on short final and completely exhausted, is about to touch down onto the runway.

OVER THE RADIO:

RICK  
Good luck, man.

INT/EXT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

TAYLOR  
Thanks.

Taylor dives into the box, accelerates to red line, and immediately pulls up into a P-loop. Right as the airplane approaches the vertical down, Taylor pops the stick back and begins a set of diving snap rolls.

EXT. PASO ROBLES - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Now on the ground, Rick walks over to Taylor's entire family, who are camped out around Taylor's parents' RV. They are all intently watching Taylor's performance.

Taylor's mother, SHERYL, wearing a TAYLOR GRIFFITH AIRSHOW shirt, catches Rick walking over and moves over to give him a hug.

SHERYL  
Great job up there!

RICK  
Thanks.

Also at the RV is Taylor's father, BRIAN; aunt, CLAIRE; uncle GARRY; grandpa, CLYDE; and grandma, DOROTHY. They are an unusually young family. Taylor's mother is no older than 40, and neither one of his grandparents is over 60.

INT/EXT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Taylor pulls into his last figure -- a double outside snap on the way up. He executes it perfectly.

EXT. JUDGES' LINE - PASO ROBLES - CONTINUOUS

The judges make their marks. Mike grins as we see the tram carrying the next set of judges pull up in the background.

EXT. PASO ROBLES - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

SHERYL

So, how do you think he did?

RICK

Perfect.

Brian pats Rick on the back. Rick gives Brian a disarming smile, as he watches Taylor's family rush toward Taylor's airplane, which is now pulling off the runway.

Rick looks at Taylor with mixed emotions.

After a brief moment, Rick's cell PHONE RINGS. The caller i.d. reads: "MOM CELL."

RICK

Hello?

EXT. RIDING RING - PALM SPRINGS HORSE SHOW - CONTINUOUS

Rick's mother, JENNIFER HENDERSON, now late 40's, is walking her mare around the warm-up ring at the Palm Springs Horse Show.

INTERCUT CONVERSATION

JENNIFER

(excited)

Thanks for calling to let me know  
you got down safe, butt.

RICK

Sorry. I just landed a few minutes  
ago.

Taylor, now parked, climbs out of his airplane. Rick watches as Sheryl gives Taylor a huge hug, followed by Brian and the rest of his family.

JENNIFER

So how did it go?

Sheryl waves Rick over.

RICK  
(to Sheryl)  
One minute.

JENNIFER  
What was that?

RICK  
Nothing.

Rick takes a few steps back.

JENNIFER  
So how did your flight go?

RICK  
(hesitant)  
Okay.

JENNIFER  
Not so hot, huh?

RICK  
No.

JENNIFER  
Where do you think you'll end up?

RICK  
I don't know. Top five I think.

Sensing the disappointment in her son's voice.

JENNIFER  
(trying to stay positive)  
Well, at least your dad got to see  
you fly, right?

RICK  
Yeah.

JENNIFER  
Well, I just wanted to call, and  
make sure you got down safe. I'll  
talk to you later?

RICK  
Alright.

JENNIFER  
I love you.

RICK  
Me, too.

EXT. RAMP - SHUT DOWN AREA - PASO ROBLES - MOMENTS LATER

Rick walks over to Taylor and his family.

SHERYL  
I'm so proud of you.

TAYLOR  
Thanks, Mom.  
(to Rick)  
So how was it?

Rick flips Taylor off. They both laugh.

BRIAN  
When do they announce the scores?

RICK  
This afternoon.

TAYLOR  
(joking)  
Shiit. We already know who won.

Rick gives Taylor a look. He doesn't appreciate this.

TAYLOR  
I'm just messing with you, man.

We HEAR the SOUND of an airplane screaming into the box.  
Rick and Taylor look up.

ROB JOHNSTONE is screaming towards the ground in his Edge 540.

TAYLOR  
Rob Johnstone?

RICK  
Yeah.

TAYLOR  
What's he doing here?

RICK  
I don't know. Demo or something.

Rick and Taylor watch as Rob pulls his Edge up onto a 45 degree up-line and executes a perfect EVENTAIL.

The boys watch in awe as John's Edge flattens out and cartwheels across the sky.

TAYLOR

(in awe)

A perfect Eventail. That'll be us  
one day.

Rick is speechless. To him, there is nothing more beautiful.

INT. STEAK HOUSE - BANQUET - NIGHT

Rick, Taylor, and Brian sit across from Sheryl and fellow aerobatic competitors TOM and MARIE.

Marie is mid-40's with shoulder-length black hair. She looks like the kind of woman who would ride a Harley on the weekend.

Tom is also mid-40's, with long greyish hair. He looks like he might have been a hippie in his formative years, and has since reformed. Neither one of the two looks like a world-class athlete.

Also at the banquet are the 50 other AEROBATIC COMPETITORS. The event is nothing fancy. Just the corner of a local steak house, but for all of the competitors, it might as well be the Kodak Theatre on Oscar night.

A first place TROPHY sits on the table next to Taylor, who is in mid-conversation with Tom.

TAYLOR

(sarcastically)

So why didn't you fly again this weekend?

TOM

I told you, I hit the damn sign.

RICK

Excuse me?

TOM

I hit a sign.

RICK

What do you mean? Like a road sign?

TOM

Yeah.

Rick looks confused. Taylor begins to crack up.

TAYLOR  
Show him the picture.

Toms pulls a small digital camera out of his pocket and hands it to Rick. On the screen is a picture of a BADLY BANGED UP SIGN that stands no more than 3 feet off the ground at the end of a dirt runway. The sign reads "CAUTION LOW FLYING AIRCRAFT."

RICK  
(laughing)  
You've got to be shitting me. How low were you flying?

TOM  
Too low, I guess.

Rick hands the camera over to Sheryl, who looks at the photo in disbelief.

SHERYL  
No, you didn't. Tom, you could of been hurt.

TOM  
You should see my plane.

Everyone continues to laugh, with the exception of Brian. He seems to be the only one not enjoying the banquet. Taylor notices..

TAYLOR  
(whispers)  
Dad. It's okay.

BRIAN  
(caught off guard)  
What?

TAYLOR  
It's okay.

BRIAN  
Yeah. But you were so good today. I just wish we could keep that plane a little longer. Give you more of a chance to get sponsored.

TAYLOR

Dad, it's all good. I'm just glad I get to keep it until the end of the season. My sister has to go to college right? However, if she went to West Valley instead of Brown.

(of Brian)

Junior college worked good for me.

BRIAN

For a semester.

TAYLOR

That's what I'm saying.

Brian can't help but smile.

BRIAN

Yeah. I really did everything I could to keep that plane.

TAYLOR

I know. But hey, at least I get to keep it until the end of the year. Don't go clipping my wings just yet.

Taylor's words are a small comfort to Brian. He feels he has let his only son down.

THE ENTRANCE TO THE STEAK HOUSE:

We HEAR the BELL attached to the entrance door RING, and in walks Mike Eversmann. He moves over to the HOSTESS, who is busy with several other customers.

MIKE

Excuse me. Can you tell me where the banquet is?

HOSTESS

Straight back, all the way to the right.

Mike starts moving towards the back of the restaurant when one of the waitresses, KAREN, 50's, recognizes him. Karen playfully sneaks up behind Mike, and TAPS him on the shoulder. Mike turns around, surprised...

KAREN

Well don't just stand there..

Mike gives Karen a hug.

KAREN

God, it's so good to see you. I haven't seen you since Zach flew this thing all those years ago.

MIKE

It's been a while. So, how's life been treating you?

KAREN

I can't complain. How about yourself? You been keeping busy?

MIKE

Oh, I've been known to cause a ruckus every once and a while.

Karen laughs.

KAREN

Still the same old Mike. So, what brings you all the way out here?

Mike points over to Rick and Taylor.

KAREN

Oh.

Karen looks away. Clearly Mike has struck a nerve.

MIKE

Well, I better get to it. It was good to see you.

KAREN

You too.

BACK AT THE TABLE:

TOM

That's not the worst part. I was going to sell that airplane. Now I have to put, like, ten grand into...

Before Tom gets a chance to finish, Mike pats Rick on the shoulder and interrupts.

MIKE

Good evening, gentlemen.

RICK

Evening.

Recognizing Mike immediately, both Rick and Taylor stand up to formally introduce themselves.

RICK

Hi. I'm Rick Henderson.

TAYLOR

Taylor Griffith.

MIKE

I know who you boys are.  
(to the rest of the  
table.)

Do you mind if I borrow these two  
for a moment?

SHERYL

Go right ahead.

MIKE

I'll bring 'em right back.

Rick and Taylor follow Mike outside.

EXT. PARKING LOT - STEAK HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Rick and Taylor are leaning up against Taylor's blue Chevy Tahoe talking to Mike. A look of nervous anticipation across both of their faces.

MIKE

You boys know about the ICAS  
aerobatic circuit?

RICK

Sure. Who doesn't around here?

MIKE

I'm starting a new team called the  
Northern Lights. For the first  
time in history, 5 young pilots,  
all under thirty, are going to get  
a chance to compete on the National  
scene. This is going to make  
aviation history, and I want you  
both on the team.

TAYLOR

Are you serious about this?

MIKE  
You better believe it.

The boys stare at each other in disbelief.

TAYLOR  
Yeah, I'm in.

RICK  
Same here.

Rick and Taylor can't contain themselves -- they embrace in excitement. This is a dream come true for both of them.

MIKE  
I'm glad to hear it. Why don't you  
go tell your parents the good news,  
and I'll be in touch.

TAYLOR  
Alright.

RICK  
Thank you.

TAYLOR  
Yeah, thanks.

The boys rush back inside.

INT. STEAK HOUSE - BANQUET - CONTINUOUS

Rick and Taylor burst into the steak house, and rush over to the table. On the way in Rick is stopped by...

MICHELLE  
Rick. Rick Henderson!

Rick stops. He turns around to see MICHELLE, his father's assistant.

RICK  
Michelle. What are you doing here?

MICHELLE  
Your father needs to see you.

INT. UNKNOWN STAIRWELL - NEXT DAY

Rick is walking up a set of GLASS STAIRS. The walls are made of STONE, and the stairwell appears to be rocking slightly.

As Rick reaches the top of the stairs we PULL UP AND OUT to reveal that we are onboard a 400 FOOT YACHT.

INT. MR. HENDERSON'S PRIVATE YACHT - CONTINUOUS

Rick moves down a long hallway. At the end of the hallway, on the DECK outside, is William Henderson.

MR. HENDERSON  
Hey, Rick. How are you doing?

Mr. Henderson gives Rick a hug like he does it everyday. The gesture makes Rick uncomfortable.

RICK  
Good. Good. How about yourself?

Mr. Henderson looks around at his surroundings and smiles.

MR. HENDERSON  
Could be worse.

RICK  
Yeah. So what's going on?

MR. HENDERSON  
I have some great news for you.

RICK  
(excited)  
Okay.

MR. HENDERSON  
I'm going to let you be on my team.

Rick's heart sinks.

MR. HENDERSON  
(not really asking)  
It's what you wanted right?!

Before Rick can answer, a FEMALE ASSISTANT moves over to Mr. Henderson and whispers into his ear.

FEMALE ASSISTANT  
Mr. Allen is on the line for you.

MR. HENDERSON  
Alright.  
(to Rick)  
I got to take this.

Mr. Henderson exits. Rick sits on the deck alone, conflicted.

INT. AIRPORT DINER - NEXT DAY

Mike and Taylor are sitting at an airport diner. Rick enters, and walks over to the table.

RICK

Hey. Sorry I'm late. I appreciate you both meeting me here.

MIKE

Not a problem.

Rick sits down next to Taylor.

TAYLOR

So, what's going on man?

RICK

I..ah..I don't really know how to say this...I'm not going to be able to join the Northern Lights. I met with my dad and, he wants me on Team Genesis. I'm sorry.

(to Mike)

I really did feel honored by your offer, but I can't say no to my father.

MIKE

I understand. I appreciate you telling me in person. Well, I'm afraid I'm going to have to excuse myself. I've got another pilot to find, and I only have a week to do it.

(to Taylor)

I'll see you in Ohio.

(to Rick)

Take care, Rick. Good luck this season.

RICK

Thanks.

Mike leaves the table.

TAYLOR

What are you doing? Your father's team?

RICK

Yeah.

TAYLOR

Let me ask you something. Did he offer you the spot, or did he order you?

RICK

He bought me my plane. What was I supposed to say?

TAYLOR

You always let him do this to you.

Rick looks away. This is too much for him. Sensing this..

TAYLOR

Well, you better not cry like this when I kick your ass at Nationals. I'm not going to be there to hold your hand anymore.

RICK

Bitch, please.

They both laugh.

TAYLOR

Well, I guess this is it. Good luck, brother.

RICK

You too.

The two slap hands and bump fists.

TAYLOR

You're gonna need it.

RICK

We'll see.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - GENESIS TRAINING FIELD - ONE WEEK LATER

Having just landed from a practice flight, Rick taxis his airplane off the runway and shuts down. Rick opens the canopy to reveal that he is barely sweating, and appears incredibly frustrated, when his new coach, KIRBY CHAPEL, approaches.

