

PASSENGERS

by

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FADE IN:

INT. CABIN - DELTA 737 - NIGHT

TWO FLIGHT ATTENDANTS come down the aisle with the beverage cart. PASSENGERS read magazines, banter lightly, listen to their head-phones, work on lap-tops.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (VO)
...we will be coming by with our
complimentary beverage cart. Beer is
three dollars. Wine and alcohol is
four dollars. Please have your money
ready...

ERIC THOMAS, late 20s, sloppy shoulder-length hair, built like a soccer player, sits in an aisle seat, looking at a magazine. The beverage cart bumps him.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
I'm sorry.

Eric barely notices, he smiles that it's okay.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Can I get you something?

ERIC
Water, please.

The Flight Attendant hands him a bottle of Evian water and a cup of ice.

SUBJECTIVE POV

CAMERA is to the left of Eric. He glances across at US, smiles awkwardly and returns to his magazine as --

CLOSE ON ERIC

He twists the cap off of his Evian and begins to pour it into his cup of ice.

CLOSE ON THE WATER

falling and splashing into the cup and --

ERIC

finishes pouring the water as -- KABOOM! AN EXPLOSION outside the plane. A cacophony of SCREAMS and SHOUTING erupts behind him.

Everything on Eric's tray launches skyward as HOWLING WIND throws papers, lap-tops and seat-pillows into the air.

Eric struggles to see in the instant maelstrom as the seats from the far back TEAR LOOSE and go airborne, flipping end over end toward the front of the 737 and --

CUT TO:

STARS... burning brightly across an endless black night.

WE ASCEND toward these stars, like spirits, drifting and gliding closer and closer toward their light...

Until we realize these are not stars, but FLAMES...

PUSH IN even closer: we are not ascending into the sky, we are descending toward a ROCKY SHORE... the FLAMES are from the burning pieces of the disintegrated 737, partially submerged in the water, stretching along the shore like hundreds of tiny campfires...

FOLLOW A NEWSPAPER as it SNAPS back and forth in the wind, fluttering past pieces of luggage... an empty shoe... a burnt seat-cushion... an untouched palm-pilot, which is still on, showing someone's appointments for that day...

EXT. CRASH-SITE - NIGHT

FIRE-TRUCKS, AMBULANCES and POLICE CARS appear on the horizon, like apparitions in the smoke. As they come closer, we begin to hear their SIRENS....

ANOTHER ANGLE

DOZENS OF FIREMEN with "Chicago Fire Department" on their coats, soak the burning plane parts. They wrestle with their hoses, negotiating around puddles of burning jet fuel and CHARRED BODY PARTS.

FIREMAN (OS)

Need some help over here!

TWO FIREMEN appear in the smoke, rushing ERIC away from a section of burning fuselage. He's bleeding from a few cuts, but other than that, he's fine. He looks around himself, disoriented, as if he has just awakened from a bad dream.

ERIC

My briefcase.

FIREMAN

It's gone! C'mon, keep walking!

ERIC

My report was in it. I have to deliver
it by six today.

FIREMAN

It's not gonna happen.

They usher him past a line, toward a team of EMS WORKERS.

ERIC

I don't think you get it. If I lose
this account, I lose my job.

FIREMAN

I feel for you, buddy.

The EMS WORKERS throw a blanket around him and guide him toward
five other discombobulated SURVIVORS.

The burning fuselage EXPLODES in the distance.

EXT. CHICAGO MEMORIAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A NEWSPAPER flutters across the parking lot as a Subaru Forester
pulls up, and out steps CLAIRE SUMMERS, late 20s, her natural
beauty suppressed beneath her frumpy, intellectual attire.

She buttons her ratty pea-coat, collar turned up against the
wind. She's distracted by the fluttering newspaper as it flails
around her like a wounded bird.

She steals a few more drags off her cigarette, watching it. As
it dances away, she tosses the cigarette aside and grabs her
briefcase out of the back-seat.

INT. HALLWAY - CHICAGO MEMORIAL - NIGHT

Blinding fluorescent lights. A droning VOICE calling for
Doctors over the intercom. HOSPITAL STAFF hustles Patients in
and out of the Emergency Room. A Security Guard beads in on
Claire.

SECURITY GUARD

You look lost. Can I help you?

Racked by shivers, Claire digs in her coat for her badge.

CLAIRE

I'm Dr. Summers.

The Security Guard points down the hall.

SECURITY GUARD

Over there.

CLAIRE

Thanks.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Claire approaches her colleague, DR. PERRY JACKSON, 40s, black, stocky, graying around the temples. Perry's decked out in the GAP's latest line. His clothes are two sizes too small, as if he's having trouble admitting he's overweight.

CLAIRE

Evening, Perry.

PERRY

Thanks for coming so quickly, Claire.

CLAIRE

God, I've been freezing all day. All this damn wind.

He hands Claire a mocha, pointedly sniffs at the smoke on her clothes.

PERRY

Thought you were gonna give up smoking?

Claire gives him a sheepish smile, caught.

CLAIRE

Maybe next week.

PERRY

Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today.

Claire rolls her eyes at this. She sips her mocha, watching as a DOCTOR enters the E.R.

CLAIRE

So why am I here?

PERRY

I need you to take some patients for me.

CLAIRE

Perry, I've been doing family counselling. I didn't exactly specialize in post traumatic stress.

PERRY

You can handle it.

Claire gives him a tentative look.

PERRY

Claire, you're ready.

CLAIRE

What happened?

PERRY

Plane went down. They're calling it pilot error. Six survivors have been accounted for. Out of two hundred and nine.

She shudders back a wave of sadness.

PERRY

(referring to his file)

You'll be handling the entire group. From what I can tell so far, you're only gonna have problems with one. Eric Thomas.

CLAIRE

What kind of problems?

PERRY

I'm hoping he's just working through a case of denial. But I'd like you to observe him for the next few days and see how he adjusts. Just to be on the safe side.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CHICAGO MEMORIAL - LATER

Claire pushes through a curtained area to find ERIC, in a hospital gown. He's talking with his father, JACK THOMAS, 60s, a gaunt man with a gray beard. They both look up at Claire as she enters.

CLAIRE

Hi. I'm Claire Summers. I work for the airline.

ERIC

Thanks, but I don't need a ride home. My Dad's gonna take me.

CLAIRE

Mr. Thomas, I'm a therapist.

ERIC
You're a Grief Counsellor?

CLAIRE
I am today.

Jack smiles at Claire, relieved.

JACK
Do you two need a moment?

CLAIRE
If you wouldn't mind.

ERIC
No, Dad, stay.

Jack puts a gentle hand on Eric's shoulder.

JACK
It's going to be okay, Eric. You're in
good hands now.

As his father leaves, Eric leans into Claire, conspiratorially.

ERIC
Hey, maybe you can help me.

CLAIRE
That's why I'm here.

ERIC
Good, good, because I missed a very
important meeting tonight and nine
chances out of ten I'm going to lose my
job. Maybe you could show me some
techniques to, you know, work through
"the pain."

Claire takes his sarcasm in stride.

CLAIRE
You're lucky to be alive, Mr. Thomas.

ERIC
Eric.

CLAIRE
Okay, Eric.

Eric watches her, a tiny grin at the corners of his lips. His gaze softens, something on the tip of his tongue. Claire grows uncomfortable at this.

ERIC
Have we met before?

CLAIRE
I doubt it.
(awkwardly)
And anyway if we did, I don't remember.
Eric, you've been through a very
traumatic incident. You're probably
experiencing a lot of emotions right
now. Some of them healthy, some of
them not so healthy. I'm here to help
you sort them out.

ERIC
You really should call her.

CLAIRE
It's not going to happen overnight.
It's a process --
(caught off-guard)
Call who?

Eric watches her, snapping his fingers, trying to remember:

ERIC
...Your sister. You need to call her.
Never let the sun go down on an
argument. Bad, bad, bad. You could
step across the street and get hit by a
bus. We have no guarantees about
tomorrow. None.

CLAIRE
How did you know that, about my sister?

ERIC
It just felt like the right thing to
say.

CLAIRE
(tentative)
Right.

Claire digs into her coat, disturbed, and quickly hands him her
card.

CLAIRE
Eric, I'm going to let you get some
rest. You need some time to absorb
what's happened to you, some time to
catch your breath. We'll continue this
in the morning, okay?

ERIC
 (examining the card)
 University of Chicago Center for
 Psychiatric Rehabilitation... that's
 all the way across town.

CLAIRE
 I could come by if it's an
 inconvenience. How does ten a.m.
 sound?

ERIC
 You make house-calls?

CLAIRE
 Under special circumstances, yes.

Eric watches her, his smile becoming easy and familiar. He holds her gaze just a little too long.

ERIC
 I'd like that.

Claire becomes flustered. She gestures that she's leaving.

CLAIRE
 Right -- okay then, I'll see you
 tomorrow.

She starts heading in the wrong direction. Eric points.

ERIC
 It's that way.

Claire winces a smile: she knew that. And quickly goes the other direction.

INT. CLAIRE'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

PAN ACROSS a room cluttered with files, paperwork, coagulated cups of Starbucks, pizza cartons, rogue sticky notes, neglected plants on the windowsill, and a row of FRAMED PHOTOS on the counter, all of which are facing down.

Claire enters, closing the door behind her, exhausted. She hangs up her pea-coat and --

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Claire enters on autopilot, digging under the sink and pulling out a bag of cat food. She pours some into a dish and looks around.

CLAIRE

Cosmo?

She takes the water bowl, fills it up and sets it down when --
There's a KNOCK on the door (OS).

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire opens the door on --

TONY, 50s, her neighbor. He wears a dark blue fire-man's t-shirt as he eats potato salad with a plastic fork.

TONY

Everything okay, Claire?

CLAIRE

Sure, Tony, why wouldn't it be?

TONY

You left in such a hurry.

CLAIRE

A colleague needed a favor.

Tony takes another bite, processing this.

TONY

Wasn't that crash, was it?

CLAIRE

Yes, it was.

TONY

Shame, huh? The engine blew.

CLAIRE

They said it was pilot error.

Tony frowns at this.

TONY

You're sure about that?

CLAIRE

Tony, I gotta get some sleep.

TONY

Hey, no problem, Claire. I ever tell you that you remind me of --

CLAIRE

-- your favorite niece? Yes, every chance you get.

TONY

Yeah. Okay. You need anything. Anything at all. I'm just down the hall. 213.

CLAIRE

213. Got it.

Tony smiles, chewing, and heads back down the hall.

Claire closes the door behind him.

INT. CLAIRE'S BATHROOM - LATER

Running water. Claire's cupped hands scoop up some and...

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

She splashes her face, washing away what little make-up she put on for the day. She towels off, catching a blot of mascara. She stares at her reflection in the mirror for a weary, loathing moment.

CLAIRE

Sad. Just... sad.

She opens the cupboard and finds a bottle of Prozac. She pops a few pills and washes it down with a nearby glass of water.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - LATER

A TV SCREEN shows images of a Survivor-like reality TV show. The sound is muted.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Claire groans at this. She reaches across her bedside table, moving an empty carton of Ben and Jerry's Chunky Monkey aside to find the remote.

Leaving the volume muted, she flips through the channels until the screen shows footage of the aftermath of the plane crash. A REPORTER stands behind a police line, speaking to the camera.

Claire's about to settle into bed when her eyes find a down-turned FRAMED PHOTO. She lifts it for a moment, revealing her and her younger sister, LINDA, in better times. They pose at a concert hall with Linda's HUSBAND and her FOUR SONS.

Claire's gaze cools at the sight of this. She puts the picture face down again and turns off the lights.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - DELTA 737 - NIGHT

CLOSE ON ERIC

terrified, hyperventilating, the wind flattening out the muscles in his face. He shields his eyes with an arm as the windows on the right side of the cabin fill with a BRILLIANT INCANDESCENT LIGHT, turning him into a silhouette --

CUT TO:

INT. ERIC'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Eric bolts up into FRAME, eyes wide, face mantled in sweat, gasping for air.

ERIC

No... no, no...

He hops up out of bed in his boxers, rubbing his disheveled hair, pacing in front of the window.

He spins and PUNCHES the lamp off of his bed-side table. It SHATTERS on the floor.

ERIC

(whispering)

No...

He stops, seeing something outside. His lips part, and his breathing becomes soft as his eyes swell with recognition.

HIS POV

A beautiful Golden Labrador retriever sits on the sidewalk, calmly staring back up at him.

ERIC

backs away from the window and --

EXT. SIDEWALK/STREETS OF CHICAGO - MORNING

Eric jogs down the sidewalk, absently passing PEDESTRIANS, moving around parked cars... we hear nothing but the HOLLOWED OUT BREATHING in his head, accompanied by the RISING BUILD of Radiohead's *"Like Spinning Plates."*

The music builds as Eric jogs faster and faster, arms pumping furiously, his breath barely escaping his clenched teeth.

He let's out a GASPING SOB as he picks up his pace. He's running away from something, or towards it... oblivious of the traffic around him as he moves faster, in long athletic strides.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Eric cuts through an intersection. He doesn't notice a NEWSPAPER TRUCK. It swerves around him, HONKING in his wake...

Amazingly, he runs FASTER. He doesn't hear anything around him, he's in his own place now.

CLOSE ON HIS TENNIS SHOES

POUNDING the pavement in a blur. He's no longer running, he's SPRINTING.

ERIC

his face a mask of pain as he squeezes back painful memories. The MUSIC and his BREATHING reaching a crescendo, swallowing all peripheral sound around him.

OVERHEAD ANGLE

High above the city street, looking down at Eric's dot as he RUNS down the yellow lines in the middle of the street at an incredible speed... vanishing around a corner --

EXT. TOWN-HOME - MORNING

Claire's Subaru pulls up to the curb.

INT. CLAIRE'S SUBARU - MORNING

She shuts off the engine and checks the address. She takes one more drag off her cigarette and stamps the butt in the ashtray.

EXT. TOWN-HOME - MORNING

Claire moves up the sidewalk, coming to the Town-house. She RINGS the doorbell. Waits a few seconds. Checks her watch.

She glances at the windows. They're all darkened. She KNOCKS on the door, and waits a little longer. Realizing no one is coming to the door, she smiles: figures. And heads back to her Subaru.

INT. CLAIRE'S SUBARU - MORNING

Claire climbs behind the wheel, shuts the door. She's about to start the engine, when something gets her attention.