KIRBY

That was nice Rick. Your points were crisp..you really popped off the line like we talked about. Good job.

Kirby pats Rick on the back.

RICK

(unenthusiastic)

Thanks.

KIRBY

Alright, why don't you go ahead and get gassed up, I'll see you first thing tomorrow.

Kirby begins to walk away. His mind is clearly on other things.

RICK

What about the second flight?

KIRBY

No need.

Rick grabs his ARESTI CARD -- (a 5 x 7 sequence card with figures drawn on it that represent aerobatic maneuvers), jumps out of his airplane, and trails after Kirby.

RICK

Kirby.

Kirby turns around.

RICK

I was wondering if I could add a few tumblings back into my sequence? Since things seem to be going so well.

Rick gestures toward his Aresti card.

RICK

I just think it starts to get a little slow around here and...

KIRBY

(dismissive)

The sequence is fine, Rick.

Kirby begins to walk away again.

RICK  
But it's not competitive.

Rob Johnstone, and TRAVIS MCDONALD, 40's, team Genesis number two pilot, look over.

RICK  
I'm sorry, but you and I both know  
this sequence will never be  
competitive at Nationals.

KIRBY  
Getting a little ahead of  
ourselves, don't you think?

RICK  
Yeah, but...

KIRBY  
No "but's," Rick. I don't want to  
hear about this again. Is that  
understood?

RICK  
(reluctantly)  
Yeah.

KIRBY  
Good man.

We see Mr. Henderson's PRIVATE JET landing in the background.

EXT. GENESIS TRAINING FIELD - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Kirby walks over to greet Mr. Henderson, who is just stepping out of his airplane.

KIRBY  
William, always a pleasure.

MR. HENDERSON  
Likewise. So how are my boys  
doing?

KIRBY  
(confident)  
Good.

EXT. CAP 232 - GENESIS TRAINING FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

Rick is pushing his airplane towards the runway/front side of the fuel pump.

EXT. GENESIS TRAINING FIELD - FUEL PUMP - MOMENTS LATER

Rob Johnstone and TRAVIS MCDONALD are standing by Rob's Edge, on the opposite side of the fuel pump.

ROB JOHNSTONE

I think it's nice what he's doing  
for his kid. Even if he never gets  
to fly.

Now in the fueling area, Rick can HEAR everything they are saying. The LARGE FUEL TANK has created a perfect visual barrier between them.

TRAVIS MCDONALD

Yeah, but it's got to be  
embarrassing. Don't you think he  
knows why he's here?

We hold on Rick. Everything is becoming so clear.

EXT. GENESIS TRAINING FIELD - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Henderson and Kirby are at the center of the ramp.

MR. HENDERSON

Do you think anyone will be able to  
beat us this year?

KIRBY

With the team you put together?  
Not a chance.

Mr. Henderson spots Rick walking over.

MR. HENDERSON

(enthusiastic)  
Rick! We were just talking about  
you.

RICK

Can I talk to you for a second?

MR. HENDERSON

Sure.

RICK  
Why am I here, Dad?

MR. HENDERSON  
Excuse me..

RICK  
Am I going to be allowed to compete?

MR. HENDERSON  
I'm not sure I understand. You're here, aren't you?

RICK  
That doesn't answer my question.

MR. HENDERSON  
So maybe you don't fly your first year. None of that will matter when you have that gold medal wrapped around your neck.

RICK  
But I want to earn it. If you would just give me a chance--

MR. HENDERSON  
(now fed up)  
Stop interrupting me! This is a good thing Rick. Try not to screw it up like you did with Stanford.

Mr. Henderson walks away. Rick stands there, speechless, and embarrassed. He can't do this anymore.

INT. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL - MR. HENDERSON'S SUITE - NIGHT

A large hotel suite. Two bedrooms, living room, full kitchen, and a balcony. Rick enters the room to find his father out on the balcony talking on his cell phone. Rick moves over to the living room, and places a SEALED ENVELOPE on top of his father's BRIEFCASE. The ENVELOPE is labeled, "I'M SORRY."

Rick exits the room without his father ever noticing his presence.

EXT. PIQUA AIRPORT, OHIO- LATE AFTERNOON - DAYS LATER

A private airfield surrounded by beautiful green fields as far as the eye can see. The runway is fully paved, and the Hartzell propeller factory is located on site.

INT. PIQUA AIRPORT - CLASSROOM - DAY

A ONE DESIGN -- a home built aerobatic airplane-- is rolling on the vertical up-line. Pull out to reveal that no one is actually flying. Rather we are watching a TELEVISION MONITOR in Mike's classroom.

MIKE

(to Andrew)

Did you see the way you over rotated on that one again, Andrew? It's a one and a quarter roll to the right on the way up. Not one and a half. This is not that difficult.

Mike is talking to ANDREW MAUSER, 25, Rick's last minute replacement. Taylor, along with the rest of the NORTHERN LIGHTS, are also in the classroom. They are:

WADE CHURCH, 22, stocky and Southern.

STACEY ROBERTS, 23. Let's put it this way: in a dog fight, you wouldn't mind having her on your tail.

TONY ANDERSON, 29. He has the best looking smile you've ever seen, and he knows it.

MIKE

(to Andrew)

The same way basketball players need to be able to dribble with both hands, you need to learn how to roll in both directions. Alright?

ANDREW

Yeah.

EXT. PIQUA AIRPORT - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Rick lands, taxis off the runway, and shuts down. Taylor rushes over.

TAYLOR

What the hell are you doing here?  
You get lost or something?

RICK

Wouldn't be the first time.

TAYLOR

So, what are you doing here?

RICK

I ahh.. I came to talk to Mike  
about that, actually.

MIKE

(overhearing their  
conversation)

And what is it you want to talk  
about?

Rick turns around to face Mike. The rest of the Northern  
Lights are a step behind him.

RICK

(hesitant)

Umm. I came out here to tell you  
that I made a mistake. And uh..If  
it's still a possibility, I'd  
really like to fly for you this  
year.

Unsure of how to respond, Mike...

WADE

The spot's been filled.

Wade pats Andrew on the shoulder, reassuring.

MIKE

He's right. I'm sorry, Rick.

RICK

Okay. I figured it was worth a  
shot. Sorry for interrupting your  
practice.

Embarrassed, Rick begins walking back towards his airplane.

MIKE

Rick.

He turns around.

MIKE

Can you do a one and a quarter roll  
on the way up?

RICK

Yeah.

MIKE

Both directions?

Rick looks over at Taylor. A smile creeps across his face.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Rick, now up at altitude, is waiting to be called into the  
box.

RICK

Which direction do you want to see  
first?

EXT. PIQUA AIRPORT - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Mike stands in the middle of the ramp, while the rest of his  
team sits on a picnic bench behind him, looking skyward.

Mike speaks into a small handheld radio.

MIKE

Your choice.

INTERCUT:

Rick dives into the box. He accelerates to red line, and  
levels off twenty five feet above the ground. At center box  
he POPS the stick back, and executes a perfect one and a  
quarter roll to the left, and then a one and a quarter roll  
to the right..all on the SAME UP LINE. Now at the top of the  
vertical line and at zero miles an hour, Rick transitions  
into a TORQUE ROLL -- a maneuver where the airplane is  
literally hanging on the ENGINE and PROP, suspended in mid-  
air while rolling to the LEFT.

Mike watches from the ground as gravity starts to take over.  
Rick's plane is now falling backwards towards the earth, TAIL  
FIRST, while rolling. Taylor can't help but smile.

MIKE

(unable to contain  
himself)

That'll do.

Having just leveled off, Rick begins a series of rolls down the runway. A 4 point roll to the left, 2 point roll right, 3 point roll left, and then three consecutive rolls to the right. Mike can't help but smile. All of his points are perfect.

WE HOLD on Wade for a moment and then move over to Andrew. They are not so enthusiastic.

INT. HOTEL - PIQUA - LATER

Rick drops his bag on the bed and begins to unpack. The hotel is nothing special. Only about one step up from a Motel 6. Rick only has a moment before he HEARS the SOUND of someone KNOCKING on his DOOR. Rick answers, and it's Taylor.

RICK  
Hey, what's up, man?

TAYLOR  
I'm gonna go meet the rest of the  
guys for dinner. You wanna come?

RICK  
Yeah, for sure.

Rick grabs his wallet and room key off the dresser, and heads for the door.

RICK  
You got car keys?

Taylor pulls his keys out of his pocket for Rick to see. Rick snatches them out of Taylor's hands.

RICK  
I'm driving.

TAYLOR  
Why?

RICK  
Because you drive like my mother.

Taylor kicks Rick in the ass, as the door closes behind them.

INT. LOCAL RESTAURANT - DINNER - CONTINUOUS

The entire team is in the middle of dinner.

RICK

It would be so sick if we qualify  
for Nationals together.

TAYLOR

"If?" Shiit. We're gonna win that  
motherfucker.

RICK

Ye-aah.

Rick and Taylor high five with huge smiles on their faces.

TONY

So Rick, I couldn't help admiring  
your plane.

RICK

Thanks.

TONY

You had it long?

RICK

About two years.

WADE

Your daddy buy that for you?

Rick is caught off guard.

RICK

Yeah.

WADE

Not to be a prick or anything, but  
what is it like being a  
billionaire's son?

TAYLOR

Wade. Chill.

WADE

What? I don't know about you, but  
personally I would like to be able  
to just show up anywhere, and have  
whoever I wanted kicked off the  
team. Must be nice. But if I was  
going to do that, I'd go for the  
best team possible, don't you  
think?

TAYLOR

Wade..

WADE

But you were already on that team  
weren't you? What exactly happened  
with your daddy's team?

Rick is about to say something when Taylor stands up.

TAYLOR

That's none of your business.  
(antagonizing)  
And what are you bitching about,  
anyway? We all saw Rick beat  
Andrew harder than a teenager beats  
off.

WADE

You son of a bitch!

Wade JUMPS out of his seat, and GRABS onto Taylor. Rick gets  
in the middle, and PHYSICALLY separates them.

RICK

Calm down.  
(to Taylor)  
Both of you.  
(beat)  
Wade, let me ask you something.  
How much does your plane cost?  
Brand new S2B right? That's  
about... what? A hundred and sixty  
grand. You pay for that yourself?

Wade looks at Rick, defeated.

RICK

Yeah. That's what I thought.

Rick sits down. Across the table, Stacey STARES at him with  
admiration.

WADE

(under his breath)  
But it's easy for your parents.

We hold on Taylor's reaction. He was the only one who heard  
that.

EXT. LOCAL RESTAURANT - PARKING LOT - LATER

Rick and Stacey exit the restaurant, with the rest of the team trailing a few feet behind.

STACEY

So, do you want to know how much my airplane costs?

RICK

What? Oh. No, that's alright.  
That guy's an asshole.

STACEY

Well, you did get his best friend  
kicked off the team.

Rick looks at Stacey. "Now that makes sense."

STACEY

He's not so bad once you get to  
know him.

RICK

I'm not sure if I'm willing to take  
your word on that.

STACEY

So, when did you start flying?

RICK

When I was 13. You?

Stacey holds up two fingers.

RICK

Damn. So your parents are pilots.  
They must be proud of you?

STACEY

They are.

She sees her car off to the right.

STACEY

Well, this is me.

RICK

Alright. It was nice talking to  
you.

STACEY

You, too.

Stacey breaks away from Rick, and heads towards her car.

RICK

Drive home safe.

Stacey turns around, and smiles at Rick. Clearly there is a connection between the two.

Taylor, having witnessed this whole interaction, walks over to Rick.

TAYLOR

What was that?

RICK

Nothing.

TAYLOR

Yeah. Yeah. Just remember, you don't shit where you eat.

They both climb into the car.

EXT. SKY - FLYING - DAY

The Northern Lights are in a diamond-shape formation only miles away from the Detroit airport. Taylor is in the lead, with Rick and Stacey off his left wing, and Wade and Tony off his right.

INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Taylor looks over at Rick for a moment. He calls the tower OVER THE RADIO:

TAYLOR

Good afternoon, Detroit tower, this is Extra 314 tango flight. We're 10 miles southwest, landing with Alpha.

DETROIT TOWER

Roger 14 tango flight. You are cleared to land on runway 26.

TAYLOR

Roger. Clear to land 26, tango flight.

Taylor looks at Rick.

TAYLOR

This is it, baby. First show of the year.

Rick presses the RED SMOKE BUTTON on his throttle, and lets out a white puff.

RICK

Sorry. I got a little excited.

The entire team laughs. Especially Taylor.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - ON THE GROUND - MOMENTS LATER

The Northern Lights are lined up in trail on short final. We stay with them as they touch down one after another.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

The Northern Lights shut down in front of the performers' hangar. They are greeted by John Talbot, and fifty plus REPORTERS AND CAMERAMEN.

The Northern Lights are blinded by FLASHES as they climb out of their airplanes.

REPORTER

How does it feel to be the youngest competitors on the aerobatic circuit?

REPORTER 2

How do your parents feel?

REPORTER 3

What is it like to be coached by the legendary Mike Eversmann?

John steps in front of the cameras. The kids are overwhelmed.