A JAPANESE COUPLE in trendy sweat-suits pushes a high-tech athletic stroller down the sidewalk. They're drinking Starbucks, deeply engaged in conversation.

PUSH IN ON CLAIRE

watching the parents with the stroller. Her eyes become distant, filled with an aching longing.

CRACK! CRACK! She SCREAMS, jumping in her seat as --

ERIC

appears outside her window, breathless and drenched in sweat. She rolls it down, awkwardly trying to regain her composure.

ERIC

Good morning.

CLAIRE

(laughing)

You scared the hell out of me.

ERIC

Dr. Summers. What are you doing here?

CLAIRE

We had a meeting. Eight O'clock, Remember?

ERIC

(wincing, embarrassed)

I'm an idiot, I forgot. I went jogging.

CLAIRE

I can see that.

ERIC

I haven't done that in five years. Felt great. You jog?

CLAIRE

It's a New Years resolution.

ERIC

Don't know what you're missing. Want to come in?

INT. ERIC'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Islands of cold, modern furniture in large empty spaces. Claire sits on an expensive leather couch, her coat still on.

Eric comes out of the kitchen, carrying two cups of coffee.

ERIC
Cream and sugar?

CLAIRE
Yes, thank you.

He grabs a remote and turns on the TV, switching the channel to a soccer game.

ERIC
You like soccer?

CLAIRE
I'm not a sports fan.

Eric shuts off the TV and settles in the easy chair next to her.

ERIC
You know what I've never tried?
Painting. I've never tried painting.

CLAIRE
Painting?

ERIC
Oil painting. My dad suggested it last night. And I do need a hobby now that I've quit my job.

CLAIRE
(taken aback)
You quit your job?

ERIC
Mm-hmm, right before you came.

CLAIRE
Last night, you seemed pretty concerned about your job.

ERIC
A lot can happen in one night.
(shrugging)
I've spent my whole life saving pennies for a rainy day. Life's too short.
I'm not waiting for it to rain anymore.

Claire reaches for her tape-recorder and then pauses, becoming self-conscious of his gaze.

CLAIRE
(re: tape recorder)
Do you mind?

ERIC
I'm fine with it.

She hits PLAY RECORD, sets it right beneath him.

CLAIRE
Why did you quit your job?

ERIC
Ever see that billboard Nike puts up?
How's it go? "You can rest when you're
dead?"

CLAIRE
I might have. Why?

Eric shrugs, as if it's obvious.

ERIC
Because I want to feel alive. I want
to steal every moment that I can.

CLAIRE
When did you start feeling this way?

Eric thinks about this, hard. He opens his mouth to say something, then reconsiders, and shakes his head.

ERIC
I can't remember. Is that weird?

CLAIRE
Not at all.

She makes a note of this for herself.

ERIC
It's like someone hung a curtain up
yesterday. I can't see anything past
it. I know my name, I know my job,
where I live... but I can't tell you
where I had breakfast two days ago.

She jots this down and checks through her notes.

CLAIRE

Short-term memory loss is common in these sort of circumstances. Maybe we could go over what you do remember?

ERIC

Let's see. I'm a VP at Jamison & Jamison --

(catching himself; balking)

-- was a VP at Jamison & Jamison. That's an accounting firm. Um, I used to be single. Engaged two years ago, that didn't work out. Couldn't commit. I had a hard time committing.

CLAIRE

You're referring to yourself in the past tense.

ERIC

I am?

CLAIRE

You said you "used to be single." Does that mean you're with someone now?

ERIC

No. As far as I know, I'm still single.

Their gazes connect. He smiles. She looks away awkwardly, and tries to make a note. But her pen is out of ink. She scribbles with it, failing miserably at indifference.

ERIC

Here.

He hands her a pen.

ERIC

I'm sorry, it's red ink. Is that okay?

Their fingers brush over the pen. Claire pretends not to notice.

CLAIRE

Sure, yes -- thank you.

She begins to write, and then pauses...

CLOSE ON HER NOTE PAD

the ink is black. Not red.

CLAIRE

looks from the pen to Eric.

CLAIRE

It's black.

ERIC

No, it's red.

Claire pauses, not wanting to confuse him. Eric continues, in his own world.

ERIC

Let's see, what else do I remember. I used to be allergic to cats. I had four credit cards, two of which I had no intention of paying off. Ever. I couldn't cook to save my life, but I made great sandwiches. I masturbated maybe three, four times a week. I was pretty regular in the other areas. The only homo-erotic fantasy I ever had was when I was twelve. I was narcissistic, but only when I was sure no one else was watching. I was nice to animals. And yes I had violent fantasies about people who cut me off in traffic. Especially if they happened to be on a cell-phone at the time. Was there anything else?

CLAIRE

I'm not here to psychoanalyze you.

He watches her, eyes flickering with boyish amusement.

ERIC

Have you been doing this long?

CLAIRE

About three years now.

Eric seems thrown by this.

CLAIRE

If working with me makes you uncomfortable, I could arrange for someone else.

Eric leans back, hands folded behind his head, thinking about this for a long moment.

ERIC

As long as you're comfortable, I'm comfortable.

CLAIRE

What was the last thing you remember about the accident?

ERIC

The right engine blew.

A beat. Claire gives him an unsure smile.

CLAIRE

Excuse me?

ERIC

Before everything happened, I looked out the window and saw the right engine...

He mouths "boom" and mimics an explosion with his fingers.

Claire watches him, the hairs on the back of her neck standing up.

CLAIRE

The airline said the crash was the result of pilot error.

ERIC

I don't see how the pilot could have caused this. We were fine until the engine blew.

CLAIRE

You're sure?

ERIC

Mm-hmm, saw it with my own eyes.

CLAIRE

Have you told anyone about this?

ERIC

I just did.

CLAIRE

Eric, this is serious. Did you tell the police?

ERIC

No.

CLAIRE

Why not?

ERIC

Because I didn't remember it until just now.

INT. ARKIN'S OFFICE - LATER

Claire sits across from BILL ARKIN, 50s, a representative for the airline. He stares back at her, unable to digest what he has just heard.

ARKIN

That's not possible.

CLAIRE

It's what he told me.

ARKIN

It was pilot error, trust me. He lost control and a fuel line ruptured. It caused a lot of fire and smoke in the cabin. Maybe that's what he saw?

CLAIRE

He said he saw the right engine explode with his own eyes.

ARKIN

Dr. Summers, it's been less than twenty-four hours and we're already looking at law-suits. The families are going through a tough time right now. This sort of "speculation" isn't going to help anybody.

Claire sits there, thinking.

CLAIRE

What if he's right?

ARKIN

Has anyone else seen this "explosion?"

CLAIRE

You think he made it up?

ARKIN

He's just been in an accident. I'm sure he's a little disoriented. Confused?

(MORE)

ARKIN(cont'd)

Maybe he's going through some sort of post-traumatic stress? I don't know.

Claire quietly considers this.

ARKIN

Talk to the others. I think you'll see that I'm right.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A conference room with a long square table and plastic chairs. Claire sits with the FIVE SURVIVORS around the table. Dusty sunlight streams through the windows, illuminating their tense expressions. The first survivor, DEAN, 40s, balding, is in tears. He can't look anyone in the eye as he speaks:

DEAN

I always thought I'd be the brave one. The guy who came through and saved the day.

He just shakes his head 'no.'

DEAN

When the shit came down, I was a coward. The lady next to me, her blouse was on fire. It caught instantly. I froze up, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't even move... She burned right next to me. And I did nothing...

ANNA, 50s, an aging trophy wife with too much make-up reacts quietly to this.

CLAIRE

Anna? Do you want to say something?

ANNA

I wasn't afraid.

Dean gives her an incredulous look.

ANNA

I thought I would be terrified. But as soon as we dropped altitude, this strange calm came over me. The lady next to me? She was urinating on herself. I remember feeling so sorry for her because I was so... okay.

NORMAN, 70s, a heavy-set truck driver in a heavy flannel shirt just shakes his head.

NORMAN

We are who we are. Coming to these sessions isn't gonna change us. How we react in the face of death is how we react. It's who we are. Period. This session is just one big circle jerk.

DEAN

Then why are you here, Norman?

Norman crosses his arms and retreats into his jowls. His forearms are peppered with fingernail marks from where someone grabbed him.

CLAIRE

Does anyone have anything to add?

No one responds. All eyes avert from Claire's gaze as it moves around the table.

CLAIRE

Max?

MAX, 17, tall and lanky, tries to shrug indifferently.

MAX

I didn't really see anything. I think I passed out or something.

ANNA

No, you were awake. You were praying in Hebrew.

MAX

Lady, I don't even know Hebrew.

ANNA

I know what I heard.

MAX

I'm sorry, but you heard wrong.

SHANNON, early 20s, short red hair, tightly wound, sits forward, fumbling with her fingers.

SHANNON

Why do we have to pick at each other?
Can't we just forget it and move on?
Is any of this really helping?

CLAIRE

Shannon, we're here to confront this together. We can't move on until we face what has happened.

The group sits in silence. Claire checks her note-pad.

CLAIRE

Does anyone remember anything else from the crash?

Silence. Claire decides to get right to the point.

CLAIRE

Did anyone see an explosion?

Shannon's eyes cloud at the question. She's grasping at something.

DEAN

I don't remember seeing an explosion.

CLAIRE

It was on the right side of the plane.

The Survivors exchange baffled looks.

NORMAN

I was near the back, 23F. I didn't see anything like that.

MAX

There was too much smoke. I could barely see two feet in front of me.

Claire glances over her shoulder as --

The silhouette of a gaunt man fills the doorway behind them. Other than his short blonde hair, we can't make out his features.

CLAIRE

Can I help you?

The silhouette vanishes quickly, his FOOTSTEPS fading away (OS).

Claire turns back to the others.

CLAIRE

I guess not.

She realizes she's not going to get anywhere today, so she begins passing out her cards.

CLAIRE

We'll continue this later. If anyone needs to talk, or needs anything at all, this is where you can reach me.

INT. HALLWAY - UC-CPR - DAY

Claire runs down her findings with Perry.

CLAIRE

The group seems to be right on course. It's a little bumpy, but they're starting to confront their emotions.

PERRY

What about Eric?

CLAIRE

(checking her list)

He seems to be suffering from a mild case of amnesia. He's shown acute bouts of manic depressive behavior. He's acting out. He quit his job. He was referring to himself in the past tense. And he may be color blind.

PERRY

Color blind?

CLAIRE

He gave me a red pen. He insisted it was black.

PERRY

It sounds like he's creating these subjective fantasies as a defense mechanism. What was it Jung said? "This whole creation is essentially subjective --"

CLAIRE

(quoting Jung)

-- "and the dream is the theater where the dreamer is at once scene, actor, stage manager, author, audience, and critic."

(thinking)

I think he's having trouble making sense of his emotions, so he's trying to make everything fit in a way that he can understand.

PERRY

Then we have to take baby steps. His mind is not ready to accept the reality of this accident. It's only letting him see what he needs to see, when he needs to see it. If you want to help him through this transition, you have to play along with these fantasies, whether they're rational or not.

CLAIRE

You want me to lie to him?

PERRY

No, Claire, I want you to hold his hand, walk him through it. If you force reality on him too fast, you could push him into a psychotic break.

CLAIRE

I hadn't thought about that.

As they veer into his office --

INT. PERRY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Claire mulls everything over.

PERRY

What's bothering you?

CLAIRE

What if Eric was right about the explosion?

PERRY

Why would Arkin lie about this?

CLAIRE

You remember that accident they had last March? Off the coast of California?

PERRY

Yeah, it was a mechanical failure. A tear in the wing or something, right?

CLAIRE

The airline almost went bankrupt. Perry, can you imagine what would happen if they had another accident due to mechanical failure? The insurance companies would shut them down.

PERRY

So you think, what... they're dumping
all the blame on the pilot to avoid a
Chapter 11?

Claire nods.

PERRY

Remind me again. How does this help
your patient?

CLAIRE

It would certainly rule out delusions
caused by post-traumatic stress.

Perry gives her a look: there's more to it than that.

CLAIRE

We owe it to those families, Perry. If
we know something and don't say
anything, we're just as much to blame.

PERRY

(cautiously)
What do you want to do?

CLAIRE

I want to keep pushing him on it. Just
to be sure.

Perry's smiling eyes have sobered.

PERRY

Careful, Claire.

EXT. ERIC'S TOWN-HOME - NIGHT

Claire approaches Eric's front door, and stops, hearing
CLASSICAL MUSIC blasting from inside (OS). She rings the
doorbell a few times.

The door swings open on Eric, shirtless, in sweats, and covered
in paint. He grins with an easy charisma as CLASSICAL MUSIC
RUMBLES and BOOMS behind him, echoing all throughout the
neighborhood.

ERIC

(yelling over the music)
Hey, Claire!

CLAIRE

I wanted to ask you a few questions!

ERIC

Huh?!

Claire looks away from his bare chest, embarrassed, fighting the blunt physical attraction she's feeling.

CLAIRE

I need to ask you a few -- a few --

She laughs at the awkwardness of this situation.

CLAIRE

I can't hear myself speak -- could you turn that down?

ERIC

Sure, yeah!

Eric marches back inside, trailing blue footprints after him.

Claire steadies herself with a deep breath. Regaining her professional demeanor, she enters after him.

INT. ERIC'S TOWN-HOME - DAY

The music is DEAFENING in here. Claire stops suddenly, eyes swelling with both confusion and awe.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Eric has stacked all of his furniture against the far wall: the couch, chair, plasma TV, kitchen table, everything... all the way up to the ceiling.

The floor and remaining walls are covered in white sheets, speckled with paint. A large canvas covers the nearest wall. On it, is the unfinished rendering of a SAIL BOAT. It's amazingly detailed and beautiful, done by a master.

Claire takes it in with a strange grin as Eric turns down the volume behind her.

ERIC

Like it?

CLAIRE

This morning you said you had never painted.

ERIC

I hadn't.

CLAIRE
...and you did all this today?

ERIC
Uh huh.

Claire stares at the beautiful painting, amazed.

CLAIRE
How...?

He raises his paint brush and waves it, grinning.

ERIC
With this.

CLAIRE
Eric, this is amazing...

Eric paces in front of the canvas, searching.