JOHN

Alright. Settle down. These kids will be happy to answer all of your questions. But one at a time, and at the press conference. Tony, we'll start with you.

TONY

Me?

JOHN

Yeah. Shane will take you.

SHANE, early 30's, John's on-site assistant moves towards Tony.

SHANE

This way.

Shane ushers Tony towards the press conference. The reporters and the rest of the Northern Lights follow. On their way, John recognizes Rick.

JOHN

You're William Henderson's son, right?

RICK

Yeah.

JOHN

I saw your dad this morning. Great guy.

RICK

Thanks.

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PRESS CONFERENCE - MOMENTS LATER

INTERVIEW MONTAGE:

Tony stands behind a microphone infested podium. Sponsorship logos fill the surrounding wall space.

REPORTER

Why did you become a stunt pilot?

TONY

I'm actually a 4th generation aviator. My great grandfather flew in World War one. My father was in the Navy. I was just...brought up around it.

REPORTER 2

How does it feel to be here?

TONY

Oh. It's amazing.

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

Stacey, dressed in full flight gear, stands in front of her airplane. A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps a few shots.

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PRESS CONFERENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Stacey is now in the hot seat.

STACEY

For me, it's a family affair. My mom and dad did all this. So when it came time to teach the kids how to fly, we learned how to fly aerobatics first.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

The Northern Lights pose for a picture with the AIR FORCE THUNDERBIRDS. They all give the camera an "airshow thumbs up."

Nearby, TWO VETERAN PILOTS mimic/mock the Northern Lights.

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PRESS CONFERENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Wade stands behind the podium.

WADE

I was brought into this sport by Donald Ross, who's sort of an airshow legend. I really try to keep a lot of his influences as part of my flying, and not go all to the tumble.

Rob Johnstone and Travis McDonald are watching the press conference from the back of the room. They exchange a disapproving look.

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PRESS CONFERENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Now Taylor:

TAYLOR

It's hard to explain. I can't dance; if I'm listening to music, I can't carry a tune.

(MORE)

TAYLOR (cont'd)

But when I'm in the air, it's a kind of dancing, it's the way I can dance. I just sort of feel it.

REPORTER

Are your parents proud?

TAYLOR

I hope so. I certainly wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the sacrifices they made.

REPORTER 2

I understand you're the only one in the group who didn't graduate college. Can you explain why?

TAYLOR

Yeah. My parents took my college fund, and used it to buy an airplane.

This gets a laugh from the reporters.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - CASTROL TENT - MOMENTS LATER

John introduces the Northern Lights to RYAN CRAFT, 60's, President of Castrol. He is wearing a shirt that bears his company logo.

JOHN

This is Ryan Craft, the President of Castrol. Ryan, these are the kids I was telling you about.

Rick extends his hand.

RICK

It's a pleasure to meet you.

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PRESS CONFERENCE - MOMENTS LATER

RICK

I guess I really enjoy the competitive side of flying. It's like my dad always says: "You don't know what kind of man you are until you push yourself to the limit."

A reporter writes down Rick's quote.

Rob Johnstone and Travis McDonald watch the reporters begin to break up around the Northern Lights.

TRAVIS MCDONALD  
Can you believe this? They've been  
here five minutes...

ROB JOHNSTONE  
We'll see who they're taking  
pictures of after the flight  
tomorrow.

END MONTAGE:

INT. DETROIT HOTEL - LOBBY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Northern Lights are towards the tail end of their meal.

WADE  
I'm about ready. We got an early  
start tomorrow.

RICK  
I'll get the check.

Taylor begins to pull out his wallet.

RICK  
I got it.

Rick gets up and moves towards the register, located behind the bar, where Rob Johnstone and Kirby Chapel are finishing their meal. Kirby is polishing off a Heineken. Off Kirby's look:

RICK  
Hey.

KIRBY  
Hi. You boys put on quite a show  
today.

RICK  
Yeah. It's kinda crazy.

The BARTENDER approaches.

BARTENDER  
What'll it be?

RICK  
I just need our check.

The bartender nods, and walks off.

KIRBY  
You want a drink?

RICK  
No thanks. We're flying tomorrow.

Rob shakes his head.

ROB JOHNSTONE  
You haven't figured it out yet,  
have you?

RICK  
What's that?

ROB JOHNSTONE  
You're not here to fly.

RICK  
(to Rob)  
You know, that's funny, because my  
spot's right before yours tomorrow.

KIRBY  
(honest)  
It's all for show. It's a  
publicity stunt, Rick. A bunch of  
young pretty faces they can use to  
boost ticket sales, and attract  
corporate sponsors. So lighten up.  
Enjoy it. While it lasts.

Rick looks over at his team. Could this be true?

INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' HANGAR - NEXT MORNING

The Northern Lights sit on the hangar floor with their  
airplanes behind them. Mike stands in front of them, and  
writes down aerobatic figures on a free standing white board.  
No one else is in the hangar yet. Rick thinks for a moment.  
Still stuck on the conversation he had last night.

RICK  
Why are we here?

MIKE  
Excuse me.

RICK

Why are we here? Did they invite us to fly, or are we just here to get our picture taken?

The team exchanges looks. What is Rick talking about?

MIKE

Does it matter?

Rick looks at Mike, confused.

MIKE

Think about it. Does it matter how you got here? Who invited you? Who paid for your plane? What matters is that you're here. I know some of you may have heard some disturbing rumors. Things like the Northern Lights are just some sort of publicity stunt.

(beat)

I don't know about you, but I don't think there is a soul on this earth, including god, who can tell me that. Those people out there haven't seen you fly, but I have. And today you, not me, are going to show them what we're made of. This is your time. Let's go out there and take it.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - MORNING

From the sky overhead, we see the entire airfield and the swarm of activity on the ground below. Unlike Paso Robles, thousands of people are lined up outside the gates, with twice as many already flooding the spectator area.

INT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

At center box, the ANNOUNCER speaks into a microphone.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the 2006 Detroit Acro Cup. By random draw, Travis McDonald..

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Travis McDonald is climbing into his airplane at the front of the starting line.

ANNOUNCER

..of the heavily favored Team  
Genesis will kick things off for us  
today. Following suit will be Matt  
Chapman, and David Martin.

Behind Travis are airshow pilots MATT CHAPMAN and DAVID MARTIN. Two of the best aerobatic pilots in the world.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

ANNOUNCER

But the talk of the competition has  
to be the Northern Lights.

The Northern Lights are walking through their sequences. As usual, Taylor appears loose, while Rick is extremely tense.

Mike walks up to Stacey who is climbing into her airplane. Several veteran pilots look at her with disgust.

ANNOUNCER

Never before has a team of such  
young and inexperienced pilots been  
allowed to compete on the Nationals  
scene. And the question on  
everybody's mind has to be, do they  
deserve to be here?

EXT/INT. STACEY'S EDGE 540 - FLYING - DAY

Stacey executes a series of diving snap rolls on the 45 degree down line.

EXT/INT. WADE'S PITTS S2B - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Wade executes a series of perfect 4 point rolls down the runway.

EXT/INT. TONY'S SUKHOI 31 - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Tony pulls straight up and begins a series of vertical rolls. We see the world spinning around at over 360 degrees per second, as he rockets skyward.

EXT/INT. TAYLOR'S EXTRA 300S - MOMENTS LATER

Taylor's airplane is tumbling throughout the sky. From the ground, we see the smoke billowing out of Taylor's exhaust engulfing his entire airplane. For a brief moment, we lose sight of him in the smoke...only the SOUND of the PROP and engine straining remain...then suddenly the airplane pops back into view as the nose falls back towards the earth.

EXT. JUDGES' LINE - DETROIT AIRSHOW - DAY

The judges' line is similar to the one at Oshkosh. Behind the judges are three people seated at a large table in front of a SCOREBOARD, which they are controlling. Here, we find out each pilot's score immediately after his/her flight.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Mike, Tony, Stacey, and Wade are all looking skyward as Taylor finishes his sequence.

CLOSE ON the scoreboards as the scores appear.

ANNOUNCER

1583, 1580, 1590, 1591, 1575. That will give him a total of 83 percent, the second highest scoring flight of the day. I think the question about whether the Northern Lights deserve to be here has been answered. They now stand in 3rd place, with one pilot left to fly.

EXT/INT. RICK'S CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick, now up at altitude, is circling in the hold position, awaiting his call into the box.

AIR BOSS

Rick Henderson, this is the air boss. You are cleared in. Have a good flight.

RICK  
Roger, the box is mine.

Rick turns his prop and mixture to full forward, takes a deep breath, and dives into the box. He lets the airspeed build up to red line before leveling off at center box. He only establishes level flight for a brief moment before he pulls vertical and enters his inverted flat spins.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mike watches Rick's sequence, which is going flawlessly.

ANNOUNCER  
His next figure will be a double outside snap on the up-line. We've seen a lot of pilots futz this one today. Let's see how young Henderson handles it.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick glances down at his airspeed-- it's over 200 -- plenty of energy to execute this difficult required element. Rick pulls vertical, POPS the stick FORWARD and KICKS FULL LEFT RUDDER, initiating the double outside snap. The airplane begins to rotate. Nearing the end of the second rotation, Rick KICKS the opposite rudder to stop the snap.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mike smiles. From his POV, we see that Rick is on a perfect vertical up-line. He has stopped the snap perfectly.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON THE SCOREBOARD as Rick's name appears just under Taylor's at 81%.

ANNOUNCER  
81 percent, oh my God! The second highest scoring Northern Light has just secured a spot for his team on the podium. Who would have thought?

Taylor, Stacey, Tony, and Wade explode into cheers.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Rick taxis his airplane in and shuts down. A huge smile is spread across his face. Rick steps out of his airplane, and catches sight of his father talking to Rob Johnstone, whose airplane is at the front of the starting line.

The two stare at each other for a moment, and to Rick's surprise, Mr. Henderson looks away, dismissive.

Crushed, Rick looks to his dad for the slightest bit of reassurance, but he receives none. Rick begins to move towards his father when he is cut off by the rest of his teammates and a sea of REPORTERS who have rushed over to congratulate him. Taylor is so excited, he literally picks Rick up off the ground.

TAYLOR

Yeah, baby! That was awesome!

Lifted in the air, Rick looks for his father, but he is unable to see him through the sea of approaching PHOTOGRAPHERS. Taylor puts Rick down.

TONY

Great job, man. Great job!

AT THE FRONT OF THE STARTING LINE:

Kirby and Mr. Henderson watch as Rob brings his canopy down, and fires his engine to life.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

The Northern Lights are still celebrating when...

ANNOUNCER

Last to fly today is current three  
time National Champion Rob  
Johnstone.

EXT/INT. ROB JOHNSTONE'S EDGE 540 - CONTINUOUS

Rob taxis out onto the runway.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Everything stops. The Northern Lights and reporters turn their heads towards the runway to watch Rob's flight.

ANNOUNCER

Rob is the only pilot today who has opted to do a ground start. For those of you who are new to the sport, a ground start is just what it sounds like. The pilot will begin his sequence from the point of takeoff rather than diving in from altitude. This is a much more difficult entrance, because the pilot doesn't benefit from the energy he gains from diving in from altitude.

EXT. ROB JOHNSTONE'S EDGE 540 - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

I wonder why Rob has opted to do one here today?

Rob turns his SMOKE on and SLAMS his THROTTLE FORWARD. The airspeed quickly comes alive, and the second it hits 100 knots, he POPS the STICK BACK ALL THE WAY TO THE STOP. The NOSE of the airplane LUNGES OFF the ground past VERTICAL AND IS FACING BACKWARDS while flying FORWARD. This is the COBRA. The airplane sits for a moment, literally suspended in motion no more than 20 FEET off the ground, just HANGING ON THE PROP.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Rick's jaw drops. He can't believe what he is seeing.

ANNOUNCER

Oh doctor, what did he do? Never in my life have I seen an aerobatic airplane do that! A cobra!

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - MOMENTS LATER

Mr. Henderson looks over at Kirby and smiles. He knows this is in the bag.

EXT/INT. ROB JOHNSTONE'S EDGE 540 - MOMENTS LATER

Now with altitude, and plenty of energy, Rob pulls up...

EXT/INT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - CONTINUOUS

Rick, mesmerized, watches Rob execute another perfect EVENTAIL.

EXT/INT. ROB JOHNSTONE'S EDGE 540 - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Satisfied, Rob wags his wings three times.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON the scoreboard...

ANNOUNCER

98 percent. Well there you have it folks. Rob Johnstone has made it a no contest here today.

Kirby and Mr. Henderson shake hands.

EXT. DETROIT AIRSHOW - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

NOW ON THE GROUND:

Rob climbs out of his airplane. The PRESS rushes over. Rick watches as his father gives Rob a hug and poses for photographers. Taylor notices and comes over.

TAYLOR

Forget them, man. You rocked it today. Third place, baby. Still one behind me, but..

Rick jokingly pushes Taylor. He is already starting to feel better.

EXT/INT. PIQUA AIRPORT - CAR - DAYS LATER

A car is stopped just outside the Northern Lights hangar. Rick sits in the driver's seat with Stacey in the passenger. They are both laughing.