ERIC
I was thinking about putting in a sail.
Right here...

He begins to paint the sail, his movements quick and deft, every one of his strokes perfect. Claire watches him work.

CLAIRE
How did you learn so fast?

ERIC
It's easy. Try it.

He offers the paint brush to her.

CLAIRE
No, I don't think so.

ERIC
Come on.

CLAIRE
I don't want to mess it up.

Eric puts the paint brush in her palm, slowly closes her fingers around it.

ERIC
Finish the sail.

CLAIRE
It's okay? You're not worried?

ERIC

Trust me.

Claire tentatively puts the brush to the canvas and begins to paint the sail. She grins, feeling stupid.

CLAIRE

I can't.

ERIC

Don't hold on so tight. Let go.

He slides in behind her, gently placing his hand over hers.

ERIC

Like this.

CLOSE ON HIS HAND

delicately guiding Claire's hand, carving the paint brush across the canvas.

CLAIRE

is looking down at their hands, at his fingers over hers. She wants to pull away, but she doesn't. And this terrifies her.

ERIC

See?

They finish the sail together.

ERIC

You just have to trust it.

But Claire isn't paying attention to the painting, she's distracted by his close proximity, the electricity of his touch. Every nerve ending in her body is firing off. She can't even think.

CLAIRE

Eric, I...

She pulls away, attempting to salvage her professional dignity.

CLAIRE

...I wanted to talk to you about this explosion.

Eric continues painting.

ERIC

Yeah?

CLAIRE

None of the other survivors remember it.

Eric paints in silence.

CLAIRE

I talked to the airline as well. They said the accident was caused by pilot error. Eric? What's going on here?

ERIC

That's a good question.

CLAIRE

I'm being serious.

ERIC

So am I.

CLAIRE

Did you see an explosion?

Eric's brush hesitates on the canvas. He seems genuinely tormented by this.

ERIC

I thought I did. But now, I don't know. Maybe I made it up.

CLAIRE

(alarmed)

Why would you make up something like that?

ERIC

Give me some choices. I'm better at multiple choice.

He tosses the brush and marches back into the hallway toward his bedroom.

CLAIRE

Where are you going?

ERIC

I'm starving.

Claire stares after him, dumbfounded. Maybe his problems are worse than she thought.

CLAIRE

Eric...?

He returns, throwing on a flannel and slapping on some flip-flops. He grabs some keys off of the counter, pausing at the door --

ERIC

You coming?

CLAIRE

To dinner?

ERIC

Well, yeah. Sort of late for lunch.

CLAIRE

No. No, I don't think so.

ERIC

We're just getting a bite to eat. Are you hungry? You look hungry. Come on.

He heads out the door. Claire stares after him, flustered.

EXT. ERIC'S TOWNHOUSE - LATER

Claire watches as Eric climbs on a brand new Harley.

CLAIRE

You have a Harley?

He starts the ENGINE. It THUNDERS loudly through the neighborhood.

ERIC

Just got it today. What do you think? Nice, huh? I've always wanted one of these.

CLAIRE

You quit your job, learned how to paint, and bought a Harley, all in one day? Don't you think that's a bit on the manic side?

ERIC

Seems that way, doesn't it?
(patting the seat)
C'mon...

CLAIRE

(balking)
I'm not getting on that.

ERIC

It'll be okay. Trust me, Claire.

ON Claire's tentative look --

EXT. STREETS OF CHICAGO - NIGHT

Claire sits on the back of a Harley, clutching Eric tightly around the waist. She gazes out at the sea of lights, the wind in her face.

ERIC

(over the wind)

What do you think?

CLAIRE

It's loud!

ERIC

Yeah, and it gets louder!

Eric GUNS the throttle, launching them past cars.

CLAIRE

Could you please slow down?!

Eric weaves past a truck, dissecting traffic at warp speeds. Claire's fingers dig into his ribs. She's terrified now.

CLAIRE

Slow down, Eric! I mean it!

ERIC

I wonder how fast this thing goes?!

CLAIRE

We're going to crash!

ERIC

I crashed in a 737 last night. I'm not worried about crashing anymore.

He swerves around an oncoming VOLVO, nearly clipping it.

CLAIRE

That's it! Pull over!

EXT. SIDE OF THE ROAD - NIGHT

Claire climbs off and marches down the shoulder of the road, furious. Eric hops out after her.

ERIC
What's wrong?

CLAIRE
ASSHOLE!!

She waits for traffic to pass, and then crosses the street.

ERIC
You're not really mad, are you?

He crosses the street after her, completely oblivious as CARS
HONK and SWERVE around him, missing him by inches.

CLAIRE
Watch out! God, what's wrong with
you?! Are you trying to kill yourself?

Eric catches up to her, beaming.

ERIC
I'm not afraid to die anymore, Claire.

CLAIRE
Fear of death is healthy. It keeps us
alive.

ERIC
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

Claire stops walking, trying to calm down and be objective.

CLAIRE
I wasn't scared.

Eric grins at her. She suppresses a smile. They both know
she's lying.

ERIC
Let's get something to eat.

CLAIRE
What makes you think I would even want
to have dinner with you right now?

ERIC
Because you stopped walking away.

Claire purses her lips, realizing he's right.

EXT. AMBRIA - NIGHT

An elegant French restaurant. VALETS rush to help an older, CONSERVATIVE CROWD in formal attire as they arrive in Mercedes and Porsches. Eric climbs off the Harley in his paint-covered sweats, flannel and flip-flops. Claire cautiously climbs off after him.

CLAIRE

I really don't think we're dressed for this.

Eric blows this off with a grin and enters the restaurant. Claire watches helplessly as the Valet takes the Harley away.

INT. AMBRIA - NIGHT

Eric is definitely out of place in here. He stands with a derisive MAITRE DE. Claire enters behind him, embarrassed.

MAITRE DE

I'm sorry, Mr. Thomas, but you do not have reservations.

ERIC

Right, heard you the first time. Look, I see two tables over there.

MAITRE DE

They're reserved.

ERIC

Alright, tell me how to do this.

Eric digs around in his flannel pocket, pulls out a wad of hundred dollar bills.

CLAIRE

Eric, I don't think this is a good idea.

MAITRE DE

You should listen to your friend.

ERIC

She's not my friend. She's my shrink. One hundred? Two hundred? You tell me, I'm shooting in the dark here.

MAITRE DE

Sir... this is jacket required.

ERIC

So we'll throw that in too. How much?
Three hundred...? Four hundred...?

The Maitre De, realizing Eric is now making a scene, looks to Claire, his eyes pleading for help.

ERIC

Five hundred bucks. That's it, that's
as high as I'm willing to go. C'mon,
man, I just lived through a plane
crash. Gimme a break here.

The Maitre De motions that he does not want Eric's money. He quietly confers with a nearby tuxedoed WAITER, and then addresses them again with a composed smile.

MAITRE DE

I believe a table has opened up.

INT. AMBRIA - LATER

Claire sits at a table across from Eric, who is now wearing a loaner jacket as he examines the menu. The Waiter takes their order.

ERIC

Man, I am just starving.
(pointing at the menu)
I can't pronounce that, but I'll have
one of these. And one of these. And
this, right here...

He glances across at the table across from them, examining the tiny proportions of food.

ERIC

Actually, we better make that two of
those.

WAITER

Two orders of the quail entree? The
chilled fois gras terrine? Feuilleton
of escargot? Rack of lamb. Spinach
quiche. And the almond souffle?

ERIC

And let's start with the tomato bisque.
I want the full experience.
(to Claire)
How about you? What do you want?

But Claire isn't paying attention. She's staring across the restaurant.

HER POV

A gaunt BLONDE MAN is watching them as he pays his bill. It's the same man who was watching her with the support group.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Eric follows her gaze to the Blonde Man as he stands and leaves.

ERIC
Something wrong?

CLAIRE
Hmm? No, nothing.

ERIC
She'll share mine. And we'll take a bottle of your finest Merlot.

WAITER
We have a '37.
(politely low)
But it's two thousand dollars for the bottle.

ERIC
Sounds good. And could we get some water? Thanks.

The Waiter leaves, overwhelmed by this huge order.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Their table is over-loaded with food. RESTAURANT PATRONS keep looking over in disgust and amazement. Eric tries the escargot. He closes his eyes, swishing it around in his mouth. A beat. He opens his eyes, amazed.

ERIC
Have you tried this escargot?

CLAIRE
No. And I don't want to.

ERIC
Do you like clams?

CLAIRE
Yes.

ERIC
Well, think of these as land clams.

CLAIRE
(amused)
"Land clams?!"

ERIC
Try it. Come on, I know you're
curious.

He holds his fork out. She looks at the dangling escargot,
tentative.

CLAIRE
It just doesn't look good.

ERIC
It's only going to get worse the more
you think about it.

Claire blushes under his gaze. She looks away, nodding quickly.

CLAIRE
Hurry, before I change my mind.

Eric reaches over, gently guiding his fork to her lips. She
takes it and chews, dribbling some of the juice down her chin.

ERIC
Oops.

They both reach to wipe it off, but he gets there first. He
dabs her chin with his napkin.

ERIC
Well?

Claire chews, thinking about it carefully. She fights a smile,
she actually likes it, but she's not giving him anything.

CLAIRE
It's not bad.

ERIC
I've always wanted to try French food.
It's a shame I never did. Maybe it was
the way I was raised. My father was a
big "meat and potatoes" man... that
probably explains his heart-attack.

CLAIRE
Your father had a heart-attack?

ERIC

Yeah, at his job at the paper plant.
He died right in front of his best
friend. One moment they're talking
about the Conference Play-offs, the
next... he's a pile on the floor.

Claire watches him, disturbed.

CLAIRE

Eric...?

ERIC

Hmm?

CLAIRE

Your father's not dead. I saw him last
night, remember? I was with you.

Eric bites his lip, the slightest questioning in his eyes as he
takes the cap off his bottle of Evian and begins to pour it into
his glass.

CLOSE ON THE WATER

falling and splashing into the cup...

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - DELTA 737 - NIGHT

The water in Eric's cup spirals skyward like glistening pearls.
Eric braces himself as wind HOWLS through the cabin and --

The BEVERAGE CART launches into the air, SLAMMING into the wall
next to him, spraying cans of soda and bottles of water
everywhere, and then PING-PONGING across the aisle to the other
side, CRUSHING a bald man in his 50s --

CUT TO:

ERIC

stares at the water, pale.

ERIC

I'm sorry, I'm just a little confused
right now.

CLAIRE

Do you want to talk about it?

ERIC

Not really.

CLAIRE

It's only going to get worse.

ERIC

It can't get any worse.

CLAIRE

What do you mean?

ERIC

Come on, do you really think anyone could have survived that crash?

CLAIRE

You did.

ERIC

Did I? I'm not so sure anymore.

CLAIRE

If you didn't survive, then what do you think happened?

Eric looks up at her, eyes in turmoil. He doesn't know what he thinks.

ERIC

I have these feelings. Like Deja Vu. Right here.

He pats his stomach.

CLAIRE

Alright, then let's confront these feelings. Let's assume you didn't survive that plane crash. How are you sitting here with me now?

ERIC

I don't know.

CLAIRE

No, follow this through: if you died on that plane, then where are we right now?

Eric glances across at a sign that says "Ambria."

ERIC

Ambria?

Claire smiles at him: her point is made. Eric swishes the water around in his glass, thinking.

CLAIRE

Eric, many crash survivors experience an overwhelming feeling of guilt. They don't think they deserve to be alive. They're just feelings.

Eric drinks the glass of Evian.

ERIC

Tell me about your sister.

CLAIRE

You're trying to change the subject.

ERIC

I told you about me. It's only fair.

On Claire's amused smile --

EXT. ROOF-TOP - NIGHT

Claire and Eric stroll along the restaurant's roof-top terrace. An easy familiarity is growing between them as they look out at the city lights.

CLAIRE

We had a fight. It was just a miscommunication. It's really stupid.

ERIC

Okay, so call her and make up.

CLAIRE

It's not that easy.

ERIC

Then send her a card.

CLAIRE

Why should I be the one to apologize?

ERIC

Because you two haven't spoken in what, two years?

CLAIRE

Where are you getting this information?

ERIC

Maybe you told me.

CLAIRE

I told you?! I don't think so. I haven't told anyone about that.

Claire doesn't know if she's scared, or amazed.

CLAIRE

So what does this mean? You're telepathic? You're psychic? You can read my mind?

ERIC

(balking)

Right. I don't believe in that crap.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Claire down the hallway, arriving at the Cancer Ward.

INT. CANCER WARD - HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Claire sits with her grandma, MADELINE, 70s, who is wearing a wig to hide the chemotherapy.

CLAIRE

How are you feeling, Grandma?

Madeline smiles softly.

MADELINE

Like I'm ready to get this over with.

CLAIRE

Don't say that.

MADELINE

Why not? There's nothing wrong with death, Darling. It's a part of life.

Madeline watches Claire, smiling.

MADELINE

Who did you meet?

CLAIRE

Nobody.

MADELINE

Then why are you smiling like that?

Claire tries to suppress her smile, and then gives up.

CLAIRE

Grandma, I, uh... went out to dinner
with one of my patients.

MADELINE

That's fabulous!

CLAIRE

Well, no. It's not very professional.

MADELINE

Do you like him?

CLAIRE

I shouldn't.

MADELINE

Go with it. It's worth every minute.

CLAIRE

Grandma!

Madeline places her hand over Claire's, her eyes filled with
joy.

MADELINE

You've denied yourself so much lately.
Let yourself have this.

Claire's gaze fill with weight.

MADELINE

It can't be healthy, isolating yourself
in that apartment. That's no way to
live.

CLAIRE

I'm not isolating myself.

Madeline grabs Claire's hand earnestly.

MADELINE

I know he hurt you, Darling, but he was
wrong. It's something you can't help.
There's no reason to punish yourself
for it.

CLAIRE

I can't believe you're bringing this
up.

MADELINE

You scared the hell out of me.

CLAIRE

It was a mistake. If I could go back,
it would've never happened. I just --
I want to forget it. I want to move
on.

Madeline's eyes shine with a stark, unbearable sadness.

MADELINE

Then let it go.

On Claire's tentative smile...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire is pouring through a book, smoking a cigarette.

She's scrawling notes like "paranormal"... "post traumatic
stress"... "telepathy"...

She stops, holding her pen up into the light. It's Eric's pen.
How did she get this?

She scribbles something on the note-pad. The ink is black. She
smiles to herself, feeling stupid.

She notices the DOWN-FACED PICTURES on the counter.

She contemplates them a moment, then reaches for the phone. She
presses the speed dial for "LINDA," listens to the dial tone.

She hangs up, getting a better idea.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Claire climbs out of her car and approaches a large three story
home. The lights are all on and the TV can be heard inside.

She takes a moment, steeling herself up, and then rings the
doorbell.

No answer.

She RINGS again, becoming self-conscious.

CLAIRE

(under her breath)

Come on, Linda, answer the door.

She goes around to the living room window, cups her hands to
peer inside.

HER POV

The TV BLARES inside the empty living room, casting a blue light over very expensive furniture.

CLAIRE

stares another moment, waiting, and then resigns herself to the fact that her sister is not coming to the door.

Frustrated, she heads back to her car and --

INT. HALLWAY - UC-CPR - MORNING

Claire walks with Perry down the busy hallway.

INT. PERRY'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Claire watches as Perry fills his brief-case with files.

CLAIRE

He takes up painting, and in one day, he's a master. He walks through traffic without any regard to his own safety.

PERRY

What else?

CLAIRE

He knows certain things about me. Things he shouldn't.

PERRY

Like?

CLAIRE

He knows I'm fighting with my sister. I don't know how, because I certainly didn't tell anyone.

PERRY

You're fighting with your sister?

CLAIRE

Do you think this crash could have done something to him?

PERRY

"Done something?" Done something how?

CLAIRE

I was reading up on some of the side-effects of post-traumatic stress last night.

PERRY

You think this crash made him, what, psychic?

CLAIRE

Usually it has to do with war, extreme stresses to the psyche...

PERRY

Like a plane crash?

Claire nods.

PERRY

How far are you willing to take this?

CLAIRE

As far as I have to.

PERRY

I might know someone who could help you.

ON Claire's curious look --

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - UC-CPR - LATER

Eric sits at a table, hooked up to a lie detector, electrodes attached to his forehead, neck, chest and hands. He grins self-consciously across at Claire, who sits with DR. LEVRA, a woman in her 60s with white hair in a strict pony-tail. She adjusts the polygraph machine, her fingernails chewed off and yellow with nicotine.

CLAIRE

Eric, Dr. Levra specializes in paranormal activities resulting from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

ERIC

(to Claire)

Is this about your sister...?

DR. LEVRA

Mr. Thomas, it's imperative that we know what you believe to be the truth. Only then, can we begin exploring all the possibilities of your condition.

ERIC

Ahh.

DR. LEVRA

I'm going to ask you a series of questions. I want you to answer them as honestly as you can.

ERIC

Shoot.

DR. LEVRA

Do you feel this recent accident has manifested your emotions into a physical force of any kind?

Eric levels Claire with a look. She has got to be kidding.

ERIC

No.

Dr. Levra checks the polygraph machine. She's satisfied that he's telling the truth.

DR. LEVRA

Is your name Eric Thomas?

ERIC

No.

The needle shows he's lying.

ERIC

(grinning)
It works.

Dr. Levra flashes a tight smile.

DR. LEVRA

How did you know Claire and her sister were fighting?

ERIC

She told me.

Dr. Levra observes the polygraph, gives Claire a curt nod. He's telling the truth. Claire sits back, baffled.

DR. LEVRA

Have you ever painted before?

ERIC

No.

The needle moves. He's telling the truth.

DR. LEVRA

Was there an explosion on the right side of the plane?

ERIC

Yes.

The lie detector: he's telling the truth. Dr. Levra knits her brow at this, concerned.

DR. LEVRA

This can't be.

ERIC

(with conviction)

Their was an explosion on the right side of the plane. It was blinding.

The needle continues to show he's telling the truth.

DR. LEVRA

Something's wrong here.

ERIC

(talking over her)

We lost altitude. The pilot tried to steady us out, but it was too late. Everything went flying. A bald man was crushed by the beverage cart --

DR. LEVRA

No...

The polygraph says he's telling the truth. Dr. Levra tries to adjust it.

ERIC

The Flight Attendant wasn't strapped in. I tried to hold onto her, but I couldn't. She broke her back. There was a lot of smoke, but I saw the old Indian man across from me. He was burning. The pilot managed to keep us airborne long enough to clear the water. We were coming down toward the rocks. I don't remember the impact. But I do remember that I was okay. I was at peace. Am I lying, Dr. Levra?

Dead silence. Eric's gaze is sad and piercing.

Dr. Levra looks away. She rests her head in her hands a moment, shuddering. She exhales slowly, shaking her head 'no.'

She adjusts her glasses, fighting to stay calm. She starts to say something, but the words catch in her throat.

A sad resignation sweeps over her. She looks back at the door.

DR. LEVRA

I have to go now.

She straightens her coat, and walks out the door, leaving Claire utterly confused.

CLOSE ON THE POLYGRAPH MACHINE

Eric was telling the truth.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO HOSPITAL - LATER

Claire walks Eric outside to the parking lot. They're both rattled from this experience.

ERIC

Not the reaction you were looking for?

CLAIRE

I'm just trying to help you, Eric.

ERIC

You can't help me.

He grins and approaches his Harley.

ERIC

Let's go. I want to show you something.

CLAIRE

What?

ERIC

It's a surprise.

CLAIRE

No, Eric.

ERIC

You'll like it. Boy Scouts honor.

CLAIRE

"Boy Scouts honor?"

ERIC

Hey, I just remembered that I was an Eagle Scout. I'd swear to God, but lately I can't find Him.

CLAIRE

I'm not going with you. I'm your therapist. I'm supposed to be helping you. Come by my office tomorrow.

Claire scoots past him. Eric keeps up with her, talking low:

ERIC

I'm not going to tell anyone about us, if that's what you're worried about.

CLAIRE

First off, there's no us. Second, I'll know.

ERIC

Know what?

Claire smirks: it's pretty obvious.

CLAIRE

We can't do this anymore.

ERIC

But you said you had fun.

CLAIRE

I did...

ERIC

What about last night? You liked the snails, right?

CLAIRE

Not really.

ERIC

Me neither, but you liked the idea of them.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry, Eric.

He digs in his pocket, pulls out a key and hands it to her. She stares at it, dumbfounded.

CLAIRE

What's this...?

ERIC

It's to my place. In case you change
your mind.

CLAIRE

I don't want your key, Eric.

Eric smiles. He's not taking no for an answer.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Claire exits, anxiously smoking a cigarette. She's holding
Eric's key, deliberating.

She pulls out her cell-phone and stares at it. She puts it
away, disturbed that she even entertained the thought.

She feels someone's gaze on her. She turns around.

A dark shape is sitting in a car across the street. Passing
headlights flash across the figure's face --

It's Arkin. Staring back at her. The headlights vanish,
throwing him back into darkness.

Claire stares, rattled, not sure what to do. The engine starts
and the car pulls into traffic, disappearing.

INT. ERIC'S TOWN-HOME - NIGHT

Eric is painting when he hears a SCRATCHING on the door.

He frowns, glancing back at it.

He sets the paint-brush down and opens the door, looking
outside.

ERIC

Hello?

Movement in the shadows.

Eric squints, letting his eyes adjust to the darkness.

He stops breathing. Everyone muscle in his body becomes stone.

HIS POV

The Golden Labrador Retriever sits on his lawn, watching him.

INT. CLAIRE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Claire washes her face at the sink, disconcerted. She looks up and opens the medicine cabinet.

She stares at the pills, overwhelmed by all the emotions she's feeling right now. She resigns herself with a fluttery sigh. Her eyes become moist with fear. Her trembling hand reaches for a bottle of Zolofit and --

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Claire enters with the bottle of medication, grabs a glass from the cupboards and fills it with some bottled water. She stops.

Cosmo's food and water dishes are completely full. They haven't been touched.

CLAIRE

Cosmo?

She checks all the windows. They're shut.

CLAIRE

Cosmo, honey?

THE DOOR BELL RINGS.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire opens the door to find Tony standing there with a laundry basket full of wet clothes.

TONY

You left your laundry in the washer.
Wasn't sure if you wanted me to put it
in the dryer or... hey, you okay there?

Claire wipes her eyes.

CLAIRE

Have you seen my cat around?

TONY

No, I...

Tony puts the basket down and holds her.

TONY

Hey... hey, it's alright.

INT. LAUNDRY ROOM - CLAIRE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Claire puts her laundry in the dryer as Tony fills a washer.

TONY

He was watching you?

CLAIRE

I think he's following me.

TONY

Because of this crash?

CLAIRE

One of the passengers is gone. He just vanished with no explanation. What the hell is going on here, Tony?

TONY

Stay the course.

(off her look)

Don't let these people stop you from finding the truth.

CLAIRE

What if I'm just being paranoid --

TONY

People don't act this way unless they're trying to hide something. Why is he following you? Clearly you've tapped a nerve.

Claire realizes he's right.

TONY

Find the truth. The rest will take care of itself.

CLAIRE

It's not that easy.

TONY

It never is, Claire.

He grabs his basket and begins to leave.

TONY

You wanna talk some more, I'm in --

CLAIRE

213. I know.

TONY
I'm here for you, Claire.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Claire sits across from four of the Survivors. Claire is absently tapping ERIC'S KEY with her index finger.

CLAIRE
We're missing someone.

DEAN
The kid.

SHANNON
Max. He's gone.

CLAIRE
I'm sorry?

SHANNON
Yeah, I went by his place yesterday.
He's not there anymore.

Claire's not sure how to take this. She checks her notes.

CLAIRE
This is a very difficult healing
process. We all have our own way of
dealing with it.

DEAN
This is gonna sound crazy, but I think
I'm getting better now.

CLAIRE
Better, how?

DEAN
Maybe I was too hard on myself before.
About being a coward. I think if I
were to face that situation again, I'd
be different. I'm not afraid of dying
anymore.

Anna seems to go inside at this.

CLAIRE
Anna?

ANNA
I'm uh... I'm not sure anymore. I
can't think about the crash anymore.
(MORE)

ANNA (cont'd)

I get these panic attacks. Like someone's standing on my chest. I'm afraid to step outside my door. I'm afraid of going to sleep. I get nightmares --

She pauses, realizing how silly this sounds.

CLAIRE

We're listening. Go on.

ANNA

I see this white light...

Everyone in the group becomes uncomfortable.

SHANNON

It was on the right side. Right?

ANNA

No. Yes. I'm not sure. It's just a nightmare. It probably never happened.

CLAIRE

(hopeful)

Does anybody else remember this white light?

Norman shuffles his weight in the chair, scowls.

NORMAN

I was on the right side, and I don't remember any white lights.

Claire sits back, masking her frustration. She's not getting anywhere.

She looks down at her hands. She's still tapping Eric's key.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A NEWSPAPER FLUTTERS past the entrance.

Claire looks back at it as she enters.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CANCER WARD - NIGHT

Claire sits with Madeline, arranging fresh flowers in a purple vase by the bedside.

MADELINE

What is it? What's bothering you?

Claire shakes her head, she doesn't want to get into it.

MADELINE

How did it go with your patient?

CLAIRE

He gave me his key.

MADELINE

(impressed)

Oh.

CLAIRE

Grandma, do you know how hard it is to find a guy these days? It's impossible. Of course, when I do finally find someone -- oh hey look, they're my patient, and they're completely nuts.

MADELINE

And you want my permission to follow your heart?

CLAIRE

It's just so unethical. So irresponsible. What am I thinking?

MADELINE

It's how you feel. Can't change how you feel.

CLAIRE

I've never even remotely considered anything like this before.

(pausing, conflicted)

But when I'm with him I feel good, I feel alive. And I haven't felt alive in so long. Do you understand? Am I being selfish here?

MADELINE

Don't be afraid of your feelings. They help us navigate around when this --

(taps her head)

-- gets in the way.

Claire look up at her Grandma, uncertain.

MADELINE

Stop being afraid. Take a chance, Claire. Spread your wings.

EXT. ERIC'S TOWN-HOME - NIGHT

Claire stands outside Eric's front door, gathering up the courage to ring his doorbell.

ERIC (OS)
Don't bother. I'm not home.

Claire startles, turns, searching for the source of his voice.

ERIC (OS)
Up here.

Claire looks up to find Eric on the roof, grinning down at her.

CLAIRE
What are you doing?

ERIC
I'm trying to find the Little Dipper.
I found the Big Dipper a few minutes
ago. Come on up.

CLAIRE
...I'd rather not. I have this thing
with heights.

Eric stares at her flatly. He's not taking no for an answer.

EXT. ERIC'S ROOF-TOP - NIGHT

Eric and Claire lie on their backs. Eric points to a star.

ERIC
Found it. Look. To the left of that
bright one. See it?

Claire follows his finger to the Little Dipper.

ERIC
See how when you find just the right
star, the rest of the constellation
comes into focus?

Claire shudders, keeping her eyes away from the ground below.

ERIC
You look like you're about to pass out.

CLAIRE
Couldn't we have found it from down
there?

ERIC

(laughing)
You really do have a "thing" with
heights.

Claire flashes a tight smile, trying to mask her fear.

Eric gets an idea. He points to his eyes.

ERIC

Look right here.

CLAIRE

What -- ?!

ERIC

It's all about focus. It works. Trust
me.

Claire just shakes her head.

ERIC

I'm serious. Look right here.

CLAIRE

This is stupid.

ERIC

So is your "thing" with heights.

Claire sighs, looks into his eyes.

ERIC

Be here with me now. In this moment.
Forget about everything out there.
(smiling)
Just focus on my silly face.

Claire does this, fighting a smirk.

ERIC

Feel better?

CLAIRE

No.

ERIC

Not even a little?

CLAIRE

(begrudgingly)
...Maybe a little.

They lie there a moment.

CLAIRE

Eric... The reason I came by tonight is to say that: I'm sorry. I may have been a little abrupt with you.

ERIC

That's not why you're here.

CLAIRE

It's not? Why am I here, Eric?

ERIC

Because you wanted to see the surprise.

Eric grins across at her and winks.

EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT

Claire follows Eric down the CREAKING DOCKS. She shivers, burying her cheeks behind the collar of her coat.

CLAIRE

I'm freezing to death. Are you going to tell me what we're doing here?