RICK

That's not the best part. We still didn't know where we were once we landed. So Taylor had to look at the address on one of the FBO's magazine covers to see what city we were in.

(off Stacey)

We flew 90 miles due east of where we were supposed to go.

Stacey is laughing hysterically.

RICK

You think that's bad, you should see him drive. At least in the air he has a GPS.

STACEY

Doesn't really seem to help.

We HEAR a LOUD BANG on the back of the car. Rick and Stacey jump. Taylor pops up laughing.

He moves towards the driver's side of the car.

TAYLOR

Yo, move over, man. I'm driving.

Rick locks the doors right as Taylor tries to open it.

RICK

Get in the back.

TAYLOR

It's my turn to drive bitch, move over.

Rick takes a long beat, considering.

RICK

Umm...No shot.

Taylor tries to open the door again.

TAYLOR

Dude, let me in.

Rick begins to drive away. Taylor chases after him hitting the window.

TAYLOR

Let me in, you tit.

RICK  
Ride in the other car.

TAYLOR  
Fuck you, let me in.

From inside we can see Rick and Stacey laughing as Taylor continues to pound on the driver's side door. Finally Rick stops the car and lets Taylor in.

Taylor jumps in the back seat, and gives Rick a tittie twister.

RICK  
Aww...fuck, man.

TAYLOR  
Yeah that's what you get. Don't mess with me.

RICK  
Dude, shut up.

TAYLOR  
Yeah whatever, vagina face.

Rick just laughs. He doesn't have a comeback for that.

STACEY  
You two are worse than a married couple.

TAYLOR  
Yeah I know.

Taylor leans into to give Rick a kiss on the cheek.

TAYLOR  
Oh come here, baby. Come on.

RICK  
Ahh. Get off me.

Rick pushes Taylor off. This is not the sort of thing he wants Stacey to see.

RICK BEGINS DRIVING:

STACEY  
Did you two always fly together?

RICK  
Pretty much.

STACEY

You must have some stories. I already know you two can't navigate together.

Taylor hits Rick.

STACEY

Anything else?

TAYLOR

This guy had a pretty close call once.

RICK

No I didn't.  
(off Taylor)  
Come on, man.

TAYLOR

It's all good. I'm sure she'd love to hear about how you learned how to do the Eventail. Which is not nearly as cool as my maneuver.

STACEY

And what's that?

TAYLOR

I haven't really figured it out yet. But it's going to be a tumble that turns into a torque roll.

Stacey looks at Taylor like he's crazy. You can't do that.

TAYLOR

Anyway, he executes the maneuver perfectly.

STACEY

(to Rick)  
Seriously?

TAYLOR

Except he can't get the airplane to recover.

(to Rick)  
You were what..No more than 20 feet when you finally pulled out. Thank god you started that thing at three thousand feet.

Stacey looks disturbed by this story. This is not something she finds amusing. Taylor notices.

TAYLOR

I mean, I personally don't know what I would have done if I lost you. Not being able to come over and visit your sister anymore.

Rick looks at Taylor. Did he really just say that?

TAYLOR

However, it would be my duty to comfort her through the grieving process. As any good friend would.

Rick takes a few swings at Taylor, who is laughing his ass off.

RICK

You're such a bitch. Do you know that?

(off Stacey)

I'm sorry.

STACEY

No problem. I think it's hilarious.

Stacey and Taylor both erupt into laughter. Rick stares at Stacey in disbelief. How could she be okay with this?

EXT. SPRINT CAR RACE TRACK - NIGHT

SPRINT CARS race around a sunken dirt track. The SOUND is DEAFENING, and the cars are throwing a CLOUD of DUST into the sea of FANS.

EXT. SPRINT CAR RACE TRACK - BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

This is hillbilly heaven. Mulletts, wife beaters, and OVERWEIGHT COUPLES compose a majority of the crowd. Sitting in the middle of all this are Rick, Stacey, and Tony. They are all wearing goggles and earplugs, to protect themselves from the elements.

RICK

What do you think it would be like to live out here?

Stacey points to a man with a mullet.

RICK  
Are you trying to tell me  
something?

Stacey smiles flirtatiously.

RICK  
(quietly)  
Hey, uh...Would you want to go to  
dinner sometime?

STACEY  
What?

RICK  
Would you want to go to dinner with  
me sometime?

STACEY  
Sure.

RICK  
After the contest this weekend?

Stacey smiles at Rick, which suddenly turns into all out  
laughter. Rick looks at her for a moment, confused. He  
turns around to see that she is laughing at Wade and Taylor.  
Both are wearing cowboy hats, wife beaters, and carrying a  
beer.

WADE  
(referencing Taylor)  
What do you think?

TAYLOR  
I've gone local.

Everyone laughs.

EXT. SKY OVERHEAD - BOSTON AIRSHOW - DAYS LATER

An airplane is flying in the box at the Boston airshow.

EXT. RAMP - BOSTON AIRSHOW - STARTING LINE - CONTINUOUS

Rick sits strapped into his Cap 232 at the front of the  
starting line. He is looking at his father, who is in mid-  
conversation with Kirby.

Mike walks over.

MIKE

Okay, this is it. You only need to place eighth for us to medal. We need a solid score with no mistakes. Alright?

Rick gives Mike a confident nod.

MIKE

Have a safe flight.

As Rick reaches back to bring his canopy down, he catches his father looking straight at him. They lock eyes for a moment until Mr. Henderson turns away.

At this moment we see something change in Rick. He is suddenly fueled with a new found drive to win.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CROWD - MOMENTS LATER

Over A HUNDRED THOUSAND FANS line the runway at the Boston Airshow. All of them are intently looking skyward.

INT. ANNOUNCER'S BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

Next to fly today will be Rick Henderson.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CROWD - CONTINUOUS

ANNOUNCER

He will need to score a 90 percent to knock Travis McDonald off the top spot here today.

A LITTLE KID spots Rick's smoke, and points.

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen, high and to your right...

EXT/INT. RICK'S CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick is in the middle of his inverted flat spins.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CROWD - CONTINUOUS

The little boy watches Rick spin towards the earth. His smoke system paints a giant cork screw in the sky.

EXT/INT. RICKS'S CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick completes his next few figures. His sequence is going flawlessly. As he approaches center box, he POPS the stick back, bringing him onto a 45 degree up line.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mike is watching from center box, holding Rick's Aresti card. The rest of the Northern Lights stand a few feet behind him. A look of confusion passes over Mike's face. He looks down at Rick's Aresti card, and then back up.

MIKE  
(realizing)  
Oh Shit.

Taylor has the same look of recognition.

TAYLOR  
Don't do it.

STACEY  
What is he doing?

TAYLOR  
Eventail.

EXT/INT. RICKS'S CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick looks down at his altitude and airspeed, which read 1,500 feet and 180 mph, respectively. Rick POPS the stick back and does a 3/4 inside snap left, into a 3/4 outside snap right. After those rotations are complete, Rick slams the stick into the left forward corner, and hits the RIGHT RUDDER, causing the airplane to literally flatten out and CARTWHEEL across the sky. He is doing the EVENTAIL.

Rick completes one full cartwheel revolution, and then stomps on the opposite rudder to recover, but NOTHING happens. The airplane continues to tumble towards the ground. Rick, losing altitude, frantically tries to recover.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mike watches in fear as Rick tumbles towards the ground. His mind races...

MIKE

Cut the power. Cut the power!

EXT/INT. RICKS'S CAP 232 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

With only seconds left before hitting the ground, Rick CUTS the power, bringing the rotation to a stop. With his nose now pointed straight down, Rick builds up just enough energy to pull out at the last second.

Rick looks down at his airspeed and smiles. What he did might have been stupid, but he still has plenty of energy to complete the rest of his sequence.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CROWD - CONTINUOUS

The crowd erupts into cheers, totally oblivious to what just happened. To them, it was just a spectacular maneuver.

ANNOUNCER

I couldn't have said it better myself!

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Henderson looks like he is about to explode. He knows his son will probably win the competition, but he did so by risking his life.

ANNOUNCER

Rob Johnstone, move over-- Mr. Henderson has arrived.

CLOSE ON THE SCOREBOARD as Rick's name appears on the top spot.

ANNOUNCER

91 percent, oh my God! William Henderson's twenty-two year old son, has just knocked Travis McDonald off the top spot here today.

EXT/INT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' AREA - CONTINUOUS

Kirby and the other coaches stare at Mike, who looks away in shame. Rick is his responsibility.

EXT/INT. CAP 232 - ON THE GROUND - MOMENTS LATER

Rick taxis his airplane in and shuts down. Rick jumps out of his airplane, and smiles at the approaching PRESS. That is, until he sees his father rapidly approaching.

MR. HENDERSON

Come here.

Mr. Henderson grabs onto Rick's arm, and drags him behind his airplane.

MR. HENDERSON

What in the hell were you thinking?  
Do you know how lucky you were that  
you didn't just get yourself  
killed?

RICK

Dad, I'm fine.

MR. HENDERSON

No you're not fine. First you were  
trying to kill yourself with DRUGS,  
and now it's airplanes. This is  
precisely the reason I didn't want  
you flying this summer. You're  
reckless and you are going to get  
yourself killed.

RICK

So you admit you never wanted me to  
fly.

MR. HENDERSON

That's not the point.

RICK

No, it's exactly the point. You're  
just jealous, because for once in  
your life, I am going to beat you.

Mr. Henderson slaps Rick across the face.

We see A WHITE LIGHT FLASH across Mr. Henderson's face,  
followed by several others.

Turn to reveal that the flash came from several PHOTOGRAPHERS who have moved around Rick's plane to give them a clear view of the confrontation.

MR. HENDERSON

You're done here. Do you  
understand me? You're going home.

Mr. Henderson walks off towards the performers' tent. Lost in thought, Rick walks around his airplane and is startled by the SOUND of MORE FLASHES going off. Suddenly self conscious, Rick walks off into the crowd.

As Rick walks out of frame we move over to Mike, who has witnessed everything.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CROWD - MOMENTS LATER

We move with Rick through the crowd. He has tied the top of his flight suit around his waist, so nobody will recognize him.

ANNOUNCER

Next to fly is Rob Johnstone, who  
will need an impressive 92% to take  
the top spot away from young  
Henderson here today.

Rick makes his way towards the front of the crowd.

EXT/INT. - ROB JOHNSTONE'S EDGE 540 - CONTINUOUS

We move with Rob as he SLAMS his THROTTLE FORWARD. At 100 knots, Rob POPS the stick back and executes another perfect COBRA. After a few seconds, Rob brings the nose down. With very little airspeed, he executes a series of rolls down the runway.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CROWD - CONTINUOUS

Rick watches as Rob's Edge zips by him, rolling toward the opposite end of the runway. Only as Rob approaches the end of the runway, Rick notices that he is slowly losing altitude with each roll he makes. Suddenly, the plane's WING DIPS just a LITTLE too LOW and CATCHES THE GROUND, sending ROB TOPPLING down the runway.

The entire crowd goes SILENT.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Henderson watches horrified, as his prize pilot comes to a stop after more than a half mile skid.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ambulances, fire trucks, and other emergency vehicles rush toward the crash site.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CRASH SITE - CONTINUOUS

Rob lies in the airplane completely unconscious. His entire cockpit is caved in around him.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Taylor, Tony, Stacey, and Wade watch in shock as the emergency vehicles arrive at the crash site.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CRASH SITE - MOMENTS LATER

FIREFIGHTERS, now at the crash site, are doing everything they can to pry the wreckage apart. A Medivac helicopter lands in the background.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Stacey buries her face into Taylor's arms. Unable to escape the reality that one day this could happen to her.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - CRASH SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Rob, now freed, is being carried to the helicopter on a stretcher, his face covered in blood.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS' AREA - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Henderson watches as his best pilot and friend is loaded up and flown off into the distance. He can't help but think, what if that had been his son?

INT. HANGAR OFFICE - BOSTON AIRSHOW - EVENING

Rick, Taylor, Stacey, Wade, and Tony sit in silence, replaying the events of the day in their heads. Stacey is taking it the hardest. She looks shell-shocked as Mike enters the room.

MIKE

Good news. He's gonna make it.

RICK

How bad is he hurt?

MIKE

Both his legs are broke.  
Collarbone. A few ribs.

Rick looks away.

MIKE

I hope this serves as a reminder to all of you, as to what can happen up there. Most of you are too young to have lost anybody to this sport, but trust me, if you stay in it long enough, it will happen.

Mike looks directly at Rick. He is expecting to get yelled at.

MIKE

Alright. I want all of you to go back to the hotel and get some rest. I'll be here if you need me.

Mike exits the room, followed by Stacey, who now has tears streaming down her face.

The rest of the team follows behind.

INT. BOSTON HOTEL - LOBBY - NIGHT

The Northern Lights enter the revolving door leading into the hotel lobby. The team makes its way over to the elevator and steps in.

INT. BOSTON HOTEL - ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Rick moves over to the elevator panel and presses the button for the 5th floor.

RICK  
You guys are on six, right?

TAYLOR  
(gesturing towards Tony  
and Wade)  
Yeah.

Rick presses the button for the sixth floor.