ERIC

I'll bet you opened your presents before Christmas morning.

CLAIRE

I only did that once.
(thinking)
Twice, if you include Undergrad.

He stops at a sail-boat in a slip, grins proudly.

ERIC

Well?

CLAIRE

(stunned)
You bought a sail-boat?

ERIC

Uh huh.

CLAIRE

How rich are you?

Eric climbs onto the boat. As he does, Claire pauses... eyes widening in recognition.

It's the same sail-boat in Eric's painting, right down to the sail they painted together.

CLAIRE
Your painting... You painted this
yesterday.

ERIC
Did I? Strange. Come on, let's go.

CLAIRE
Can you even go sailing at night?

ERIC
I don't see why not?

CLAIRE
Well, there's no wind.

Eric grins, starting the motor.

ERIC
We'll improvise.

CLAIRE
I don't know about this...

He reaches into a backpack, pulls out a paper brown bag.

ERIC
Here, look, I made sandwiches. I make
great sandwiches, Claire. And --

He pulls out a sweater.

ERIC
I even brought an extra sweater.

EXT. LAKE MICHIGAN - NIGHT

The sail-boat glides beneath us as Eric expertly tacks across the moonlit water.

EXT. SAIL-BOAT - LATER

Claire is nestled in Eric's sweater. She watches him in the moonlight, conflicted by her growing attraction towards him. He turns, catching her gaze. She looks away awkwardly.

EXT. SAIL-BOAT - LATER

The boat drifts across the water. Claire eats Eric's sandwich. She smiles, impressed.

CLAIRE

This is a really good sandwich. Wow.
(to herself, amazed)
And I hate pastrami.

ERIC

I wasn't lying, was I? You can have
the rest of mine.

He takes off his shirt. Claire's eyes bulge.

CLAIRE

What are you doing?

ERIC

I'm going swimming.

CLAIRE

But the water's freezing.

ERIC

(giddy)
I know.

CLAIRE

And you just ate.

ERIC

(nodding excitedly)
I know!

He strips off his pants and dives into the water. Claire drops
her sandwich and runs to the edge of the boat in disbelief.

Eric SCREAMS in pain.

CLAIRE

Are you okay?

ERIC

No! I'm freezing to death! Come on
in!

CLAIRE

I'm not jumping in there.

ERIC

Why not?

CLAIRE

I can think of a dozen reasons. The
first being, I can't swim for shit.

ERIC
I won't let you drown. Trust me.

Claire balks.

ERIC
Once you take death out of the
equation, life gets pretty damn good,
Claire.

Claire stares down at the water, speaking to herself.

CLAIRE
This is so insane.

Eric grins, treading water.

ERIC
You want to do this, I know you do.
Come on, jump, I'll save you.

Claire looks around herself. How did she get herself into this?
She takes a deep breath and, before she can chicken out, she
jumps into the water.

She surfaces, SCREAMING and floundering. Eric holds her up as
her teeth clatters.

CLAIRE
Cold! COLD! COLD!

ERIC
Feels good, doesn't it?

CLAIRE
No! Horrible! I HATE YOU!

He gently pushes her hair out of her eyes, smiling.

ERIC
See? You didn't drown. I saved you.

Claire shivers, realizing he's holding her in his arms. Their
faces are only inches apart, lips hovering next to each other.
She looks into his eyes, conflicted.

A MAN'S VOICE (OS)
Everything alright over there?

A FISHING BOAT passes, shining its light on them in the water.
Eric squints in the light and waves like nothing's happening.

ERIC

Come on in! The water's fine!

The FISHERMAN stares at these nuts, baffled. As the boat continues past, Claire begins laughing, splashing water at Eric.

EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Eric walks Claire to the front entrance. Their hair is still wet, and both are shivering.

ERIC

Let me come in.

Claire looks down, fighting her feelings.

ERIC

Is there someone else?

CLAIRE

No.

ERIC

You're not attracted to me?

Claire smiles. It's clear she's attracted to him.

CLAIRE

I've got a lot of work to do.

ERIC

Work is an illusion.

CLAIRE

It's that kind of talk that's going to get you into trouble.

ERIC

What is it, really? And don't tell me it's your work.

CLAIRE

Eric, I'm really boring. I leave the TV on all night. My apartment's a mess. There are crumbs everywhere. I can't keep plants alive. I haven't dated in forever. Don't even get me started on my social life. You don't want to come in, trust me. I'm just a mess all around.

ERIC

But I like your mess. I like who you
are, Claire.

Eric holds her gaze, unblinking. He was sincere about that.
Claire doesn't know how to respond to that.

CLAIRE

I'll see you tomorrow, Eric.

ERIC

We don't have any guarantees about
tomorrow.

He smiles. He meant that too. He heads back to his Harley.

Claire watches him go, hating herself for letting him walk away.
She struggles with her emotions another moment.

CLAIRE

(bursting out)

Eric!

Eric turns and looks at her.

CLAIRE

Did you really mean that? The part
about... my mess?

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire and Eric come through the door, kissing passionately.
Claire slams the door shut with her foot, and they stumble
against the wall, knocking a lamp over.

ERIC

(re: lamp)

Shit, I'm sorry --

CLAIRE

Forget it.

They kiss again. She surfaces for air with:

CLAIRE

Wait, wait -- what am I doing?

ERIC

Do you want me to stop?

CLAIRE

No.

As they continue kissing --

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Clothes are strewn everywhere as Claire and Eric make love on the floor, because they couldn't make it to the bed. Everything that's been pent up between them is coming out now.

INT. CLAIRE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Claire and Eric make love in the shower, their forms rhythmically intertwined and blurred behind the steamy glass.

INT. CLAIRE'S BEDROOM - LATER

The muted TV throws a dancing blue light over Claire and Eric as they hold each other in spoon position, listening to traffic outside. Claire pulls a pillow into her face and SCREAMS into it.

ERIC

What?! What's wrong?

CLAIRE

(sighing with relief)

I haven't felt this good in so long!

ERIC

Really? Why not?

CLAIRE

I don't know. Maybe I didn't want to.

Eric levels her with a look.

ERIC

Now you sound like the patient. You never stop working, do you?

CLAIRE

How am I working right now?

ERIC

This is a tactic. And don't think I don't see it.

CLAIRE

A tactic?

ERIC

Role-playing. The Doctor switches roles with the patient.

(MORE)

ERIC(cont'd)

You give a little, and then I open up.
It's interesting, go on.

CLAIRE

I wasn't role-playing.

ERIC

How do you feel about small animals?

CLAIRE

(laughing)
What?!

ERIC

If the question makes you
uncomfortable, you don't have to
answer.

CLAIRE

You're making fun of me.

ERIC

So? Humor me.

Claire thinks about this a moment.

CLAIRE

I like all animals.

ERIC

Do you believe in God?

CLAIRE

Well, my parents were Catholic. I
don't know, jury's still out.

ERIC

What about the Devil?

CLAIRE

Definitely.

ERIC

Republican or Democrat?

CLAIRE

I hate politics. And football.

ERIC

Why do you leave your TV on mute?

CLAIRE

I like to hear myself think.

ERIC

What's your favorite food?

CLAIRE

Favorite food?! This is your way of psychoanalyzing me?

Eric drills her with his "serious look."

CLAIRE

Anything Italian. Except risotto.

ERIC

What's your favorite memory?

CLAIRE

Hmm.

(thinking)

Twelve years old, right after my Dad mowed the lawn. Walking barefoot through the sticky wet grass pieces.

ERIC

The most important thing about life?

CLAIRE

Family. Definitely family.

ERIC

What's your best quality?

CLAIRE

I'm honest. I like the truth. I like things to make sense.

ERIC

Worst quality?

CLAIRE

Can we skip that one?

ERIC

So why don't you want to feel good?

CLAIRE

I don't know.

ERIC

Come on, Claire, don't stop now.

CLAIRE

Maybe I don't deserve to feel good.

ERIC

You're a beautiful person, Claire.
There's no reason to punish yourself.

Claire is touched by this.

CLAIRE

You'd be surprised.

ERIC

Fine, then give me an example.

CLAIRE

Well, I'm sleeping with my patient, for
one.

She glances across at Eric's attentive gaze. He's waiting for a
real answer. She becomes self-conscious.

CLAIRE

I don't want to do this anymore. Let's
just leave some of me a mystery.

ERIC

Won't change how I feel about you.

CLAIRE

We just met a few days ago.

ERIC

It's not the quantity of time, it's the
quality.

CLAIRE

What are you saying? This is love at
first sight?

ERIC

Works for me.

He caresses her cheek, staring into her eyes.

CLAIRE

I'm glad you're here with me.

ERIC

I wouldn't trade this moment for the
rest of my life.

He leans in and kisses her.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CANCER WARD - DAY

Madeline smiles, taking in Claire's appearance as she arranges some violets in a purple vase on the windowsill.

MADELINE

Violets. My favorites. They're beautiful.

CLAIRE

You like them?

MADELINE

I'm proud of you. I know that was a very scary thing for you.

CLAIRE

What's that?

MADELINE

It takes courage to live.

Madeline watches her, smiling, eyes shining with a sad wisdom. She doesn't realize her wig is slipping off.

MADELINE

The moments I had with your grandpa. I wouldn't trade a single one of them for the rest of my life.

Claire straightens her wig, eyes registering recognition.

CLAIRE

Eric said something like that.

MADELINE

Listen to him. Steal every moment you can, Darling.

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Claire is pacing in her bathrobe, smoking a cigarette, feeling good and not exactly sure what to do about it.

ERIC (VO)

We don't have any guarantees about tomorrow.

She looks at her cigarette. Spirals of smoke rising from its end.

ERIC (VO)

But I like your mess. I like who you
are, Claire.

She squints at the cigarette...

ERIC (VO)

You're a beautiful person, Claire.
There's no reason to punish yourself.

She smiles, inspired. She wants to believe this more than
anything.

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - LATER

Claire comes storming into the kitchen with an arm-load of
cigarette cartons, saved for a rainy day. She dumps them all
into the trash-compactor and turns it on.

As she listens to them being crushed, she covers her mouth,
laughing to herself in amazement. She can't believe she finally
had the guts to do that.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Claire sweeps through the room with a trash-bag, throwing away
pizza cartons, Coke Cans, candy-bar wrappers. She finds an
empty carton of Ben & Jerry's and triumphantly slam dunks it
into the bag.

CLAIRE

Swish.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Claire's apartment is immaculate. She's been cleaning all
night. The front door opens. She comes in carrying NEW PLANTS.

As she begins setting them around the apartment --

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATER

The front door opens again, and this time Claire comes in with
shopping bags full of new clothes.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Claire scrubs the walls. She examines them a moment, blowing
her hair out of her face, getting a better idea and --

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATER

A plant RATTLES on the windowsill as George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" BLASTS through the apartment.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Claire wears an old pair of Stanford sweats as she paints the walls of her apartment yellow.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Claire examines her paint job. It's not perfect, but it looks a lot better in here now.

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Claire comes out of her bedroom, dressed for work. Her hair is done up and dyed a darker color. She's wearing her contacts. She's gotten rid of the ratty pea-coat. There's a new confidence in her stride.

She grabs her keys off the table and is about to leave when something catches her eye.

The down-faced FRAMED PHOTOS on the counter.

She musters her strength, and one by one, she sets them upright. Each one is a picture of her and her sister, LINDA, in better times: little girls at a picnic, teenagers at a ski resort, posing with boat-drinks in a cabana. They're happy, no bond could be stronger.

CLOSE ON CLAIRE

A strange serenity overcomes her. She draws a sharp breath as her walls crumble, and the tears begin pooling in her eyes...

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Claire sits at a table, her hand trembling as she fills out a "MISS YOU" card. It's the hardest thing she's ever done. She's struggling not to laugh or cry as she writes:

CLAIRE (VO)

Dear Linda, hi... remember me? I'm
sorry for not getting in touch sooner,
but...

Claire's pen pauses on the card, and then continues...

CLAIRE (VO)

I'm just sorry. I'm sorry this has gone on for so long. You're my little sister, and I love you. And I will always love you.

Claire smiles at this.

CLAIRE (VO)

Anyway, write me back, or call me if you want. I'd really like to talk.
Love, Claire.

Claire puts the card in an envelope, seals it, and writes Linda's name and address on it.

She wipes her eyes, and begins laughing to herself -- amazed at how good she feels now. She stops suddenly, noticing --

The writing is in RED INK.

She stares at Eric's pen, makes a scribble on the envelope. It's red ink. She tears open the envelope and looks at the card. It's all written in red ink.

She grabs her note-pad and begins flipping through it, page after page -- All the notes are in RED. Everything she's written with his pen.

She drops the pen, backing away from it. What the hell is happening?

There's an URGENT KNOCKING on the door. Claire looks up, reeling.

CLAIRE

Hold on!

She hops up, accidentally knocking the card off the table. It lands under her chair.

CLAIRE

I'm coming!

She opens the door on --

Eric, standing in the hallway. He has the Golden Labrador Retriever on a leash.

He looks up at her, his eyes red and swollen, his cheeks stained with tears.

CLAIRE
Eric...? What's wrong?

Eric takes a deep breath, wipes his nose with his sleeve:

ERIC
This is Spencer.

CLAIRE
I didn't know you had a dog.

She kneels and begins petting Spencer. The dog licks her face egregiously.

CLAIRE
Hi, Spencer, how are you doing this morning?

ERIC
Claire... Spencer died when I was ten.

Claire looks up at him, sharply. He's serious.

ERIC
He was hit by a car after soccer practice. I buried him in the backyard.

CLAIRE
(grabbing his arm)
I have to go. C'mon, you're coming with me.

INT. CLAIRE'S SUBARU (MOVING) - DAY

Claire checks her watch as she drives. Eric sits despondently in the passenger's seat. Spencer is panting in the back.

ERIC
Where are we going?

CLAIRE
I want you to meet some people.

ERIC
Who?

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PANCAKES - MORNING

Claire and Eric sit around a table with the three remaining survivors, ANNA, NORMAN and SHANNON. They drink coffee and pick at their food as Claire speaks.

CLAIRE

Where's Dean?

They exchange looks. Nobody knows. Shannon looks out the window, paranoid.

SHANNON

I haven't seen him since our last meeting.

Claire is disturbed, but decides to roll with this.

CLAIRE

Everyone, I'd like you to meet Eric.