The elevator doors close as they make their way up in silence. Stacey, still rattled, can barely maintain her composure. The elevator beeps..the doors open, and Stacey and Rick step off.

RICK  
See you guys tomorrow.

TAYLOR  
See ya.

TONY  
Night.

INT. BOSTON HOTEL - FIFTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Rick and Stacey walk down the hall to their respective rooms. With every step Stacey takes, she gets closer and closer to losing it. She stops outside a room.

STACEY  
This is me.

RICK  
Alright. I'll see you in the morning.

Rick keeps walking down the hall towards his own room.

CLOSE ON Stacey as she pulls her KEY CARD out of her pocket. Her hands are shaking now as she struggles to unlock the door. After a few attempts, she loses it, and lets out a SCREAM, and begins kicking the door. Rick turns around and rushes over. Stacey is still trying to open the door.

RICK  
Stacey. Stacey, are you okay?

She doesn't answer.

RICK  
Here let me help you with that.

Rick tries to grab the key card, but she pushes him away.

STACEY

No, I got it.

(off Rick)

I said I got it.

RICK

Stacey, I'm just trying to help.

STACEY

I don't need your help.

She tried again but it is no use. Thinking she has lost it, Rick struggles with Stacey until he gets control of the key card. She begins hitting him forcefully. Rick opens the door...

INT. STACEY'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...lifts Stacey up and carries her over to the bed.

RICK

Stacey, look at me. Just calm down, okay. You're okay.

She shakes her head no, and begins to break down.

STACEY

I don't want that to happen to me.

RICK

What?

STACEY

God, I don't even know why I am doing this. I don't want to end up like them.

RICK

Them? What are you talking about?

STACEY

It happened right in front of me. They were at the top of a loop when mom lost control and flew right into my dad's plane. I remember they were so excited for me to see them fly.

Stacey starts to cry even harder.

RICK

Come here. Come here.

Rick grabs onto Stacey and holds her close. We pull out on Rick rocking Stacey in his arms.

INT. STACEY'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Rick is staring at Stacey, stroking her hair while she sleeps. After a moment, Stacey slowly opens her eyes and sees Rick laying next to her.

RICK

Hey.

STACEY

Hi.

RICK

You feeling better?

Stacey appreciatively nods yes.

RICK

That's good. So, are they the reason you fly? Your parents?

She nods yes.

RICK

How do you do it? I couldn't imagine getting into an airplane after something like that.

Stacey sits up.

STACEY

I still remember the first time they took me flying. I was two. My mom was in the left seat, and my dad was holding me in his lap. I don't remember much about the flight, what it felt like to be up there, but I do remember their faces. They were so happy. That's how I feel every time I'm up there. Like they're smiling down on me.

Rick looks away. He wishes he had that kind of love.

STACEY

Thanks for taking care of me last night.

RICK

Don't mention it.

Stacey grabs a hold of Rick's hand, and presses her lips into the palm of his hand. The two lock eyes for a moment..Rick slowly leans in, and kisses Stacey on the lips.

After a moment, their lips separate and they stare at each other for a moment. Realizing what just happened...

RICK

I shouldn't have done that.

STACEY

No. It's okay...

RICK

I should go.

Rick gets up and exits the room.

INT. HANGAR OFFICE - BOSTON AIRSHOW - EVENING

Mike is reviewing tapes of the Northern Lights flights when he HEARS a KNOCK on the door. Mike turns to see Rick standing in the doorway.

MIKE

Rick. Come on in.

RICK

Can I talk to you?

MIKE

I was hoping you would. You gave me quite a scare the other day.

RICK

Yeah I know. I was surprised you didn't lay into me.

MIKE

Yeah, well, I think your father pretty much took care of that. Is that why you did that maneuver? You trying to prove something?

Rick looks away. Mike's got his number.

MIKE

There are more important things in life. Killing yourself won't make your father happy.

RICK

(sarcastic)

You sure?

MIKE

Yeah.

(beat)

You need to be doing this for yourself, and no other reason. As soon as you start doing that, I think you're going to see a big change.

Rick thinks for a moment.

MIKE

And I'm not just talking about your flying.

RICK

How do I do that?

MIKE

You're the only one who can answer that.

Rick nods his head in agreement, and heads for the door.

MIKE

But if I was you, I would try to figure it out sooner than later.

Rick exits the office.

INT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - HANGAR - MOMENTS LATER

Rick enters the lifeless airshow hangar. There is not another soul around as he walks over to his airplane. He stares at it, looking for answers, when Stacey approaches.

STACEY

How you doing?

RICK

I'm okay.

STACEY

You sure?

RICK

It just feels like I can never get anything right, you know. You ever feel like that?

Stacey responds.

RICK

I just wish I had all the answers. I wish I could make my father happy. I...

STACEY

Why do you care so much about what he thinks?

RICK

I don't know.

Stacey gives Rick a reassuring look. We can tell this is hard for him.

RICK

I guess it's just that...my dad was never really around when I was a kid. To make up for it, he would always promise me these elaborate things. Like going to the Super Bowl. But he would never show up. I always figured it was my fault, and I hoped that one day I would be enough for him. Well, eventually that day came. I was eighteen years old, and all I wanted to do was go to Stanford University. It's where he went, but I didn't have the grades. My dad got me in.

STACEY

Doesn't that show you something?

RICK

No. I didn't exactly respect the privilege. I know. Hard to believe right?

(beat)

I O.D.'d the end of my freshman year. I didn't belong in that school. I was probably going to flunk out anyway.

(MORE)

RICK (cont'd)

(beat)

I just didn't want to disappoint him again, you know. Anyway, when I woke up in the hospital my dad was the only one in the room. Poor little rich kid, right?

STACEY

I'm sorry. That must have been difficult.

RICK

No, I think it was the only time he ever actually looked at me. Ever since then he's never really given me a second chance.

STACEY

Have you given him reason to?

RICK

Yeah. I cleaned up my act, went back to school, but none of it mattered.

STACEY

Then forget about him. We all make mistakes Rick. You can't punish yourself forever.

RICK

(sarcastic)

You know, amazingly enough, you're not the first person to tell me that.

They share a small laugh.

STACEY

When was the last time you did something because you wanted to? Just for fun?

Rick thinks a moment. He can't come up with anything. Stacey looks at him sympathetically. After a moment, a small smile creeps across her face...

STACEY

Come here.

RICK

What?

STACEY

Come here.

Stacey extends her hand towards Rick. Slowly reaching out, Stacey grabs onto it. As soon as their hands connect we...

CUT TO:

EXT. BOSTON AIRPORT - TAXI WAY - SUNSET

CLOSE on a prop spinning. WIDEN to reveal Stacey's Edge and Rick's Cap taxiing out for take off.

INT. CAP 232 - TAXIING - BOSTON - CONTINUOUS

Rick is following Stacey down the taxi way.

RICK

Can you tell me again what we're doing here?

INT. STACEY'S EDGE 540 - TAXIING - CONTINUOUS

STACEY

Will you relax? Just follow me out. If you can.

INT. CAP 232 - TAXIING - CONTINUOUS

Rick shakes his head. He has never turned down a challenge in his life, and he is not about to start now.

ON THE RUNWAY:

Stacey's Edge pulls onto the LEFT side of the runway, and RICK onto the right. The wing tips of their aircraft are no more than five feet apart.

CONTROLLER

Edge, flight of two, you are clear for takeoff on runway 30.

INT. STACEY'S EDGE 540 - RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS

STACEY

Roger. Clear for take off, Edge flight.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE TWO PLANES FOR THE REST OF THE SCENE:

The metallic paint-jobs of the two aircraft are glistening in the evening sun as Stacey and Rick bring their throttles forward. We watch as the two aircraft lunge into the air, in a PERFECT FORMATION TAKEOFF!

MOMENTS LATER:

Rick and Stacey are now flying just off the coast in perfect formation. The view of airplanes against the city is breathtaking. The large skyscrapers are glowing gold in the warmth of the setting sun.

RICK

Well you got me out here. What do you want to do?

From Rick's POV, we see Stacey look over her shoulder. A devious smile creeps across her face.

The next thing we know, Stacey banks hard left, and peels off, diving towards the earth.

RICK

Oh.

Rick dives after her.

This is DOGFIGHTING AEROBATIC STYLE.

Rick chases Stacey through a series of barrel rolls, a Cuban eight -- a 3/4 loop, with a half roll on the 45 degree down line. Rick is still hot on her trail. Unable to lose him, Stacey does everything she can to get Rick off her tail.

With a huge smile across his face, Rick calls Stacey on the RADIO.

RICK

Alright, break off for a second. I want to show you something.

Stacey goes into a climbing left turn, and begins an orbiting pattern at five thousand feet. This gives Stacey the best seat in the house to watch Rick perform for the next few moments.

Ready to go, Rick pulls up into a P-loop. The second his nose is pointed straight down, Rick POPS the stick back, and begins a series of diving snap rolls.

The world is rushing around at 500 degrees a second, as Rick rockets towards the earth. After 8 revolutions, Rick stops the rotation, and immediately pulls into a HARD 135 degree hairpin turn. Back on the 45 degree up line, Rick initiates and completes a perfect EVENTAIL.

The view from Stacey's cockpit is truly breathtaking.

Stacey begins laughing joyfully as Rick breaks off, and begins climbing for altitude. She can feel the positive energy radiating off of Rick's airplane.

Having lost sight of Rick for a moment, Stacey looks around the sky, but she sees nothing.

STACEY  
Where did you go?

RICK  
Don't move.

Rick, directly behind Stacey, SLAMS his THROTTLE forward, and heads straight for Stacey's tail. Rick passes directly under Stacey's airplane. The second he clears the nose of her plane, Rick POPS the STICK back, and brings his airplane onto the vertical up-line-- missing the nose of Stacey's airplane by only a matter of feet.

Startled, Stacey jumps back, and lets out a GIRLY SCREAM.

Having lost sight of Rick again, Stacey looks around the sky. Rick presses down his RADIO TRANSMIT BUTTON. We HEAR laughing over the RADIO in Stacey's cockpit.

STACEY  
Where are you?

RICK  
I'm pulling a Tom Cruise.

Stacey looks up.

WIDEN TO REVEAL Rick, flying UPSIDE DOWN directly over Stacey's head. A huge smile is plastered across his face.

After a moment, Rick rolls upright, and joins up on Stacey's wing.

Settling down, Rick stares at Stacey for a moment, mesmerized. At this moment, she is the most beautiful woman he has ever seen.

FADE TO:

EXT. SKY - BOSTON AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Rick and Stacey are lined up on final approach, with the sun setting in the background.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - RAMP - MOMENTS LATER

With their airplanes now parked, Rick and Stacey climb out.

STACEY

So, did you have any fun?

Rick moves closer to Stacey.

RICK

(completely mesmerized)

That was amazing.

With no words to describe what he is feeling, Rick moves towards Stacey, leans in, and kisses her passionately on the lips. We PULL OUT as the two kiss, and embrace in each other's arms.

FADE OUT.

EXT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - HANGAR - EARLY MORNING

Rick is walking toward the airshow hangar with a smirk across his face. He is still on a natural high from what took place the night before.

INT. BOSTON AIRSHOW - EARLY MORNING

Opening the door, Rick walks towards the spot in the hangar where his airplane usually resides, when all of the sudden he stops dead in his tracks. The spot where his airplane is supposed to be is EMPTY.

INT. BOSTON RESTAURANT - LATER

Rick and Mr. Henderson are sitting down at a nice restaurant in Boston. Mr. Henderson's plate is practically wiped clean, whereas Rick's has not been touched.

RICK

Why are you doing this?

Pleading with his father.

MR. HENDERSON  
When you're a father you'll understand.

RICK  
When I'm a father, I won't get in the way of my children's dreams.

MR. HENDERSON  
I paid for them, didn't I?

A long beat.

RICK  
Dad, I'm 22, not 17. You can't...

MR. HENDERSON  
Well, start acting like it. Life's full of disappointments, get used to it.

Mr. Henderson stands up and exits.

Rick drops his head. He knows he's beaten.

INT. BOSTON HOTEL - RICK'S ROOM - LATER

CLOSE ON clothes being stuffed into a duffel bag. Widen to reveal Rick packing. The second everything is in there, he zips the bag up and barges out the door.

INT. BOSTON HOTEL - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Rick is headed toward the front door when he bumps into Taylor.

TAYLOR  
Where are you going in such a hurry?

Rick keeps heading for the door.

RICK  
Home. I'm off the team.

TAYLOR  
What?

Rick keeps heading towards the door. On the curb outside is a limo driver with a sign that reads "Henderson."

TAYLOR

Who, whoa, whoa, what? Rick, stop!  
What happened?

Only Rick doesn't stop. He keeps heading for the door, walks PAST the LIMO driver, and jumps into a cab.

WE HOLD on Taylor for a moment. He can't believe this is happening.

EXT. SKY - FLYING - AFTERNOON

The Northern Lights are in their usual diamond-shaped formation, heading back toward Piqua. Only without Rick, they are unintentionally flying a missing man formation.

INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Taylor looks off his left wing at the gap in the formation. A somber expression across his face.