They all say "hi" and smile. But Eric is looking outside at Claire's car. Spencer pants in the back-seat.

CLAIRE

(whispering)

He's okay. I gave him some water and the window's rolled down. Eric?

ERIC

Huh?

Claire gestures to the rest of the group. He turns, forcing a smile.

ERIC

Hi, I'm Eric. And I'm a survivor.

Claire bows her head at his sarcasm.

CLAIRE

Eric, why don't you tell them about these feelings you've been getting.

ERIC

What feelings?

CLAIRE

It's okay, everyone here is going through the same thing. These emotions are perfectly natural....

Eric's own BREATHING drowns out the noises around him. He's staring at his GLASS OF WATER...

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - DELTA 737 - NIGHT

Eric squints through the windstorm as papers flutter past him like a frightened flock of pigeons.

A hand reaches out to him. It's a Flight Attendant. She's on her stomach in the aisle. Her voice is muted beneath the chaotic din, but we can tell she's screaming for help.

Eric grabs her hand, but it's too late. Their grips slip, and she's sucked toward the front of the plane. She hits the wall of the fuselage with bone-breaking force, her body going limp like a rag-doll as --

All the windows on the right side of the plane fill with a BLINDING WHITE LIGHT, washing out the screen and --

CUT TO:

INT. INTERNATIONAL HOUSE OF PANCAKES - DAY

Eric has lost himself in the glass of water. Claire is still talking.

CLAIRE

...and as you can see, you're not alone. We're all wrestling with the same thing.

Claire looks to Shannon, who is looking around herself, paranoid.

SHANNON

I don't feel comfortable talking about this anymore.

CLAIRE

Anna?

ANNA

A piece of me died on that plane. At first, I thought I was liberated by the crash. Now... I feel my mortality. I feel how fragile everything really is. I don't feel safe anymore...

NORMAN

It changed me, and I didn't think I could change. I thought a man was defined by how he faced death. I'm beginning to think I was wrong. I'm beginning to think it's how he faces life.

Claire catches Eric's tearful gaze.

CLAIRE

Eric, do you want to share anything
with the group?

Eric looks up at all the attentive stares.

CLAIRE

You said you believed there were no
survivors in the crash.

ERIC

Well, yeah. I meant it figuratively.
Obviously, we all survived, right? Or
we wouldn't be sitting here at IHOP
having coffee and pancakes.

CLAIRE

Eric?

ERIC

You must have misunderstood me.

CLAIRE

What about your father? And Spencer?

ERIC

I'm sorry, I'm just a little scrambled
up inside.

Claire stares back at him, confused.

ERIC

I don't mean to be rude, but I really
have to be somewhere. Thanks for
inviting me. This was... helpful.

He gets up and leaves. Claire looks at the group, apologetic.

CLAIRE

(scooting out of her booth)
Thanks for coming. We'll continue this
on Friday.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

Claire catches up with Eric as he grabs Spencer from the back-
seat of the car and starts walking away.

CLAIRE

Where are you going?

ERIC
I need some fresh air.

CLAIRE
Why did you lie in there?

ERIC
Did you see their faces? They don't
want to hear the truth.

CLAIRE
What's the truth, Eric?

Eric turns a corner.

EXT. LOOP EL STATION - MORNING

A TRAIN THUNDERS overhead. Claire stays with Eric and Spencer
as they approach the Loop El Station.

CLAIRE
I want to put you on some medication.

ERIC
I can't do it.

CLAIRE
It might help you deal with these
emotions.

ERIC
I don't want to take any medication.

CLAIRE
Why are you fighting this so hard?

ERIC
Because I don't want to be numb. I
want to feel everything.

CLAIRE
Eric, it's okay that you lived. No one
holds it against you. You don't have
to overcompensate. You don't have to
jump off of cliffs to feel alive. You
don't have to prove anything to anyone.

Eric watches her, her words hitting him hard.

CLAIRE
I went along with this manic behavior
because I thought you were getting
better.

(MORE)

CLAIRE(cont'd)

But you can't keep this up anymore, or
you're going to hit a wall. These are
the rules of reality. If you don't
play by the rules, you will lose.

Eric tries to wrap his mind around this, shakes his head 'no.'

ERIC

Those are your rules. Not mine.

CLAIRE

It's called life. Everybody plays by
these rules.

ERIC

You're wrong. I'll prove it to you.

CLAIRE

Prove what to me?

Eric hands her the leash.

ERIC

Stay there.

Eric jogs up the station steps, scooting past other COMMUTERS.

CLAIRE

Eric...?

Spencer begins BARKING and straining on the leash as --

EXT. EL TRAIN TRACKS - MORNING

Determined, Eric hops off the platform and climbs out onto the
tracks. COMMUTERS MURMUR, watching in curiosity and horror as
he walks along the tracks, high above the ground.

Eric looks down at Claire with a wide, exuberant smile.

ERIC

Watch.

ON THE GROUND

Claire watches him, frustrated.

CLAIRE

Eric, this isn't funny anymore.

ERIC

Keep your eyes on me.

CLAIRE

What's your point? That you can scare
the hell out of me? You win. Now come
down.

ON THE EL TRACKS

Eric looks down at her, smiling softly.

ERIC

I want to show you the rules of my
reality.

The distant DOWNTOWN TRAIN can be seen coming down the tracks.
Eric straightens, fighting all of his reflexes to get off the
tracks.

CLAIRE

And that is what? That you can play
chicken with a train?

ERIC

I'm not playing, Claire.

ON THE GROUND

Claire watches helplessly as Eric balances on the tracks above,
facing the ONCOMING TRAIN. Its HORN echoes from the distance.

CLAIRE

So you want to kill yourself? Is that
it?

ERIC

I can't kill myself. I'm already dead.

ON THE EL TRACKS

Eric struggles to keep his balance as the rails VIBRATE beneath
his feet. The train continues to approach, its HORN blaring.

ERIC

(convincing himself)
I'm dead... I'm dead...

CLAIRE

No, you're not dead, you're just
confused!

But Eric isn't listening to her. The train comes closer. Its
HORN louder now, filled with urgency.

ERIC
It can't hurt me...

CLAIRE
You're just trying to make sense of
your emotions. You feel like you're
dead because the thought of surviving
that crash scares the hell out of you.

The TRACKS RATTLE as the train THUNDERS toward him --

CLAIRE
Please, Eric! Let me help you!

ERIC
You can't help me!

CLAIRE
Why not?

ERIC
How do you expect to help me?! You
can't even help yourself!

CLAIRE
What?!

ERIC
Why are you punishing yourself!

ON THE GROUND

Claire stares up at him in shock.

CLAIRE
Eric, I -- I -- don't know what you're
talking about. I --

The train BRAKES, SCREECHING toward him. It's not going to stop
in time. He shuts his eyes, bracing himself.

ERIC
Quick, Claire, I'm running out of time
here --

CLAIRE
I took some pills, okay?

Eric stares down at her, oblivious of the train.

ERIC
Why?

CLAIRE

(flustered)

My fiancée left me. He left me because
I can't have kids.

ON THE EL TRACKS

Eric opens his eyes as the TRAIN FILLS THE FRAME AROUND HIM!

ERIC

You can't have kids...?

CLAIRE

Yes! Alright?! Are you happy now?!

THE TRAIN SCREECHES toward Eric, seconds from impact.

ERIC sighs, casually side-stepping as -- WHOOSH! The El Train
PLOWS through the area where he was just standing, car after
SCREECHING car, missing him by inches...

EXT. LOOP EL STATION - DAY

Claire marches ahead, scared and angry. Eric tries to keep up.

ERIC

He doesn't deserve you.

CLAIRE

You need help, Eric. I'm such an
idiot. What was I thinking?

ERIC

Fuck him. It doesn't change who you
are. It doesn't make you any less of a
person.

Claire hands him back the leash to Spencer.

CLAIRE

I can't believe I let it go this far.
I was so selfish. I wanted to be in
your world so bad, I didn't see what it
was doing to you.

ERIC

Is that why you're punishing yourself?
Because you can't have children?
Because you can't have a family?
Claire, that's ridiculous. You're a
beautiful person.

Claire stares at him, unsure.

CLAIRE

I made a big mistake, Eric. I can't help you anymore. Goodbye.

She walks away. Eric stares after her, quietly.

ERIC

Goodbye...

INT. PERRY'S OFFICE - LATER

Perry is stunned by Claire's story.

PERRY

He was up on the El?

CLAIRE

He was trying to prove that he was dead. Perry, I let it go too far. It's my fault.

Claire looks out the window, scared.

CLAIRE

How do I fix this? Tell me what to do, because right now I don't know anymore.

Perry's gaze softens above his glasses.

PERRY

Remember what I said about holding his hand? Keep holding it. Hold on tightly. And no matter what happens, don't let go.

EXT. ERIC'S TOWN-HOME - LATER

Claire stands at Eric's front door. She KNOCKS a few times. But no one answers. She tries the door. It's locked. She uses Eric's key to unlock it, and is about to enter when --

The Japanese Couple appear across the street, pushing the high-tech athletic stroller.

The stroller is empty.

Claire frowns. She looks again, but they're too far away now.

Disturbed, she opens Eric's door.

INT. ERIC'S TOWN-HOME - NIGHT

Claire enters, turning on the lights.

CLAIRE

Eric?

She moves into the living room, and stops dead in her tracks.

REVERSE ANGLE

Eric's apartment is completely empty of furniture. All that's left are the paint-splattered bed-sheets draped across the floor and walls, and several empty paint cans.

The painting of the SAIL-BOAT sits in the center of the room. It's finished now. Every detail filled in. It heads out across the ocean, into an amazing white light.

Claire moves to the painting. She looks at the sail they painted together.

EXT. DOCKS - LATER

Claire stands before Eric's sail-boat. The sails have been taken down. The boat is covered, as if for a long winter.

She stares at the boat as it CREAKS back and forth in its slip.

She braces herself against Lake Michigan's icy wind, alone, overcome with an unbearable fear.

CRACK. (OS). She glances over her shoulder. There's movement in the shadows.

She stares at the darkness. She can feel it staring back at her. She turns and walks away, quickly as --

ANOTHER ANGLE

Shadows slide off of the Blonde Man's profile.

EXT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire races back to her apartment. She climbs up the steps.

A HAND grabs her from behind. She GASPS, facing --

SHANNON, the red-headed girl from the survivor group. She stares back at Claire with wide eyes.

CLAIRE

Shannon?

Shannon raises the card Claire gave her earlier.

SHANNON

You gave me this... in case I remembered?

CLAIRE

Yes. What's wrong?

EXT. SIDE-WALK - NIGHT

The wind violently whips a newspaper across the street as Claire and Shannon walk quickly down the sidewalk.

SHANNON

They're watching. Hurry.

CLAIRE

Where are we going? What's going on?

SHANNON

They're disappearing.

Claire gives her a puzzled look. Shannon is near tears.

SHANNON

The other passengers. Norman and Anna. They're gone. I can't find them anywhere. They just vanished off the face of the earth. Both of them. Without a trace.

CLAIRE

I'm sure there's an explanation.

SHANNON

I know there is.

Shannon looks behind them. There's movement in the shadows.

She veers into a bar. The sign flashes: "MCGILL'S BAR & PUB."

INT. MCGILL'S BAR & PUB - NIGHT

A crowded Sports Bar. TV's showing football and basketball games compete with a THUNDERING JUKEBOX.

Shannon and Claire sit at a table near the back, away from the blasting JUKEBOX and TV's. Shannon nervously bites the back of her thumb, her eyes flitting back and forth as she speaks:

SHANNON

They're trying to cover it up.

CLAIRE

Who?

SHANNON

The airline. They're covering up the explosion.

CLAIRE

But you said you didn't see an explosion.

SHANNON

I didn't remember it. None of us did, until yesterday. That's why they're gone.

CLAIRE

Tell me exactly what you saw.

SHANNON

It was the engine on the right side. I saw it explode with my own eyes... It's so weird, I've been living in this fog since... well...

She can't say "plane crash." She holds her forehead, struggling not to break down.

SHANNON

I'm sorry, I -- What's wrong with me?

CLAIRE

It's okay, Shannon. It's okay.

Claire consoles her, rubbing her shoulder.

CLAIRE

Can you tell me what else you remember?

SHANNON

It knocked me into the aisle. That's when I grabbed that guy's arm. I couldn't remember before, but he pulled me into the seat next to him.

Shannon dabs her eyes with the cuffs of her blouse.

SHANNON

I couldn't even breathe... I thought for sure I was gonna fly away. And then...

A gentle smile creases the corners of her lips.

CLAIRE

Yes?

SHANNON

There was all this light...

CLAIRE

From the explosion?

SHANNON

I remember looking up at it, and being so calm, you know... thinking, this is gorgeous...

(laughing to herself)

I know that sounds freaky. I could have been imagining it. It could have been endorphins. I don't know.

Shannon looks up at her. Her eyes heavy.

SHANNON

I think I might have snapped or something. What do you think?

Claire watches her as she becomes emotional. She doesn't know what to think anymore.

SHANNON

(laughing and crying)

God, I can't believe I'm confessing everything in the middle of McDonalds.

She wipes away the tears, struggling to stay cool.

CLAIRE

MgGill's?

Shannon gives her an odd smile. Gestures to their surroundings.

SHANNON

McDonald's. Billions served?

Claire looks around at the Sports Bar, confused. She's about to respond when Shannon goes rigid, staring at a reflection in the window.

SHANNON

(whispering)

Shit, shit -- that's him. Don't look.

Claire's eyes move to the reflection. The gaunt BLONDE MAN stands across the bar, watching them beneath his knitted brow.

SHANNON

That's the guy who's been following me.

CLAIRE

You're sure?

SHANNON

He was asking questions about the crash. I think he's from the airline. He was watching our support group.

CLAIRE

Stay here.

Claire approaches the Blonde Man. He turns and quickly heads toward the back of the bar.

CLAIRE

Wait.

He bolts for the back door.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Claire emerges into an alley behind the bar. The Blonde Man is walking away, quickly.

CLAIRE

(calling after)

I just want to talk!

He walks faster. She chases after him.

CLAIRE

Wait!

He reaches a fence at the end of the alley, realizes he's trapped. He whirls around, eyes wide and manic, bony features sheathed in sweat.

CLAIRE

Why are you following me?