INT. EDGE 540 - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Stacey looks at Wade's Pitts, which is in the number two slot just off Taylor's left wing, the position Rick's Cap usually filled. Replaying recent events in her mind, a somber look slowly spreads across her face.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - LATER

Rick walks out of the terminal through the sliding double glass doors. Rick throws his bags into the back of a cab, and climbs into the car.

EXT. PIQUA AIRPORT - HANGAR

Mike shakes hands with ANDREW to welcome him back onto the team. Taylor looks over as Wade gives his best friend a big hug.

INT. CAB - CONTINUOUS

Driving through the streets of San Francisco, we can see the reflection of the skyscrapers pass by, as Rick stares out the window aimlessly.

EXT. JENNIFER HENDERSON'S HOME - BAY AREA, CA - NIGHT

Rick enters through a 12-foot tall antique wooden door. A large chandelier hangs in the marble entry way, and several pieces of art adorn the walls. MOVING over to the kitchen we notice that the house is filled with family photographs. Most of them are of Rick and his mother. There is, however, no father figure in any of the pictures we see. Rick walks up the stairs and into...

INT. JENNIFER HENDERSON'S HOME - RICK'S ROOM

His room, which is adorned with aviation posters, pictures, etc. Rick drops his bags, and sits down on the bed. A somber look across his face.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Ladies and gentlemen welcome to New  
York...

BEGIN MONTAGE:

EXT. NEW YORK AIRSHOW - CENTER BOX - DAYS LATER

Thousand of fans are lined up along the runway. We HEAR the ANNOUNCER over the LOUDSPEAKER.

ANNOUNCER  
...where Taylor Griffith is trying  
to pick up the slack from the loss  
of recent teammate Rick Henderson.

EXT/INT. TAYLOR'S EXTRA 300S - FLYING - NEW YORK AIRSHOW

Taylor executes a triple WHOOEE TUMBLE. From the ground, it appears as if a giant has grabbed a hold of the wing tips and is flipping the airplane uncontrollably. It is truly breathtaking.

CLOSE ON THE SCOREBOARD: Taylor's name appears on top with 90%.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
Stacey Robertson shows off her  
curves...

EXT/INT. STACEY'S EDGE 540 - FLYING - SEATTLE AIRSHOW

Stacy executes a series of point rolls down the runway.

ANNOUNCER

...as she rolls down the runway  
here in Seattle.

EXT. SEATTLE AIRSHOW - PODIUM

The Northern Lights stand in the SILVER spot on the podium.  
Team Genesis is on top. Surprisingly, Taylor is the only one  
not smiling.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

It's 81 degrees in Dallas...

EXT. DALLAS AIRSHOW - CROWD

In the crowd, Brian, and Sheryl, along with the rest of  
Taylor's FAMILY look skyward.

ANNOUNCER

...and Taylor Griffith is in the  
box. He's led his team to medals  
in two out of the last three  
competitions. Let's see if he can  
do it again today.

EXT/INT. TAYLOR'S EXTRA 300S - FLYING

Taylor executes a SERIES of aerobatic maneuvers down the  
runway. A SLIDE WINDER into a SPIRALING TOWER, and then  
exits with a RATCHET ROLL down the runway - two 1/4 points  
forward, 1 back.

EXT. DALLAS AIRSHOW - RAMP

There is a huge mob of PRESS and FANS gathered around  
Taylor's airplane. A gold medal hangs around his neck.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. DALLAS AIRSHOW - RAMP - LATE AFTERNOON

The bustle of activity that once filled the ramp earlier has  
gone. Only a few custodians and janitors remain.

Taylor and Brian walk towards the performers' hangar. Brian has Taylor's gold medal in hand. A proud expression across his face. Taylor on the other hand is not so excited. We get the sense that his mind may be on other things.

TAYLOR

Why are we going back to the hangar again?

BRIAN

I just want to take a look at something. It will only take a minute.

TAYLOR

The plane's fine dad.

Sensing his son's frustration.

BRIAN

You know you made the whole family very proud today.

TAYLOR

Thanks.

BRIAN

None of us have ever done anything like this.

Taylor smiles, starting to feel better. Closing on the hangar, Taylor looks up, and sees a MAN TOUCHING his airplane.

TAYLOR

What the...

The MAN turns and locks eyes with Taylor. Caught, he quickly moves away.

Taylor quickens his pace, as he moves towards the hangar.

INT. DALLAS AIRSHOW - PERFORMERS HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

As soon as Taylor enters the hangar, SHERYL pops into view.

TAYLOR

Mom. What are you doing here?  
What was that guy doing to my plane?

Sheryl looks back at Brian, who has just entered the hangar. Taylor begins inspecting the fuselage of his airplane. No problems so far.

BRIAN

Notice anything different.

Taylor looks back at his father, confused. Brian nods his head towards Taylor's wing.

Taylor turns, and sees that CASTROL'S LOGO is plastered across the top of his wings. Taylor's jaw drops, his eyes begin to well up. Could this be real?

At this moment, Ryan Craft, the president of Castrol, Mike, and the rest of Taylor's family come out of hiding.

Taylor looks at his father in disbelief.

BRIAN

Looks like we won't be selling her after all.

Ryan walks over to Taylor and places a HAT on Taylor's head. The HAT BEARS THE CASTROL LOGO!

RYAN CRAFT

Welcome to the team, son. We're looking forward to many seasons together.

TAYLOR

Thank you.

The two shake hands and Taylor's mom takes a picture. This is Taylor's dream come true, but for some reason, it doesn't feel quite right.

INT. JENNIFER HENDERSON'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rick and his mother, Jennifer, are sitting down at the kitchen table, eating dinner. The T.V. is on. Rick's GOLDEN RETRIEVER's face is buried in his lap. Even he can tell that Rick is upset. A long silence...

JENNIFER

You know, he was just trying to look out for you.

(beat)

If something were to happen...

Rick gets up and leaves the table without saying a word.

INT. MIKE'S HANGAR OFFICE - PIQUA AIRPORT - NIGHT

Mike is shuffling through papers at his desk when he comes across a PICTURE of his SON. For the first time in a long time, he remembers him happily. We HEAR the SOUND of someone KNOCKING on the door.

MIKE

Come in.

Taylor steps into Mike's office. He is holding his CASTROL HAT in his hands.

MIKE

Taylor, what can I do for you?

TAYLOR

I...

MIKE

I wanted to let you know how proud I am of you. The youngest sponsored pilot in aerobatic history. Feels good, doesn't it?

TAYLOR

Yeah.

MIKE

So, what did you want to see me for?

TAYLOR

It's about Rick.

MIKE

Okay...

TAYLOR

You see, he and I started flying together. I just...don't feel right doing this without him. It's not fun anymore.

MIKE

Taylor, I understand what you're feeling. But these things happen in sports. Some people make it and move forward, others get left behind.

TAYLOR

But he didn't choose to be left behind.

MIKE

I'm on your side here, but what can we do about it? Rick's father took away his plane.

TAYLOR

He could fly mine.

MIKE

An Extra is a little different than a Cap.

TAYLOR

Not that different.

MIKE

It's different.

(a beat)

Not to mention that Andrew has been with us the last few weeks. It's bad enough he lost his place once on the team, I'm not going to put him through that again.

TAYLOR

Well, if Rick doesn't fly, neither do I.

Mike is not sure how to handle this.

MIKE

Taylor, I appreciate what you're trying to do here, but taking yourself off the team isn't going to help anybody.

TAYLOR

I have to try. I'm sorry. Me and Stacey are leaving tonight to go get him. I'll be back as soon as I can.

Taylor exits. Mike sits there in total disbelief. He can't believe Taylor is willing to sacrifice his future for his best friend.

INT. CLUB - SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Rick is sitting alone at a table in the middle of a crowded club. RAP MUSIC is blaring in the background, and people are falling over drunk around him. We can tell that Rick is no longer comfortable in his old surroundings.

In the distance, we see a girl, ERICA CALOFF, 22-- blonde, beautiful, wearing a low-cut dress and looking sexy as hell-- pushing her way through the crowd with two SHOTS in hand. She is right at home here.

Erica hands Rick his shot and then sits down next to him.

ERICA

Here you go, baby.

We see her hand slide toward his pelvic area as she kisses him on the cheek.

Rick stares at the drink in his hand. He can't believe he is about to do this. Rick takes the shot.

EXT. JENNIFER HENDERSON'S HOME - NIGHT

Taylor and Stacey pull into Rick's driveway. Exiting the vehicle, they make their way over to the front door. Taylor RINGS the DOORBELL, and Jennifer answers.

JENNIFER

Hey, Taylor. What are you doing here?

TAYLOR

Looking for Rick, actually. Have you seen him?

INT. CLUB - SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

CLOSE on a LINE OF COKE being snorted off a table. Widen to reveal Rick, now drunk and high, CLENCHING his nose.

He looks around the room, which is now spinning. Lost and stoned out of his mind, he reaches over, grabs Erica, and begins kissing her roughly.

EXT. CLUB - SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

Taylor and Stacey pull up to the front of the club. They valet the car, and then make their way through the crowd into the club.

INT. CLUB - SAN FRANCISCO - MOMENTS LATER

Taylor makes his way over to the table section of the club. Rick spots Taylor and Stacey approaching.

RICK  
Hey, Taylor, Stacey, what's up,  
guys? What are you doing here?

Rick takes a sip of his drink.

RICK  
Sit down, have a drink.

TAYLOR  
What are you doing?

RICK  
What are you talking about?

TAYLOR  
Come on. Let's get out of here.

RICK  
And go where?

TAYLOR  
Home. Let's go.

RICK  
I'm not going anywhere.

TAYLOR  
Yeah you are.

Taylor grabs a hold of Rick's shirt, and tries to force him out of the club. The two wrestle for a moment until Rick is able to get free.

RICK  
What the fuck is wrong with you?

TAYLOR  
I ought to be asking you that.

Taylor tries to grab Rick again, but Rick pushes him away.

RICK

Don't touch me. Don't you fucking touch me.

Stacey begins to well up. She has never seen Rick like this.

STACEY

Rick, what are you doing? This isn't you.

RICK

No, this is exactly me. I just didn't realize it until now.

STACEY

No, it isn't.

RICK

And how would you know? You think just because we fucked once that you know everything about me. Don't flatter yourself, babe. You're not that hot.

Rick leans back into his seat, and puts his arm around Erica. Loving every minute of this, Erica moves closer to Rick and touches him sexually.

Unable to take any more of this, Stacey runs out of the club.

TAYLOR

That's just great. Really mature, man.

RICK

What do you care? Everything's working out for you. With your big new sponsor, and Nationals next week. What are you even doing here?

TAYLOR

Cut the shit Rick. I'm so sick and tired of you feeling sorry for yourself all the time. You think just because your father...

Rick stands up.

RICK

You know what, I don't have to listen to this. I'm one of the richest kids in the world, remember? I don't have to work a day in my life, or listen to anyone, I don't want to listen to.

Rick begins to leave.

RICK

(turning around)

Oh, and as soon as I turn 25 and inherit my trust, I can buy ten airplanes. We'll see whose laughing then.

TAYLOR

And what are you going to do until then?

Taylor looks down at the drink in Rick's hand.

TAYLOR

Maybe your father was right about you.

Rick exits. Taylor waits a moment. Regretting what he has just said.

EXT. CLUB - SAN FRANCISCO - CONTINUOUS

Now on the curb, Taylor sees a valet hand Rick his keys. Taylor rushes over, as Rick climbs into his car. Rick tries to close the door, but is stopped by Taylor.

TAYLOR

What are you doing?

RICK

Get away from me.

TAYLOR

You can't drive home.

RICK

Watch me.

Taylor reaches for the keys, but Rick stops him. Now infuriated, Taylor jumps in the car, and uses all of his weight to physically shove Rick into the passenger seat.

RICK  
Jesus, what's your problem? Why  
can't you just let me live my life.

TAYLOR  
Fine. We'll do it your way.

Taylor slams the door, and hits the gas. The wheels spin as Taylor launches the car out of the driveway, and onto the streets of San Francisco.

INT/EXT. RICK'S CAR - DRIVING - CONTINUOUS

Taylor's foot is still on the floor. Rick looks over at the speedometer, which is still climbing.

RICK  
(sobering up)  
Taylor what are you...

Taylor throws the steering wheel over to the right, sending the car skidding around a corner.

TAYLOR  
Shut up. It's my turn to talk.

The car's speed increases.

TAYLOR  
And what do you care, anyway? You  
clearly don't give a shit about  
what happens to you.

Taylor skids around another corner, knocking over several trash cans. Rick is quickly sobering up.

RICK  
Taylor this isn't funny, slow the  
fucking car down!

Taylor puts the accelerator to the floor, as he barrels towards a busy intersection.

TAYLOR  
What's the matter? Scared?

Rick tenses as Taylor runs through a red light, barely missing several passing cars.

RICK  
(now completely sober)  
Alright. Alright.  
(MORE)

RICK (cont'd)  
You've made your point, so can we  
please slow down!

TAYLOR  
No.

RICK  
What do you want from me? I'm  
sorry alright. I know what I did  
was stupid, but you've got to  
understand it's not that easy.  
You've got an entire family that  
supports you, but what about me?  
What do I have?

We HEAR the SOUND of the engine slowing down.