The Blonde Man stares at her, bewildered.

BLONDE MAN

Huh?

CLAIRE

You work for the airline, right?

BLONDE MAN

I'm a Sophomore at the University of Chicago. I'm majoring in Political Science. I'm not... I didn't do anything... I can't...

He steps back, in a daze.

BLONDE MAN

I can't remember...

He sits down against the alley wall, holds his knees close to his chest, struggling to remember.

BLONDE MAN

I can't even remember my last name. Everything's so... blurry.

Claire watches him closely. The Blonde Man is not a threat.

CLAIRE

Why were you following me?

BLONDE MAN

I was scared, okay?! I thought you had the answers. I thought you knew. Ever since the crash, it's been a nightmare.

CLAIRE

You were on the flight?

BLONDE MAN

Yes!

CLAIRE

But there were only six survivors...

BLONDE MAN

Well, I'm here. One moment, I'm watching the engine explode, the next I'm wandering through a parking lot... no idea how I got there.

CLAIRE

You saw the engine explode?

BLONDE MAN

Yes, yes, YES!

Claire watches him as he becomes emotional, laughing and crying, pounding his own head with his fists.

BLONDE MAN

I need help.

He looks up at her.

BLONDE MAN

Help me.

INT. MCGILL'S BAR & PUB - NIGHT

Claire leads the Blonde Man back into the bar. They approach the table Shannon was sitting at.

CLAIRE

I want you to talk to Shannon. Tell her exactly what you told me --

Claire stops at their table. Shannon's gone.

CLAIRE

Shit.

Claire sighs, frustrated. Thinking.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DELTA AIRLINES - NIGHT

Claire's Subaru pulls up in the parking lot.

INT. CLAIRE'S SUBARU - NIGHT

Claire shuts off the engine and looks across at the Blonde Man in the passenger's seat. He's shuddering and SOBBING uncontrollably.

CLAIRE

I need you to come with me.

But he's inconsolable. She puts a gentle hand on his shoulder.

CLAIRE

Hey, it's going to be okay.

Blonde Man stares up at the stars through his tears, distant. Claire looks around, assessing the situation.

CLAIRE

I'll be right back.

She pushes out her door and starts toward the building.

He eases back into his seat, his tear-streaked features relaxing, becoming serene as --

HIS POV

The stars flash brightly against the darkness.

INT. BILL ARKIN'S OFFICE - DELTA AIRLINES - NIGHT

Claire faces off with Arkin.

CLAIRE

What are you doing to these people?
Don't you think they've been through
enough already?

ARKIN

What are you talking about?

CLAIRE

The survivors are missing. You're
trying to cover it up.

ARKIN

Cover what up?

CLAIRE

It was a mechanical failure. That
engine exploded.

ARKIN

It was pilot error.

CLAIRE

No, it wasn't. They saw the engine
explode on the right side of the plane.
They described it to me.

Arkin watches her, darkening.

ARKIN

You can't prove that.

CLAIRE

Really?

EXT. PARKING LOT - DELTA AIRLINES - NIGHT

Arkin follows Claire to her car.

CLAIRE

He's right here. He'll tell you
exactly what he saw.

Arkin gives her a strange look.

ARKIN

Who?

Claire follows his gaze to her car. It's empty.

Claire looks back at Arkin, bristling with a thought.

CLAIRE

What did you do...?

ARKIN

Get some help, Claire. You're losing it.

He walks back into the building.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Papers and loose trash swirl through the air as the wind picks up, HOWLING louder and louder.

Eric walks down the middle of the street, hands in his pockets, collar up around his neck, his face intermittently illuminated by oncoming headlights as they zip past, swerving and HONKING, ANGRY YELLING attenuating from hastily opened windows...

But Eric isn't paying attention. He's in deep thought, on the verge of an epiphany.

He looks up into another set of HEADLIGHTS as a NEWSPAPER TRUCK swerves erratically towards him.

CLOSE ON ERIC

He straightens with an odd smile, embracing what's about to come next as the headlights white out his features.

He takes a deep breath, closes his eyes and braces for impact as the GRILL FILLS THE FRAME AROUND HIM AND --

REVERSE ANGLE

Eric is standing in the same spot. He opens his eyes.

The Truck continues in the other direction, its tail-lights vanishing.

He stares after it, filled with a strange, sad calm.

EXT. PERRY'S HOME - NIGHT

Claire RINGS the doorbell and waits. The door opens on PERRY, in tight sweats and t-shirt, which are two sizes too small. Reading glasses perched on his forehead.

PERRY

Claire? What are you doing here?

Claire stares at him. She doesn't know where to begin.

CLAIRE

Perry, something weird is happening.

INT. PERRY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Claire sits on Perry's over-stuffed couch. She notices a stack of GRADE SCHOOL MULTIPLE CHOICE EXAMS on the floor next to the coffee table. She picks them up: "A+, B-, A-, D..."

She stares at this, confused.

CLAIRE

I didn't know you had kids.

PERRY

I don't.

Perry hands her a cup of coffee and sits back in his chair.

PERRY

Start from the beginning.

CLAIRE

People are vanishing. The survivors are all vanishing.

Perry stares at her, concerned.

CLAIRE

Something happened on that plane. They saw a white light. One of the survivors wasn't even accounted for. How did that happen? Nothing makes sense anymore.

PERRY

So let's make sense out of it.

Claire hears the slight shift in his voice. It's tinged with a strange sadness. She hops up, spilling her coffee everywhere.

CLAIRE

Don't do that! Don't talk to me like that! I'm not crazy.

PERRY

I know. I just want to help you.

Claire backs toward his front door.

CLAIRE

Something's going on here, Perry.
Something I can't explain.

PERRY

You're looking for the truth.

CLAIRE

Yes!

PERRY

Whatever you're holding onto, let it go. Whatever's blocking you, unblock it. Let the truth find you.

CLAIRE

No...

PERRY

(offering a hand)

Baby steps, Claire. Think baby steps. Remember what Jung said, "The conscious mind allows itself to be trained like a parrot, but the unconscious does not."

CLAIRE

What -- ?!

Perry approaches her, delicately.

PERRY

There's a reason why you made up this elaborate fantasy of an airline cover-up. You're just following your natural instincts... it's your subconscious' way of telling you who you really are. Listen to it.

CLAIRE

They got to you. Arkin got to you...

PERRY

No, it's not like that.

CLAIRE

Stay away from me, Perry. I mean it.

She gets the door open and charges out.

PERRY

Claire, don't go out there like this!

EXT. PERRY'S HOME - NIGHT

The wind is blowing hard as Claire climbs behind the wheel of her Subaru and PEELS out of there. Perry stares after the vanishing taillights, concerned.

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Claire paces back and forth, chewing the back of her thumb, mind racing furiously and --

CRASH! Her foot knocks something over.

Cosmo's dish rattles like a settling quarter. Cat food scatters across the shiny linoleum.

Claire stares at this, thinking. She backs out of the kitchen and --

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Claire runs down the hallway, scanning all the door numbers: 210, 211, 212.

CLAIRE

(searching)

213, 213, 213...

(calling out)

TONY!

She stops, spins around in the hallway, trying to catch her breath.

CLAIRE

Tony...

The door numbers end at 212. There is no 213.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Claire sits at the front, resting her forehead on the back of a pew. She's trembling uncontrollably.

CLAIRE
(whispering)
It's okay... everything's okay...
you're okay...

FOOTSTEPS REVERBERATE through the cathedral behind her (OS).

ERIC scoots into the pew, sitting next to her.

CLAIRE
What's happening...? Stop playing
these games. I'm scared. I don't know
what's real, and what's not real
anymore. People are vanishing left and
right.

ERIC
Maybe you didn't need them anymore.
(shrugging)
Or maybe they didn't need you.

CLAIRE
And maybe you're not real. And maybe
that plane never crashed. And maybe
I'm just making everything up because
I've completely lost my mind.

ERIC
Claire, you're not crazy.

CLAIRE
Then the engine did explode.

ERIC
It was more than that. You helped me
see the truth.

Eric stares at her, his eyes moist. He manages a smile.

CLAIRE
This is bullshit.

She scoots out of the pew and storms out of there.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE CATHEDREAL - NIGHT

Eric catches up with Claire, grabbing her arm.

ERIC
Claire, wait --

CLAIRE
(yanking away)
Don't touch me.

ERIC
Hang on, please. Just stop.

Claire stops, furious.

ERIC
Let's go out in the boat.
(off her outraged look)
Alright, so let's go dancing. I've
never tried Salsa. Have you?

Claire just stares at him, slowly imploding.

CLAIRE
After all this, you want to go Salsa
dancing?

ERIC
It looks like fun.

CLAIRE
I don't want to go Salsa Dancing, okay?

ERIC
Remember the paint brush? Don't hold
on so tight. Let go.

Claire doesn't know how to respond to this.

CLAIRE
I have to find out what happened. I
have to know I'm not crazy.

ERIC
Just be with me. Be here with me now.
I love you, Claire. You've saved me.
You've transformed me.

CLAIRE
I've transformed you...?

ERIC
"The meeting of two personalities is
like the contact of two chemical
substances: if there is any reaction,
both are transformed."

Claire is taken aback by this.

CLAIRE

That's Jung...?! Why did you say that?

ERIC

Claire, you helped me see what was really important in life. It wasn't the furniture, or the Harley, or the sail-boat. It was you. My whole life I was afraid to commit, I was afraid to love. You showed me what I was missing.

(beat)

You showed me how to love.

CLAIRE

Eric --

ERIC

Nothing else matters. If you want the truth, stop listening to this --

(he touches her head)

And listen to this --

He touches her heart.

ERIC

This is the truth, Claire.

CLAIRE

No. No, I'm sorry. I'm going to find out what happened on that plane.

She reaches her car and climbs in.

ERIC

If you can't get over this, I might not ever see you again.

She starts the engine. Eric begins to panic.

ERIC

Don't go, please --

CLAIRE

Good-bye, Eric!

She drives away.

ERIC

Claire, stop -- I don't want to lose you!

Eric stares after her, terrified.

INT. CLAIRE'S SUBARU (MOVING) - NIGHT

Claire speeds through sparse night-time traffic, at her wits end. Her eyes gravitate toward the gas gauge. She's on empty. The light is on.

CLAIRE

Shit...

EXT. GAS-STATION - NIGHT

Claire pulls up to a pump and gets out, bracing herself against a strong gust of wind. She goes to the island to pay with her ATM CARD, but the sign says "OUT OF ORDER. PAY INSIDE."

Claire heads inside as --

CLOSE ON A NEWSPAPER

flutters across the parking lot behind her.

INT. GAS-STATION - NIGHT

Claire enters to find an HISPANIC CLERK behind the counter watching a news program. She stands at the counter, waiting for him to acknowledge her. But he doesn't.

CLAIRE

Excuse me?

He glances across at her, as if waking up from a dream.

CLAIRE

I'd like to put twenty on Number 7.

She pulls out a twenty and slides it across the counter. The Clerk nods and puts it in the cash register. He smiles and activates her pump, his gaze drifting back to the TV.

Claire is about to leave when she spots a stack of newspapers next to the counter.

CLOSE ON THE TOP NEWSPAPER

showing the crash on the front page. The headline reads: "FATAL CRASH KILLS ALL PASSENGERS ON-BOARD."

CLAIRE

stares at this, eyes saucerling. She covers her mouth, nauseous.

CLAIRE

Oh shit...

She picks up the paper and races out --

INT. HALLWAY - DELTA AIRLINES - NIGHT

Claire marches down the hallway with purpose, the newspaper under her arm.

INT. BILL ARKIN'S OFFICE - DELTA AIRLINES - NIGHT

Arkin sits behind his desk, on the phone.

Claire blows through the doorway, holding up the newspaper.

CLAIRE

What's this?

ARKIN

You really should have called first.

CLAIRE

Nobody survived the crash?! First, you lied about the engine. Now this?! What the hell is going on here, Arkin?

ARKIN

I don't know what you're talking about.

CLAIRE

What's this about? Money? You're afraid of going bankrupt? You're not going to get away with it.

ARKIN

It was pilot error.

CLAIRE

You can tell me what the hell is going on, or I can go straight to the police.

ARKIN

And say what? You can't prove anything.

CLAIRE

You didn't get all the witnesses.

Arkin stands behind his desk. He looks outside his window at the stars.

ARKIN

The pilot killed them all. He -- he was responsible for every single soul on board that flight, and he fucked up.

CLAIRE

No.

ARKIN

He flew two flights, back to back. He was in the middle of a divorce. His wife was taking the kids, the house, the best twenty years of his life. He had too much too drink. He fell asleep. He was irresponsible.

Claire is thrown by all this detail.

CLAIRE

But that didn't cause the crash. It was a mechanical failure.

ARKIN

No.

(whispering)

Can't be...

Arkin turns around, his cheeks streaming with tears.

ARKIN

I'm sure it was him. I'm positive. It had to have been...

Claire is disturbed by this reaction.

CLAIRE

I want to see the passenger list.

ARKIN

Why?

CLAIRE

Because there were seven survivors in that crash. And I'm going to prove it. I want to see everyone who was on board that flight. Now.

ARKIN

You're sure they saw this?

CLAIRE

Yes.

ARKIN

(whispering to himself)
Mechanical failure...

Arkin stares out at the stars, distant. His eyes aching for the possibility of forgiveness.

ARKIN

And all this time, I thought it was the pilot.

He drifts out into the hallway, as if lost in a dream.

CLAIRE

Arkin, I'm serious --

She comes out into the hallway, and stops.

HER POV

Arkin is gone.

CLAIRE

moves to his desk, begins opening drawers, rifling through stacks of papers. She finds nothing, turns around, thinking.

Her gaze comes to rest on a file sitting alone on the chair.

She stares at the file, mind racing. Her fingers gingerly brushing around its edges.

She opens the file to find the list of passengers.

CLOSE ON CLAIRE

She reads through the names, and then stops. Her eyes hollow out with recognition.

She looks outside as the WIND picks up. A NEWSPAPER FLUTTERS against the window like a lost sparrow, trying to get in at her.

And then the dam bursts. She folds forward, SOBBING into her hand.

CLOSE ON THE LIST

sliding from her fingertips... see-sawing through the air like an autumn leaf...