TAYLOR  
Well me for starters.

Rick cracks a smile.

TAYLOR  
Not to mention everyone else on  
that team. Don't we count for  
something?

Taylor notices that Rick is smiling.

TAYLOR  
What?

RICK  
Are you gonna kiss me now?

Taylor can't help but crack a smile.

TAYLOR  
Fuck you.

RICK  
Oh, come on.  
(kissing motions)  
Muh, muh, muh, muh, muh.

Taylor hits Rick playfully. The two share a light moment.

TAYLOR  
You're such a little bitch, ya know  
that?

RICK  
(apologizing)  
Yeah, I know.

Taylor takes his foot off the gas completely. The car continues to slow down. They stare at each other for a moment, still laughing.

TAYLOR

So, are you gonna come back or what?

The STREET LIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM GOES RED. Taylor doesn't notice, as they pass into the intersection.

We HEAR the SOUND of a HORN HONKING. Taylor and Rick turn as a LARGE TRUCK SLAMS INTO THE DRIVER SIDE OF RICK'S CAR, SENDING IT TOPPLING END OVER END.

EXT. RICK'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Pulling up and overhead we see Rick's car come rolling to a stop upside down. Nearby witnesses begin running towards the accident. There is no movement coming from inside the car.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. RICK'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Rick lies in a hospital bed hooked up to an EKG monitor, IV's, and oxygen. Slowly awakening, Rick looks around to see his mother standing by the bed next to him.

JENNIFER

Shhh. You're okay. Just a few bumps and bruises, but nothing serious. Thank God you wore your seat belt.

RICK

Taylor? Where is he?

Jennifer begins to well up. We know what's happened before she says anything.

Rick begins to break down. He is not able to deal with this.

JENNIFER

I'm so sorry, sweetie. They did everything they could.

RICK

Oh my God. Oh my God.

Jennifer tries to comfort her son by touching his face.

RICK  
(quietly)  
Don't touch me.

Jennifer grabs a hold of her son, but he can't take it. His body convulses the second he feels her touch.

RICK  
I said don't touch me. Please just  
get away from me.

Rick rolls away from his mother, and curls up into a ball. This is too much for him to take.

RICK  
Just leave me alone! Please just  
leave me alone.

With tears streaming down her face, Jennifer makes her way toward the exit.

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer enters the hallway to find Mr. Henderson talking to one of the doctors. He moves towards her.

MR. HENDERSON  
So how's he doing?

Jennifer doesn't answer. She just looks at him like he's the stupidest man alive.

MR. HENDERSON  
(sincere)  
He's going to be okay. We've got  
the best doctors in the world  
looking after him.  
(comforting)  
He'll be fine.

Jennifer looks into the eyes of her ex-husband. He just doesn't get it. After a moment, she walks away.

EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NEXT DAY

Jennifer is sitting in a chair outside her son's room, watching him through the window, when Mike approaches.

MIKE  
Mrs. Henderson?

JENNIFER  
Yes.

MIKE  
I'm...

JENNIFER  
Mike. I know who you are. He's  
told me all about you.

MIKE  
How is he?

JENNIFER  
Not good. He's refusing to talk to  
anybody. I know he blames himself  
and...

INT. RICK'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rick watches from his bed through the window as Mike and his mother talk. Ashamed, he turns his head away from the window.

We HEAR the SOUND of a DOOR OPEN. Rick turns his head to see Mike walking into his room.

The two exchange a brief look before Rick has to turn away. The guilt is too much for him to bear.

Mike pulls up a chair and sits down next to Rick.

MIKE  
How are you feeling?

Rick looks over at Mike.

MIKE  
Dumb question, I know.  
(beat)  
I know it might be hard for you to  
believe, but I understand what  
you're going through.

Rick gives Mike a look that says, "you don't have a clue."

A long moment passes.

MIKE

Did you know I had a son? Yep. You two would have gotten a kick out of each other. He was the spitting image of Taylor, I swear to god. He died when he was about your age.

INT. OLD HANGAR - METS FIELD - FLASHBACK

The hangar is immaculate. There is not an oil stain in sight, and the freshly painted BLUE walls are glistening in the evening sun.

Inside, ZACH EVERSMANN, early 20's, is wiping down his PITTS S1C aerobatic biplane.

We HEAR an UNKNOWN VOICE from off screen.

UNKNOWN VOICE

Zach, are you there? Zach pick up.  
Zach...

Zach picks up a small HANDHELD RADIO off a nearby tool bench.

ZACH

Yeah. What's going on, Dad?

EXT/INT. PIPER CUB - FLYING - CONTINUOUS - FLASHBACK

MIKE is behind the controls of a piper cub. He SPEAKS over the RADIO.

MIKE

Have you dusted the Barrets' field yet?

EXT/INT. GRUMMAN AG-CAT - FLYING - FLASHBACK

Zach's airplane HITS the GROUND, and EXPLODES.

INT. RICK'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MIKE

That was the last thing I said to him. I blamed myself for so long. What would have happened if I hadn't asked him to dust that field? Would he still be here today?

(MORE)

MIKE (cont'd)

Those are the questions that haunted me for years.

(a beat)

There was a time when I regretted ever having let him fly. But that would have been like killing him anyway. Like Taylor, Zach was the most alive when he was in the airplane. He was actually the one who came up with the name Northern Lights.

Rick looks at Mike, confused.

MIKE

Yeah. We originally tried this thing about 15 years ago. But after Zach died...His death only reinforced the idea that kids your age lacked the maturity to fly competitive aerobatics. You gonna prove them right?

(beat)

I know, you feel responsible for Taylor's death. But sooner or later you are going to have to forgive yourself and move on. Not forget. But move on. Otherwise you'll find yourself wasting away the better years of your life.

Rick looks away from Mike. Tears are now streaming down Rick's face. Mike gets up and heads for the door.

RICK

How do I do that?

Mike turns around.

MIKE

Like anything else, one day at a time.

We hold on Rick for a moment. He is not ready to do this yet.

INT. PIQUA AIRPORT - HANGAR - DAYS LATER

Tony, Stacey, Andrew, and Wade push their airplanes out of the hangar, about to leave for Nationals. We hold on Taylor's airplane, in the hangar, alone. We stay with it as the hangar doors slowly close, making the airplane only visible in silhouette. Like a ghost.

EXT/INT. JENNIFER'S CAR - MORNING

Rick sits in the passenger seat of his mother's car as they pull into their driveway. Rick exits the car and enters his house.

INT. JENNIFER HENDERSON'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Without hesitation, Rick walks up the stairs, heading for his room.

JENNIFER

I turned down your bed, and I put a satellite controller on your night stand. There's cookie dough ice cream in the fridge, if you want it. If you need anything else, let me know.

RICK

Thanks, Mom.

INT. RICK'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rick enters his room and sits down on his bed. On the night stand is a PICTURE of him and Taylor at their first aerobatic competition. Unable to look at the picture, Rick buries his face into the palms of his hands, and begins to break down.

INT. BAR - OSHKOSH - NIGHT

Wade, Stacey, and Tony are sitting at a local bar in Oshkosh.

WADE

I still can't believe he's gone.

TONY

Me either.

STACEY

He wouldn't be, if it hadn't been for Rick.

TONY

Don't say that.

STACEY

You weren't there, Tony. You didn't see what he was like.

(MORE)

STACEY (cont'd)  
I swear, it should have been him in  
that car.

Wade slams his hands down on the table.

WADE  
That's enough. You shut your trap  
there Stacey. Taylor died trying  
to save his best friend. I only  
hope that one day I'm worthy of  
that kind of love.

Stacey looks at Wade for a moment. She knows he's right.

EXT. TAYLOR'S HOUSE - MORNING - NEXT DAY

The middle of nowhere. Over TWENTY CARS are parked in the driveway and on the road outside Taylor's house. Rick pulls into the driveway and steps out. He makes his way across the lawn, and stops several feet before the front door. He can't bring himself to go any further.

INT. TAYLOR'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Sheryl, Brian, the rest of Taylor's family, and over 30 close friends are gathered around their small kitchen table. They are going through photographs which are strewn all over the table.

BRIAN  
I can't find the picture of me and  
Taylor at the lake. Do you know  
where that one is?

SHERYL  
Taylor's got a copy in his room.  
I'll get it.

Sheryl gets up, and makes her way over to Taylor's room.

INT. TAYLOR'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The walls and ceiling are COMPLETELY covered with posters, photographs, and ads from aviation magazines. Sheryl walks over to a pin board and removes a picture of Taylor, age 10, and Brian at Lake Berryessa. Brian is standing on a dock with Taylor on his shoulders. Both are smiling.

Sheryl stares at the picture for a moment and then moves towards the door.

On her way, she catches sight of RICK through the window. He is still standing a few feet away from the door.

Brian approaches.

BRIAN

You find it.

Sheryl hands him the picture.

SHERYL

I'll be right back.

Brian catches sight of Rick, as Sheryl heads for the front door.

EXT. TAYLOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sheryl opens the door, and walks over to Rick. He can barely look at her.

SHERYL

Are you gonna come inside?

RICK

I can't.

Sheryl walks up to Rick, and puts her arm around him.

SHERYL

You have to. You're family.

(beat)

Come on. I need you to help us  
pick out pictures. You're the only  
one Taylor would trust.

Sheryl begins to walk inside, and Rick follows.

INT. TAYLOR'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rick follows Sheryl down the hallway, which is adorned with pictures of Taylor and his family. The house is very simple. No luxury of any kind. Nevertheless, the feeling of the home is far richer than Rick's. Arriving at the kitchen table, Rick sees the 30 plus PEOPLE who have come to lend their love and support to Taylor's family.

As he approaches the table, Brian gets up grabs onto Rick as if he were hugging his own son. Unsure of how to react, Rick slowly put his arms around Brian, as he begins to break down.

After a moment, Brian pulls away from Rick, and looks directly into his eyes. He forgives Rick without even saying a word.

BRIAN

I'm glad you're here.

They both sit down at the kitchen table and begin going through photographs.

After a moment, Rick spots a picture of him and Taylor at an aerobatic competition. They look years younger.

BRIAN

I remember that? Borrego Springs, right?

RICK

Yeah. It was our first contest.

Brian picks up the picture.

BRIAN

What were you two, 18?

RICK

Yep.

BRIAN

Look how scrawny you two were back then. Especially Taylor.

Rick goes through a few more pictures of the same competition. After a few, he stumbles upon a picture of Rick and Taylor at the fuel pump. Rick begins laughing. He is bending over, and Taylor is pretending to "do" Rick from behind with the fuel nozzle.

Brian sees the picture and begins laughing. He shows it to Sheryl.

SHERYL

Yep. That'd be Taylor.

Sheryl begins laughing, which quickly transforms into a cry.

SHERYL

I'm sorry. It's just that I miss him already...

Rick stands up and gives Sheryl a hug who continues to break down in his arms. After a moment, his tears begin to flow as well.

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

SHERYL  
I know..I know. But it's not your fault.

Sheryl pulls away and looks Rick in the eyes.

SHERYL  
It's not your fault.

SHERYL  
Ahhh. Look at me. Taylor would kick my ass if he saw me like this.

RICK  
No.

SHERYL  
He would. You know he would.  
(imitating Taylor)  
He'd say, "momma, all your negative energy is messing with his positive world."

Rick just smiles. He knows this is true.

Sheryl sits down and they begin going through pictures again. For the next few moments Rick goes through pictures with Taylor's family and friends. They each tell their own "Taylor" stories, and almost every one is met with a laugh. After a moment Rick realizes, he truly is part of this family.

INT. TAYLOR'S HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Rick, Sheryl, and Brian are standing in Brian's home office, which is filled with pictures and TROPHIES from Taylor's competitions. Brian is looking at the first place trophy from Borrego Springs.

BRIAN  
You know what he said to me? The last time I saw him?

RICK  
No.

BRIAN  
"So long Daddy-O." Then he jumped in his airplane, and took off.  
(MORE)

BRIAN (cont'd)

He was so happy you two were flying together. God you should have heard him. He would go on and on about how the two of you were going to take over the world together.

(beat)

He was so proud of you.

RICK

I doubt that.

SHERYL

He was. He loved you so much. He was always so protective of you. He would never tell me what was going on between you two. I remember the year when you two didn't talk to each other. It was like something died in him. Whenever I asked him what was wrong, he would say, "Momma, don't worry about it." He loved you so much he wouldn't even talk about your secrets to me. I'm just so thankful he had a friend like you. That's the reason he went out there that night. He wanted you to fly his plane so badly. He just didn't feel right, doing it without you.

RICK

What do you mean, fly his plane?

Brian pulls TAYLOR'S KEYS out of his POCKET, and extends them to Rick.

RICK

No. I can't.

BRIAN

You don't understand. You have to.

Brian places the keys in Rick's hand. Rick takes them, and clenches his fist tightly.

BRIAN

Say hi to him for me up there.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - OSHKOSH - DAYS LATER - EARLY MORNING

Andrew, and what remains of the Northern Lights, follow Mike to the front row of the briefing room.

The group looks around at the near 100 COMPETITORS whom they will be facing in the days to come.

After a brief moment, TOM POBEREZNY, a man in his 60's and 3 time National Champion, 1969 World Champion, and head of the National Aerobatic Committee, steps on stage. The room goes silent.

TOM POBEREZNY

How's it going, everyone? Now before we officially get started I would like to commend all of you for making it this far. You are the very best pilots this country has to offer.

The group applauds. The Northern Lights look around at the pilots surrounding them.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING

Arial POV shot of the Oshkosh airport in the morning sun. The airport is not yet awake, yet the sight of FIVE THOUSAND AIRPLANES on the ground is breathtaking.

CUT TO REVEAL RICK FLYING TAYLOR'S EXTRA 300S.

We stay with him as he lands at the Oshkosh airport.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - ON THE GROUND - OSHKOSH - MOMENTS LATER

The morning dew is still on the grass. The mist and clouds have not yet dissipated as Rick taxis Taylor's airplane toward the motionless pit area. Rick pulls up and shuts down next to Wade's airplane and climbs out. He looks around the airport for a moment, taking it all in. He still can't believe what he is about to do.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - OSHKOSH - EARLY MORNING

TOM POBEREZNY

Now without any further ado, I would like to officially welcome you all to the 2007 National Aerobatic Championship.

The entire room applauds. From the back of the room we see Rick approaching.

TOM POBEREZNY

Good luck to each of you. Now I am going to hand you over to Mac, who is going to be your air boss. Mac, if you would.

MAC moves to the center of the briefing room.

MAC

A little bit of house cleaning... Direction of flight will be from North to South. Winds currently are out of the east, so you are going to have an on-crowd wind.

The air boss continues briefing as Rick casually makes his way towards the front of the room. He takes a seat next to Mike. The two share a moment of mutual admiration.

From across the room, Mr. Henderson witnesses all of this. He is clearly distraught by Rick's presence.

MAC

Order of flight for the day is predetermined by your qualification standings. Well, that about covers it. Any questions?

Mac looks around the room, and sees that nobody has their hand up.

MAC

Alright, good luck to all of you.

All of the pilots stand up and begin to disperse.

Before Rick can move, Wade smacks him in the back.

WADE

(sarcastically)  
Glad you finally decided to show up.

RICK

Sorry it took me so long.

TONY

We're just glad you made it.

RICK

Me, too.

Rick looks at Stacey. The two lock eyes for a moment. Unwilling to forgive him, she moves past him without saying a word. Rick, Wade, Andrew and Tony follow closely behind.

WADE

It's alright. It's just gonna take time, that's all.

Before Rick can respond, Mr. Henderson latches onto Rick and pulls him away from the rest of the competitors.

Rick shrugs his father off. The two now stand toe to toe with each other.

MR. HENDERSON

What are you doing here? I specifically forbid you from flying here today.

RICK

No, you took away my airplane. It's a little different.

MR. HENDERSON

That's not the point. I told you to go home, which is exactly what you are going to do.

Rick begins to walk away when Mr. Henderson grabs a hold of him.

RICK

Jesus Christ, Dad, what's your problem. I'm not a baby any more, you can't tell me what to do.

MR. HENDERSON

Yes I can. I'm your father, and you will respect my decision.

RICK

No, I won't. I'm not your child anymore, Dad.

Rick removes himself from his father's grasp. Mr. Henderson begins to crack.

MR. HENDERSON

Rick, you'll always be my child. I know I haven't always been there for you, but I'm doing the best I can here.

Rick is shocked. His father is trying to hold back his emotions, but Rick can still see them. This is the most open his father has ever been.

Ricks waits a moment. He finally understands that his father has never been trying to do anything more than protect him.

RICK

Dad, I get it, alright. I know you don't want anything to happen to me. But sooner or later you're going to have to start letting me make my own choices. And I know I haven't always done that well in the past, but we all make mistakes. All we can do now is try to learn from those mistakes and move on.

(beat)

When are you going to start doing that?

MR. HENDERSON

What do you mean?

RICK

Dad, come on, you treated me and mom like shit.

(off Mr. Henderson)

It's true. You were never there for us. And I want to hate you so bad but I can't. You're my father, and I love you. But I can't do this anymore. I can't live the rest of my life for somebody else. And no matter what you say, I am going to fly here today.

Mr. Henderson drops his head, defeated.

RICK

But I would prefer to do it with you behind me.

Mr. Henderson tries to speak, but can't find the words. Disappointed, Rick walks away. Mr. Henderson watches his son disappear into the crowd in disbelief. Right in front of his eyes, his son has become a man.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' PIT - LATER

The sky is clear. Rick now sits strapped into Taylor's airplane.

MIKE  
How do you feel?

RICK  
Fine.

MIKE  
Okay. Now if you start to feel uncomfortable...

RICK  
Mike. I'll be fine.

Mike looks at him for a moment. His eyes are filled with parental admiration.

MIKE  
Okay. Have a safe flight.

Rick brings his canopy down and fires his ENGINE to LIFE.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Rick's mother, father, and sister all watch as Rick taxis out. Surprisingly, Sheryl, Brian, Dorothy, and Clyde have just entered the tent. Jennifer goes over to greet them.

JENNIFER  
Hi. How are you doing?

SHERYL  
We're hanging in there.

JENNIFER  
I'm so glad you could make it.

BRIAN  
We wouldn't miss it for the world.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - MOMENTS LATER

Rick pulls out onto the runway. Rick closes his eyes just long enough to say a quick prayer before taking off. As he brings the throttle forward we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TAYLOR'S FUNERAL - OSHKOSH AIRFIELD - DAYS LATER

CLOSE ON a pair of white gloves opening a BLACK car door. We pull out to reveal Rick, Brian, Wade, and Mike, all dressed in black, pulling a coffin out of a HEARSE. We move with them as they carry Taylor's body down the longest funeral aisle ever seen on screen. Thousands of Oshkosh pilots and spectators have gathered for Taylor's outdoor funeral.

AIR BOSS (O.S.)

Rick Henderson, you are cleared  
into the box, it's all yours.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - DAYS EARLIER

RICK

Roger, the box is mine.

Rick brings his MIXTURE and PROP to FULL FORWARD. We can HEAR the RPM'S increase, and Rick dives into the box with smoke on.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' TENT - MINUTES LATER

Rick and Taylor's families watch nervously, their eyes toward the sky.

EXT. TAYLOR'S FUNERAL - DAYS LATER

Mike has just finished his speech, and is stepping down off the podium as Rick takes his place. He waits a moment before speaking. The sight of the thousands of people who have remained at Oshkosh to say goodbye to his best friend is truly breathtaking.

RICK

Hi, I'm Rick Henderson. Taylor was my best friend. But to me, Taylor was more than a friend. He was a brother, family that was closer than my own. When Sheryl asked me to speak up here today...I had no idea what to say. Things the past few days have just not seemed to make a whole lot of sense. And after my flight on Saturday... I... have no idea how to feel about things anymore.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' PIT - DAYS EARLIER

Mike and the Northern Lights are all looking skyward.

WADE

Where is he?

Then Mike catches it. At almost ten thousand feet, over 7,000 feet higher than he should be for his routine, Mike sees Rick's smoke.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick is now halfway around in a P-loop. Right as the airplane approaches the vertical down, Rick POPS the STICK BACK, SLAMS THE LEFT RUDDER, AND ENTERS A SERIES OF DIVING SNAP ROLLS -- the same maneuver Taylor began his sequence with.

RICK (O.S.)

But in the midst of all that confusion, there was one thing that did seem to make sense.

(looking at Stacey)

A few weeks ago, somebody asked me why I do all this.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Jennifer and Sheryl gasp as they see Rick's airplane drawing GIANT CORK SCREWS in the SKY as he SNAP ROLLS TOWARD THE GROUND.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' PIT - CONTINUOUS

Mike, Tony, Andrew, Wade, and Stacey look up in awe as Rick rockets toward the ground, rotating at over 500 degrees per second.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING

The smoke is billowing out behind Rick's airplane as he SCREAMS at the top of his lungs, counting the revolutions as he dives towards the earth.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Sheryl, now crying, looks up as Rick snap rolls towards the ground. She might as well be watching her own boy up there. We move across Jennifer, Mr. Henderson, Stacey, Clyde, Brian, and Dorothy's faces, who are all watching in awe as Rick continues his series of diving snap rolls. The line of snaps is over two miles long.

RICK (O.S.)

At the time, I didn't really have  
an answer.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Rick SLAMS on the RIGHT RUDDER, stopping the rotation on a DIME, as he completes 50 DIVING SNAP ROLLS. The tail of smoke left behind his plane seems to stretch into the heavens.

EXT. TAYLOR'S FUNERAL - DAYS LATER

RICK

But you know what? I think I found  
the answer to that question:  
freedom. Up there, you can be  
anything you want to be.

From here on out, the funeral scene will intercut with Rick's flight. Images will dissolve onto one another to create a beautiful juxtaposition of triumph and loss.

EXT. CROWD LINE - CONTINUOUS

Over TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE in the crowd watch in awe as Rick's routine continues. Nobody has ever seen anything like this before. A combination of Taylor's sequence and his own. It is beautiful.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Again at center box, Rick pulls up onto a 45 degree up-line. As the airspeed begins to bleed off, he begins ROLLING left while SKIDDING the airplane with RIGHT RUDDER. As he approaches the inverted point, Rick GOES FULL LEFT RUDDER AND FULL FORWARD STICK AS HE ENTERS A WHOOEE TUMBLE. The airplane is flying perfectly sideways in the sky while FLIPPING TAIL OVER NOSE.

The airplane comes around 4 times, completing a quad tumble -- a maneuver that has never in history been completed... until now.

RICK

All the dreams you had as a child  
can come true in front of your  
eyes. I only just learned that  
recently, but Taylor...that was  
something he knew all along. And  
you could see it in his flying. He  
flew with no restraint or  
boundaries.

EXT/INT. EXTRA 300S - FLYING - CONTINUOUS

Now at the north end of the field, Rick pulls up into a half loop. Once he reaches the top of the maneuver, Rick SLAMS the LEFT RUDDER, and QUICKLY STUFFS the STICK FORWARD, sending the airplane into a series of tumbles. The airplane completes two revolutions before Rick stops the rotation inverted. With almost zero airspeed, Rick keeps the THROTTLE FORWARD and TRACTORS the airplane back up to the vertical up-line. Shutting off the smoke, Rick enters into a torque roll. It is truly beautiful.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' PITT - CONTINUOUS

STACEY

A tumble into a torque roll.

EXT. CROWD LINE - CONTINUOUS

The crowd erupts into cheers as Rick exits his final maneuver and comes around for landing.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' PIT - MOMENTS LATER

Rick taxis his airplane into the center of the pit and shuts down.

EXT/INT. RICK'S CAP 232 - CONTINUOUS

Rick undoes his seat belts and slowly takes off his helmet to reveal tears underneath. He takes a moment, then pops open his canopy and climbs out onto the wing. The CROWD ERUPTS INTO CHEERS. After a moment, he throws his arms up in triumph.

RICK

...no care of winning or losing,  
but with love, passion, and with  
his heart. And that's how I plan  
to live the rest of my life.

EXT. CENTER BOX - PERFORMERS' PIT - CONTINUOUS

Rick climbs down off the wing, where his friends and family  
are waiting for him. Jennifer, doing her best to hold back  
tears of her own, rushes over to grab a hold of her son.

JENNIFER

That was amazing. He would have  
been so proud of you.

RICK

Thanks, Mom.

Rick moves over to Sheryl, and gives her a big hug. Then  
Brian.

Rick spots Stacey, whose eyes are welled up with tears.  
Releasing Sheryl, Rick approaches Stacey, who can barely look  
him in the eyes.

RICK

Stacey, I'm...

STACEY

I know.

She grabs his hand.

STACEY

But I don't want you to miss this  
moment. He wouldn't want you to.

Rick gives Stacey a hug and then runs back over to Taylor's  
airplane, jumps onto the wing and throws his hands up in the  
air. The crowd erupts into cheers.

BACK IN THE TENT:

Mr. Henderson is staring at his son. He is the only one not  
clapping. After a moment, he brings his hands together, and  
joins in the applause. He looks over at an UNKNOWN GENTLEMAN  
standing next to him and proudly says ...

MR. HENDERSON

That's my son.

RICK (O.S.)  
Because I don't know if any of you  
realized it, but last Saturday,  
that wasn't just me flying.

EXT. TAYLOR'S FUNERAL - DAYS LATER

Rick, tears now streaming down his face, is doing his best to finish his speech.

RICK  
He was right there next to me...  
egging me to go around one more  
time in that snap roll. So I did.

Looking up at the sky.

RICK  
Taylor, you taught me how to live,  
and that is a lesson I will never  
forget. I love you, brother.  
Goodbye.

Rick steps off the podium. Before Rick reaches his seat, we HEAR the SOUND of several JET AIRPLANES approaching. As Rick looks up, so do we, to reveal the BLUE ANGELS -- a 5 ship, F-18 Navy formation team -- passing overhead. As they pass over the procession, the right wing man breaks off to fly the MISSING MAN FORMATION. We watch the Blue Angels fly off into the distance.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: DEDICATED TO NICK NILMEYER: 1983-2006