EXT. STREETS OF CHICAGO - NIGHT

FOLLOW CLAIRE, walking down the street as the WIND BLOWS around her, throwing her hair in her face.

WE STAY WITH HER as she begins jogging... passing PEDESTRIANS... shops...

street-signs...running faster and faster, until she is sprinting... as if she's running away from something... or towards it...

EXT. DOCKS - DAWN

The fog is burning away as Claire emerges from the shadows, approaching Eric's sail-boat. It CREAKS back and forth in its slip, empty.

Claire sits on the dock, letting her feet dangle over, lost.

CLAIRE

Eric...

The boat continues to CREAK. She can't stop trembling.

CLAIRE

Don't leave me.

She bows her head, jaw muscles twitching, fighting to hang on.

CLAIRE

I don't want to be alone anymore...

(hoarse whisper)

I don't want to be alone...

She looks up at the boat, realizing she's lost him. He's not coming back.

She gets up with fatal resignation and begins to walk away.

The steady sound of FOOTFALLS on the dock behind her (OS). She stops and turns to find --

Eric, walking toward her, grinning.

ERIC

I waited for you.

CLAIRE

Why didn't you tell me?

ERIC

You had to work it out in your own way. Nobody else could do it for you. But I tried to help.

CLAIRE

No.

Eric stares back at her, eyes becoming moist.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - DELTA 737 - NIGHT

Eric reads a magazine.

CAMERA TURNS SLOWLY TO REVEAL

CLAIRE, sitting next to him. She's pouring through a thick packet of information and taking notes. She stops and scribbles furiously on her note-pad. Her pen is out of ink.

Eric reaches into his shirt, produces a red ink pen and hands it to her.

ERIC

It's red. Is that okay?

CLAIRE

Great. Thank you.

Harried, she goes back to jotting her notes. Eric reads over her shoulder.

ERIC

"The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed."

CLAIRE

It's Jung.

ERIC

You have the sloppiest handwriting.

Claire flashes a tight smile as she works.

ERIC

You're very closed off.

Now Claire is getting annoyed.

ERIC

It's almost like scrawl. Very tight loops. Slashed "T"s.

Claire's jaw twitches angrily.

ERIC

I apologize in advance. I'm probably going to be looking over your shoulder the whole flight.

Claire looks up at him, heated.

CLAIRE

Do you want your pen back?

ERIC

Sorry. I'll leave you alone.

He returns to his magazine. Claire returns to her notes. She doesn't see the reflection in the window of the people behind her.

It's DR. LEVRA and the gaunt BLONDE MAN, casually bantering.

Her eyes slowly slide across to Eric as he flips through his magazine. She feels bad. Without looking up:

CLAIRE

I didn't mean to snap. I'm just overwhelmed. I'm preparing for my Orals.

ERIC

Orals?

CLAIRE

American Board of Psychiatry. You have to take a written and oral exam every few years to stay certified.

ERIC

And here I was analyzing your handwriting.

Claire grins at this. Extends a hand.

CLAIRE

I'm Claire.

ERIC

(shaking hands)

Eric. I'm not normally this chatty. My mouth just runs like a motor when I get nervous. I can go on and on...

CLAIRE

There's no need to be nervous. I hear flying's the safest mode of transportation.

A beat. Eric's lips tremble into a smile.

ERIC

Who said I was nervous about flying?

Claire smiles self-consciously, buries her gaze in the note-pad.

EXT. DOCKS - BACK TO SCENE - DAY

Claire stares at Eric, remembering. He climbs onto the sailboat and begins securing the ropes.

ERIC

Someone once told me your loved ones come back to help you make the transition. They come back to help you find the truth, to help you remember who you really were. I didn't believe that until last night.

He ties down another rope.

ERIC

My Dad, my dog... they came back to help me. Who came back for you, Claire?

PUSH IN ON CLAIRE, memories flooding back to her in a series of quick cuts:

INT. SERIES OF SHOTS - CLAIRE'S MEMORY

1) Claire, seven years old, making a strawberry-rhubarb pie in the kitchen with her grandma, MADELINE. It's one of many that are stacked in boxes labeled "bake sale."

2) Claire, nine years old, standing at MADELINE'S bedside, arranging violets in a purple vase. Madeline is in the final stages of cancer. Her hair has fallen out from chemotherapy, her face is gaunt, her arms are full of tubes. Despite this, she finds a smile for Claire.

3) Claire, twelve years old, sitting in PERRY'S SEVENTH GRADE MATH CLASS. He wears his clothes too small, his reading glasses perched on his forehead. He points to Claire, who has her hand raised.

PERRY

Yes, Claire, do you have the answer?

4) Claire, twelve, reads the paper at the kitchen table as she eats her cereal. Her fingers hover over an obituary article. PERRY'S OBITUARY PHOTO is headed with "PERRY JACKSON: MATH TEACHER MISSED BY COMMUNITY." The spoon falls from Claire's fingertips...

5) Claire, fourteen, at a barbecue with TONY, her Uncle. He passes her some potato salad.

TONY

Did I ever tell you you were my favorite niece?

YOUNG CLAIRE

Every chance you get, Uncle Tony.

6) Claire, seventeen, looking down at Tony's open coffin. He's dressed in his fire-man's uniform. PUSH IN ON the badge on his chest. It says, "COMPANY 213."

EXT. DOCKS - BACK TO SCENE - DAWN

Claire stares at Eric through her tears. He fastens another rope, watching her. Claire looks up at some PASSERS-BY in the distance.

CLAIRE

What about them?

ERIC

They're just like us. They're just trying to figure it all out.

CLAIRE

Then everyone here...

Claire watches as MORE AND MORE PEOPLE pass. A YOUNG COUPLE on roller-blades. A pony-tailed BIKE MESSENGER. A HEAVY-SET TRAFFIC COP. AN OLD MAN feeding pigeons on a bench. She can barely say the words.

CLAIRE

...everyone here is dead?

Eric nods solemnly.

ERIC

They're trying to make their own peace.
In their own ways.

CLAIRE
How could they not know?

ERIC
I don't think they remember. Or want
to.

CUT TO:

INT. CABIN - 737 - NIGHT

It's now dark outside the window. Claire and Eric have been talking for most of the trip. There's an easy familiarity between them now. The attraction is palpable.

CLAIRE
You're an investment broker?

ERIC
Yeah, I kind of ended up that way.

TWO FLIGHT ATTENDANTS come down the aisle with the beverage cart. We recognize the MAITRE DE from Ambria.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT (VO)
...we will be coming by with our
complimentary beverage cart. Beer is
three dollars. Wine and alcohol is
four dollars. Please have your money
ready...

CLAIRE
You don't sound too thrilled about your
job.

ERIC
I'd rather be doing this.

He raises his magazine. It has a glorious image of a sail-boat heading out into the horizon. It's his painting.

MALE FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Can I get you something?

ERIC
Water, please.

The Flight Attendant hands him a bottle of Evian and a cup of ice.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Anything for you?

CLAIRE

I'll take a 7-Up.

The Flight Attendant passes a can of 7-Up and a cup of ice to Eric, who in turn passes it to Claire.

CLAIRE

Thanks.

Eric twists the cap off his Evian water. He begins to pour it into the cup --

CLOSE ON THE WATER

falling and splashing into the cup and --

ERIC

finishes pouring as -- KABOOM! THE ENGINE EXPLODES on the right side of the plane. A cacophony of SCREAMS and SHOUTING erupts from behind him as the plane loses altitude and everything on their trays shoot skyward: papers, cups, lap-tops.

The cabin door bangs open. We get a brief glimpse of the pilot. It's ARKIN. He's surprisingly calm and professional as he tries to steady out the plane. The door bangs shut again.

Claire and Eric turn as the seats from the far back of the plane TEAR LOOSE and go airborne, flipping end over end toward the front of the 737...

Eric tries to grab the Flight Attendant in the aisle, but she's sucked into the front wall. She hits with bone-breaking force, and goes limp.

Claire watches as Dean shrinks away from the Lady next to him, SCREAMING at the top of his lungs as her blouse catches fire.

CRASH! The BEVERAGE CART launches into the air, SLAMMING into the wall next to Eric and Claire, spraying cans of soda and bottles of water everywhere, and then PING PONGING across the aisle to the other side, CRUSHING a bald man in his 50s --

Shannon is thrown from her seat. Norman grabs her and pulls her up into his seat. She digs her claws deep into his arm as --

Anna blinks slowly, calmly watches everything unfold around her. She glances across the aisle at Max. He's praying in Hebrew.

WHOOSH! All the windows on the right side of the plane fill with a BRILLIANT INCANDESCENCE.

EXT. DOCKS - DAWN

Claire stares distantly as she remembers. She wipes her eyes. Eric is watching her, smiling softly through his own tears.

ERIC

Then you told me about your sister.

Claire stares as it all comes back to her --

INT. CABIN - DELTA 737 - NIGHT

Eric leans forward, gently pushing Claire's cheek down into a pillow as EXPLOSIONS and PANDEMONIUM break out in our periphery. He holds her line of sight, their faces just inches apart. It's as if they're in the eye of the hurricane.

ERIC

Shh. It's going be okay.

He smiles at her as she sobs into her pillow.

CLAIRE

I can't die. God, there were so many things I wanted to do.

ERIC

Tell me about them. Tell me all the things you wanted to do.

CLAIRE

My sister -- I'd make up with my sister...

An INDIAN MAN SCREAMS, catching fire across the aisle.

ERIC

Stay with me, Claire. Be with me. Be here with me now. In this moment.

CLAIRE

(crying)
I'm so scared...

ERIC

You're not alone. We're in this together. Go on. You were telling me about your sister.

CLAIRE

My -- my sister... we're fighting over something stupid. We haven't spoken in two years. Two years and three months.

The plane jerks VIOLENTLY. More seats come out. The cabin begins to fill with smoke. Eric holds Claire's gaze, points to his own eyes.

ERIC

Stay right here, Claire. Right here.
What else happened?

CLAIRE

We just met.

ERIC

Yeah, but I feel like I've known you
forever.

Despite their circumstances, Claire finds a smile. She speaks as the chaos continues to erupt around them.

ERIC

Why were you fighting?

CLAIRE

I don't remember. I was supposed to
call her, or she was supposed to call
me? God, what was I thinking? Why
couldn't I just be the bigger person?

Claire begins SOBBING as their seats RATTLE violently. She looks out her window.

HER POV

The ROCKY SHORE is shooting up to meet US.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Eric gently guides her attention back to him.

ERIC

Don't look out there. Stay here. Keep
going. I'm listening.

Another BLINDING WHITE LIGHT as the engine on the right side EXPLODES again.

ERIC

You'd forgive your sister. What else
would you do?

CLAIRE

(fighting through her
tears)
I'd paint my walls yellow!

ERIC

Go on!

Another EXPLOSION. Eric holds Claire's head, yelling over the WIND.

ERIC

What else?!

CLAIRE

Plants! I'd get new plants!

ERIC

Good! Keep going!

CLAIRE

And new clothes!

ERIC

And?!

CLAIRE

I'd dye my hair! And I'd quit smoking!

Eric brushes her cheek, smiling. Claire finds a moment of sanctuary in this, even as the WIND HOWLS louder and louder.

CLAIRE

We're not gonna make it, are we?

ERIC

Probably not.

CLAIRE

I'm glad you're here with me.

Eric manages a scared smile at this.

Pieces of the fuselage begin to come apart, spinning through the air as if they were caught in a twister.

Claire smiles back at Eric through the DEAFENING WHINE, squeezing his hand tightly, staying in his gaze.

A NEWSPAPER flutters over them, hanging in the air for a surreal moment and --

WHOOSH! The cabin fills with a BLINDING WHITE LIGHT and --

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKS - MORNING

We pull back from the BLINDING WHITE LIGHT. It's the rising sun. We hear Pete Townsend's *"Let My Love Open the Door."*

Eric has finished raising the sails. Claire climbs onto the sail-boat, overwhelmed with a strange calm.

ERIC

Ready?

CLAIRE

Where are we going?

ERIC

It's a surprise.

Claire smiles at him, feeling the wind in her face.

CLAIRE

I can hardly wait.

ANOTHER ANGLE

CAMERA ASCENDS as the sail-boat heads out across the water, towards the rising sun.

As the wind catches its sails, taking the boat out into the horizon, we slowly begin to realize --

It's exactly like Eric's painting.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

LINDA ANDRADE, mid 20s, her husband, RON, and their sons, JOHN, BRIAN, KYLE and MICKEY, gather outside of Claire's apartment with the SUPER of the building.

SUPER

I'm sorry to hear about your sister.
Can't imagine what you must be going
through.

Linda smiles stoically, staying level. It's clear she's the rock in this family. The others are crestfallen, but she refuses to let her defenses down.

The Super opens the apartment and --

INT. CLAIRE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Claire's dark apartment, exactly as it was in the beginning. Mountains of files, paperwork, coagulated cups of Starbucks, pizza cartons, rogue sticky notes, neglected plants on the windowsill...

Linda leads the group inside. She sees the TV, which is still on mute. She smiles sadly, this is definitely her sister's apartment.

LINDA

Has anyone else been in here since...

SUPER

Since last week? No. Nobody's stepped foot in here. We didn't want to touch anything until we heard from you.

As he says this, COSMO, a ravished Himalayan cat, comes out of the bedroom, MEOWING incessantly for food.

LINDA

Cosmo?

INT. CLAIRE'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Linda enters the kitchen. Cosmo's food dishes are dry as bone.

LINDA

Oh, honey, you must be so thirsty.

Linda quickly fills a dish with water. Cosmo attacks it as she sets it down.

Mickey spots something under the kitchen table. He kneels down and picks up something (OS)...

MICKEY

Mom...?

He rises, holding CLAIRE'S CARD.

MICKEY

It has your name on it.

He hands the card to Linda. She stares at Claire's "MISS YOU" card. It's written in red ink. Claire's VOICE can be heard as Linda reads the card:

CLAIRE (VO)

Dear Linda, hi... remember me? I'm
sorry for not getting in touch sooner,
but...

(beat)

I'm just sorry. I'm sorry this has
gone on for so long. You're my little
sister, and I love you. And I will
always love you.

(beat)

Anyway, write me back, or call me if
you want. I'd really like to talk.
Love, Claire.

A strange serenity overcomes Linda. She draws a sharp breath as
her walls crumble, and the tears begin pooling in her eyes...

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END